

DCAF Days in Brussels 2022

Event Report



Opening of the DCAF Days in Brussels with the plenary session on the implication of the war in Ukraine on SSG/R globally and the way the EU can adapt to implement the Strategic Compass. Speakers from left: Abigail Robinson (DCAF), Maciej Popowski (NEAR), Brice de Schieter (EEAS), and Thomas Guerber (DCAF). Photo: DCAF.

The 2022 edition of the 'DCAF Days in Brussels' was held on May 23rd. The purpose of the event was to provide a forum for staff of EU institutions, EU member states, and DCAF to take stock of developments in SSG/R policy and practice, as well as to explore the role of SSG/R in the implementation of the EU's Strategic Compass. The meeting took place in the midst of significant geopolitical changes globally and a significant amount of discussion was around how this will affect the approach to, and impact of, supporting security governance.

For more information:

Mark Downes

Deputy Director
Head of Operations Department
✉ m.downes@dacf.ch

Antoine Hanin

Senior SSR Advisor
DCAF in Brussels Office
Avenue des Arts 7/8
1210 Brussels – Belgium
✉ a.hanin@dacf.ch

The morning plenary sessions brought together senior EU and DCAF officials to look at the political and strategic developments over the last few years that have influenced the implementation of SSG/R at the EU level and globally. Photo: DCAF.



Summary of key issues discussed

The war in Ukraine has had a significant impact on the EU's security and defense architecture and priorities. The EU's response, together with the approach of the EU's Strategic Compass, means that the EU is now seen as a global security and defence actor. It is increasing its support to the defence sector of partner countries. It now can equip, as well as train military forces. This reinforced role is seen as an opportunity but also as a (governance) risk. Indeed, there is ample evidence showing that the train and equip approach alone does not work. Security provision will only be more effective as it becomes more accountable. The EU support to the defence sector has to be embedded into a broader approach of reinforcement of the management, leadership and oversight of the sector.

In the midst of the current security and economic crisis, development and geographic priorities may change. Coming on the heels of COVID, the current economic and security crisis in Europe, as a result of the invasion of Ukraine, will inevitably influence the development and foreign policy of the EU and its member states for some time. Increased defence spending also signals a significant policy shift and a re-allocation of priorities, budgets and political focus. Geographically we will already see a pivot in terms of priorities back towards the Balkans and the East Neighbourhood. How this will affect engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa and the focus of security and development initiatives is yet to be seen. With limited resources, donors may decide to focus on stabilisation and containment initiatives rather than the longer-term approach of tackling the political issues around root causes of insecurity.

The world is becoming more polarised, and security policy is more isolationist. Where previously countries coalesced around apolitical norms and standards on security governance, they are now being provided with alternatives. Democratic governance, as a concept, is being openly questioned, as is its cultural appropriateness. The EU and DCAF

adhere to a liberal model of security sector governance, which recognises the importance of accountability and oversight, and ensures a role for civil society, a free media and parliament. Countries are now however being presented with alternative forms of governance models that do not espouse checks and balances to power, do not take a people-centered approach to security and justice; and do not create space of civil society and the media in oversight.

Many of the countries where we collectively support SSG/R can easily shift their centre of gravity away from the liberal approach to security governance. And in others, the gains made through SSR in recent years can still be easily reversed. Even before the current crisis, there has been a slow erosion of human rights norms and standards, including SSG/R principles that have been established through the multilateral (UN; AU; EU) system. Developing effective ways to work in the evolving context, while still maintaining a focus on these universal principles, will be a key challenge for SSG/R in the coming years.



Participants at the plenary session that examined future perspectives and opportunities for the EU's support to SSG/R and its partners, and analyzed what can be done better. Photo: DCAF.

The new EU Strategic Compass sets a clear direction for the EU and its contribution to SSG/R, to reinforce the effectiveness and the accountability of the security sector in partner countries. The Strategic Compass aims to preserve universal rights and the international rules-based order. There was a recognition that security provision will be more effective

as it becomes more accountable. There is a wealth of evidence showing that when the focus is only on reinforcing the effectiveness of the security sector, without the accountability, the results on security provision for the population is limited.



