

Seminar: Prevent and Protect – an Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises (December 7th, 2018) - Operational Conclusions

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Last December 7th, 2018, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Portugal gathered in Lisbon, for the Seminar “Prevent and Protect – an Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises”, representatives from the 28 EU’s Member States, the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU, the European Commission and the EEAS, all of them with responsibilities in crises management and consular protection.

Taking on a framework of common resources use and information sharing about the consular protection provided in emergency situations, the Seminar’ aimed to feed the debate about the path to tread on the future of the integrated European response and to promote a space to share best practices and experiences between Member States and the European institutions with competences in the crises management processes.

On an occasion we wish was fruitful for everyone, this document aims to highlight briefly some of the main contributions and operational conclusions from the general debate as follows:

1. The increasing citizens’ mobility is directly linked to consular crises’ complexity, due to the speed of events’ appearance and evolution, and the dimension of the territories and populations affected.
2. The State remains the main actor in the response to the different kinds of crises, and citizens turn mainly to its structures in time of need.
3. Even though states are in process of extending their capabilities in order to face an increasing demand for support, the range of the challenges faced implies the inefficiency of an isolated response or action.
4. Thus, the EU’s MS have the responsibility to cooperate on consular crises prevention and response, whether as beneficiaries or as providers of consular support.
5. Such cooperation may fall under four different dimensions:
 - a) to provide support to European citizens, represented or non-represented, in the contact with local authorities in order to solve or help with specific problems (ex.: detentions, hospitalization, documents’ loss);
 - b) to attend social emergency cases;
 - c) to respond to disruptions of the security order (ex.: terrorist attacks or conflicts);
 - d) to coordinate rescue operations in case of accident or natural disaster.
6. It is key that cooperation between MS on consular crises response develops and is deepened so that no EU citizen, whether represented or non-represented, is left unprotected.
7. The legal framework on Consular Protection matters builds on multiple instruments: the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights; the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Treaty of Lisbon); the Decision 1313/2013/EU of the European

Parliament and of the Council on a Union Civil Protection Mechanism; and, above all, the Council Directive (EU) 637/2015 of 20 April 2015 on coordination and cooperation measures to facilitate consular protection for unrepresented citizens of the Union in third countries.

8. The answer is also in the conjugation and coordination of efforts, through an integrated system of monitoring, prevention and means coordination mechanisms already available, such as the Integrated Political Crises Response (IPCR), the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), the Union's Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) or the Consular Protection Directive (Directive 637/2015).

9. The IPCR coordinates an integrated response by all of the Union's mechanisms. It can be activated through the Presidency of the Council of the EU or by any MS, under Article 222nd of the Treaty of Lisbon.

10. The ERCC works as a Crises Center for the whole EU, in a 24/7 basis, monitoring risks and coordinating action in the framework of the UCPM.

11. The Consular Crises Management Division of the EEAS provides with support in the implementation of the Consular Protection Directive by helping to coordinate the development of the "Joint EU Consular Crisis Preparedness Framework" (risk analysis, identification and location of represented and non-represented EU citizens, emergency contacts' lists) and in perfecting and feeding CoOL (an online platform for live exchange of information) with useful data on crises prevention and management.

12. The UCPM helps in coordinating and co-finances the projection of rescue means both in and outside of the EU. In this case, it covers for the civil protection assistance to consular protection of EU citizens in third states under Article 16 of Decision 1313/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council. There are currently two main co-financing modalities: for the transportation of MS' resources allocated to the Civil Protection pool (up to 85%); for the transportation of MS' resources not allocated to the common pool (up to 55%). A third modality is currently being discussed – rescEU – that would allow for the co-financing of means' acquisition and operational coordination of the means' projection by the Commission.

13. Civil Protection units play a role in the projection of means to respond to crises, mostly natural disasters, taking place in third countries. They articulate among themselves both bilaterally and in the framework of the UCPM, through CECIS (Common Emergency Communication and Information System), by providing the necessary means to respond to specific crises.

14. The articulation between Crises Centers (in MS' MFAs) and national Civil Protection units should start as early as in the prevention and planning phases through an integrated system that involves all relevant partners.

15. Cooperation among MS and between these and the EU's mechanisms isn't new, it builds upon a long path filled with different experiences and many lessons learned.

Here are some of the best practices shared:

a) in the prevention phase:

- gather as much expertise as possible, including risk and threat analysis.
- benefit from MS' presence in specific third countries for early warning purposes.
- gather all information available.
- mapping of MS' resources to face consular crises.

b) in the planning phase:

- anticipate different scenarios.
- develop plans.
- involve all the relevant partners, including like-minded countries.
- promote military arrangements concerning NEO operations (NON Combatant Evacuation Operations).
- develop joint exercises.
- share burdens and responsibilities between MS in specific countries.
- develop practical arrangements on the protection of non-represented citizens.

c) in the response phase:

- consistent and coherent communication, in which all MS speak in one voice to European citizens affected.
- consistently use existent means in the implementation of Directive 637/2015.