



EUROPEAN  
INSTITUTE  
OF PEACE



# TIME TO STEP UP EU MEDIATION?



EUROPEAN INSTITUTE OF PEACE

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# FOREWORD

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The need and scope for conflict resolution and mediation is going up. The numbers of people affected by violence and conflict is increasing. The world is disfigured by prolonged, internationalised civil wars and growing civil unrest. Great power politics are resurgent, the conventions regulating states' behaviour are fraying, and international law and human rights are being eroded.

Profound demographic and climatic changes, the emergence of new technologies and of threats are changing the global landscape in ways that should bring humanity together but too often are exploited for commercial and political gain, driving insecurity and a sense of injustice.

The EU has an enormous role to play in this context. It is a powerful global actor pursuing multiple objectives on the world stage. It is committed to human rights, gender equity, sustainable development and a rules based global order, and to supporting others that are taking action, whether inter-governmental and regional bodies such as the UN and AU, or civil society including at the very local level.

But the EU also recognises, as the High Representative has put it, the need to learn “to use the language of power”, to deploy its capabilities, whether political, security, economic or regulatory, more strategically to shape reality, address the agents and drivers of violence, and secure peace.

So what should the EU's role in mediation be in this context? The review of the EU's concept on mediation provides an excellent opportunity to generate debate and to define the parameters of the future of EU mediation frameworks.

This study provides a snapshot of the views within the Brussels diplomatic and policy community. Even within this relatively confined universe, there is a very broad diversity of opinions.

There are some important takeaways. Mediation requires a long-term commitment which, given its global reach and longstanding presence in most countries in the world, the EU is well placed to provide. But views differ as to the nature and goals of EU mediation (for instance, as a stabilisation tool) and there is a blurring of the lines between the practice and purpose of diplomacy and of mediation.

The constraints hardwired into EU foreign policy and the degree to which member states will provide the authority and space to the EU to lead in the mediation field are key issues. The room for manoeuvre afforded to EU representatives also depends upon their own skills and the support they receive both from Brussels and from member states.

Identifying where the EU can most profitably invest in and undertake mediation should be shaped by a high degree of self awareness as to how it is seen by other actors, including parties to a conflict in specific contexts, whether states or extremists. Offers to mediate may be accepted for reasons that have less to do with the EU's mediation capability than with the prospect of access to EU support and resources.

Decisions as to whether the EU is best placed to take a frontline mediation role, or to support others to take on that role, should therefore be based not just upon need and political opportunity, but upon analysis of the context, of the EU's reputation, its capability and local credentials relative to other actors, whether inter-governmental, national, private sector or civil society.

The EU has taken important steps to adopt an 'integrated approach' to its foreign policy. This provides great scope to promote a conflict resolution approach across its broader policy toolkits, ensuring that its many roles complement each other.

In conflict affected-countries, the EU's engagement in areas such as security sector reform, support for elections or constitutional processes, financial management, infrastructure, development and humanitarian assistance, can benefit further from conflict sensitive approaches and can bolster its mediation objectives if brought closer together. This has long been an objective proven difficult to implement in practice.

Where the EU has individuals in place that combine technical knowledge and conflict resolution skills, the ability to foster trust from all sides, and strong political backing, the potential for mediation support is enormous. Successful deployment of such individuals depends upon human resource and recruitment policies and practices being geared in part to selecting people with an appropriate profile.

There are other ways in which the EU already does and can further contribute to strengthening the practice of mediation. There is scope for the EU to engage with others, both official and non governmental actors, in the definition and adoption of standards and principles in the mediation field, as has happened in the humanitarian field, and to supporting communities of practice in thematic areas.

I hope that this study provides a useful addition to the debate on how EU mediation tools and frameworks will evolve in future. The study was carried out with funding from the German Federal Foreign Office, though the conclusions within it are all EIP's. I am grateful in particular to Guy Banim for his research and analysis, and to all those who contributed their valuable time and insights.



Michael Kew

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The European Institute of Peace (EIP) has undertaken a detailed survey of EU Member State representatives and Brussels based policy makers to gauge opinions on the EU's external role in promoting peace and stability, in particular its involvement in mediation. The findings presented here seek to guide deliberations in Council on the process of reviewing the *2009 EU Concept on Strengthening Mediation and Dialogue* (2009 Concept) by delineating which initiatives and policy ideas are likely to be accepted, which might require further advocacy and which are subject to sharply differing opinions and unlikely to gain traction. This report synthesises the opinions expressed in the 50 interviews that were conducted and analyses the responses by offering commentary and interpretation.

## KEY FINDINGS

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1. Whilst there is general **consensus on updating or supplementing the existing EU policy framework**, there is a remarkable **heterogeneity of views between Member States** on quite basic premises regarding the EU's mediation role and its pursuit of security and defence interests.
2. Brussels-based decision makers have very little information about and exposure to the practice of third-party diplomacy and **the reality of existing EU field-based mediation and peace process support**. Accordingly, there is little thinking about links to and (in)compatibilities of these activities with the Integrated Approach. This general lack of awareness encompasses the financial dimension of EU mediation and generates a set of misperceptions of EU strengths and weaknesses as well as risks and opportunities of EU third-party diplomacy.
3. The process of conducting the survey has in itself **stimulated reflection and raised the profile of peace mediation and dialogue** among interviewees. There was also however a recognition that progress would be difficult as many of the limitations and challenges in delivering on the ambitions of the 2009 Concept are not specific to peace support but are a function of the wider constraints hardwired into EU foreign policy.

## OVERALL REFLECTIONS

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- 1. Political leadership:** a culture of risk taking, not risk aversion, is needed to fulfil the EU's aspiration in peace mediation and dialogue. For the EU to be able to play an effective political role on their behalf, EU Member States must accept trade-offs between policy areas beyond CFSP, limits on their individual autonomy to act and a margin of manoeuvre for EU representatives. This requires mechanisms in the EEAS and Council of the EU, and delegated to the field, where rapid decisions can be taken that can be made to stick. Whilst this may be true across the full spectrum of external relations it is particularly important for progress on conflict resolution.
- 2. Awareness raising** recognition of what the EU is already doing in mediation and dialogue support, and particularly where it is doing well, must be the starting point for ensuring it is included in the EU's menu of crisis management options and the planning cycle. Further exposure to existing practice, potential and limitations of a peace-making and human security approach is necessary. This will help ensure it is considered a credible and effective foreign policy tool and also mitigate the risk of assuming that conflict partners and other international actors always want an increased EU peace-making role. Working towards an EU Consensus on Peace and Stability or a Common Peace and Stability Policy may help to raise awareness/make progress in this area.
- 3. Concept Revision:** the existing 2009 Concept is not well understood and there are gaps in implementation. The EIP supports a renewed effort, coinciding with the German Presidency of the European Council, to update or revise the 2009 Concept. It will be important to have a discussion that is based on a good understanding of the existing Concept, reflects new institutional and geopolitical realities and considers why it has proved difficult to deliver on existing policy commitments despite them having widespread normative support.
- 4. Council Working Group:** a decision is needed on which Council formation is best placed to incubate ideas and drive innovation in the area of mediation and peace process support. Remaining with the status quo will not deliver the widely anticipated progress. The creation of a new, dedicated Council Working Group would require very strong advocacy as there is little support for the idea. Including mediation in the mandate of an existing working group such as CIVCOM might yet be a feasible compromise.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

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At its origin the EU is a peace-making project. The ambition of playing a supportive role in peace mediation and facilitation is intrinsic to EU policy frameworks and reflected in the stated priorities of the external assistance portfolio. The 2009 EU Concept on Strengthening Mediation and Dialogue<sup>1</sup> (the 2009 Concept), for example, asserted that the EU *“as a global actor... is generally seen as a credible and ethical actor in situations of instability and conflict and is thus well placed to mediate”*.

However, a changing global context raises new challenges. With the EU’s Political and Security Committee (PSC) reviewing the 2009 Concept, there is need for reflection on how the EU’s mediation frameworks and capabilities might need to be adapted in the coming years if the EU is to fully live up to its peacebuilding potential. The case for the EU as a peacemaker becomes potentially more complex in a shifting global order where the High Representative has prioritised the need for the EU to learn “to use the language of power” and with developments on the European defence agenda.

