

# The EU Military Staff: a frog in boiling water?

**The challenges the European Union military staff (EUMS) currently faces lay in the organizational structures – since 2009 the EUMS is a part of the European External Action Service – as well as in recent policy developments such as the new EU Global Strategy. The latter development creates challenges for the EUMS in the form of new command and control structures and a new push for cooperation of civil and military entities within the domain of the European Union. The EUMS has a special place as a military body in a mainly civilian organisation, and as a body with strong national influences in an international environment. The EUMS certainly has the potential to exploit and sell its knowledge and expertise better.**

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**T**here is this well-known management anecdote about a frog in boiling water. The story is that when a frog is put into a pan with boiling water, it will immediately jump out. However, when it is put into a pan with cold water and the water is slowly put to the boiling point, the frog will stay in until it is cooked. Even though the scientific evidence for this story could be questioned, the metaphorical meaning still stands: when changes arise gradually, people are often unaware, unable or unwilling to react to them in time. In my first week at the European Union Military Staff (EUMS), somebody asked if a

comparison could be made between the EUMS and the frog. The EUMS finds itself amidst new policies and organisational restructuring with unforeseeable consequences: the introduction of the new Global Strategy by High Representative Federica Mogherini, the upcoming Brexit (which means the loss of Great-Britain's strong counterweight against further European integration in the area of security and defence, and a loss of personnel and (unique) defence capabilities no longer available to the EU), and the ongoing organisational restructuring processes within the relatively young European External Action Service (EEAS). Inspired by the comparison, this article aims to shed light upon the EUMS by highlighting its history and current challenges, in order to deliver an answer to the question if the EUMS indeed is a frog in boiling water.

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At the European Communities Summit in 1948 in The Hague, Winston Churchill and other European leaders assigned their foreign ministers to explore the feasibility of further political cooperation

## History and establishment of the EUMS

### Creation of the EUMS

The EU Military Staff is part of the structures of the EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), which is only a small part of the broader EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). Initiatives for European cooperation on foreign policy originate from the late 1940s. The United Kingdom, France, Belgium, West-Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands founded the Western European Union (WEU) in 1948. The WEU was a defence alliance originally composed of these seven member states, with the primary purpose of offering mutual military assistance in case of external aggression. Between 1954 and 1984, the WEU was mostly used as a forum for consultations and discussions, in order to contribute to the dialogue on European security and defence.

Concurrently, at the European Communities Summit in 1948 in The Hague, the European leaders assigned their foreign ministers to explore the feasibility of further political cooperation. This assignment resulted in the Davignon Report, which introduced the concept of a European Political Cooperation. The report defined the objectives of further cooperation: harmonization of positions, practices of consultation and possible common actions. This initial European Political Cooperation resulted in the European Foreign and Security Policy, one of the pillars of the Maastricht Treaty that was introduced in 1993.<sup>1</sup>

Within this new pillar structure the seeds for a common defence policy were already planted, since it was stated that CFSP included 'all

1 Jochen Rehl and Hans-Bernhard Weissert, *Handbook CSDP: The Common Security and Defence Policy of the European Union* (Vienna, Armed Forces Printing Centre, n.d.) 14.

