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Training Civilian Experts for OSCE Peace Missions – What Progress Five Years after Istanbul?

With the adoption of the REACT programme,¹ the OSCE Summit in Istanbul in November 1999 emphasized in a striking way the need to build up reserves of civilian experts in the participating States for future missions. These carefully chosen specialists must be available to the Organization at short notice, especially for deployment in acute crisis situations. The decision to establish REACT was primarily adopted in view of the difficulties that had arisen in the deployment of 2,000 personnel for the Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM) in 1998. The aim of this paper is to offer a critical assessment of the training arrangements existing for civilian personnel for OSCE operations five years after that decisive moment. Following a description of recently established structures in this area, remaining weak spots will be indicated and specific requirements for action on the part of those supplying personnel as well as those employing personnel will be discussed.

Preparation Is Everything

While military and police personnel generally receive adequate operational training, the need to provide civilian experts for international peacekeeping operations with appropriate training has only recently been placed on the political agenda. The demands on modern peacekeeping operations have increased considerably over the last ten years and are now characterized by multidimensionality, the diversity of the actors and organizations involved and, not least, significantly greater risks for the personnel deployed. The experiences of the KVM confirmed the glaring shortcomings of personnel without military training, first and foremost with regard to the necessary security training. Since the need for well-trained and professional civilian personnel is expected to continue to increase in the future, there is a need for urgent action. Moreover, the quality of the civilian component is becoming more and more decisive to the success of international multidimensional intervention. In view of the predominantly civilian nature of OSCE field missions, it is not surprising that the OSCE was the first of the relevant international organizations to deal with this development – or to have to deal with it.

1 REACT: Rapid Expert Assistance and Co-operation Teams.

The Training Dimension of REACT

At first, however, very little attention was paid to the training aspect. It was decided to establish new structures in the OSCE participating States so that suitable personnel could be made available to the Organization in sufficient number and, if necessary, at very short notice. The OSCE Secretariat was to be strengthened to enable a swift selection of candidates to take place more efficiently, using transparent selection criteria. The systematic training of these civilian personnel reserves was given no specific mention in the OSCE Charter for European Security of 1999 but was increasingly recognized as a complementary measure for personnel selection in the participating States during the implementation of the REACT programme. The factor that speaks most strongly in favour of systematically preparing the personnel reserve is the need to secure the desired level of deployability. This can only be achieved on the basis of thorough training. In acute crisis situations, the Organization will not have enough time to make the experts assigned to it "crisis-proof" by means of two-week training courses.

Both the concluding report of the meeting between the REACT Task Force and representatives of the participating States on 28 March 2000 and the subsequent concept paper drawn up by the REACT Task Force under the leadership of Ambassador Victor Tomseth emphasized the training dimension of REACT, and the OSCE Secretariat was instructed to develop standards for the preparation of OSCE field personnel. Since their publication in November 2000, the OSCE Training Standards² have served as a framework for a constantly increasing number of training activities, and are recognized outside the OSCE as general guidelines for basic preparation for field operations regardless of the professional expertise involved. The decision of the Permanent Council of 29 June 2000 on the strengthening of OSCE operational capacities³ explicitly mentions for the first time the importance of training and preparation and calls for close co-ordination between the training processes in the participating States and the OSCE measures for integrating new mission members.

This aspect was expanded – albeit modestly – in February 2002 in the OSCE Training Strategy for the period 2002 to 2004,⁴ in which the OSCE Training Co-ordinator was called upon to support the participating States in their efforts in this regard. He was also instructed to exploit synergies through closer co-operation with partner organizations within the framework of the Platform for Co-operative Security. Since then, the Training Co-ordinator and the staff of the Training Section in the OSCE Secretariat have

2 Training Standards for Preparation of OSCE Mission Staff, first release November 2000, Training Section, OSCE Secretariat.

3 See OSCE, Permanent Council, Decision No. 364, Strengthening of OSCE Operational Capacities, 29 June 2000, PC.DEC/364.

4 See OSCE, Permanent Council, Decision No. 465, Adoption of the OSCE Training Strategy for the Period 2002 to 2004, 7 February 2002, PC.DEC/465.

actively supported numerous training activities in a total of ten participating States, either by directly providing training or arranging for external personnel to give lectures, or in the form of training material, handbooks, etc.