Bertrand Romain (EEAS) participating in the roundtable on defence reform, military capacity building and the role of SSG/R. Photo: DCAF.

The EU has the tools and instruments to embrace that broader support. It can use the EPF, CSDP missions and NDICI-Global Europe programmes to engage in SSG/R. **The use of EPF for Ukraine was a good example of a quick and needed EU reaction.** There is an increasing demand for equipment funded by the EPF from other countries. It shows that it is a relevant tool for the future role of the EU as a security actor. But this should be done with the reinforcement of accountable institutions in the partner countries. While the reasons behind the use of the EPF for Ukraine are clear, there are consequences for its not being used for its original purpose, which was to provide CSDP missions with greater flexibility of engagement.

The EU remains one of the major donors supporting SSG/R and has increased its role over the years as a contributor to international peace and security. However, if the EU wants to be 'more of a player rather than just a payer' in international security, it has to have both the capacity and the will to engage in political dialogue on security governance. It is important that security governance is integrated into the EU's **formal political**

dialogue with its partner countries (such as DRC or Niger), which takes place at a high level, but also at an operational level on specific sectors and programmes.

In many of the contexts in which the EU and its member states engage, the security environment is increasingly shaped by growing offers of direct support from non-traditional partners (UAE, China, Turkey, Russia, etc.), which has diluted the influence and reliance of the traditional actors (UN, EU, Western bilateral assistance) on national SSR processes. Rapid and evident backsliding of standards and value commitments in many countries has raised questions as to whether current traditional SSG/R approaches build sufficient resilience to political shifts and focus on approaches that can help solidify reform gains and prevent their political capture and eventual undoing.

As a political and security actor the EU needs to be able to defend its democratic values. The EU took an important step through the adoption of the Strategic Compass, but it will need to implement it and reconfigure its partnerships with other actors, countries, and international organisations. On the one hand, the EU and its member states will want to ensure that their approach to development is different, that it enshrines rules-based approaches and in that sense good governance of the security sector will remain a priority. On the other hand, this also represents a pendulum swing towards harder security priorities and approaches. It would be important to develop a more complete picture of the current trends and their likely effect on the approach to support SSG/R.

Identified current challenges for SSG/R

It is now well understood that a technical approach is not enough to affect change. Engaging with politics around SSG/R processes remains fundamental. There is a need to better understand the formal and informal political ties and dynamics in the security sector and among elites. This is valid at the local, regional, national, and international level. But as external partners, we need to remain realistic in our support to long-term complex locally owned reform processes.

People centred approaches are more important than ever in a context of eroding democratic norms. Criticism of the State and its role is rising globally and approaches to SSG/R which primarily emphasize formal institutions have had mixed results. Moving forward, SSG/R programming needs to better integrate formal and informal actors in reform processes and place greater emphasis on evolving concepts of legitimacy, rule of law, the role of the government in service provision, and the social contract. These issues will be particularly important for SSG/R in fragile and transitional contexts.

The expansion of disinformation has a major impact on public opinion and trust between the population and the security sector institutions. It is becoming a major threat to the security of the state and the people. All the actors of the security sector, including the media and CSO, have a major role to play. The EU can do more to improve access to information through support to media, inclusion of diverse voices, and a focus on greater transparency in the security sector, whether through large scale programmes or smaller scale opportunities where the EU can have a direct influence.

Cybersecurity and good governance of cyberspace are also crucial in an era of rapidly increasing digitalization and exponential growth in cyber-attacks. More commitment is needed to invest in a solid cybersecurity architecture including hiring and retaining experts in the public sector, improving regulatory frameworks, and

strengthening public-private cooperation and coordination between different state bodies (ministries, agencies). Countries in regions such as the Western Balkans are making considerable efforts to align their legal frameworks with the *acquis*, demonstrating how the EU integration process can serve as a driver for improving cybersecurity governance.