What does this imply for the EU’s added value in the field of peace-making and mediation? In which conflict settings could this added value be brought to its full potential? Is there a need for enhanced internal/institutional mechanisms? What should be the working relationship between the EU and other international stakeholders engaging in peace efforts?

To gauge opinion on some of these key policy-related questions regarding the EU’s external role in promoting peace and stability, in particular through its involvement in mediation, the European Institute of Peace (EIP) has undertaken a detailed survey of Brussels-based EU foreign policy actors. The aim has been to set aside immediate operational preoccupations and ask insiders to the EU policy process their opinion on how EU peace-making might evolve in the future. The result can help guide the process of reviewing the 2009 Concept in Council by delineating which initiatives and policy ideas are likely to be accepted, which might require further advocacy, and which are subject to sharply differing opinions and unlikely to gain traction.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/cfsp/conflict\\_prevention/docs/concept\\_strengthening\\_eu\\_med\\_en.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/cfsp/conflict_prevention/docs/concept_strengthening_eu_med_en.pdf)



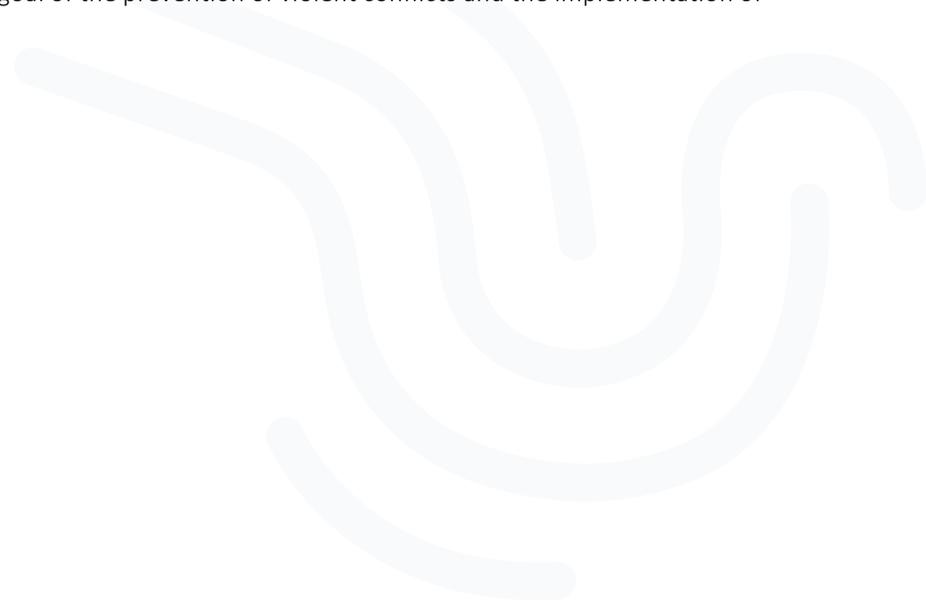
## 2. EU MEDIATION AND DIALOGUE CAPACITIES

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In the 2009 Concept the EU defined mediation as “*a way of assisting negotiations between conflict parties and transforming conflicts with the support of an acceptable third party*”. Mediation was understood as goal driven, seeking resolution of the conflict, in contrast to facilitation, which would be less directive, and dialogue which would be a more open-ended process creating a culture of communication. The EU mediation ambition was to be more active in both practicing and supporting all three approaches. Five different types of EU involvement were envisaged:

- Acting as a mediator itself (with primary actors ranging from HRVP, Presidency, European Commission, EUSRs, ESDP missions and EU Delegations);
- Promoting mediation by serving as a role model and urging parties to consider mediation as an option;
- Leveraging mediation by using its financial resources and foreign policy instruments to bring parties to the table;
- Supporting mediation through tangible inputs to peace processes in terms of capacity building, training and logistical support;
- Providing financial support to formal, informal and grassroots mediation processes.

Whilst on the one hand understanding mediation as a practice, the metaphor of the EU as a doctor or engineer with a set of ‘tools’ or ‘instruments’ to apply to a given conflict context was simultaneously embraced. In this framework mediation was understood as one tool within a wider toolkit consisting of a range of ‘political, diplomatic, military and civilian, trade and development tools’ that would be deployed in pursuit of the overall goal of the prevention of violent conflicts and the implementation of the European Security Strategy.



The subsequent 'Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy'<sup>2</sup> (2016) continued to situate mediation and dialogue as a tool or instrument that could be deployed as part of an integrated approach to external conflicts and crises. The overall strategy would be implemented by engagement in a practical and principled way in peacebuilding using all available instruments for conflict prevention, management and resolution. Where issues are identified through early warning systems the EU would engage in preventive diplomacy and mediation by mobilising EU Delegations and Special Representatives, as well as deepening partnerships with civil society. The Council Conclusions of 2018 on the Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises<sup>3</sup> reiterated the EU's self-perception as having a unique potential in global mediation and restated the goal of building mediation capacity within the EEAS and continuing work to ensure an ability to rapidly deploy mediation expertise to EU delegations and in support of other organisations.

Several formal and informal processes were launched to review progress upon the 10-year anniversary of the adoption of the 2009 Concept. Reflection on areas where the EU Mediation Concept might be updated took place at a Community of Practice meeting where the EEAS brought together focal points from Member States and expert organisations in June 2019.<sup>4</sup> A briefing of the PSC by the EEAS followed in September 2019 with the PSC tasking the EEAS to update the 2009 EU mediation concept, in close consultation with Member States and relevant Commission services.

It is understood that an internal exercise was launched by the European External Action Service focusing on reviewing progress to date in delivering on the aspirations set out in the 2009 Concept. It is anticipated that findings will be presented to Member States contact points in a subsequent Community of Practice meeting.

Meanwhile a Civil Society Dialogue Network meeting was hosted by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office on 20 February 2020<sup>5</sup> with an accompanying Discussion Paper "*The European Union as a peace mediator*". The discussion paper offers reflections on how the EU is perceived as an actor in the field of peace mediation based on 32 in-depth interviews conducted between October 2019 and January 2020 with acting and former diplomats and officials.<sup>6</sup>

It is hoped that this detailed survey of Brussels-based EU foreign policy actors will provide a complementary input to these reflections by identifying the space for moving the agenda forward.

<sup>2</sup> <http://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/global-strategy-foreign-and-security-policy-european-union>

<sup>3</sup> <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5413-2018-INIT/en/pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [https://ecdpm.org/wp-content/uploads/EEAS-CoP-mediation-report\\_v3-final.pdf](https://ecdpm.org/wp-content/uploads/EEAS-CoP-mediation-report_v3-final.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [http://eplo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Report-CSDN-Policy-Meeting\\_Strengthening-the-EUs-Role-in-Mediation.pdf](http://eplo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Report-CSDN-Policy-Meeting_Strengthening-the-EUs-Role-in-Mediation.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [http://eplo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/EPLO\\_CSDN\\_Discussion\\_Paper\\_EU\\_Mediation.pdf](http://eplo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/EPLO_CSDN_Discussion_Paper_EU_Mediation.pdf)

### 3. METHODOLOGY

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The EIP has surveyed the following key actors: (1) EU Member State foreign policy representatives in Brussels; (2) policy makers within EU institutions (EEAS, Commission, Council); (3) major political groups within the European parliament; and (4) peacebuilding NGOs and think tanks represented in Brussels. This choice was informed by the specific goal of this study, namely, to offer a guide to the Brussels debate as the review process of the 2009 Concept moves forward.

A semi-structured interview lasting a maximum of one hour was requested during which the research team elicited views on the basis of the respondent's professional experience and institutional position. The interview covered a series of questions related to the future of EU mediation frameworks (see Annex 1). A total of 50 interviews and discussions were conducted. Those with Member State representatives followed a closed interview format with an identical set of questions, whereas those with other respondents were more open-ended discussions covering a broader range of issues. Around half of these interviews had been completed in face-to-face encounters before Covid-19 restrictions came into force. The remaining interviews were organised via distance video conferencing.

