Priorities

The European Union’s range of instruments and the broad network of actors both across EU institutions and through Member States offer an opportunity for preventive action that few other international actors can match. The post-Lisbon architecture for conflict and crisis management reflects the renewed commitment to conflict prevention contained in the Treaty of Lisbon.

In response to the 2011 Council Conclusions on Conflict Prevention, the European External Action Service (EEAS) has developed tools and a methodology to promote an EU-wide and timely understanding of conflict risk, and of ways in which these risks could be addressed.

The EU Conflict Early Warning System (EWS) provides a basis for cross institutional decision making, leading to concrete actions to mitigate conflict risk.

It is not a predictive tool; its purpose is to identify risks of violent conflict early on in order to enable senior management to prioritise resources to manage these risks in light of EU’s strategic interests and leverage.

The EWS is designed to locate risk areas on a 3-5 years horizon span and to analyse their trajectories through an inclusive process of data collection and shared assessment that incorporates a wide range of EU actors.

To support these efforts, an Early Warning and Conflict Analysis Team has been established within the Conflict prevention, Peace building and Mediation Instruments Division of the EEAS. They provide advice, capacity building and training to colleagues across the EEAS to enhance their understanding of and strategies to affect conflict dynamics and early warning.

Top 3 Facts

- The process of the EWS is exemplary of the EU Comprehensive Approach in action. It involves the EEAS and the Commission but also Member States and Civil Society organizations. We believe that a comprehensive early warning assessment is the key of success to link to an effective early action.

- The EU EWS has been pilot-tested in two regions thus far. As a result, diplomatic initiatives as well as thematic projects and conflict analysis have been carried out in these countries accordingly to the identified risks. The EWS will now gradually be rolled-out on a global scale.

- The European Commission via the Instrument for Stability finances projects, which promote early warning and non-state actors’ capacities. The overall objective of these projects is to strengthen the links between early warning, conflict analysis and early response and to build civil society’s capacities for early warning.
Did you know?
EU Conflict Early Warning System’s purpose is to identify opportunities for the EU to help prevent the emergence, re-emergence or escalation of violent conflict.

CONCRETE EXAMPLES
Rwandan genocide in 1994: The International Community clearly failed to prevent and respond to the genocide. One of the main explanations was the failure of information management provided by different sources which lead to a confusion in the signals sent. The period immediately after the genocide in Rwanda saw the establishment of several early warning initiatives.

The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia crisis in 2000-2001: In this country the cost of conflict prevention was less than one-tenth of the cost of the crisis management response in nearby Kosovo. When violence broke out in spring 2001, the EU, NATO and the OSCE coordinated a swift and effective response, following an initial EU diplomatic initiative. With EU pressure applied on both side backed up by the Commission’s conditional offer of eventual EU membership to Macedonia as well as by NATO’s military commitment to the disarmament of the UCK, both the EU and NATO managed to have a considerable impact on the diffusion of the crisis.

Democratic Republic of the Congo elections in 2006: The major EU effort to support the critical elections in 2006 can be considered as a genuine EU success in terms of conflict prevention. The EU efforts encompassed a wide set of actions: support to the electoral organisation, EU electoral observation mission and deployment of a Common Security Defence Policy (CSDP) operation. Moreover, EU Heads of Missions played a decisive, preventive diplomacy role in protecting one of the key candidates from being arrested by Kabila loyalists in the midst of the electoral process. This determined EU diplomatic action coupled with EU military force and a strong EU electoral observation mission ensured EU credibility and averted mass violence.

Main links:
Conflict Prevention, Peace building and Mediation:

Council Conclusions on Conflict prevention:

The EU’s comprehensive approach to external risks and crisis:

Guidance note on the use of Conflict Analysis in support of EU external action