Defence reform programmes require a stronger focus on accountability and sustainability. The EU is increasingly well equipped to support partner defence institutions through tools including the EPF. But a strategic logic of engagement in support to SSR (i.e. so-called SSR matrix) is needed to ensure an overall coherent framework to support long-term change. Particularly when programmes involve training and equipping, regular control and monitoring is essential to ensure respect for human rights and accountability of equipment. Budgetary implications of reform programmes should also be well understood; security sector expenditure reviews can provide a valuable entry point to influence decision making. Addressing the welfare of members of the force is another critical but often overlooked aspect of reform.



The DCAF Days in Brussels offer a space for open discussion among partners and stakeholders to identify lessons and improve understanding of how SSG/R. Photo: DCAF.

There is a need for more information and more data to better understand the security sector of partner countries. This can contribute to smarter support programmes, more flexible and better

adapted to the evolving context and needs of the population. The EU and DCAF are engaged in conflict analysis, security sector analysis, political economy analysis to better inform their support and understand incentives for reform. Increasingly use is being made of public perception survey, victimization survey and satisfaction survey to monitor the risks and the results of programmes.

While a lot of effort has been invested by the EU and DCAF to better integrate gender equality in programming, much more can and needs to be done. There is a perceived lack of political will needed to enable further progress and insufficient operationalization of gender equality commitments. At the same time, good examples exist, including the catalytic effect of undertaking a gender-self assessment of, for example, a police service, which is often seen as an entry point to further support wider reform processes of the security sector. Assessments and other forms of evidence-based learning will be important to continue developing transformative approaches to working on gender as part of SSG/R processes.

The “weaponization” of migration, natural resources, information, and the cyberspace with the aim of destabilizing societies is growing. This poses the challenge of better linking internal and external security to tackle those destabilizing effects outside and within the EU, as well as ensuring security sector programmes are effectively linked with approaches which tackle other aspects of governance and development.

Climate change and environmental degradation have a significant demonstrated impact on human security. As the effects of climate change accelerate, demands for security responses in areas including disaster management and tackling environmental crime are likely to increase. Security sector actors in some regions may also have to manage large scale forced displacement (both cross border migration and IDPs) due to climate change’s negative consequences on the livelihoods of communities. SSG/R can help to ensure security sectors are prepared to address

climate and environmental risks as part of whole of government efforts to respond to climate change. Links between gender and security deserve particular attention, as climate change disproportionately affects women and girls.



Discussions were held on the implication of the war in Ukraine on SSR/G globally and how the EU will further support its partner countries in line of the Strategic Compass objectives. Photo: DCAF.

Highlighted issues for EU and Member States’ approaches to SSG/R

The need for the EU to better engage with the political factors influencing reforms in the security sector was discussed. One of the major challenges is to define what a political approach to SSG/R looks like in stabilisation or transition environments. Often reforms in the security sector are shaped by whether there is sufficient leverage, incentives, and engagement with the interests of the elites who manage or oversee the sector. They are also the ones making key decisions on recruitment or budgeting, or even contribute to a culture of impunity for misconduct. Too often the technical assistance offered by the international community lacks engagement with potential change agents without considering the political economy influencing the security sector. Technical interventions which are seen as strategic (such as the support to a national security policy or legal reform) risk misjudging the value and influence of these interventions

on behaviour. In many contexts this is simply ignored by security agencies when convenient.

There is a need to reach a better balanced approach to support the effectiveness as well as the accountability of the security and defence forces. The benefits of having both components is now well understood and well explained in policies and strategies. However, the EU and other donors could have a greater influence in bringing those two elements closer together when support SSG/R processes in partner countries.

The increase of military spending around the world (\$2 trillion in 2021) **combined with the lack of institutional capacity, capability, and strong oversight creates greater risks.** It can have devastating effects on fundamental rights and security, especially in countries where the state no longer has the monopoly over the use of force and where alternative models/actors emerge.

