



An EU Survey on Whole-of-Government Approaches to External Conflict and Crisis

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Croatia Report

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1 | Introduction

Croatia has had a systematic and complete whole-of-government approach (WGA) since 2017, when the current National Security Strategy (Republic of Croatia 2017) was issued and the Act on National Security System (Croatian Parliament 2017) was enacted. This kind of approach is fully in line with Croatia's constitution and includes cooperation between the executive, legislative and judicial branches. What's more, unlike those of many other EU countries, Croatia's WGA explicitly includes crisis management and emergency responses at the levels of NATO and/or the European Union in its strategic and legal documents.

There are several specific characteristics of Croatia's WGA, of which the following are the most important. The first involves the country's relative youth. As a young democracy and small country, it took Croatia some time to firmly establish a number of governmental mechanisms, including those related to security, which Croatia views holistically as encompassing both the internal and external dimensions. The best (and the integrated) approach to doing so involved producing strategic documents that followed pre-existing European strategies, directives and best practices.

A second factor that contributed to Croatia's adoption of a holistic WGA has been the degree of (in)security in the surrounding region of South-East Europe. Tragic war circumstances and the war's convulsions played a major role in the ultimate breakup of the former Yugoslavia and the creation of new independent states since the mid-1990s, a time when this area was one of the key crisis regions in the world. In that period, Croatia faced a grave threat from the so-

called 'Greater- Serbian Aggression' (AKA the 'Homeland War'), suffered a large number of human casualties and widespread destruction, and even had to contend with the possibility of no longer existing. To this day, the war and the post-conflict state-building that followed have continued to exert a significant influence on the regional security of Croatia. For example, political objectives have become particularly radicalised at the moment, as the leadership of the Republika Srpska has sharpened its secessionist rhetoric and is flirting with the possibility of a referendum on the secession of the Republika Srpska from Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), leaving the Croats with the prospects of life in a rump state in which Bosniaks would make up an absolute majority of the population and ethnic Croats would be a national minority. The Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), the main centre-right party in Croatia and holder of the most seats in its parliament, supported the idea of a 'third entity', i.e. a reorganisation of BiH into a confederation of three ethnic states or at least into a federation of three or more ethnic units/territories (Kasapovic 2016: 181).

The third important factor contributing to Croatia's adoption of this kind of holistic WGA lies in the threat of modern terrorism, especially the international one, which is made even more palpable due to Croatia's geographical location near troubled countries and on one of the main routes used by organised criminal groups. As noted in the National Security Strategy (Republic of Croatia 2017), several hundred people in the region of South-East Europe joined terrorist organisations active in conflicts in Syria and Iraq and then returned to their home countries, where other individuals have also been indirectly radicalised through terrorist propaganda. Indeed, the Republic of Croatia views modern, extremist-led terrorism – which does not respect national borders or limits on the scale of destruction – as one of the greatest security threats in general, both today and in the foreseeable future, and calls for comprehensive, harmonised national and international responses to it. Furthermore, it is very important to add that, as noted in the National Security Strategy (ibid.: 8), the Croatian neighbourhood "is showing trends of strengthening of intolerance, radicalism and extremism, especially of Islamic radicalism."

2 | What policies have been developed to further policy coherence?

The WGA that is used in Croatia is explicitly outlined in official state documents at the national level: the National Security Strategy (Republic of Croatia 2017) and the Act on National Security System (Croatian Parliament 2017), which firmly and formally establishes the framework for coordination and cooperation among the various ministries of the Croatian government at the national level. The purpose of the act was to put in place a national security system that could effectively respond to modern-day threats and risks. Among other things, the act regulates the coordinated actions of the national security bodies related to crisis management and emergency responses at the levels of NATO and the EU as well as those of the homeland security system, which will be discussed in more detail below.

For example, regarding counterterrorism efforts, the first document (Republic of Croatia 2017: 12) states that: "Countering terrorism will be implemented by [an] integrated approach and interdepartmental cooperation through measures of prevention, suppression, protection, prosecution and strengthening of international cooperation." Given the country's location on an external EU border and requirements for joining the Schengen Area, the strategy (ibid.) notes that Croatia "will continue to develop its Integrated Border Management capacities."

Regarding domestic security, the strategy (ibid.: 14) states that the homeland security system “will comprise coordinated operation, the use of capability and potential of all components of national security, beginning from public security, defence, civil protection system, security-intelligence system, diplomacy and economy, and other bodies and institutions in the Republic of Croatia.”

