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#### NOTE

From:	Presidency
On:	10 June 2025
To:	Working Party on External Aspects of Asylum and Migration (EMWP)
Subject:	Optimising cooperation along migratory routes and strengthening the EU's comprehensive approach to building security in partner countries: contribution from CSDP missions

In the current geopolitical context, marked by persistent instability in the EU's neighbourhood, hybrid threats, and shifting migratory dynamics, the specific contribution of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) civilian missions has the potential to play its part in optimising cooperation along migratory routes and strengthening the EU's comprehensive approach to building security in partner countries. The new European Internal Security Strategy (Protect EU, 2025) underscores the indivisibility of internal and external security, calling for a whole-of-society and whole-of-EU approach that integrates CSDP missions, Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) actors, and partner countries into a coherent security ecosystem<sup>1</sup>. The focus is on how civilian CSDP missions could support the security actors involved in combating organized crime and in integrated border management, rather than on general issues of mission effectiveness or institutional cooperation. The migratory routes towards the EU - spanning the Sahel, North Africa, the Central

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<sup>1</sup> Protect EU, 2025

and Western and Eastern Mediterranean, and Eastern Europe - are not only conduits for people seeking protection or opportunity, but also vectors for organized crime, migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, and potential infiltration by hostile actors, such as terrorist suspects or individuals likely to pose a security threat. The EU's response must therefore be multidimensional also towards its neighbourhood: strengthening partner capacities, enhancing border management, promoting rule of law, and ensuring that migration management is embedded within a broader security and resilience framework<sup>2</sup>.

This paper analyses the role of selected civilian CSDP missions in addressing migration-related challenges along key routes to the EU, highlighting concrete contributions and lessons learned for future EU engagement.

### **The Protect EU Strategy**

The ProtectEU Internal Security Strategy (2025) provides the overarching framework for strengthening the EU's internal security, placing a strong emphasis on operational cooperation and information exchange with partner countries. From the perspective of the EMWP, the most relevant aspects of this strategy are those that directly support migration management and security along routes leading to the European Union.

*“The ProtectEU Strategy aims to increase the capabilities of EU Member States to protect societies and democracies from online and offline threats from terrorists, criminals, and hostile foreign actors. Furthermore, it will guarantee that security implications are considered in all future EU policies.”*

The Strategy underscores the importance of deepening operational cooperation between CSDP missions and EU agencies such as Frontex, Europol, Eurojust, and CEPOL, including in the context of migration management and the fight against cross-border crime linked to migratory flows.

*“The Commission will expand the operational capacities of its agencies, including Europol, Eurojust, and Frontex.”*

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<sup>2</sup> Civilian CSDP missions in the area of migration, Discussion paper 14103/24

It also highlights the need to further strengthen the operational capacities of Frontex and Europol so that they can more effectively support both Member States and partner countries, including in combating migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings.<sup>3</sup>

*“The Commission will further reinforce agreements between partner countries and Europol and Eurojust, allowing to set up joint operational teams.”*

In addition, ProtectEU calls for the establishment of joint operational teams and the enhancement of information sharing with authorities in key partner countries, recognising that such collaboration is essential for security.

*“The European Internal Security Strategy aims to facilitate coordinated action, deepening cooperation through information sharing and enhancing our resilience and collective ability to prevent, detect and respond effectively to security threats.”*

Furthermore, the strategy insists that security considerations must be systematically integrated into all EU external actions, including the mandates and activities of CSDP missions (decided at PSC level), which includes a particular focus on risks and challenges related to irregular migration.

*“It will ensure that security considerations are integrated in the development and implementation of Union policies across Member States, promoting a cohesive and comprehensive whole-of-society approach to security.”*

It is important to note that the application of the ProtectEU Strategy is context-dependent and may be limited by the EU’s political relationship with partner countries. As a result, the scope and nature of cooperation can vary, sometimes leading to differing approaches even within similar contexts. Taken together, these priorities within the ProtectEU Strategy directly support the EMWP’s objective of optimising cooperation along migratory routes and reinforcing the EU’s comprehensive approach to building security in partner countries. EMWP and CivCom could explore how to align the relevant provisions of the Strategy and relevant mandates of CSDP missions. As CSDP missions are invited by host countries, relevant mandates also obviously need to be agreed with those host countries.