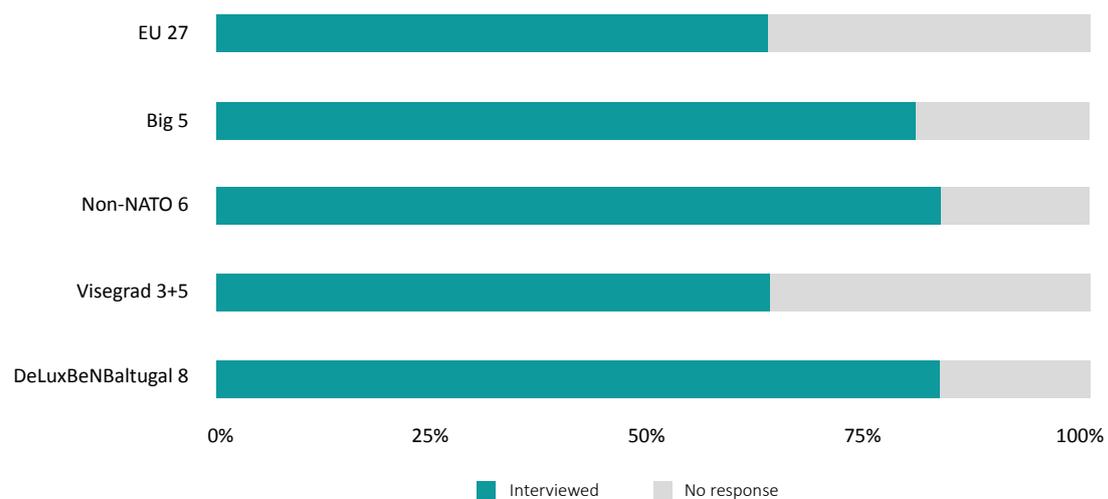
EIP was also able to benefit from an offer put forward by the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) to convene a number of Brussels-based representatives within their member organisations for a roundtable discussion facilitated by EIP on the research questions being investigated.

Initially, a small informal workshop bringing together foreign policy parliamentary group advisors supporting either the **European Parliament's** foreign affairs committee (AFET) or the security and defence sub-committee (SEDE) from the four main political groups (i.e. S&D, Renew, EPP, Greens) was planned to run in parallel. However, this proved impossible to organise following the outbreak of the coronavirus.

Interviews were completed with representatives of two thirds (17/27) of the EU Member States. With the exception of one or two cases, these interviews were with the respective PSC Ambassador or Deputy PSC Ambassador/Nicolaidis.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/council-eu/preparatory-bodies/nicolaidis-group/>



To analyse and present findings Member States were clustered into four groupings:

**Big 5:** Germany, Poland, France, Italy, Spain.

**Non-NATO 6:** Sweden, Finland, Ireland, Malta, Austria, Cyprus.

**Visegrad 3+5:** Hungary, Czechia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece.

**DeLuxBeNBaltugal 8:** Denmark, Luxembourg, Belgium, Netherlands, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal.

This clustering of Member States is not intended to imply any fixed or immutable characteristics shared by all members of each group. Any clustering of Member States is open to contestation, but it is judged useful in this context in order to make some sense of the data gathered in interviews. To some extent it is simply expediency but with a loose logic as follows:

- the **Big 5** are anticipated to have global diplomatic networks and well formulated views combined with leverage within the EU that potentially gives their views weight. In terms of peace mediation, however, they have rather heterogenous experiences and stances. Germany for instance has adopted a Peace Mediation Framework and Spain has been co-convenor of the UN based Group of Friends format whereas France and Poland have traditionally been perceived as promoting CSDP mission responses to crises;
- the **non-NATO 6** share a history of neutrality, although what this has precisely meant in practice has differed between them. It is anticipated that they would be strong advocates of a conflict prevention and peace mediation role for the EU reflecting their national foreign policy traditions, constitutional arrangements and public opinion. Indeed, Finland has a clearly articulated national mediation policy, whilst Sweden and Ireland both contribute significantly to UN and other peace-making efforts. The six have not typically operated as a distinct block within CFSP decision making, although there are informal networks;

- the **Visegrad 4** are a cohesive grouping within the EU with a shared history of membership negotiation and accession (although for the purpose of this study Poland was clustered in the Big 5). The five additional countries are all more recent and mid-sized members of the EU, with the exception of Greece. In terms of peace mediation, the former Yugoslav states of Croatia and Slovenia share with Ireland/UK their own experience of peace building and Czechia and Slovakia also have their specific history. Notwithstanding individuals from these countries who have occupied senior diplomatic positions, none of these states has a high international profile on peace mediation;
- **DeLuxBeNBaltugal 8** is a residual grouping of the remaining eight states. BeNeLux and the Baltic 3 are both loose groupings that have some degree of collaboration but the only real commonality in this grouping is that they are mid-to small-sized NATO members. They have disparate historical backgrounds, including some with a strong global presence stretching back to the colonial period, and others with development aid or military assistance profiles.

EU policy making processes need to assume a degree of internal coherence in Member State positions, for example between Brussels-based, capital-based and third country-based officials as well as between Ministries (e.g. defence, finance, foreign affairs, development). However, perspectives are inevitably shaped by experience. Whilst recognising the role of capitals-based experts, for example in the mediation 'Community of Practice' format, the study assumes that Brussels-based officials will have some degree of agency in determining the future shape of EU mediation capabilities and frameworks as there is a degree of joint socialisation through the Council formations and their interaction with EEAS and Commission officials.

It is beyond the scope of this study to investigate how the EU potential for peace mediation is perceived by those based in countries where there are opportunities for the EU to actively support peace processes and conflict resolution. Rather, this study represents an attempt to provide an initial indication of attitudes towards a set number of questions regarding the future development of EU mediation frameworks and capacities, within the relevant policy community in Brussels. Recognising the important role that capitals play in decision-making on many of these issues, the study therefore makes no claims to comprehensiveness. Further work involving policy actors operating in capitals would be needed, over a longer timescale, to accurately represent the views of all key actors involved in decision-making on the issues studied.

The methodology assumed equal 'weighting' for opinions expressed by Member State respondents, unless the respondent explicitly registered that an opinion was personal and did not reflect an official position. In the process of carrying out the interviews, however, it became apparent that there were very different levels of knowledge and experience of the issues under discussion between different respondents. Extrapolating from the interviews a sound analysis of a given Member State's position, and most importantly the underlying reasoning and history for that position needs to be treated cautiously. For example, some interviewees had many years of hands-on experience, whilst others had only just touched down in Brussels. Several interviewees had EU mediation experience from previous in-country postings or even a secondment at the EEAS, whilst others had much less knowledge on the nuts and bolts of EU foreign policy in practice. The researcher has offered their own speculation on the drivers behind different responses.

## 4. PERCEPTIONS OF THE EU'S ROLE AS A PEACE MEDIATOR

### I. In the 2009 concept on strengthening mediation and dialogue the EU set itself the goal of promoting the use of mediation as a first-response tool to emerging or ongoing crisis situations. How can this best be promoted?

Respondents understood this question in two different ways, some focusing their reply on process related issues concerning the way the 2009 Concept was originally prepared and how it might now be modified and others with more substantive remarks concerning whether or not the EU has set a realistic level of ambition.

### EU GOALS FOR THE FUTURE

There was general, but not unanimous, support for the level of ambition as articulated in the 2009 Concept. *"The aspiration is **correct**, but we need to see it implemented"* (Big 5). *"I see untapped potential because no-one is against taking more decisive action"* (non-NATO 6). *"There is surely more that can be done to deliver on the ambition"* (Big 5). The majority sentiment could be summed up as *"I think we need to be much more pragmatic and much more concrete"* (DeLuxBeNBaltugal).