The decision to invest in SSG/R should always be contextual, adapted to the specificities of the partner countries, the politics and the needs of the population. There needs to be a very close partnership between the EU and the partner country to make it work. When there is a willingness on the part of the EU and Member States, and a request for support like in Mozambique recently, the EU can mobilize all its tools to support SSG/R, such as CSDP missions, EPF, humanitarian support in collaboration with the UN, the WB, and EU Member States. Joint development of programmes with partner institutions, grounded in a thorough analysis of the context including community needs, are critical to the success of any reform process.

There is a lack of expertise in EU institutions on security issues in general and on SSG/R. There is no significant military and security advisory capacity in Delegations. It is evolving in some Delegations where the EU has an important portfolio on security issues. But EU Delegations also need security governance experts, political analysts, and programme

managers with experience in the security sector.

The EU SSG Facility is a smart instrument to promote better security sector governance and work on the strategic framework to enhance coordination and complementarity for the EU and its member states support to SSG/R (i.e SSR matrix). There are many positive examples of the use of that instrument to further enhance the EU's role as a security actor such as in the Gambia, DRC, Benin, and Ethiopia.

The EU is also reinforcing its cooperation with NATO. The relationship has become more natural, and this will further be developed. There are some common projects, especially with the current "weaponization" of new sectors and the current blockage in Ukraine leading to a food crisis. Both organisations are working together to better respond to those challenges. DCAF has also been engaged with NATO through their programme on building integrity.

The EU has now a wide toolbox to support SSG/R and to address the challenges mentioned above. But it will remain crucial to adapt the tools to the context, on a case-by-case basis. SSG/R can also be used to complement other wider reforms in partner countries. And human rights, gender and age- responsive actions should not be put aside, when supporting the security sector. DCAF has developed many tools to include gender equality in SSG/R programming. It is also looking at developing similar tools within the framework of its work on youth, peace and security.

The EU will launch an evaluation of its support to SSR in the coming year. It is indeed important to look at the results and draw lessons for the future. The 2016 EU SSR policy is still a very powerful framework, and all the actors are well set up to be able to respond to many challenges mentioned above with the support of partners such as DCAF.

The EU is also increasing its Team Europe Initiatives in several countries on peace and security issues to team up with its Member States in partner countries. This can be a useful tool for sending political messages, showing the EU-wide added value both with the partner countries' institutions, but also within the EU. There are also coordination platforms through the work of DCAF's International Security Sector Advisory Team for example, convening major SSG/R donors to exchange information, analyse challenges and find new avenues for cooperation in specific countries.



Olivier Luyckx (INTPA) and Marc Friedrich (FPI) led a discussion about emerging challenges and where opportunities exist for the EU and DCAF to play a stronger role in supporting SSG/R globally. Photo: DCAF.

CSDP specific recommendations

The CSDP missions have evolved over the years and are now asked to tackle many security-related issues of which police and justice but also HR issues, finance, leadership as well as cybersecurity and the protection of cultural heritage. CSDP missions are part of the EU's integrated approach, which requires collaboration, coordination and complementarity with other actors. It requires new skills for staff deployed to those missions, which might be more difficult to find in EU Member States.

There is an evolution of the requirements from a set of technical expertise (police,

justice) towards advising, strategic, and political skills. The real challenge is about how to transfer the knowledge to lead to an actual change, to a reform process. EU staff in missions may have a real technical expertise, but often lack the soft skills to advise.

There is no solid understanding of SSG/R and the needed capacities for CSDP missions. Therefore, it is difficult to get the expertise. And there is no such expertise on SSG/R within EUMS. In addition, EUMS are not willing to release their "top talent" for CSDP missions. There are huge needs in the Member States and the best experts are more attracted by other organisations such as Frontex or other EU agencies.