Croatia’s homeland security system complies with and is connected to related EU frameworks. Indeed, the Act on National Security System (Croatian Parliament 2017) explicitly states that the Coordination of the Homeland Security System (CHSS) (a body discussed in more detail below) is responsible for giving supervising state bodies recommendations on how to harmonise national procedures and regulations with the crisis procedures of NATO and/or the EU.

Croatia also strongly supports the European Union Global Strategy for foreign and security policy, and it fully supports (and upholds) the WGA strategies of the UN, NATO, the OECD-DAC and the OSCE. Indeed, these WGA strategies have strongly influenced the formation of Croatia’s own WGA approach. What’s more, Croatia is actively involved in the field in implementing mutual WGAs. For example, as part of the UN, Croatia is present in India/Pakistan, the Western Sahara and Lebanon, and it holds a two-year membership on the United Nations Human Rights Council. As part of NATO, Croatia is supporting missions in Afghanistan and Kosovo (KFOR) in addition to participating in the NATO EFP (Enhanced Forward Presence) military posture. Croatia is also part of the Adriatic Trilateral together with Albania and Montenegro, and it continues to support FRONTEX operations in Bulgaria, Greece, Italy and North Macedonia. For example, a FRONTEX airplane for conducting surveillance along the EU-BiH border is stationed in the Croatian coastal city of Zadar.

3 | Who are the main actors involved in cooperating in a WGA?

Croatia’s WGA is executed by a well-defined and robust leadership body, which includes the deputy prime minister (who simultaneously serves as the minister of defence) and a number of state secretaries from the more important ministries. At the intra-ministerial level, WGA-related coordination takes place in both formal and informal ways. Formal cooperation is firmly established and formalised within separate committees that are significant for supporting WGA, which hold weekly or monthly meetings. Informal cooperation, on the other hand, takes place on an almost daily basis.

On the legislative level, there is formal WGA coordination within Croatia’s parliament. Formal cooperation is firmly established and formalised within various parliamentary committees that are important for the WGA (e.g. the Defence Committee, the Legislation Committee, the Foreign Affairs Committee, and the Domestic Policy and National Security Committee), all of which hold regular meetings. When it comes to coordination between the executive and legislative branches, Croatia’s government informs its parliament once a year about the actions that have been taken in pursuing a WGA towards external crises.

There are also a number of other efforts aimed at coordination and cooperation within and among various bodies. For example, the Ministry of Interior cooperates with the Jesuit Refugee Service. Furthermore, Croatia formally cooperates with PESCO, the Schengen

Information System (SIS), the European Defence Agency (EDA), the UN, NATO, the OECD-DAC and the OSCE, although the precise constellation of governmental bodies involved in these efforts changes depending on the particulars of the collaborative effort. For example, the parliament's European Affairs Committee formally cooperates with the UN, the EU, the OSCE and NATO. A recent example of such cooperation involved horizontal cooperation within the Ministry of Defence followed the next day by vertical cooperation in a meeting chaired by the prime minister.

Another example of cooperation relates to Croatia's efforts to boost its integrated border-management capacities, as discussed above, although this cooperation comes more in the form of financial assistance to Croatia from the European level. For example, in response to increased migration pressure, Croatia has had to reinforce the parts of its border making up part of the EU's external border with additional police officers. In addition, Croatia's Ministry of the Interior requested and subsequently received almost EUR 6.8 million in additional financial support from the European Commission. These funds have been used for a number of enhancements, such as a stationary surveillance system for the borders with BiH and Montenegro, stationary day-night long-range cameras, and seven surveillance drones (Croatian Government 2019).

There are also a number of smaller cooperations. For example, as part of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), Croatia is supporting missions along the Somalian coast (piracy), in the Mediterranean Sea (migrants), and in Ukraine as part of the EU's advisory mission there (EUAM). As part of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), Croatia's Ministry of the Interior is also providing migration-related support to EU member states, including Cyprus, Greece and Italy. Croatia's government has an agreement with the Council of Ministers of Bosnia-Herzegovina on European partnership. What's more, at Croatia's urging, the EU has paid more attention to fostering political reforms in BiH, especially when it comes to electoral law.

4 | How does your country operationalise a WGA?

Croatia has made significant institutional reforms that underscore the country's commitment to pursuing a WGA on the national level. For example, significant changes were made to how multiple governmental organisations operate, and a new state infrastructure was formed to respond to crises. This infrastructure, which is provided with sufficient human resources, is made up of the homeland security system (HSS), the National Security Council (NSC), and the body known as the Coordination of the Homeland Security System (CHSS).