There was some reflection on whether the EU could or should adopt a more geo-strategic/interest based approach and how this might impact its ambition to play a role in peacebuilding and mediation, as well as what it means to have a more transactional approach internally and externally: *"I don't think the world has changed dramatically in terms of what we are and what we want to do, but we are losing our influence because others are not keen to share the world view we have. We also have more acute differences between us."* (DeLuxBeNBaltugal)

Specific avenues for future work included:

- staff training and incentives (*"The EEAS needs to incentivise colleagues who work in difficult contexts and where mediation skills are needed"* [non-NATO Member State]. *"Main message is that we must integrate Mediation into the Integrated Approach. Staff in Delegations need to be properly trained and more should be invested in deployable teams"* [Big 5 Member State]).
- deployable expertise (*"EEAS is going to focus on a pool of active mediators as the way forward"* [Visegrad 3+5]).
- conflict analysis (*"We are proponents of a way more proactive approach. Prioritise working on the full conflict cycle, strong and involved EEAS driven by quasi objective indicators. I have the impression that doing more would be feasible"* [DeLuxBeNBaltugal]. *"One domain where we could translate all this into practice is first of all conflict analysis - it is essential that we increase our capability to understand political, economic and societal factors around conflict"* [Big 5]).
- integration of mediation and conflict prevention into crisis planning and scenario development.

## UPDATING THE CONCEPT

Respondents recognised the trade-offs involved in opening discussion around an existing policy framework. Opinions ranged from those who said: *“We would be open to discussion on a second version”* (Visegrad 3+5) and *“It does need an update. We have to decide what we want from it. There is always the need to update in terms of the structures”* (Visegrad 3+5) to others who were sceptical: *“There is suggestion to modernise the concept, but I fear it will be just the same again”* (DeLuxBeNBaltugal).

Some of the suggestions made on how the Concept might be updated or supplemented indicated that many only had a vague sense of what was in the original 2009 Concept. Proposals made were only reiterations of what is already agreed:

*“Concerning review of the concept we believe that we should consider our full conflict toolkit”* (DeLuxBeNBaltugal)

**Interpretation and Comment:** several of the respondents appeared to be well tuned in to this question with the specific proposals of where future efforts might be focused. This would indicate these as likely candidates around which there would be a quick consensus. On the downside, the proposals themselves are far from novel (training, rosters, conflict analysis). A very similar list of specific proposals is already included in the 2009 Concept. Some respondents indicated that they had not actually read the 2009 Concept and were surprised to see that things now under discussion were already agreed over 10 years ago. Further reflection might be required on why ideas that generate strong cross-stakeholder support are proving difficult to implement in practice or are being implemented but not having the desired impact.

### II. What is the specific added value of the EU in peace processes in comparison to other actors (UN, national governments, NGOs,...) as:

- a) third party (mediator)
- b) fourth party (mediation supporter)

A wide spectrum of views was expressed on whether the EU actually could be a third party mediator, whether it had a specific niche in that role and/or whether it had specificities as a fourth party supporting others.

For a minority *“The EU is particularly badly suited to play a role as a mediator, it should support others. It is a mistake to seek to find a conflict to solve in order to increase the legitimacy of the EU”* (DeLuxBeNBaltugal). Others maybe did not rule out the possibility of EU mediation but saw the space as relatively narrow and saw obstacles to an EU role: *“If the EU is biased, we cannot mediate.”* (Visegrad 3+5). *“The EU is good at setting up processes and longer term engagement... it is too visible to act discretely behind the scenes”* (Big 5).

A larger number of respondents had generally positive views on the added value of the EU:

*“The EU is seldom seen to have a hidden agenda... it has a good trademark: the EU itself is built upon mediating between states”. (non-NATO)*

*“The EU should be there doing it. We should not hand our role over to others” (DeLuxBeNBaltugal).*

*“We should not be either mediator or mediation supporter. We should do both. It is in the DNA of the EU and it is who we are” (Visegrad 3+5).*

*“We support a strong role for the HRVP as a [third party] mediator where the EU has some leverage” (non-NATO).*

*“Look at EU Delegations who discretely keep channels open with parties” (DeLuxBeNBaltugal).*

There was little appetite for an increased codification of when and in what circumstances the EU would play a mediation role as opposed to a mediation support role: *“It is very sui generis; you cannot extrapolate a generic template whether we should be a mediator or mediation supporter. A first step is that we must clearly identify our interests and then see whether it is us who can play the right role” (DeLuxBeNBaltugal).* *“It completely depends upon the characteristics of each individual crisis. Sometimes [the EU] might mediate, in other cases it could be only supporting others” (non-NATO).*

**Interpretation and Comment:** The 2009 Concept already states that, “Given the multitude of potential actors in international peace mediation, close coordination is essential in order to determine who, in a given mediation initiative, would take on the lead role and who would play a supportive role. This decision will have to be taken depending on considerations of comparative advantage for the lead role in a particular case.” A reaffirmation of the need to analyse the situation and comparative advantage before taking a lead role would surely be acceptable to Member States.

It is interesting to reflect on the remarks that the EU should not assume that it has assets that put it in high demand as a mediator. This challenges the assumption that stepping up the EU’s global mediation role is essentially a supply rather than a demand side issue. Certainly, it would be unwise to assume that any state would welcome EU offers to mediate in their domestic or external relations. Formal requests for a mediator to be deployed are the exception rather than the rule. The difficulty with opening this discussion is that differences of opinion are fundamental and not likely to be resolved through policy discussion and technical drafting exercises.

### III. What is the appropriate division of labour between EU institutions, EU Member States, UN, AU or others in mediation or mediation support processes?

There was some interest in exploring the potential of the HRVP deputising to individual or small groups of Foreign Ministers to take on a mediation role on behalf of the EU, with examples of the Normandy Format (Russia/Ukraine), “*We have to do this in the name of the EU*” (Big 5), and the Finnish FM acting on behalf of the HRVP in Sudan. There was however some resistance to the idea of the HRVP having any authority over Member States, “*HRVP sees himself as the main actor whereas he needs to rely on the Member States to generate military forces*” (Big 5). It was also suggested that whilst some Member States had mediation capacity, “*others do not have such a history on this*” (Visegrad 3+5) with the implication that a standardised format ‘delegation’ from the EEAS to Member States would not be in everyone’s interest given the asymmetrical capacities and positions of Member States. A diplomatic formula was found for making a virtue of this complexity: “*There are a multitude of actors each with their own logic. They do not all work with a common goal. We need the EU to work with a degree of ambiguity*”. (DeLuxBeNBaltugal).

There were contradictory views on the relationship with the UN ranging from “*We should not hand our role over to the UN*” (DeLuxBeNBaltugal) to the “*UN can have a global role, we as EU support UN efforts, and EU is not known in some places in the world*” (Visegrad 3+5). There was little reflection on the role of other regional organisations, beyond the remark that “*the AU can do much in Africa, I do not see a direct [mediation] role for the EU there*” (DeLuxBeNBaltugal).

**Interpretation and Comment:** Given the range of responses it is hard to imagine a template for a division of labour that goes beyond the formula in the 2009 Concept, “The EU will continue to be involved in mediation processes at various levels – from the governmental to that of local communities - and at different stages - from preliminary talks to the implementation phase of peace agreements. In many parts of the world, the EU has various actors and field presences in place to pursue both a top-down and a bottom-up approach in parallel tracks, which reinforce and inform each other.”

In terms of tasking and line of accountability Member State respondents did not openly criticise the EEAS and the European Commission, indeed there was perhaps some underlying caution or restraint not to be seen to undermine the existing architecture. It is difficult however to discuss this question without immediately opening the wider, and highly controversial, set of EU foreign policy issues around the role and mandate of the HRVP and EEAS and their relationships with the Commission, Council/FAC and Member States. This potential for delegating tasks from the HRVP to individual Foreign Ministers might be an area that could generate some new content for supplementary guidance to the 2009 Concept but the wider issue will not be solved in the short term.

**IV. a. When and in which conflicts should the EU position itself as an active mediator or mediation supporter and  
b. in which cases is a mediation role incompatible with another EU role/obligation (e.g. security and defence?)**

The minority of respondents who did not see a role for the EU as a mediator (see question 2) were clear that, *“it is much better to leave this to the Swiss and the Norwegians of this world”* (DeLuxBeNBaltugal).

For the majority who did see a mediation role for the EU, some felt that there should be established criteria in order to prioritise where the EU would act. Criteria that were mentioned included a formal request of a host country, geographical proximity, leverage over the parties, *“The first question is whether the EU has the leverage to change the situation on the ground.”* (Big 5), *“To be acceptable one has to have the confidence of the parties: this is not something that you have a priori but something that you gain”* (Big 5) and where a mediation role might facilitate the achievement of the goals of a military mission (Big 5).