The recent CSDP Training Requirements Analysis on SSR (both on the military and civilian sides) analysed the gaps between what is needed and what is available, both in terms of quantity and quality. DCAF and FBA have been leading this analysis and have suggested options to further enhance the quality of SSG/R training programmes. It was also recommended to clarify the training approach into four important capacity-building moments:

1. **Advising at the strategic level** for people designing the mandates, to make them more realistic and possible to deliver against objectives.
2. **Pre-deployment trainings:** sensitize on SSR principles to get global pictures and raise cultural & context awareness.
3. **In-mission trainings:** this is the time to focus on the skills and link the concepts to personnel concrete experiences and sharing of experience. It could be repeated on a regular basis to encourage sharing of experiences and change the culture towards a learning organization.
4. **Training of trainers / advisors / mentors** to follow-up the results achieved through training

There is also a need to develop **innovative and creative approaches to training such as the following positive examples:**

- the pre-deployment trainings for CSDP missions in Mali regarding police reform through the lens of SSG/R which was provided by DCAF.
- The delivery of a five week virtual program on Effective Advising for EUAM Iraq, organized by DCAF, with different actors from the International Community in the country.
- Focusing on soft skills and culture is an excellent opportunity to network, as well as sending the message that we care about the staff's professional development.

Other recommendations were discussed, such as creating **SSR specialized teams** of people with complementary skills, rather than looking for all skills into one single individual. This could be used as a surge capacity when needed during the implementation of the mission's mandate.



Roundtable discussion on operationalizing Gender equality to achieve peace and security. The session explored how to better integrate gender into SSG/R programming. Photo: DCAF.

Emphasized SSG/R good practices

Monitoring the implementation of the programme in complex environment regularly. Under an EU-funded programme, DCAF is doing that in Ethiopia to ensure we are still on track and to adapt our approaches to achieving the desired outcomes. It is important to question and requestion our approach at every step of the way.

Working with the middle management levels within the security institutions.

Donors usually try to support the high strategic level policy issues (National Security Policy) and then work at the lower level with capacity building type of activities. But in fact, the middle management of those institutions are key for reform processes, for management and leadership, such as in **Ethiopia**. They also have a role of “day-to-day” accountability and internal control over the lower-level police services in contact with the population.

In countries where there is even a small window of opportunity to work on SSG/R it is important to put it as a top policy issue and make it visible. In **Sudan** for example, the media attention was giving a lot of importance to SSG/R. CSOs were starting to work on the issues and DCAF was supporting them in better understanding their role and building their capacity.

In Libya, working with media and investigative journalism has proven to be an effective entry-point. DCAF has also engaged with the police on strengthening accountability and capacity for effective community security and local security provision. It is important in those contexts to identify the right people to work with, understand the state and non-state actors and the hybridity of the security sector to address short-term security needs of the population.

In Yemen, supporting women for raising their concerns in the ceasefire agreement. DCAF was able to “translate” their suggestions and what worked for them into an SSG/R language. They worked with local researchers and collected data through perceptions studies to understand the local needs. Through that process, they were able to support local ownership and buy in of women in the peace process.

“ We are very grateful for the active participation of all the EU institutions, EU Member States and DCAF colleagues during this 2022 edition of the DCAF days.

About DCAF

DCAF – Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance is dedicated to improving the security of states and their people within a framework of democratic governance, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and gender equality. Since its founding in 2000, DCAF has contributed to making peace and development more sustainable by assisting partner states, and international actors supporting these states, to improve the governance of their security sector through inclusive and participatory reforms. It creates innovative knowledge products, promotes norms and good practices, provides legal and policy advice, and supports capacity-building of both state and non-state security sector stakeholders.

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Maison de la Paix
Chemin Eugène-Rigot 2E
CH-1202 Geneva, Switzerland

☎ +41 22 730 94 00

✉ info@dcaf.ch

🐦 [@DCAF_Geneva](https://twitter.com/DCAF_Geneva)

🌐 www.dcaf.ch