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<sup>3</sup> CivCom Warsaw - CSDP JHA non-paper, January 2025

## Deepening Cooperation along Key Migratory Routes

### EUCAP Sahel Niger

EUCAP Sahel Niger was operational from 2012 to 30 September 2024<sup>4</sup>. The mission's mandate was expanded after 2015 to include the fight against irregular migration, support for Nigerien authorities in border management, anti-smuggling and anti-trafficking operations. EUCAP Sahel Niger contributed to the establishment of mobile border units, training of local security forces, and the development of data-sharing mechanisms with Frontex and other EU actors. The mission's activities led to increased arrests of migrant smugglers and disruption of established irregular migratory routes but also generated local socio-economic consequences and criticism regarding the criminalisation of traditional migration patterns. The closure of the mission in June 2024, following the unilateral denunciation of the Status of Mission Agreement (SOMA) by Nigerien authorities, marks the end of this direct EU engagement, but its legacy in terms of capacity building and migration management remains relevant for future EU actions in the region. The regional CSDP initiative – RACC with security advisors in five G5 Sahel countries could be included in the cooperation on irregular migration. Its mandate ends on 31 January 2026.

### EUCAP Sahel Mali

In Mali, the EUCAP Sahel Mali focuses on supporting the implementation of the security sector reform led by the Malian government by providing strategic advice, mentoring, training, material support and infrastructure projects to the National Police, Gendarmerie, and the relevant ministries. In January 2025, the EUCAP's mandate has been extended for a period of 2 years with the objective to maintain its focus on Bamako and the South (pending the security situation), and adapt its strategic objectives on identified priorities such as reinforcing support to the fight against irregular migration, terrorism and trafficking, including slavery and the fight against impunity, through advice to the Ministries of Justice and Security, training (non-operational for Gendarmerie and National Guard) and support to specialised units and projects.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/09/09/eucap-sahel-niger-mission-extended-until-30-september-2024-with-an-adjusted-mandate/>

The mission contributes to strengthening the capabilities of the Malian internal security forces in many areas, including integrated border management that supports the Malian authorities in extending state presence, building resilience in vulnerable border regions and fights against irregular migration, terrorism and trafficking. In this context, the Brigade for the Repression of Migrants' Smuggling and Human Trafficking (BRTMTEH) is a specialized unit within the Malian National Police, established in October 2019, dedicated to combating migrant smuggling and human trafficking. In April 2025, EUCAP Sahel Mali, together with its partners, opened newly rehabilitated spaces at the Brigade's headquarters in Bamako. These include a room with tinted glass for victim identification of suspects, six boxes for confidential statement-taking, and separate living spaces for male and female victims, all designed to safeguard the identity and safety of victims and ensure respect for their rights. This support is part of EUCAP's broader commitment to building the Brigade's capacity through infrastructure, equipment, and specialized training for officers. The mission's work on establishing integrated border security centres and supporting the adoption of national strategies for border area security is particularly relevant for migration management as well as its support the Brigade for the Repression of Migrants' Smuggling and Human Trafficking (BRTMTEH), even though limited to capacity building. Subject to its mandate, the mission can enhance its role in monitoring migratory flows and security incidents along the southern and western borders, feeding this intelligence into EU-wide early warning systems. As a positive element of the continued partnership with Mali, on 27 January 2025, the mandate of EUCAP Sahel Mali was extended until 31 January 2027.

## EUBAM Libya

Libya remains a key transit and destination country on the Central Mediterranean route. EUBAM Libya's mandate has been refocused on border management, cross-border crime, and counter-terrorism, with a strong emphasis on technical advice, capacity building, and institutional reform. The mission's Memorandum of Understanding with the Libyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the establishment of joint technical working groups mark significant progress in building trust and operational cooperation. While political realities limit direct engagement in southern Libya, EUBAM can support capacity building for Libyan agencies operating in these areas, in coordination with international partners. In 2020, HoM EUBAM Libya and Chief of Mission IOM Libya signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on mutual cooperation. [The aim of the MoU was to ensure the cooperation in the implementation of EU *Trust Fund Support of Integrated Border and Migration Management in Libya* (SIBMMIL) project, in which IOM was an implementing partner.]

## EUAM Ukraine

On the Eastern Route, the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has transformed the operational environment on the EU's eastern flank. EUAM Ukraine has adapted its mandate to support border management, facilitate the flow of refugees and humanitarian aid, and advise on integrated border management strategies. The mission's cooperation with Frontex and other JHA actors has been formalized, enhancing the EU's capacity to respond to migration-related security threats. Expanding joint situational analysis and information exchange between EUAM Ukraine, Frontex, and Member States' border agencies will help monitor and manage cross-border flows, including the movement of refugees, IDPs, and illicit goods. Intensifying support for Ukrainian authorities in implementing EU best practices in border management, crisis response, and resilience to hybrid threats, with a focus on sustainability and local ownership, is essential. EUAM Ukraine's on-the-ground presence should be leveraged to provide timely intelligence and operational support to EU Member States facing secondary migration flows or security risks along the eastern route. Looking ahead to the post-war period, it will be important for EUAM Ukraine to consider how it can best support the safe and efficient movement of people, including displaced persons in the EU returning to Ukraine and internally displaced persons in Ukraine.