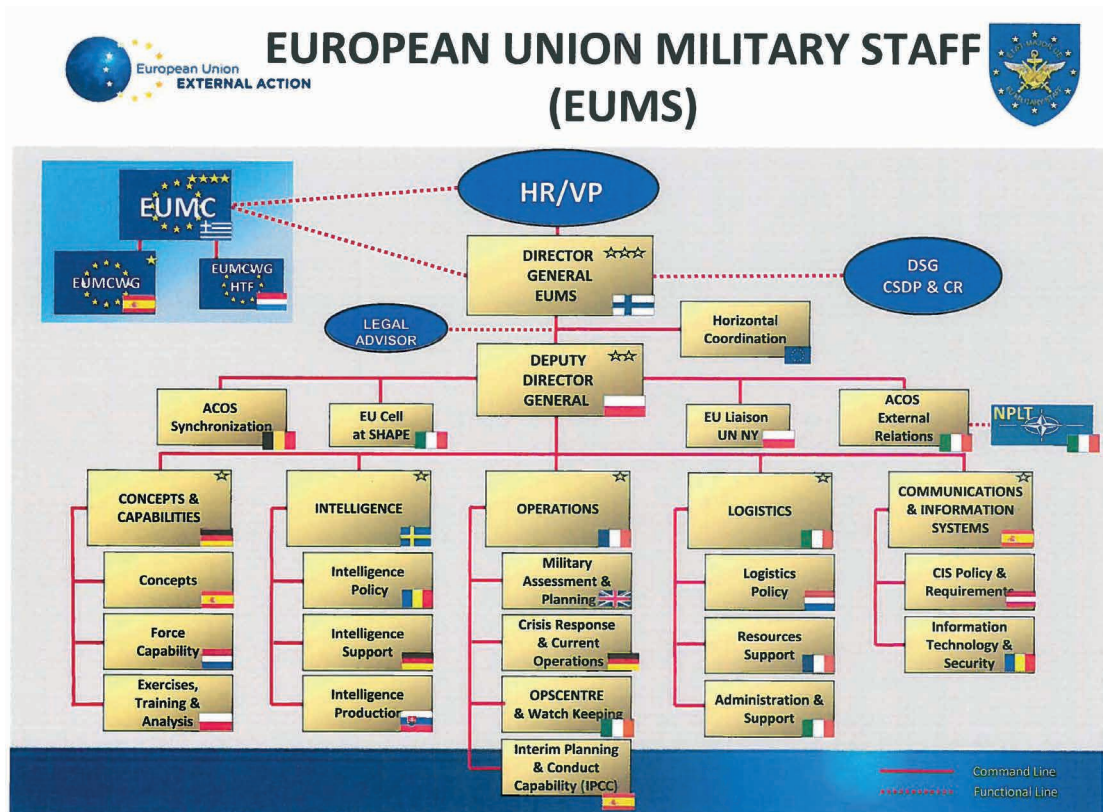


Figure 1 Organigram of the EUMS. The EUMS today has up to about 180 staff members, divided over five directorates: Concepts and Capabilities, Intelligence, Operations, Logistics and Communication and Information Systems. Next to these, there are liaison cells at NATO (SHAPE) and the UN, and branches that deal with the external military relations outside the EU (ACOS External) and with the horizontal relations with other EU institutions (ACOS Synchronization) (Source: EU Military Staff)

questions related to the security of the Union, including the eventual framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence'.<sup>2</sup> However, despite this ambitious wording in 1993, formal EU structures that had to deal with the issues of CFSP and CSDP were only established from 2000 onwards. It took the Yugoslav Wars of the nineties to move from rhetorical ambition to concrete action. At a Franco-British summit held at Saint-Malo from 4 to 5 December 1998, UK Prime Minister Blair and French President Chirac signed the Saint-Malo declaration, thereby overcoming the biggest hurdle in

establishing a common European defence and security policy. The Saint-Malo declaration created a common vision between the main opponents in CSDP, the UK and France. It stated that the European Union 'must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them, and a readiness to do so, in order to respond to international crises'.<sup>3</sup> It marked a change of course of the UK, which until then had blocked any intent to create autonomous military capabilities within the European Union.

The Saint-Malo declaration paved the way for EU governments to launch the then-called European Security and Defence Policy at the European Council Summit in Cologne in June 1999. The Treaty of Nice that followed at the

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Maartje Rutten, 'From St Malo to Nice, European Defence: core documents' in: *Institute for Security Studies – Chaillot papers* 47 (May 2001) 8.

end of 2000 provided in turn the legal foundation for European cooperation in the area of security and defence by defining the competences, organization, structures and assets of the new Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). The main goal of this newly established CSDP was to deal with crisis management outside EU territory.<sup>4</sup> In the following year, the Political Security Committee (PSC) and the European Military Committee (EUMC) took their place as formal EU structures. Around the same time, the EUMS was established with the aim of being the working body of the EU Military Committee and its advisory body. Since the Military Committee was a Council body, the EUMS was placed at the General Secretariat of the Council.<sup>5</sup>

#### Functions of the EUMS

The Council Decision which established the EU Military Staff states that that it is the EUMS' mission 'to perform early warning, situation assessment and strategic planning for the Petersberg tasks<sup>6</sup> including identification of European national and multinational forces' and 'to implement policies and decisions as directed by the European Union Military Committee'.<sup>7</sup> This means that the EUMS functions as the primary source of military expertise within the EU, mainly through supporting and advising the EU Military Committee. Furthermore, the EUMS maintains working relations with the military counterparts of other international organizations, such as the Northern Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU) and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Besides this, the EUMS is tasked with the organization of (military) exercises and the participation of the member states. Last – but certainly not least – the EUMS contributes to the production of planning documents for CSDP missions.

