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NOTE

From : Council Secretariat
To : Delegations

Subject : Guidelines for identification and implementation of lessons and best practices in civilian ESDP missions

On 10 November 2008, Council adopted the attached Guidelines for the identification and implementation of lessons and best practices in civilian ESDP missions.

Guidelines for identification and implementation of lessons and best practices in civilian ESDP missions

I. OBJECTIVES

After 5 years of civilian ESDP missions, there is a large body of information and experience available, which needs to be captured in a systematic lessons learned process, as foreseen under the Civilian headline goal, to ensure institutional learning. This process will take into account the existing practices in the EU Military Staff (EUMS), as well as in the UN and OSCE. The purpose of these guidelines is to improve civilian crisis management in ESDP, including the planning, management and conduct of the growing number of civilian missions and to introduce a culture of continuous improvement of practice reflecting the high political ambition of ESDP. The objective is to draw valuable lessons for ESDP missions, while at the same time maintaining a light and flexible structure.

This paper defines a framework and suggests guidelines for identification and implementation of lessons and best practices in civilian ESDP missions (an internal methodology on the handling of the lessons cycle in missions will complete these guidelines). A structure is proposed which also takes into account new measures for evaluation and quality control undertaken under the authority of the Civilian Operations Commander (CivOpsCdr) in line with the command and control arrangements for civilian ESDP missions.

II. PROCESS

The cycle of lessons learned and best practices starts with the identification of lessons and continues with their analysis, endorsement, implementation and dissemination. To ensure that the learning cycle is complete, a further step is to transform the lessons learned into new or revised policies, working methods and best practices and to disseminate them.

1. Identification of lessons

Identification of lessons is the collation of observations and experience from both the political as well as the strategic, operational and tactical levels in planning and conducting civilian ESDP missions, in order to extract the lessons that will serve future missions and institutional learning.

Types of lessons to be identified are notably issues pertaining to the mandate of the mission and to mission support aspects (e.g. mission launch and mandate, mission support activities, security, working with host nations, communication, training aspects etc).

Collection of input will mainly involve missions (notably through the best practices officers and Heads of Missions) the General Secretariat of the Council as well as, where relevant, non-EU actors. The collection of input will take place i.a. by systematically registering lessons during the conduct of missions, including in regular reports (see below). Horizontal lessons identified during Internal support reviews¹ will also be fed into the system.

¹ ISRs are a recent development, designed to focus on continuous improvement of the effectiveness of planning and conduct of operations. They are aimed at assisting the mission(s) in meeting objectives as defined in its mandate, and to assist the CivOpsCdr in his/her role of managing the overall performance of all its elements.

In preparation for the drafting of reports, a consultation of relevant stakeholders will be launched including contributions from staff involved in the planning and conduct of the mission and the communities of experts, both in Brussels and in the field.

2. Analysis of lessons

Horizontal analysis of the lessons identified will help defining recurrent **trends** (notably recurrent problems faced by the missions), **bad and good practice** and which of the latter should become best practice and be disseminated for the purpose of supporting other ongoing and future missions.

Identification and analysis of lessons will be reflected in a **number of different reports** to be discussed by Member states, covering the whole life cycle of a mission, as well as visits and detailed collection of data by the Council Secretariat (DGE IX and CPCC), also building on the findings of the annual Heads of mission seminar. The number, type, size and frequency of these reports should take into account the particular circumstances of each ESDP mission.

Reporting should take place (i) at the end of the planning phase ; (ii) at the end of the mission; (iii) through the introduction of a lessons identified section in 6th-monthly reports; (iv) through the introduction of a lessons identified section in any report supporting the change of mandate of an ongoing mission; (v) through reports on horizontal issues and across missions (e.g SSR, governance and political reform, monitoring missions, explaining the mission mandate to the local population, working with the UN on handover of missions).

Based on the above mentioned reports, **an annual report**, possibly in view of the yearly ministerial conference on civilian ESDP, will notably involve:

- compiling and summarising the main lessons identified and achievements across all missions,
- detecting and analysing trends across missions,
- proposing action to implement the lessons,
- assessing whether previous identified lessons have been learned and, if not, what remedial actions could be taken and in what order of priority,
- defining objectives for the next year.

When planning a new mission, support should be given to the planning team through the identification of the main lessons in planning drawn from past missions with a similar mandate. Templates for planning documents (CMC, CONOPS, OPLAN, Joint Action) should also be reviewed at this stage.