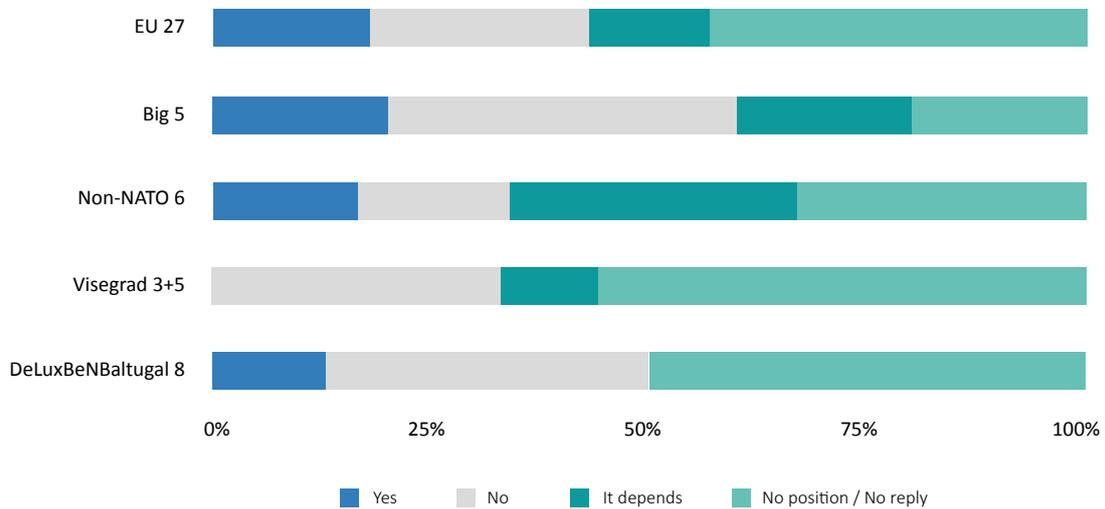
However, other respondents emphasised the contingent and relationship dimensions of mediation processes and cast doubt on centrally organised and top-down criteria noting instead *“the issue is so time-sensitive and with such a strong personal dimension, I don’t think we can be dogmatic about the EU should act here and not there”* (non-NATO) and *“Mediation is a question of trust, you need to work where you have that trust”* (DeLuxBeNBaltugal).

Whilst there was recognition that *“We might not be the best placed to act where we are perceived by others as having interests”* (DeLuxBeNBaltugal) most respondents were sanguine about the risk of incompatibilities between the EU’s different roles or even felt that a strong military role could be an advantage in providing for a powerful mediation role. It was remarked that playing multiple roles was in line with the integrated approach where, *“We need to orchestrate every means the EU has at its disposal”* (Big 5)

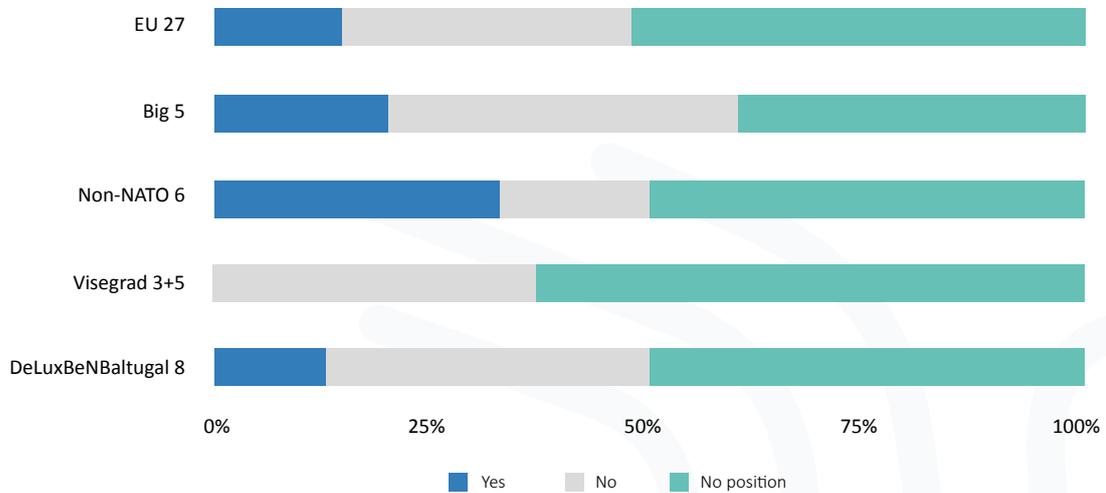
**Interpretation and Comment:** Behind the responses there seemed to be a strong attachment to the narrative of the EU being able to deploy different instruments, with different logics, within an overall integrated approach. This possibly reflects the extent to which the ‘integrated approach’ has been internalised by the PSC community as an overarching framework for all foreign policy dilemmas. As a result, this group of policy makers and representatives are largely resistant to the implication that there are incompatibilities or trade-offs between different roles.

## 5. EU POLICIES AND CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

### V. a. Do we need an EU Consensus on Peace and Stabilisation?



### VI. a. Do we need a Common Peace and Stabilisation Policy and



### b. What would be its rationale, also with regard to related policy fields such as security and defence?

Question five and Question six were not easily distinguished for respondents hence the responses are presented together. There was little enthusiasm for embarking on any large-scale process of policy or concept development. Some respondents were firmly against with remarks such as: *“This sounds just horrible”* (Visegrad 3+5). *“No, I am very sceptical about doing any papers. We need a pragmatic approach”* (DeLuxBeNeBaltugal).

*“It would take ages, and then who would then submit themselves to be guided by it - would all actors consider it their framework?” (DeLuxBeNeBaltugal). “I can’t say, it is not something we have pronounced on” (Big 5). “I am increasingly sceptical towards policies and papers we adopt with pomp that then don’t translate. We launch policy ‘A’, it doesn’t work: instead of seeing why it doesn’t work we launch policy ‘A+” (DeLuxBeNeBaltugal). “Immediate reaction is, no. I don’t see the need for big new conceptual discussions” (Visegrad 3+5). “No, I consider that we already have one” (DeLuxBeNeBaltugal).*

Two respondents volunteered that they saw no possibility of any initiative that would require Treaty change.

There were some who saw some merit, or even necessity, in forging new consensus or building a new Common Peace and Stabilisation policy, *“It is how the CFSP works. We do need a consensus, that is the way of the EU” (Big 5)*. There were a couple of specific remarks in favour of a high-level reference to both peace and to stabilisation, perceived as downplayed in the current CFSP hierarchy. *“It would be good to have something that rebalanced away from military means” (non-NATO)*. However, even those open to further conceptual work were generally wary of the opportunity cost involved for an outcome that might not deliver.

Some alternative process for policy development and revision were proposed such as, *“We can update the 2009 concept, but only marginal changes brought about by the Lisbon Treaty. It is not really necessary to spend too much time on it” (Visegrad 3+5)*. Also, *“A light process with endorsement by Council Conclusions could be a way forward” (DeLuxBeNeBaltugal)*. *“The trick will be to make progress that improves the 2009 Concept whilst at the same time not embarking on a drafting exercise that does not change the realities on the ground” (non-NATO)*.

**Interpretation and Comment:** These questions were not well understood. Rather than considering an EU Consensus on Peace and Stabilisation as a counterpart to the EU Consensus on Development and EU Consensus on Humanitarian Assistance, several respondents answered the question “Should we seek consensus, or do we need unanimity before acting in support of peace and stabilisation?” Likewise, only a minority of respondents understood a Common Peace and Stabilisation Policy as a counterbalance to the Common Security and Defence Policy.

## 6. STRUCTURES, INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND FINANCING

### VII. What should the PSC role be in EU-supported mediation processes?

A typical response was "Yes, absolutely. Precise PSC role depends on where the money is coming from" (Big 5). "There needs to be a framework where the parameters are agreed" (non-NATO). "Political oversight needs to be with the PSC and before that in the Council Working Groups" (Big 5), and "Yes, it should have the final say" (Visegrad 3+5). Quite what it would mean to have the final say was not specified although the formal role was clear in the remark "It is where mediation can find its role in the institutions, it is related to CFSP" (Visegrad 3+5).