Important to mention here is that within CSDP a distinction is made between operations and missions. By nature an operation is always military and executive. A mission can be either military or civilian – but not both – and either executive or non-executive.<sup>8</sup> These features are

determined by the mandate of the mission and entail consequences for the chains of command and the source of the budget: under article 41.2 of the TEU, the Commission cannot use its budget to fund 'expenditure arising from operations having military or defence implications'. Therefore, operations and executive military missions have to be funded by the member states themselves through a special mechanism called Athena.

#### A double-hatted role

The Lisbon Treaty, signed in 2009, was a huge leap forward in integrating the member states' common foreign and security policies by establishing the European External Action Service (EEAS). The EEAS functions essentially as the EU's diplomatic service, comparable with most nations' ministries of foreign affairs. It was decided that all the CSDP structures, including the EUMS, would move from the General Council Secretariat to become part of the EEAS, since it was envisioned that CSDP was an integral part of the EU's external action. The EUMS was placed within the EEAS structure as a special Directorate-General (DG) with a direct link to the High Representative. Since all the functions of the WEU were effectively incorporated into the European Union after the adaptation of the Lisbon Treaty, the WEU was closed down in 2011. The functions relating to the development of capabilities were taken over by the European Defence Agency (EDA), already established in 2004.<sup>9</sup>

4 Gen. J. Perruche, 'When I was proud to be the DGEUMS!', in: *Impetus*, 21 (2016) (2) 10.

5 Gen. R. Schuwirth, '15 Years EUMS', in: *Impetus*, 21 (2016) (2) 9.

6 The Petersberg tasks formed an integral part of the then European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) - now called the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). They define the spectrum of military actions/functions that the European Union can undertake in its crisis management operations, which are humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks, and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making.

7 Council Decision of 22 January 2001 on the establishment of the Military Staff of the European Union, Official Journal L 027, 30/01/2001 p. 0007-0011.

8 An example of an executive mission is EULEX Kosovo, which has got executive powers with respect to investigating and prosecuting serious and sensitive crimes. An example of a non-executive mission is the observation mission EUMM Georgia.

9 European External Action Service (2016, July 8). Shaping of a Common Security and Defence Policy. Retrieved from: [https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/common-security-and-defence-policy-csdp/5388/shaping-of-a-common-security-and-defence-policy\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/topics/common-security-and-defence-policy-csdp/5388/shaping-of-a-common-security-and-defence-policy_en).

