



EUROPEAN CENTRE  
OF EXCELLENCE  
FOR CIVILIAN  
CRISIS MANAGEMENT

**Speech of the  
Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs  
Heiko Maas, MdB**

**on the occasion of the opening of the  
European Centre of Excellence for Civil Crisis  
Management  
(Centre of Excellence - CoE)**

**Berlin, 17. September 2020**

Colleagues,

Members of the Parliament,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

How do you teach a Portuguese police officer to read Ukrainian customs documents?

And how do you prepare an Irish coast guard to work in Mogadishu?

One could think that these are **technical questions**.

But getting the answers to such questions right is crucial to the **success of EU missions** abroad.

Today, we are officially opening an institution that will help us answer such questions: the ***European Centre of Excellence for Civilian Crisis Management***.

It will help the EU and its Member States to **improve their civilian missions**. This means recruiting the right people, but also giving them the best training possible.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are setting up the Centre at a **critical moment**.

- The **COVID-19 pandemic** will most likely create further instability in our neighborhood.
- We are dealing with **destabilizing actors** in a number of countries – just think of Ukraine, Syria or Libya.
- And the **United States** is retrenching – from Afghanistan, but also from Africa.

For the **European Union** this can only mean one thing: we need a toolbox to solve the conflicts in our own neighborhood.

And this toolbox, ladies and gentlemen, is our ***Common Security and Defence Policy***.

Making it more effective is therefore a central goal of our **EU Council Presidency**.

- Recently, we have started work on the **Strategic Compass** that will outline our level of ambition in the field of security and defence.
- And we will continue our defence cooperation via **PESCO**.

But if the crises from Bamako to Benghazi and Donetsk have taught us one thing, it is this: they **cannot be solved by military means alone**.

Building sustainable peace requires an “integrated approach”.

Therefore, civilian crisis management must be at the heart of European foreign and security policy.

We know that this is easier said than done.

- Well-trained advisors with political experience and diplomatic skills are hard to find.
- Trust in the justice system cannot be established overnight.
- And building democratic police forces in a country plagued by corruption remains an uphill battle.

In 2018, Member States made a political commitment to move forward in the **Civilian CSDP Compact**. Today, we are filling this commitment with life.

The **Centre of Excellence** is Germany's central contribution to the Compact. But more importantly, it is a joint European project – at the service of Member States and the European External Action Service. Eighteen EU Member States are already part of it – with more to join. The Centre is also open to NATO partners.

It will **pool knowledge**, offer **practical advice** and answer **concrete needs** to improve EU civilian missions.

Above all, this means getting **the right people** to do the job.

And we all know that often **women** are the right people to build peace and to mediate in conflicts.

This is why it is so important to attract more women to join EU civilian missions – one of the key goals of the Compact that the Centre will pursue.

Dear friends,

I know that many of you who are here today or following us via the livestream have been working for years towards this day.

And while I already had the pleasure to inaugurate the Centre's premises on Monday – the opening would not have been complete without you, its **pioneers and supporters**:

- the **Member States** who responded with enthusiasm to our initiative,
- the **European External Action Service** as the Centre's "Preferred Partner",
- the **Bundestag**, which made additional financial resources available,
- the **community of experts**, who gave important guidance,
- and, of course, the Centre's Founding Director, **Volker Jacoby**, and his great team.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a challenge for a **Portuguese police officer** to work in Ukraine and for an **Irish coast guard** to move to Somalia.

But it is their commitment that will make the *Centre of Excellence* truly excellent.

And it is their efforts – and the efforts **of all men and women serving in EU missions abroad** – that allow Europe to manage the crises in its neighborhood.

They have our full support.

Thank you and the best of luck and success in your work!