3. Implementation of lessons

The aim should be to ensure that lessons identified will be learned and implemented, as much as feasible, and thus that they will be of use for future missions. To ensure that the learning cycle is complete, a further step is to transform the lessons learned into new or revised policies, working methods and best practices and to implement and disseminate them. Some of the lessons will need to be reviewed again at political level in order to decide on their implementation. General Secretariat of the Council / Lessons guidance team (Director DGE IX and CivOpsCdr) will appoint a responsible action officer for implementing each lesson identified where it is in its mandate to take action.

In some cases, lessons identified will imply:

- revising or establishing new concepts (e.g. following the Lessons Learned report on support to AMIS, guidelines for planning and conducting EU Supporting Actions are under elaboration)
- adapting capabilities development
- updating content of training of ESDP personnel
- drafting of manuals on horizontal issues (already, manuals on a series of Mission Support issues will be ready at the beginning of 2009).

4. Dissemination

Lessons and best practices will be disseminated in order for them to be replicated across missions and in Brussels, in the form of concepts or manuals on the basis of experience from previous missions and input from Member States and the European Commission, and through the action of best practices officers in missions (see below).

Best practices reports, agreed lessons and concepts will be published on a new restricted best practices website that will be available to all staff involved in planning and conducting missions, in Member States delegations, Council Secretariat, Commission and in the field. This way, they will be equally available to all actors and constitute a transparent common set of reference and a common professional standard. Their use across missions will result in further suggestions for their improvement. Best practices will also be taught to ESDP officials and mission staff. Moreover, best practices and lessons identified will be published, where feasible, on the public website of the Council. Classified lessons identified and lessons learned and best practices will be shared with international organisations and third states as appropriate.

Also, on the basis of UN experience, needs-driven communities of experts on certain issues could be created across missions and in Brussels (e.g. for police, rule of law, SSR, monitoring, legal issues experts, procurement experts, human rights/gender experts). The communities will serve the purpose to share knowledge and identify solutions on the basis of their experience and established best practices. The existing network of press officers could serve as a useful model. The communities should be able to work through the website described above.

III. ORGANISATION AND RESSOURCES

Secretariat task force

The overall preparation of the specific lessons identified and learned reports listed above will be managed by a General Secretariat of the Council task force, which would ensure close cooperation between the services concerned, including the European Commission, and in line with their respective roles. Its work will include the analysis and identification of trends among observations posted and lessons identified, as well as the validation of the draft lessons identified to be presented to the Member States by a Lessons guidance team (Director DGE IX and CivOpsCdr).

Best practices officers in missions

Missions will nominate best practices officers. These will form a network on the model of those set up by the UN-DPKO between headquarters and the field.

On the basis of a common methodology, Heads of mission will be responsible for ensuring that suitable systems are in place to (i) identify observations based on input from mission staff; (ii) communicating them to Headquarters; (iii) disseminate lessons and best practices and spreading and use of the institutional knowledge within missions; (iv) ensure that training reflects existing rules and best practices; and (v) provide input for lessons identified reports.

Any new missions, as recently in the case of EUMM Georgia, will consider from the outset the arrangements in the planning documents to identify lessons and capture best practices as set out in the OPLAN.

Lessons learned questionnaire

Contributors to the identification and analyse of lessons will receive a questionnaire (adapted to each lessons identified collation) to guide their contribution. Questionnaires should follow a standard template to facilitate comparison between missions and drawing of horizontal lessons, while being adapted to the specific mission mandate and circumstances.

Software tools

A database that stores and manages observations, lessons identified and lessons learned has to be created. It would serve as a network through which individual staff will be able to draft and send their observations in real time. Observations should be filed together with a proposal for remedial action that could be taken.

Furthermore, this system could be used as a tool supporting decision-making by management on actions to be taken further to any observations/lessons and could also support the monitoring of actions taken to implement lessons.

The possibility to use the Civilian crisis management tool (CCMT) as well as the software tool used by the EU Military Staff (ELMA) for collating lessons identified should be taken into account.

Resources needed

Given the importance of internal support reviews, the CivOpsCdr has nominated an Advisor to continue to take this process forward and to ensure that best practices are implemented systematically by missions.

At the same time and in order to ensure a full process of lessons learned, discussions on the necessary resources need to be undertaken, both in terms of staff in the General Secretariat of the Council (CPCC and DGE IX) and in missions, and in terms of software needed for the restricted website and other communication systems for missions.