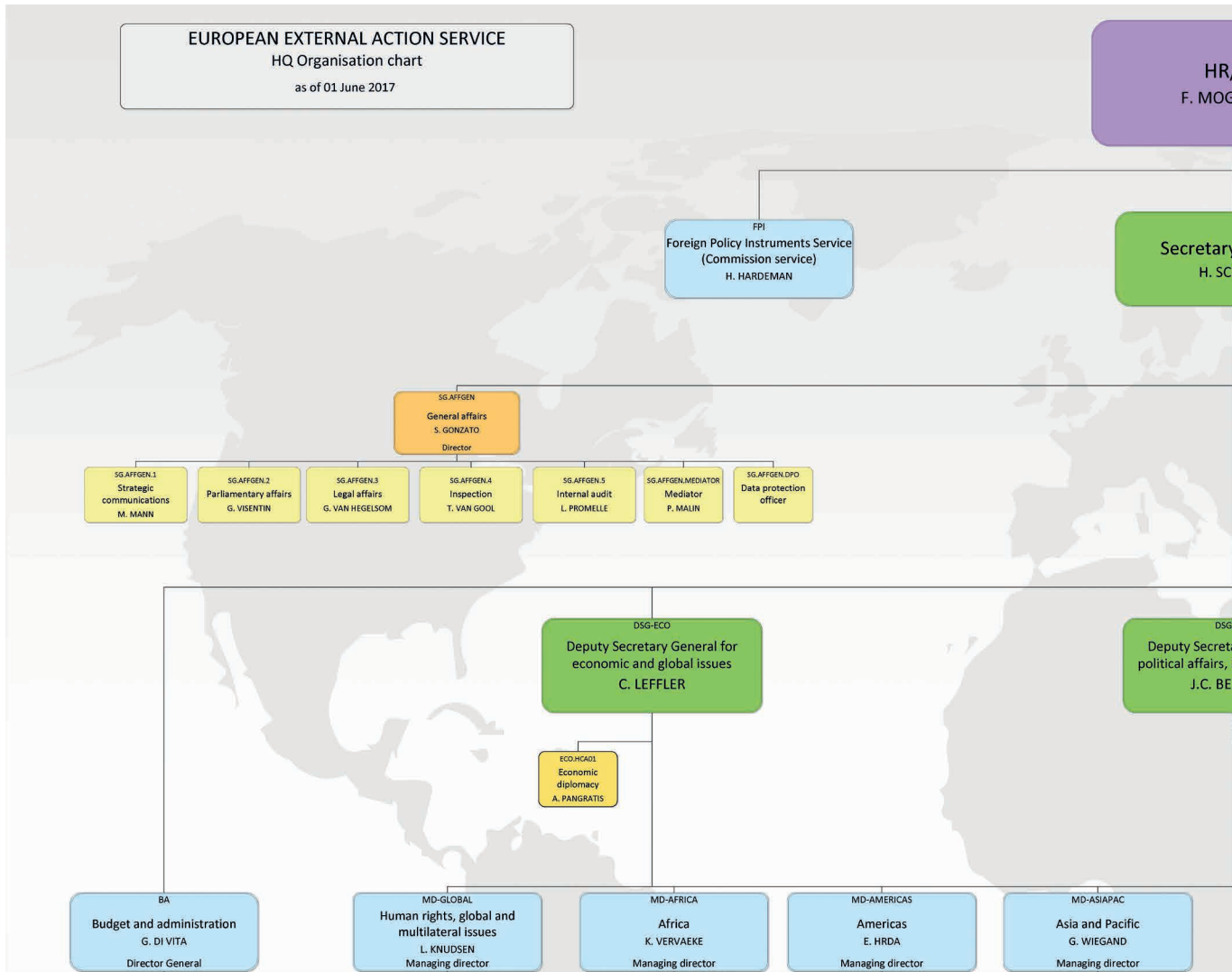


Figure 2 Brief overview of the organizational structure of the EEAS as of June 2017, with the EUMS on the right (Source: European External Action Service) ([https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage\\_en/3602/Organisation%20chart%20of%20the%20EEAS](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage_en/3602/Organisation%20chart%20of%20the%20EEAS))

Becoming part of the EEAS meant that the EUMS, as a former Council body, was placed within a Commission’s body, the EEAS. To complicate things further, the EEAS in itself is already a hybrid council-commission institution, since it was formed by a merger of the external relations departments of the Council and relevant international relations departments of the European Commission. In the EU’s force field battles between the member states represented in the Council and the European

Union institutions represented in the Commission are not uncommon. As part of the EEAS the EUMS therefore is at the forefront of the continuing power play between the European Union and the Member States, not in the least because of the political sensitivity that surrounds security and defence issues.

Things were further complicated by the fact that despite EUMS’ transfer to the EEAS in 2010, no revision of its terms of references took





PHOTO NATO

*President of the European Council Donald Tusk, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker during the signing ceremony of the EU-NATO Joint Declaration in Warsaw, 2016*

Another complicating factor of the movement of the EUMS to the EEAS is that it created a double-hatted role for the EUMS. As a part of the EEAS, it contributes to the drafting of EEAS' strategic planning documents for the missions. Later on in the process, it has to advise the EUMC on these same documents, in order for the EUMC to pass its judgment to the Political Security Committee (see figure 3). This results in a situation comparable with a student marking his own homework. Recently, new terms of reference for the EUMS were established by the Council, following the establishment of the new Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC). Hopefully, these will take away most of the ambiguity. Although this is a step in the right direction, some questions remain unans-

wered. For example, the EUMS sees it as its unique added value that it is the sole source of military expertise. The new terms of reference however do not subscribe that claim.

