

EU PEACE MEDIATION

Reflections on the Implementation of the EU Concept on Peace Mediation and the Way Ahead

An Expert Workshop Organized by the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU and the European External Action Service (EEAS), in cooperation with the EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS)

15 November 2022, Permanent Representation of the Czech Republic to the EU, Brussels

INTRODUCTION

In December 2020, the **Concept on EU Peace Mediation** (Concept) was adopted with the aim of further boosting the EU's role as a global peace mediator, contributor towards conflict prevention and peacebuilding actor. The new Concept sets an ambitious stance for the EU in global peace mediation and points out the EU's comparative advantages in this field. Specifically, the Concept stresses the EU's role as a value-based actor and places a key emphasis on issues such as climate change, the digital space, human rights, women, peace and security (WPS), cultural heritage, and religion. Shortly after the Concept, the Council adopted Conclusions on EU Peace Mediation. Therein it specifies peace mediation as a key tool for conflict prevention and resolution, while calling for a more proactive and resolute EU engagement in this field. The Council also recalls that peace mediation is part of the EU's Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises and emphasises the importance of working with other mediation actors, especially the United Nations (UN).

The past two years of implementation of these two landmark documents offer an opportunity to reflect on the EU's engagement in the field of peace mediation and to identify priorities for the way ahead. To this end, the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU, the EEAS, and the EUISS convened an expert roundtable that brought together EU Member State officials with mediation experts from the EU, the UN and civil society.

CONTEXT, ADAPTABILITY, AND INCLUSION

Contemporary conflicts are complex, fast-paced and characterised by quickly shifting alliances and power dynamics. To be effective, peace mediation should ideally be premised on a **detailed understanding of context and remain adaptive to evolving challenges**. This requires rigorous conflict analyses and a continuous evaluation of key objectives, the range of involved stakeholders, and available avenues of success. Accordingly, it is essential that the EU's peace mediation efforts remain context-specific, flexible, and responsive to the changing realities on the ground.

Multi-level mediation strategies have proven most effective at preventing and resolving conflict when they are **planned and implemented in close coordination with local partners**. This finding underscores the importance of empowering involved parties to take leadership of peace processes, and cautions against the domination of peace mediation efforts by external actors. Building on this insight, participants also highlighted the importance of placing trust in local communities and their capacity to devise pathways towards sustainable peace.

Inclusivity was identified as a key requirement to successful peace mediation. It was underlined that ensuring the inclusivity of peace mediation support requires conflict sensitivity, a readiness to engage with diverse and changing conflict parties, and a willingness to concede leadership to alternative mediation actors. It also demands concerted efforts to ensure, provide for, and facilitate **gender awareness** at all levels of a mediation process. Moving forward, the critical role, and immense potential, of ensuring the further inclusion of **young people** in peace and mediation processes was identified as a key policy priority.

'NETWORKED MULTILATERALISM' IN PARTNERSHIP AND SUPPORT

Discussants highlighted that the **climate crisis, the increasing fragmentation of conflict, and lack of international unity**, have rendered effective peace mediation increasingly challenging. Given this environment, the importance of '**networked multilateralism**' in international efforts to support peace mediation was highlighted. This requires that the EU and its international partners seek to **identify which actors have the best toolkit, the highest degree of legitimacy and the greatest leverage** to lead a mediation effort. Accordingly, international support and engagement in peace mediation processes must build on a readiness to rally behind whichever actor is best placed to lead such efforts. On these grounds, it was noted **that peace mediation is often most effective when it is quiet**, discreet and conducted with minimal visibility. For these reasons, discussants noted, it is at times best to refrain from using the politically charged designation of 'mediation' altogether.

Sustained political support was identified as a critical ingredient to successful peace mediation. However, it was noted that this often stands in tension with the need to ensure the trust in, and impartiality of, mediation efforts. The difficulty of guarding against the perceived subservience to a political agenda was highlighted as a key challenge arising out of today's fractured geopolitical environment. Identifying when 'less visibility is more', and when the EU's political leverage can best be drawn upon in mediation efforts, will thus require continued consideration and calibration. The need to understand peace mediation in its widest sense, and as comprising a range of different actors, approaches, and possible entry points was identified as critical. Hence, the EU's establishment of a **single instrument to fund mediation support** was highlighted as an important step towards implementing an integrated approach. The EU's establishment of **key performance indicators** as a means of measuring success and ensuring continued self-reflection and re-evaluation was commended.

The importance of **counterbalancing competition** in the field of peace mediation with concerted partnership and collaboration was likewise underscored. With the proliferating number of mediation actors, the increasing competition for resources and recognition was identified as a challenge. However, the potential for synergies, complementarity, and collaboration between distinct mediation actors, approaches and levels was also stressed. In developing and implementing its strategic priorities in the field of peace mediation, the EU's continued consultation with local, regional, and international partners was identified as a key policy priority.