Unmistakable Progress – Discernible Shortcomings

If we compare the situation today with that of 1998, it is clear that an ever-increasing number of participating States have taken up the systematic training of civilian peacekeeping personnel and in some cases have invested considerable resources in these activities. Several approaches can be seen here, corresponding to the respective requirements of each country and the number of experts being made available to the OSCE in the form of secondments. For example, some states have created a permanent reserve of experts and provide them with regular training. In other countries, pools of experts have existed for a considerable time already, and their experienced members are no longer in need of basic preparation for deployment in dangerous situations. There are other countries that use online courses to prepare potential candidates for OSCE operations. Another group can rely on private or partly state-run training facilities that have considerable experience in providing training to multinational groups of civilian staff for OSCE or UN missions.⁵

The OSCE Training Section was involved in virtually all developments in an advisory capacity and tries to ensure that minimum standards required by the receiving organization are observed. In that connection, it is particularly important in view of scarce resources and the great needs of other organizations (especially the United Nations) not to ask too much of participating States by insisting on an OSCE-specific orientation. In the interests of interoperability, i.e., to ensure the flexible use of these personnel reserves by various organizations, each in accordance with its mandate, the training activities should impart general skills, knowledge, and abilities that are of relevance in the field – and of relevance regardless of the organization ultimately mandated by the international community. A model is provided by the Centre for International Peace Operations (*Zentrum für Internationale Friedenseinsätze*, ZIF), established in Berlin in 2002, which trains German civilian peacekeeping personnel for operations within the framework of the United Nations, the European Union, and the OSCE. The personnel reserve, which is to be expanded to include 2,000 individuals, can be made available according to the specific needs of the mandated international organization. However, in view of the OSCE's secondment principle and the relative ease this brings when planning deployment,⁶ the OSCE is the Centre's largest customer.

5 Such as the Austrian Study Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution in Stadtschlaining and the Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies (*Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna*) in Pisa, Italy.

6 The United Nations recruits civilian personnel directly on the basis of individual applications but has recently begun to consider making use of the secondment of civilian experts under certain circumstances.

Despite these very positive developments, the most recent statistics on OSCE induction courses for new mission members show that only around a third of the members can be regarded as experienced and well-prepared. A further third possess prior mission experience, often gained working for the United Nations or a non-governmental organization, but have not been formally trained. The remaining – and most problematic – third consists of persons who, despite possessing appropriate professional qualifications, have neither undergone adequate training nor gained experience in previous deployments abroad. This clearly shows that, despite all the progress, a further redoubling of effort will be required to ensure that all mission members receive suitable training that will bring civilian experts up to somewhere near the training level of military and police personnel.

EU Training for Civilian Experts for Peace Missions – Also a Positive Stimulus for the OSCE

The strengthening of the EU's capacity to react to crises decided on at the summits of the EU in Feira (2000), Göteborg (2001), and especially Thessaloniki (2003) relates mainly to the development of personnel capacities in the areas of the military, the police, and civilian expertise in the framework of crisis management, broadly understood. These reserves are intended for future EU-led missions, but can also be made available to the United Nations, the OSCE, or the Council of Europe for their field operations. Against this background, the European Commission launched in 2001 the project entitled Training for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management, which has since led to a multitude of training activities. The training institutions in nine EU states brought together in the EU Group on Training⁷ have developed, along with the core courses designed according to OSCE training standards, a series of specialization courses in various key civilian areas. These cover subjects such as rule of law, human rights, democratization, civil administration, conflict transformation, press and public information/media development, and mission administration. The particular experience of the OSCE in civilian crisis management was incorporated from the beginning and made a decisive contribution towards the preparation and organization of both core and specialization courses.

If we take a look at the OSCE Staffing Matrix first published in the year 2000, which indicates the twelve most important areas of expertise in field

7 The Austrian Study Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution (Austria), the Danish School of Administration (Denmark), the Diplomatic School (*Escuela Diplomática*; Spain), the Abo Academy University, Helsinki (Finland), the National School of Administration (*Ecole nationale d'administration*; France), the Centre for International Peace Operations (Germany), the Sant'Anna School for Advanced Studies (Italy), the Folke Bernadotte Academy (Sweden) and Peaceworkers UK (United Kingdom).

operations,⁸ it becomes apparent that the fields of activity of civilian experts in the two organizations largely correspond. Since EU member states, of which there are now 25, provide over 60 per cent of the experts assigned to OSCE missions, these training activities will, in the medium term, also have a positive effect on the quality of civilian personnel in the OSCE. In the short run, however, some structural impediments to the flexible use of the civilian personnel trained need to be overcome – for example, an absence of mutual recognition of such training. Although the future of this project beyond 2004 is still uncertain, the EU Group on Training has already given a decisive, continuing impetus to the systematic selection and preparation of civilian experts for crisis management operations.