### **The Global Strategy**

The earlier mentioned MPCC is a result from the new Global Strategy (GS). In the summer of 2016, the European Council welcomed this important document, which is intended to be the future guideline for Europe's security and defence policy.<sup>12</sup> The new Global Strategy covers the whole EU foreign policy area, bringing together existing work strands and adding an overall strategic vision including new priorities. Important strands of action according to the GS in the field of security and defence are resilience building, an integrated approach to conflicts and crises, strengthening the nexus between internal and external policies and enhanced cooperation in the area of security and defence.

12 A very informative and interesting document on this process leading up to the Global Strategy is written by Nathaly Tocci, personal advisor to HR/VP Mogherini: N. Tocci, 'The making of the EU Global Strategy' in: *Contemporary Security Policy*, vol. 37 (3) (2016) 461-472.



Figure 3 The military planning steps. The EUMS is mainly involved in drafting the Crisis Management Concept (CMC), the Military Strategic Options (MSO) and the Initiating Military Directive (IMD) (Source: EU Military Staff)

In order to translate the strategic vision of the Global Strategy into concrete action, a document called the Implementation Plan on Security and Defence (IPSD) followed in the autumn of 2016. The content of the IPSD is closely linked to the European Defence Action Plan (EDAP) and the EU-NATO Joint Declaration on EU-NATO cooperation, which was signed at the NATO Warsaw Summit in July 2016. For the EUMS, the follow-up of the Global Strategy on the area of security and defence entails several consequences. Firstly, if the level of ambition for the scope and quantity of missions is broadened, new command and control structures – or, as they are called in the Global Strategy, planning and conduct structures – are unavoidable. The result is the new MPCC. Secondly, the Global Strategy emphasizes the continuing pressure for further development of civil-military cooperation within the EU. These topics will be discussed below in this order.

### The great divide

When speaking about command and control structures in a European context, one arrives unavoidably at one of the hottest potatoes in the EU's CSDP, namely the desirability of a permanent military EU operational headquarters (HQ). France is an important advocate of this, whereas the UK strongly opposes, arguing that a European HQ would seriously infringe on the sovereignty of the Member States and entails an unnecessary expansion of the European Union machinery. In order to understand the debate, one has to understand the current EU crisis management structures first.

As mentioned before, an EU mission can be civilian or military. For the civilian missions of the EU the command structure is quite clear once a mission is established: The director of the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC) is the commander of all the ongoing civilian missions. For the military missions, it is



a bit more complicated. The Political and Security Committee (PSC) provides the political strategic direction and guidance. It validates proposals made by the EEAS for the steering of these missions and so it functions as a strategic headquarters. Every military mission – except military executive operations – has its own mission headquarters led by a mission commander.<sup>13</sup> This mission headquarters often combines the operational and the tactical level.

This system has certain drawbacks. Many mission commanders have to act at too many different levels. They are simultaneously responsible for the operations at the tactical level, as well as the coordination with the strategic level (the PSC). Next to the limited time available to execute all the tasks, there is the importance of having the mission commander present on the ground in case of need. Additionally, local actors often prefer working directly with the commander. Absence of the mission commander on the ground could, therefore, lead to reduced effectiveness of the mission and a slower result. Lastly, mission commanders usually lack the time, the knowledge or the network to find their way around the complex institutional environment of the EU in the often short period of time they are appointed to a mission. Before their network has been set up and runs smoothly, a mission can be halfway through its mandate.

All these constraints lead some Member States to the conclusion that there should be a single military European headquarters, to act in the same way as the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capacity (CPCC) does with regard to civilian

missions. However, establishing a European headquarters is seen as a strong infringement on the sovereignty of Member States. Therefore, in March 2012, a compromise was found in realising the Activated Operations Centre for the Horn of Africa and the Sahel (in short: the activated OPCEN). For France, it meant a foot in the door for realising a permanent structure. For the UK, there were enough checks and balances to prevent this. Note that the ‘activated OPCEN’ is deceiving. Instead of fulfilling the common function of an OPCEN – that of actively steering missions – this OPCEN functioned more as a facilitation platform within Brussels for the mission commanders in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel. However, in the summer of 2016, the PSC decided to no longer extend the mandate of the activated OPCEN. It was argued that it was always meant as a temporary structure.