The HSS aims to "provide an integral methodology and systematic monitoring of the risks for national security and establishment of the priorities in procedures" as well as to provide "coordinated preparation and implementation of regulations that will determine the measures and procedures of the security protection of importance for national security, particularly the protection of critical infrastructures" (Republic of Croatia 2017: 14). The HSS consists of: central bodies responsible for defence activities, domestic and foreign affairs, civil protection, finances, the administration of justice, security and intelligence; public and private companies (especially those involved in the private-protection sector); civil society organisations; other central bodies of the state administration that are crucial for defence or protection-and-rescue

operations (e.g. the Croatian Firefighting Association, the Croatian Red Cross or the Croatian Mountaineering Association); and skilled private individuals who can help the HSS with tasks related to risk management or in crisis situations that could potentially impact national security. When the issue involves homeland security, governments at the local and regional levels can also be engaged.

The National Security Council (NSC) is the central body of the HSS. The National Security Strategy (ibid.: 14–15) notes that the NSC has several tasks. First, it takes into consideration “the risks and issues from the scope of work of the government bodies related to national security.” Second, it enacts “guidelines, decisions and conclusions on the manners of protection and realisation of the national interests and strategic goals.” And, third, it is also supposed to “regularly review reports on the state of risks and threats to national security and other strategic and planning documents and give recommendations to competent governmental bodies for the purpose of harmonisation [of] the development of capabilities and operation.”

Lastly, the Coordination of the Homeland Security System (CHSS) was formed to coordinate the operation of the HSS; to see that the decisions, conclusions and guidelines of the NSC are implemented; and to “launch and coordinate development of the National Security Strategy or update the existing strategic documents” (ibid.: 14). To list some of its tasks in more detail, the CHSS is responsible for: supervising security threats and risk reports created by other government bodies as well as coordinating the creation of national security risk assessments; supervising the application of strategic and planning documents that have an influence on the HSS as well as giving recommendations to the relevant government bodies about capabilities development; supervising crisis-response capabilities and coordinating the development of relevant plans among various homeland security bodies; organising and participating in crisis-response exercises planned at the national government level; and providing recommendations to pertinent governmental bodies on how to align the riskresponse procedures of Croatia with those of other organisations, such as NATO and the EU. Lastly, pursuant to Article 13 of the Act on National Security System, the CHSS must keep Croatia’s president, prime minister and speaker of the parliament informed about the results of its meetings in addition to submitting an annual report on the system’s activities. Although this has not yet happened in practice, the CHSS is authorised to recommend that the government declare an emergency and establish a crisis-management headquarters.

This CHSS is comprised of: the deputy prime minister of Croatia, who is in charge of national security, as a president of the CHSS; the president’s national security adviser; several federal ministers (including those from the ministries of Defence, Foreign and European Affairs, Finance, the Interior, Justice, Health, Croatian Veterans’ Affairs, and Sea, Transport and Infrastructure; the head of the General Staff of the Croatian Armed Forces; the general director of the police; the general director of the firefighters; the general director of the Office of the National Security Council; the general director of the Security-Intelligence Agency; and the general director of the National Information Security Authority.

5 | Conclusions

The Republic of Croatia has almost completely implemented a WGA that is fully in line with the country's constitution and includes cooperation among executive, legislative and judicial authorities. The national WGA was patterned after the EU framework and shares aspects in common with several other WGAs, including those of the UN, NATO and the OSCE. As a result, the national WGA enjoys effective and high-quality institutional arrangements.

Croatia has had a WGA since 2017, when the current National Security Strategy (Republic of Croatia 2017) was adopted and the Act on National Security System was passed (Croatian Parliament 2017). There are integrated processes for initiating, programming and implementing the WGA on the national level. Furthermore, funds for enforcing the implementation of the WGA (in the form of the homeland security system) are provided by the government budget pursuant to Art. 18 of the Act on National Security System (ibid.). If the funds are not sufficient, it is possible to redistribute some funds within the government budget after officially notifying the parliament.

Furthermore, Coordination for the Homeland Security System (CHSS), the body in charge of coordinating the activities of the homeland security system and seeing that the decisions of the National Security Council are implemented, has a composition that itself reflects a horizontal WGA, as it includes the heads of several ministries and other organisations involved in responding to crises. What's more, it serves a vertical WGA function in its role as a communications channel between members of the executive and legislative branches, including the president, the prime minister and the speaker of the parliament.

6 | Reference list

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