## EUAM Iraq

EUAM Iraq, launched in 2017, provides strategic advice and assistance to Iraqi authorities, especially the Ministry of Interior and the Office of the National Security Adviser, on civilian security sector reform—including integrated border management and countering organised crime—which are directly relevant for improving border security. In the context of the EU-Iraq migration action plan, EUAM Iraq’s support for strengthening Iraqi border management capacities, enhancing inter-agency coordination, and promoting international cooperation is particularly valuable. The mission’s experience in capacity building, crisis management, and the development of national strategies contributes to more effective control of irregular flows and helps to address the root causes of displacement and irregular migration. Lessons learned from EUAM Iraq’s engagement can inform future CSDP and EU actions in the region, especially as the EU seeks to foster regional cooperation on migration, improve readmission processes, and prevent the exploitation of migratory routes by organised crime networks.

## CSDP–JHA Synergies

CSDP missions operate in a policy framework that sets out the EU migration policy and operational objectives along the migratory routes, while at the same time other EU actors and tools are active along the routes and work towards the achievements of those objectives. Such complex environment requires enhanced coordination to make sure that all actors and instruments are moving coherently towards achieving the same policy and operational goals, while avoiding duplications and overlaps. Efforts are needed to enhance such coherence.

Beyond that coordination layer, there are also legal provisions that are applicable to the cooperation between EU Agencies and the CSDP missions. For instance, Article 68(1)(j) of the European Border and Coast Guard Regulation<sup>5</sup> requires Frontex and CSDP missions to cooperate within the framework of working arrangements to promote the European integrated border management standards and to ensure situational awareness and risk analysis. Currently, the only active CSDP mission to have a working arrangement in place with Frontex is EUAM Ukraine.

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<sup>5</sup> Regulation (EU) 2019/1896

Optimizing cooperation on the migratory issues, contributing to EU's internal-external security nexus, requires further enhancing or, where necessary, as mentioned above, institutionalizing CSDP–JHA synergies. The Civilian CSDP Compact and recent policy papers highlight the need for systematic, structured cooperation between CSDP missions and EU and Member States' JHA agencies at both strategic and operational levels, whenever possible, bearing in mind the legal constraints, the policy mandates and choices and the availability of resources. Regular dialogue platforms could be established between CSDP missions and JHA agencies to share best practices and coordinate on operational priorities. Joint training initiatives and short-term secondments between CSDP missions and JHA agencies (e.g., Frontex, Europol, CEPOL, Member States' law enforcement agencies and criminal justice actors) could be considered where necessary in order to build mutual understanding and operational capacity. JHA actors could be consulted where relevant in the planning and review of CSDP mission mandates to ensure coherence and complementarity. Building on current Member States secondments, more experts from the field of JHA should be seconded by Member States to the civilian missions. That's why further outreach to Member States law enforcement agencies and criminal justice actors is vital.

Effective migration management requires robust monitoring of migratory flows and related security risks. CSDP missions are uniquely positioned to provide their own products on-the-ground intelligence, early warning, and context-sensitive analysis. Developing interoperable data platforms and secure communication channels to facilitate real-time information exchange between missions, JHA agencies, and partner authorities could be relevant. Integrating CSDP mission reporting into EU-wide early warning and risk assessment mechanisms will support timely and targeted policy responses. Cross-mission intelligence sharing, especially along contiguous migratory routes, will help identify emerging trends and coordinate responses. In turn, this would also benefit the work carried out by the Commission under the Migration Preparedness and Crisis Blueprint, in which the JHA Agencies and EEAS are already involved, with a particular emphasis on situational awareness, early warning, and forecasting.



## **The Way Forward**

Looking forward, the EU should aim at continuing implementing its policy objectives on the external dimension and make best use of all the available tools towards that end. Depending on the actual operational needs and gaps, that could include further deepening operational cooperation by institutionalizing regular joint activities, training, and intelligence sharing between CSDP missions, JHA agencies, and partner country authorities along all major migratory routes. The possible contribution of CSDP missions to Member States' efforts in tackling internal and external security challenges can be further fine-tuned by Council working groups under JHA and Foreign Affairs Councils. Implementing the relevant legal provisions requiring conclusion of legal instruments of cooperation with Frontex should be pursued as an element of priority. Investments in advanced monitoring, data analysis, and communication tools where relevant could enhance situational awareness and operational effectiveness. Regional cooperation frameworks such as Team Europe Initiative should be fostered to integrate CSDP missions, EU and Member States JHA actors, and local partners into coherent, cross-border responses.

### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. How can Member States take better advantage from CSDP civilian missions' knowledge and expertise to increase the effectiveness of migration management along key migratory routes?
2. How can the EU better measure and demonstrate the impact of CSDP civilian missions on migration management, security sector reform, and partner country resilience?
3. What would be the options to increase the cooperation and the coherence of activities between the CSDP missions, EU agencies and other EU funded actions?

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