In trying to find a new compromise for the differing opinions of the member states on this topic, the establishment of a new CSDP body, the Military Planning and Conduct Capability, is on its way. It will be based on existing EEAS structures and set in a context of reinforcing civ-mil synergies, more seamless planning and conduct, while retaining separate civilian and military chains of command. It is expected that it will be its mandate and ambition to act as the military counterpart of the CPCC for non-executive military missions. Its main task will then be to support CSDP executive missions’ and operations’ planning and conduct. This differs from the current tasks performed by the EUMS, which do not include a responsibility towards the missions’ operational planning and conduct.

Although many advantages are foreseen by establishing this new structure, some remain sceptical. First of all, there are concerns about its effective potential. It is uncertain whether Member States will perceive the head of this MPCC as a commander with full military responsibility, or just as a strategic level ambassador or some sort of EU Military Missions Special Representative: someone that just represents the EU’s military missions

13 Since the EU does not yet have its own operational headquarters, some member states have offered their own operational headquarters to be used for these military missions. These are Northwood in the United Kingdom, Rome in Italy, Potsdam in Germany, Mont Valérien (Paris) in France and Larissa in Greece. When these national operational headquarters are used by the EU, they are temporarily enforced with staff from the member states in order to have enough capacity. Officially, the EU military staff could also function as an operational headquarters. However, this is not a desirable option as it would take on too much of capacity in order for the EUMS to still adequately fulfil the advisory role for the EUMC. Lastly, there is the possibility of making use of the so-called Berlin+ agreement, which offers EU-led Crisis Management Operations assured access to NATO’s (planning) assets and capabilities, such as headquarters.

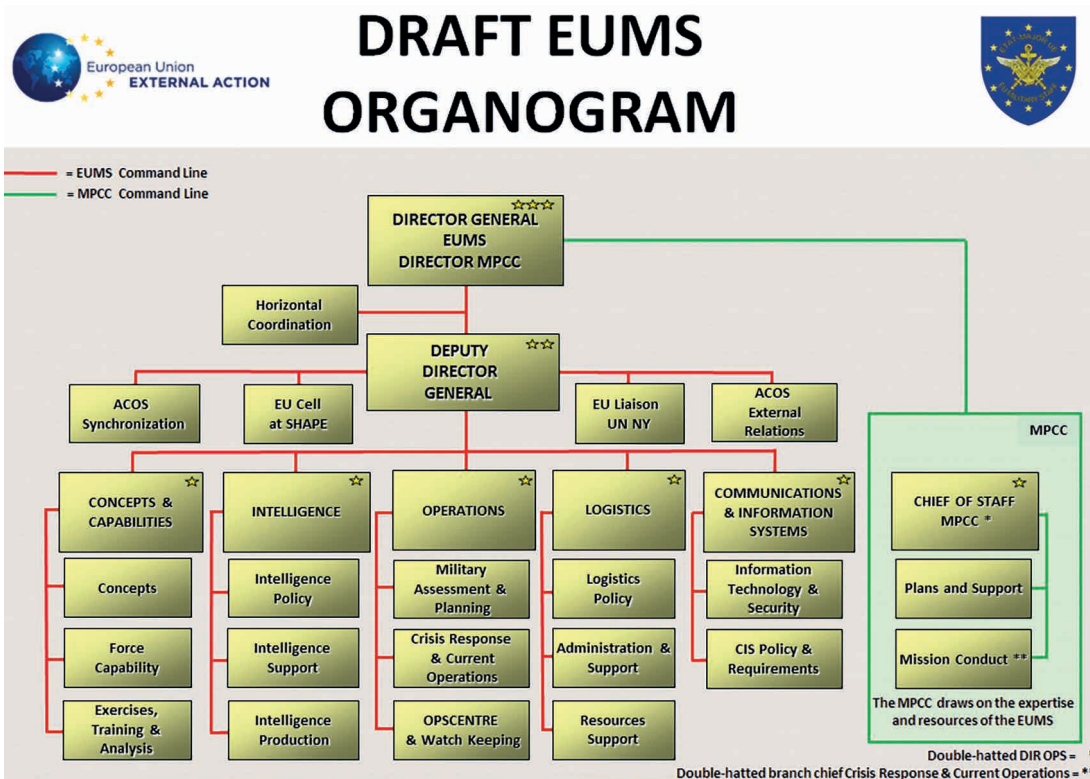


Figure 4 Draft of the new structure of the EUMS with the MPCC incorporated (Source: EU Military Staff)

