

ISP.2 - Conflict Prevention and Peace Mediation

FACT SHEET

EARLY WARNING SYSTEM

The **EU conflict Early Warning System (EWS)** is a robust, evidence-based risk management tool that identifies, prioritises and assesses non-EU countries at risks of violent conflict. With a time horizon of up to four years, the EWS identifies **structural risk factors** that frequently correlate with the outburst of violence. It enables policy makers to develop strategic responses to **mitigate risks** and **identify opportunities for conflict prevention**.

WHAT DOES THE EWS DO?

The EU conflict EWS looks at underlying factors which correlate with the risk of a violent conflict in a country. Risks are identified and assessed so that early preventive action can be pursued before situations escalate into crises.

The EWS process starts with the compilation of quantitative and qualitative data indicating the risk of conflict in non-EU countries. Out of these, a handful are selected annually for further analysis.

The assessment provides the basis for the formulation of **timely, relevant and coherent EU response for conflict prevention** by staff from across EU services. The response reflects the EU's **Integrated Approach to conflicts and crises** and brings together – among others – diplomacy and political actions, development cooperation, crisis preparedness and crisis response actions. Responses may take the shape of a new action or lead to fine-tuning of existing ones. They typically include both short- and medium-term actions, and long-term programmatic responses within EU development cooperation.

EU preventive action involves the EU Member States, who closely follow all the stages of the EWS and participate in the setting of priorities for EU action.

The early warning cycle includes four phases: **Risk Scanning, Prioritisation, Shared Assessment, Follow-up and Monitoring**. This ensures a regular update of priorities and allows time for analysis and follow-up.

THE EWS PROCESS

1: Preparatory Component: Risk Scanning

Risk information from the Global Conflict Risk Index¹ provides the basis for **prioritisation** by EU services. Quantitative data on the probability and intensity of a violent conflict is complemented with open source and intelligence-based qualitative analysis. To model the probability and intensity of violent conflict over a period of up to four years, the GCRI uses structural indicators based on human security dimensions, which show a strong correlation with violent conflict. An overview of countries in regional risk tables is presented to the EEAS and Commission Services for their thematic and geographic expert input.

2: Prioritisation

Senior management from the European External Action Service and the European Commission decide on up to **five priority countries** annually. The decision considers both heightened risk of emergence, re-emergence or escalation of violence as well as EU interest and leverage in terms of capacity of achieving results.

¹The Global Conflict Risk Index is produced by the Joint Research Center of the European Commission and is financed by the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace.

The outcomes of the risk scanning and conflict prioritisation phases are shared with the EU Member States at the **Political and Security Committee (PSC) of the Council of the European Union**.

3: Shared Assessment

The **Assessment of Structural Risks of Conflict** is carried out during an inter-service field mission in prioritised countries. It focuses on a series of factors within six risk areas, including legitimacy and rule of law, security and regional stability, inter-group relations and society, human rights and civil society/media, climate change/disasters, and economic performance.

Risk area
Political
Security
Social
Economy
Geography - Environment
Demography

EU actors analyse **risks in relation to these factors and identify opportunities to support, complement, and expand ongoing activities and to create new conflict prevention actions**. In-country assessment of structural risks of conflict lays the foundation for **Conflict Prevention Reports**, which are shared with geographic Council Working Groups and form the basis for follow-up work by the European External Action Service, the European Commission, the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments, EU Delegations and the EU Member States.

4: Monitoring and Follow-up

Monitoring involves **assessing the evolution of the risk environment and how EU action has contributed to mitigate risks**. EU Delegation and

Member States present in the country play a key role in monitoring. Their reports are discussed with the Member States in the relevant Council Working Groups and the PSC.

A **follow-up reassessment** is undertaken approximately one year after the initial analysis. This allows EU actors to update of initial analysis, delve deeper into some priority risk domains, assess the implementation of previously identified options for action, adjust the EU strategy and pinpoint new opportunities for engagement.

The EWS combines:

- ✓ **Quantitative data**
- ✓ **Qualitative data**
- ✓ **External analysis**
- ✓ **Internal assessments**
- ✓ **Open sources**
- ✓ **Intelligence input**

EWS Coordination

The EU conflict Early Warning System is led by the **ISP.2 Division within the Integrated Approach for Security and Peace Directorate** of the EEAS.

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