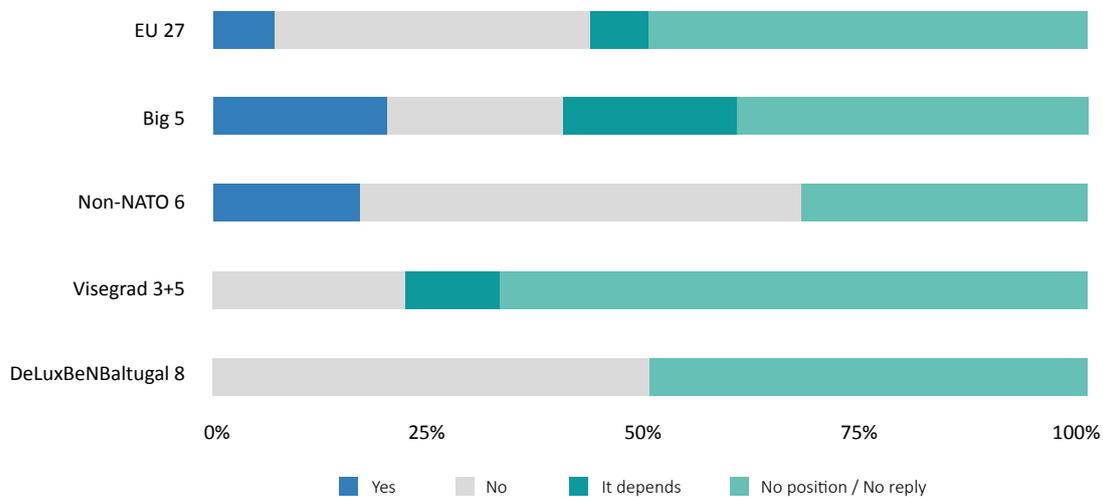
A sense of dissatisfaction with current practice was hinted at in comments such as "We have virtually no information on progress in specific geostrategic theatres" (Big 5) and "Of course PSC has to be involved... we miss the conflict prevention discussion and our tools are not sufficient" (Visegrad 3+5).

Interestingly, however, were the significant number of comments indicating some unease or opposition to any enhanced PSC role and support for the principle that EU mediators should not be micromanaged at every step by Member States: "Not necessarily... a mediator needs to retain a certain independence" (non-NATO). "It depends because each country has an agenda. Might be better for FAC and HRVP to decide at a higher level" (non-NATO). "PSC will not know about ground realities; it cannot be managed from PSC and we need to be wary of creating an illusion of action" (DeLuxBeNeBaltugal). "We should know what is there and what is possible but feasibly PSC is not going to take on the mandating role. We cannot steer things when we do not know the possibilities that exist" (DeLuxBeNeBaltugal). "We have to let the people engaged use their own judgement" (non-NATO)."

One response highlighted that the chain of accountability did not need to be routed through Council mechanisms in Brussels. "Member States need to be in control, but that can also be through the HoD sharing information with HoMs locally" (DeLuxBeNeBaltugal).

**Interpretation and Comment:** It may come as no surprise that there was support from diplomats who attend the PSC for the PSC to have a role, and indeed potentially an enhanced role, in mandating and monitoring EU-led and EU-supported mediation processes. More surprising was the large number of respondents who were wary of this, in particular those with longer and more varied experience of working for the EU.

### VIII. Do we need a new Council Working Group on Peace and Stabilisation (including Mediation)?



There was very limited opinion in favour of the creation of a new Council working group with relatively blunt responses such as “No. My country is against new Council Working Groups in principle. Discussion should take place in the relevant geographic working group” (DeLuxBeNBaltugal), “No. This should be what is discussed in PSC” (non-Nato) and “We would have a preference to incorporate discussion into an existing group” (Visegrad 3+5).

Several respondents spoke favourably of the proposal to include peace and stabilisation, including mediation, in the mandate of Civcom: “I think we need a home for these issues. A suggestion has been made for it to be housed in CivCom and I think there is more traction in this than trying to create something new” (non-NATO). “Civcom would be rational” (DeLuxBeNBaltugal). “Civcom should be expanded to encompass the full conflict cycle” (DeLuxBeNBaltugal), whilst others spoke against: “Mediation is something genuinely cross cutting. Civcom has not got sufficient perspective as it is focused on CSDP” (Big 5). “I don’t think that the Civcom is the best placed to discuss” (non-NATO).

**Interpretation and Comment:** since the establishment of the Civilian Crisis Management Committee twenty years ago there has been discussion around its scope and mandate with, on the one hand, suggestions that it should have a broad role in delivering a coherent EU response to crisis situations and on the other, assertions that it can only deal with the specificities of CSDP mission deployment. The latter position has been defended both in terms of the legal situation (both before and after the Lisbon Treaty innovations and the creation of the EEAS) as well as pragmatically given that CivCom is not in the decision-making chain. Most EU instruments are either overseen by other CFSP working groups (e.g. sanctions) or the relevant management committee chaired by the European Commission. Progress in resolving this conundrum is likely to be slow given the structures and divisions of responsibilities provided in the existing treaty base.

## IX. What role should Art. 28 actions play in EU mediation?

Most respondents were relatively agnostic on the potential role of Art 28 actions with a typical comment being, *“If it is deemed appropriate, we would be prepared to think about it”* (Visegrad 3+5). There was however a perception that the initial experience of deploying EU personnel through an Article 28 action had been disappointing:

*“They will struggle with the same basic problem that the Member States will struggle to provide the right personnel. If you don’t have eggs you can’t make omelettes”* (DeLuxBeNBaltugal).

*“I still see a mission generation process as likely to fail”* (Big 5.)

Notably, several respondents did not know what an Article 28 action entailed, pointing to the need for greater socialisation concerning the distinctiveness and specificities of this possibility before any specific proposal to deploy in a given conflict setting.

**Interpretation and Comment:** Respondents did not seem to perceive any gap in ability to mobilise EU mediation expertise and were in general rather puzzled about what need this new modality would meet that could not be met within existing capacities. This may be based on experience and confidence in existing mechanisms or may also reflect a lack of detailed knowledge of actual constraints and financing possibilities offered by an Article 28 action. Conversely it may reflect a pessimism that there is any untapped pool of potential mediators that would be able to be mobilised via capitals-based networks.

## X. How can EU mediation efforts be supported in the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and specifically the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)?

A clear view emerged that, from the perspective of diplomats attending the PSC, the existing range of financial instruments, notably the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), had proven relevant and flexible. This was an asset of the EU that needed to be retained in whatever final agreement was reached on the MFF.

*“No-one has ever really said if only we had more funds we could do more”* (Big 5).

*“I am comfortable that what we have been able to do with the IcSP will be retained within the future NDICI”* (non-NATO).

*“IcSP is something that is working quite well, it is fast and flexible, and it is not taken hostage by specific Member State interests”* (DeLuxBeNBaltugal).

*“We cherish the IcSP. In the future MFF we hope for the funding needed for peace and stability is allocated in order to retain the benefits”* (Visegrad 3+5).

There was some reference to the debate surrounding increased defence spending, although the expectation seemed to be that any increase in funding for defence would not come at the expense of peacebuilding and mediation.

**Interpretation and Comment:** respondents openly stated that they were not well suited to answer this question as they were not typically engaged in the debates surrounding the NDICI and the MFF.

## 7. PERSPECTIVES ON THE KEY QUESTIONS FROM OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

### 7.1 EEAS/COMMISSION

Respondents from within the EU institutions emphasised the broad understanding of mediation, as set out in the original 2009 Concept, that embraces a range of different types of diplomatic practice and is not limited to high level track one ‘power brokerage’. In fact, the cases of formalised track one processes where the EU has a mandated role are often not dynamic spaces conducive to problem solving focused mediation. It was however remarked that despite various training efforts the concept had not been fully socialised. An indicator of this could be found in the number of colleagues inside the institutions (i.e. EEAS, European Commission) as well as Member States who, according to the perceptions of interviewees, struggled to understand what enhancing EU peace-making and mediation support would actually mean in tangible, real-world terms.