within Brussels strategic-level entities (such as PSC or EUMC) and outside Brussels at the global level (UN, AU). In addition, will the new MPCC really contribute to a more integrated civil-military planning, as is one of the intentions reflecting the ambition of the Global Strategy? After all, the civil and military chain of command will still be separated.

Secondly, there are worries concerning the impact the establishment of the MPCC will have on the EUMS' capacity to deal with its current workload. The MPCC will, as mentioned, most likely be embedded in the EUMS. This is partly driven by reasons of cost-efficiency, given the fact that the new MPCC should be as cost-neutral as possible. The new MPCC will probably make use of additional staff coming from the former EU activated OPCEN, as well as personnel that has to be seconded by Member States. However, the new MPCC is expected to also draw on other EUMS directorates for functional expertise when needed. The

embedding therefore almost unavoidably entails the consequence that there will be additional responsibilities for (double-hatted) action officers and the EUMS' Director General and Deputy Director General. Furthermore, double-hatted staff is possibly being called upon to prioritize their command function over their advisory work for the EUMC, which means that the normal work of the EUMS would suffer first if the workload accumulates. Finally, the MPCC also has to operate on command and support levels, facing the same restraining conditions and coordination problems as the current mission commanders.

Although the MPCC should have reached full operational capacity in July, until now, the MPCC is not fully manned. This means that some worries have come true: priorities have to be made between the work of the EUMS and the work of the MPCC, resulting in the normal work of the EUMS – to advice and support the EU Military Committee – to be in danger of



PHOTO AFRICAN UNION

*High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini and Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, discuss cooperation during a summit in Addis Ababa, 2015*

marginalization. Here again, we see the tension that arises for the EUMS in being a Council body and a Commission body at the same time.

#### **Civil-military structures and the role of the EUMS**

As said, the Global Strategy also increases the pressure for further development of civil-military cooperation. The EU sees its originally civilian nature as its unique selling point within the field of security of defence, in comparison with the mainly military organisation of NATO. However, even though the comprehensive approach is presented as its unique selling point, this does not mean that the cooperation between civil officials and military officers within the European structures is without its, figuratively speaking, bumps in the road. One of the underlying factors seems to be the traditional wariness between the military and civilian officers. Civilian experts

seem to struggle sometimes with what to expect from input by the military. It is difficult for a non-expert to see the potential and possible application of military expertise. On the other hand, the military sometimes fail to communicate effectively with their civilian counterparts due to an exhaustive use of jargon and a very linear, systematic way of thinking and proceeding that is not always flexible enough to integrate civilian elements.

Within the CSDP structures, civil military working relations differ from area to area. In interviews for this article interlocutors' views were mixed about the quality of the cooperation. Between the CPCC and the EUMS, for example, there seems to be room for closer cooperation. Since the EUMS is mainly concerned with the military missions and CPCC with the civilian missions, the civil and military

structures do not seem to have much in common. However, the EU Military Staff can offer advice to CPCC on medical, financial or logistical related issues, as happened when planning the EU's monitoring mission in Georgia. This seems to be an exception now, but it could be beneficial to intensify this sort of cooperation. There are a few fixed structures in which the EUMS is involved that enable and enhance civil-military cooperation. Firstly, there are the weekly Mission Monitoring Team (MMT) meetings.<sup>14</sup> Depending on the kind of mission, different stakeholders take part, such as the CPCC, CMPD and EDA. Representatives from the geographical desks of the EEAS are not always present. They could be a valuable addition, since they are the gateways to the local EU Delegation and the Commission's interest within the country of the mission (for example with concern to the programs that are executed or financed by DEVCO, FPI or ECHO).