The OSCE Training Strategy for 2005-2007

The in-depth discussions – which take place every three years – between the OSCE Training Co-ordinator and the participating States on the general direction to be given to training measures in the OSCE context have proved an appropriate tool for gearing all training activities to the continually changing needs of the staff of the Secretariat, the institutions, and the missions, and also for mobilizing the necessary political support for them.

The area of mission training – that is to say, the first and perhaps most important part of the training process through which a mission participant should ideally pass – will, on the proposal of the Training Co-ordinator, be given considerably more emphasis within the strategy in the future. In the framework of the negotiations regarding the Training Strategy for 2002-2004, this aspect was only partly taken into account (see above), because some participating States wished to entrust the preparation of all the seconded personnel to the OSCE Secretariat. For reasons of cost, this idea did not obtain consensus. The significant increase in predeployment training in some participating States confirms, however, the growing appreciation that a basic provision of essential training must take place in the sending state, in view of the time factor and not least as part of the responsibility of the state to provide due support for its nationals.

Nevertheless, the continuing lack of involvement in these initiatives of many participating States that do not have capacities of their own impedes the exploitation of important potential synergies. Such networking – that is, the development and maintenance of a training network of this kind – is a key area of work being assigned to the OSCE Training Co-ordinator for the years 2005-2007.

8 Human rights, rule of law, democratization, elections, economic and environmental affairs, press and public information, media development, political affairs, administration, monitoring, military affairs, and civilian police.

The first OSCE training and recruitment conference in the autumn of 2004 brought those responsible for recruitment and training from the participating States together with delegations, missions, and partner organizations and provided a forum for exchange, sharing of best practices, and dialogue, which should ultimately promote increased co-operation among the participating States. Hitherto unutilized potential exists on a wide front: Thus nearly all national training courses allow at least some participation by persons from other countries. This is not only useful for didactic reasons (because in this way work in international teams can be practised already during the training stage) but also provides an opportunity to those states for which, because of the small numbers of staff being seconded and consequently the absence of a critical mass, investment in national training programmes is not economical. Joint planning and a better exchange of information would give a second chance to the idea already put forward in the REACT context, but not realized, of regional or subregional co-operation in the training of civilian experts.

In this connection, a particularly noteworthy example of co-operation is the memorandum of understanding between the Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Federation and the OSCE Secretariat on support for training activities for the benefit of future Russian members of OSCE missions, which was signed in January 2004. The OSCE Training Section is not only offering active support and advice for the development of a Russian national training centre to be situated in the Diplomatic Academy, but will also function as a catalyst for the establishment of links with training institutions in other OSCE States. For example, co-operation with ZIF and other institutions is being initiated, and will undoubtedly expand in the coming years.

Predeployment Security Training Is a Matter of Survival

In the past, the need for thorough training in the sending state was questioned on the grounds that there were induction courses for new staff in the various organizations and that therefore the programmes (supposedly) involved duplication or were simply redundant. In the first place, however, the OSCE is the only organization to have established a system of compulsory induction and, second, such programmes cannot in any case be compared with predeployment training; both activities are vital and should certainly be co-ordinated.

Predeployment training has the primary task of making civilian experts "crisis-proof" by transmitting knowledge and, above all, skills that could be critical to their survival as part of a security training exercise. In an organization that bases recruitment on the principle of secondment, it is clearly the responsibility of the participating States to provide this basic training. Induction courses for staff in the various organizations are too short in duration to

allow for more than a very superficial level of training. New staff must already be familiar with the fundamental principles when they are introduced by a given organization to specific procedures, work routines, and standards. To give an example, to offer a security briefing during the general induction programme and another on arrival at the mission undoubtedly is and will continue to be the responsibility of the receiving organization. But the organization should be able to assume that the experts made available can handle radio equipment, steer four-wheel-drive vehicles, find their way alone in open country with the help of a compass, and that they are aware of possible danger from mines. The security aspect cannot be sufficiently emphasized. In view of the existing risks faced by international mission members, which have grown exponentially, there must be no slackening of efforts to provide really comprehensive training for civilian experts, even in the context of the OSCE, whose 18 missions have in recent years seen a gradual improvement in the security situation, going against the worldwide trend. The latest rioting in Kosovo in March 2004 confirmed in a striking manner that civilian personnel must always be prepared for the "worst case". Events and developments are difficult to predict, by their very nature, in a crisis operation. It would therefore be extremely irresponsible to allow any let-up or complacency in the preparation of civilian experts. This is a joint responsibility of which sending states and the receiving organization must be aware. Much still remains to be done to ensure that this unit receives the attention and, above all, the resources that it deserves on the basis of objective conditions and its increased significance.