Acceptance by the parties was understood to be a precondition for EU engagement, but this is nuanced by the fact that the EU almost invariably has a presence that can help elicit requests for support, which do not simply fall from the sky. The ability of the EU to play very different roles in different conflict settings, and also to play multiple roles within a single conflict setting, was identified as a specific strength of the EU. The essence of the EU’s peace-making methodology remains valid: firstly, to undertake an analysis of drivers of conflict; secondly, to identify EU interest; thirdly, to establish a political objective; and fourthly, to apply the appropriate instruments and tools. This aligns closely to the references made by Member State respondents who used the language of deploying the multiple tools in the EU toolbox coherently and effectively.

In terms of concept and policy development there was recognition that this had a role to play in bringing all stakeholders behind an agreed approach. This is essential for the legitimacy of EU efforts. Moreover, a “Peace Policy” could be an effective antidote to a growing securitisation of European foreign policy. Stabilisation was also a concept that merited further elaboration. However, the risk of ‘over processing’ a Brussels-based drafting exercise needed to be handled carefully. It was acknowledged that a lot of the existing policy frameworks, guidance and concepts were unknown to EU staff in Delegations and EU Member State officials in capitals and posted abroad: hence policy frameworks did not have the expected impact on practice.

The ‘mandating’ of EU mediation efforts is a sensitive topic. There is no dispute that, as per the Treaty, it is the European Council that collectively identifies strategic interests, objectives and general guidelines; that the HRVP makes proposals and ensures implementation (assisted by the EEAS); and that the PSC monitors the international situation in the areas covered by CFSP and contributes to the definition of policies. Experienced diplomats within the EEAS maintained that they must be able to explore possibilities for playing a mediation role, and proceeding with low-level engagements, without having had such an initiative explicitly included in general guidelines or policies defined by the Council.

*“We need to have the courage to do things”.*

The cases of every day contact with political actors in third countries on the one hand (where no explicit mandate would be sought as it was derived from the general mission mandate of the organisation), and the most senior level engagement in high-profile peace talks (which would be discussed at FAC) were easy to handle. The difficulty lies in cases in the middle and that processes oscillate between tracks and levels of seniority. Respondents gave examples to argue for the EEAS continuing to have a degree of autonomy to act discretely within general guidelines. This implies that peace mediation should not be considered on the menu of CFSP options in the same way as, for example, restrictive measures or the launch of a CSDP mission as this would require *ex ante* approval in the Council. It was argued that there is plenty of wisdom and experience within the EEAS to inform the subjective political judgement on how and when to seek an explicit mandate from Member States. An essential precondition for successful peace process engagement is to have full and solid political leadership and support.

The EEAS is in favour of having a Council format where the topic of peace and stabilisation, including mediation can be discussed. Finding the right institutional format for this has no easy answer, not least because the Comprehensive Approach requires mobilisation of EU instruments well beyond the CFSP dimension, notably including external assistance and macro-financial policies but also thematic issues related to technology, artificial intelligence, business investment, taxation, climate, environment, fisheries, trade policy (and in the post-Covid-19 environment, public health and medical services). As an example, the Commissioner for Crisis Response, Janez Lenarčič, is tasked to develop an integrated approach ensuring that humanitarian, development, security and other policies all work together to better link urgent relief and longer-term solutions.

Respondents were reluctant to give definitive views on the likely outcome, and impact on EU peace support ambitions, of negotiations on the MFF. As a general principle, in order to be faithful to the logic of a comprehensive and integrated approach it was necessary to avoid assessing the importance of an issue by looking at whether it has an assigned separate (siloed) financial envelope. Peacebuilding and mediation activities should be funded within many different envelopes. It was assumed that financing for mediation related activities would remain at appropriate levels although the Commission counted upon Ministries of Foreign Affairs apprising their Ministries of Finance of the importance they attach to peacebuilding and peace mediation support. Through experience, the detailed management decisions of financial support to third-party actors in peace processes is most efficiently and effectively handled through country level coordination with those Member States present. In terms of correctly prioritising funding interventions, the basic question is whether an initiative is likely to succeed in helping bring progress towards sustainable peace, rather than whether or not to engage in a country on the basis of a set of abstract criteria, or whether that country is on a ‘watchlist’.

## 7.2 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

There was reportedly less attention being paid in the current Parliament to the general topic of conflict prevention and peacebuilding, although this could not be verified as it did not prove possible to have a full range of interviews with parliamentarians and their advisors.

There remain some ‘champions’ who wish to see the EU’s efforts taken to the next level although the opacity of the system meant this was difficult to advocate. Progress could be achieved by setting clear strategic goals in specific regions where the range of available mediation instruments would be deployed, and the impact would be measured. There was no contradiction between the EU being simultaneously a security provider whilst striving to offer mediation support, “*if you can’t ride two horses get out of the circus*”. Indeed, EU goals would often be best pursued through partner organisations rather than directly, as peace processes need to embrace a much wider constituency than only government officials.

The Global Strategy is rather abstract and lacks ownership across the full range of stakeholders. However, the risk of opening up debate again on general principles and guidance would be that it might actually expose some sharp differences between Member States. In any case there had been plenty of policy development and it was time for specific and practical initiatives. The Jean Monnet Dialogues for peace and democracy<sup>8</sup> provided an example of a specific approach that leveraged the potential of the European Parliament to support dialogue processes. There was an opportunity for this type of initiative to be scaled up. EU Heads of Delegation should have a central role to play in spotting opportunities and it was difficult to see how the PSC could attempt to perform that type of function. Whilst some of the lack of clarity on tasks and mandates stems from the Treaty, it is premature to imagine a fundamental Treaty revision that could resolve these issues. A degree of ambiguity and tension is perhaps inevitable.

With regard to the MFF, the previous European Parliament had noted in its resolution on building EU capacity on conflict prevention and mediation ‘the need for sufficient and earmarked financial resources to be made available for the EU’s conflict prevention and mediation actions under the next Multiannual Financial Framework.’<sup>9</sup> The key issue will be the oversight and management mechanism of peace related funds rather than the amounts in different Headings. This is particularly sensitive given the discussion around the financing of train and equip programmes which would require appropriate levels of transparency.

## 7.3 PEACEBUILDING ORGANISATIONS

Peacebuilding organisations were concerned that there continued to be confusion around the meaning of the core concepts of ‘mediation’ and ‘mediation support’ within EU discourses. This then leads to confused and suboptimal efforts at implementation. There is a view that mediation is not always the appropriate response in all contexts, and it cannot be something that is mechanically ‘selected from a toolbox’ and ‘deployed’.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/globaldemocracysupport/en/mediation-&-dialogue/jean-monnet-dialogues.html>

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2019-0158\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2019-0158_EN.pdf)

This poses fundamental questions around what it means to be a mediator and how practice and organisational culture might need to shift. A system based around diplomatic practice whereby instructions are issued in headquarters might not be best suited to supporting fragile and complex peace processes. Appropriate incentives need to be provided to reward the good practices that certainly already exist but that are not sufficiently cultivated.

One reading is that the original 2009 Concept was intended to give EU Heads of Delegation/EUSRs the confidence to grasp opportunities as they arise and adopt a more political risk-taking approach. For the EU to fulfil its potential in this area the emphasis needs to shift to empowering people already engaged on the ground, whether in EU Delegations and Member State embassies or EU-supported independent peacebuilding organisations. An effort to refocus on the field level would mean a different type of discussion about the way to build up and retain capacity in country that is necessary to build the relationships upon which mediation processes depend. Brussels is not the right place to have these discussions and it is inevitable that Brussels-based officials struggle to appreciate the range and depth of ongoing EU engagement at field level. This is perceived as leading to a chronic underestimation of the totality of EU engagement in peace processes. It should not be framed in terms of 'do we or don't we engage'. The EU is engaged in one way or another all around the world in all conflicts. The question is how the EU can act coherently in a way that is relevant to the goal of achieving sustainable peace.

There is a wariness of ideas around generalised guidance for how to launch an EU supported mediation process. A 'rule book' approach of issuing 'Standard Operating Procedures' is unlikely to deliver the desired change in practice and stifle the creativity necessary to cultivate openings for peace. Templates and guidelines suggest an overly static, hierarchical and linear model of conflict and relationships between actors.