Another example of civil-military cooperation is the African Peace Facility Task Force. DEVCO, the EEAS and the EUMS work together in monitoring the funding of different African Union projects related to security. These projects are meant to strengthen the local African state forces. Military expertise is required to check if the envisaged aims of the different projects are indeed sufficiently reached on the ground. The third fixed structure was provided by the OPCEN, which facilitated regular coordination platforms for the Horn of Africa and the Sahel. These were attended by the earlier mentioned entities, supplemented by the geographical desks and the Special Representative's office.<sup>15</sup> However, as mentioned earlier, the PSC decided to end the mandate of the OPCEN by December 2016.

Recently, a new horizontal structure has been established within the EEAS CSDP en Crisis Response Structures: PRISM.<sup>16</sup> This new entity is meant to facilitate civil-military cooperation as well. The African Peace Facility and the new PRISM body are examples that illustrate a trend: several Commission bodies wish to have their own in-house military expertise. For this purpose (former) military personnel are hired

that have no connection to the EUMS. Flexibility and efficiency are the advantages. Disadvantages could be the dispersion of military knowledge across the various European Union bodies, which entails fewer coordination options and a threat to having a sole, undispu-

Having expertise in all the different military disciplines and being able to bring those different disciplines together is the unique selling point of the EUMS

ted military advice. In addition, having a military background is not necessarily the same as being able to provide all military expertise. An intelligence officer is not automatically also the right person to advice on logistical planning, nor does a logistics officer have to know the ins and outs of intelligence matters. Having expertise in all the different military disciplines and being able to bring those different disciplines together is the unique selling point of the EUMS. However, it is essential that the EUMS meets the increasing demand for flexibility and efficiency of the other EU bodies.

### The future: what is the EUMS as a concerned frog to do?

This article started with the question if the EUMS behaves like a frog in boiling water. It is clear that there were many changes for the

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- 14 There are four MMT's: one for the Sahel missions (EUTM Mali, EUCAP Sahel Mali and EUCAP Niger), one for the missions in the Horn of Africa (EUTM Somalia, EUCAP Nestor and operation Atalanta), one for the training mission in the Central African Republic and one for operation EUNAVFORMED Sophia.
  - 15 The EU has special representatives that are not concerned with a country – as would an ambassador – but an area, such as the Horn of Africa. Only three special representatives are appointed for a country: those in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Afghanistan.
  - 16 PRISM stands for Prevention of Conflicts, Rule of Law/SSR, Integrated Approach, Stabilisation, Mediation and Early Warning.



PHOTO EUROPEAN COMMISSION, T. CHARLIER

*As a military body in a mainly civilian organisation and in an ambiguous position between Council and Commission, the EUMS might want to take a stronger lead and consider its role*

EUMS in the past recent years – resulting from becoming part of the EEAS – and there are more to come due to the introduction and adaptation of the new Global Strategy. The EUMS has a special place as a military body in a mainly civilian organisation, and as a body with strong national influences in an international environment. It should take the time to consider its role amidst this changing environment. The water is definitely moving around the EUMS, but is it also heating up? Should the EUMS act? Raising attention to these changes and reflecting upon them is a good way to start. The next step is to develop a vision and a strategy. What kind of role does it want to play in the European security and defence area? Where does it see its niche? Does it want to be influencing policymaking? Or does it want to be only supporting?

In any case, the EUMS could profit from effectively communicating its possibilities and added value in order to have an open communi-

cation with all kinds of actors inside and outside the EEAS. Enhanced cooperation and better mutual understanding could lead to an increasing influence in the debate on current developments. If the EU Military Staff wants to take a stronger lead, it should aim at being involved from the early stages of policy implementation processes onwards, however this is difficult due to its ambiguous position between Council and Commission. There is potential to exploit and sell its knowledge and expertise better. Pro-actively deciding on its desired course will help to better navigate in the European bureaucratic power play. In these rapidly changing times it should never take its position for granted, nor treat itself as indispensable. On the contrary, it should continue to find its niche and bring its unique assets to the table whenever possible in order to continue to strengthen CSDP and to support a truly comprehensive approach of high quality. It should not wait-and-see, but actively outset its course. That is what a concerned frog should do. ■