Areas where the existing policy framework could be upgraded include building more inclusivity whilst the focus on securing financial resources for Capacity Building for Security and Defence is causing concern. The EU will need to have an honest assessment of whether conflict parties share the EU self-perception of being a trusted and impartial broker, particularly where the EU is also engaged in defence related support.

More broadly there is a feeling among peacebuilding actors that there needs to be a much more profound reflection within the EU on the extent to which EU state and private sector policies and activities are complicit in the conflict dynamics which the EU purportedly wishes to address. It would be a genuine Comprehensive Approach if the EU was able to engage in upstream conflict analysis that did not shy away from issues such as migration, technology transfer, global taxation, energy supply, business and trade practices. Institutionally the EU would then be able to make strategic choices based on reconciling interests and values with clarity around the trade-offs involved. Whether and how to then pursue a peace support/peace mediation approach using any potential EU leverage would then follow from such 'geostrategic' choices. At present there is an obvious institutional deficit in the ability of any single Council formation to address this full range of issues. There is also a perception of a legitimacy deficit for EU action if capitals and the private sector are able to keep certain issues and national prerogatives off the agenda. Realistically, the best that can be hoped for in the short term is for PSC to be more intelligently informed of the broader range of issues.

## 8. CONCLUSION – SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND AVENUES FOR PROGRESS

This research has sought to outline some of the avenues that merit further discussion as the EU is reviewing the 2009 Concept. Three key features stand out:

- Whilst there is general consensus on updating or supplementing the existing EU policy framework, there is a remarkable heterogeneity of views between Member States on quite basic premises, such as whether the EU is well equipped to play a mediation role and whether this is compatible with the pursuit of security and defence interests.
- Brussels-based decision makers have very little information about and exposure to the practice of third-party diplomacy and the reality of existing EU field-based mediation and peace process support. Accordingly, there is little thinking about links to and (in-)compatibilities of these activities with the Integrated Approach. This general lack of awareness encompasses the financial dimension of EU mediation and generates a set of misperceptions of EU strengths and weaknesses as well as risks and opportunities of EU third-party diplomacy.
- The process of conducting the survey has in itself stimulated reflection and raised the profile of peace mediation and dialogue among interviewees. There was also however a recognition that progress would be difficult as many of the limitations and challenges in delivering on the ambitions of the 2009 Concept are not specific to peace support but are a function of the wider constraints hard wired into EU foreign policy.

Building on these points, the following reflections are made:

- **Awareness raising:** recognition of what the EU is already doing in mediation and dialogue support, and particularly where it is doing well, must be the starting point for ensuring it is included in the EU's menu of crisis management options and the planning cycle. Further exposure to existing practice, potential and limitations of a peacebuilding and human security approach is necessary. This will help ensure it is considered a credible and effective foreign policy tool and also mitigate the risk of assuming that conflict partners and other international actors always want an increased EU peace-making role. Working towards an EU Consensus on Peace and Stability or a Common Peace and Stability Policy may help to raise awareness/make progress in this area.
- **Collective political leadership:** a culture of risk taking, not risk aversion, is needed to deliver on the EU's aspiration to engage in peace mediation and dialogue. EU Member States must accept trade-offs between policy areas beyond CFSP, limits on their individual autonomy to act and a margin of manoeuvre for EU representatives for the EU to be able to play an effective political role on their behalf. This requires mechanisms in the EEAS and Council of the EU, and delegated to the field, where rapid decisions can be taken that can be made to stick. Whilst this may be true across the full spectrum of external relations it is particularly important for progress on conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

- **Concept Revision:** the existing 2009 Concept is not well understood and there are gaps in implementation. The EIP supports a renewed effort, coinciding with the German Presidency of the European Council, to update or revise the 2009 Concept. It will be important to have a discussion that is based on a good understanding of the existing Concept, reflects new institutional and geopolitical realities and considers why it has proved difficult to deliver on existing policy commitments despite them having widespread normative support.
- **Council Working Group:** A decision is needed on which Council formation is best placed to incubate ideas and drive innovation in the area of mediation and peace process support. Remaining with the status quo will not deliver the widely anticipated progress. The creation of a new, dedicated Council Working Group would require very strong advocacy as there is little support for the idea. Including mediation in the mandate of an existing working group such as CIVCOM might be a feasible compromise.

The EIP is open to the possibility of organising further events to discuss the survey findings. One potential modality would be an intimate retreat or gathering of prominent European individuals (for instance former holders of the office of High Representative etc.) to discuss more specific details of EU institutional reforms that might be needed to unlock the EU's full peace mediation potential.

An additional avenue for research would be to survey mediation focal points based in capitals in order to explore whether there is a different perspective on the relevance and impact of the EU mediation frameworks and capabilities and how they might evolve in future. An alternative would be a case study approach to undertake a survey of the opinions of **EU Heads of Mission (EU HoMs)** in conflict-affected countries where the EU aims to play a peace process support role.

## INFO BOX: STUDY AUTHOR AND FUNDING

The European Institute of Peace is an independent conflict resolution organisation based in Brussels. Established in 2014 with the purpose of supporting European actors to design and deliver sustainable peace processes and agreements, its board is composed of European states.

The research was led by Guy Banim, an experienced consultant on peacebuilding support who has worked in the past as team leader of the Mediation Support Team in the European External Action Service.

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## ANNEX 1

# GUIDING QUESTIONS

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1. In the 2009 Concept on Strengthening Mediation and Dialogue the EU set itself the goal of promoting the use of mediation as a first-response tool to emerging or ongoing crisis situations. How can this best be promoted?
2. What is the specific added value of the EU in peace processes in comparison to other actors (UN, national governments, NGOs,...) as:
  - a. third party (mediator)
  - b. fourth party (mediation supporter)
3. What is the appropriate division of labour between EU institutions, EU Member States, UN, AU or others in mediation or mediation support processes?
4. a. When and in which conflicts should the EU position itself as an active mediator or mediation supporter and  
b. in which cases is a mediation role incompatible with another EU role/obligation (e.g. security and defence)?
5. a. Do we need an EU Consensus on Peace and Stabilisation?  
b. How would such a document help the EU's mediation efforts?
6. a. Do we need a Common Peace and Stabilisation Policy and;  
b. what would be its rationale, also with regard to related policy fields such as security and defence)?
7. What should the PSC role be in EU supported mediation processes?
8. Do we need a new Council Working Group on Peace and Stabilisation (including Mediation)?
9. What role should Art. 28 actions play in EU mediation?
10. How can EU mediation efforts be supported in the new Multiannual Financial Framework and specifically the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI)?

## ANNEX 2

# SURVEY RESPONDENTS & EXPERTS CONSULTED

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### EU MEMBER STATES

*PSC Representative (\* indicates deputy level)*

Austria\*, Czechia\*, Germany, Denmark, Finland\*, France\*, Croatia\*, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands\*, Poland\*, Portugal, Sweden, Slovakia\*

*Capital Focal point*

Belgium, Ireland, Italy

### OTHER

UK, Switzerland

## EEAS/COMMISSION

Christian Leffler	EEAS Deputy Secretary General
Stefano Tomat	EEAS Director, Integrated Approach for Security & Peace
Rene van Nes	EEAS Head of Division, Conflict Prevention & Mediation Support
Antje Herrberg	EEAS Mediation Support Team
Anne Maria Madsen	EEAS Conflict Prevention
Marc Feidrich	FPI, IcSP
Marcus Cornaro	EEAS SG Principal Adviser
Alexandros Yannis	EEAS Strategic Policy Planning
Melis Alguadis	EEAS Concepts, Knowledge Management & Programmes
Javier Niño Perez	EEAS, Director (f.f.) Americas
Michael Doyle	Retired, former FPI & HoD Lesotho

## EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Hannah Neumann	Member of European Parliament
Gerrard Quille	Directorate for Democracy Support, Mediation and Dialogue Unit
Tobias Heider	Advisor on Security and Defence Policy, Greens/EFA group

## COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Magdalena Grono	Cabinet, President of the European Council
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## PEACEBUILDING ORGANISATIONS AND THINK TANKS

Michael Keating	EIP
Stine Lehmann	EIP
Katariina Mustilta	EU ISS
Shada Islam	Friends of Europe
Giuseppe Famà	International Crisis Group
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