



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

This report is part of the Bertelsmann Stiftung's EU Survey on Whole-of-Government Approaches to External Conflict and Crises (WGA) 2020. More on the WGA at <https://www.wga-project.eu>.

Please cite as follows: Bertelsmann Stiftung, WGA 2020 Country Report – Hungary. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020.

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Hungary Report

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1 | Introduction

Preventing and managing fragile and crisis situations, rendering assistance to societies in post-conflict situations, and emerging security challenges require the international community to pool resources and pursue comprehensive and coordinated approaches. This is especially the case for the member states of the European Union, which is a global actor on the international stage and possesses a huge set of instruments for these purposes.

After the change of regime in 1990, Hungary reorganised its administration and adjusted it to new values, conditions and requirements. One of the first steps was the introduction of new reporting lines corresponding to the values, rules and regulations of a parliamentary democracy as well as the establishment of the Conference of State Secretaries for Administrations, whose members represent the ministries and create an effective framework for a whole-of-government approach (WGA).

Hungary joined NATO in 1999 and the European Union in 2004. These new memberships prompted the state to introduce further measures and mechanisms for ensuring coherence and consistency in its decision-making system. It was vital to establish governmental bodies and coordination mechanisms which ensure that agreed and coordinated positions are represented. This applies to both the development and implementation of policies, including those related to external relations and participation in efforts to respond to fragile and crisis situations worldwide. The tasks involved with holding the EU presidency in 2011 presented

Hungary with additional challenges and forced its government to pay specific attention to a coherent governmental approach.

The report below aims to take stock of the measures and efforts of Hungarian governments in recent decades to develop an intra-governmental decision-making system (in other words, a WGA) in order to ensure more coherence and consistency in cases of external crisis situations.

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

The Foreign Policy Strategy of Hungary adopted in 2011 (MFA 2011) serves as a fundamental document providing guidance for foreign policy activities, including responses to crises, in both geographical and horizontal terms. However, it does not contain any explicit reference to a WGA.

The National Security Strategy (NSS) (MFA 2012: Art. 43) adopted in 2012 points to the requirement of “a comprehensive, whole of government approach” to comprehensively manage the threats mentioned in the strategy, and it tasks all government institutions “to continuously evaluate in their own area of responsibility the elements of national and international security and exposure to threats, and to take steps necessary to manage and avert them.” What’s more, it specifically states the need to apply a WGA (“government-wide coordination”) in the field of international cooperation. The ensuing articles of the strategy tackle the issues of cooperation in the fields of civil-military cooperation, development and multilateral collaboration. At the same time, however, the document does not provide any guidance for establishing specific structures and mechanisms dedicated to the type of WGA it calls for. Nevertheless, a number of specific strategies based on the NSS have been prepared in some ministries (e.g. the Ministry of Defence), and these have further strengthened the coordinated governmental approach.

At present, the most significant legal document that ensures coherence and coordination in addition to setting up structures and mechanisms for intra-governmental cooperation is Governmental Resolution 1144/2010 (VII.7.) on the “operation of the government”. The document designates the Conference of State Secretaries for Administration as the highest governmental structure. The conference convenes once a week to prepare documents in a coherent and coordinated manner for the government’s decision-making process, and it also sets on its agenda the issues related to foreign affairs, including governmental responses to crises and conflicts. In this context, proposals are mainly submitted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT). As a general rule, the MFAT reaches agreements about the proposals with the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Interior as well as with other relevant ministries prior to the submission of documents.

A similarly important decision-making channel aimed at ensuring a coherent governmental approach is established by Governmental Resolution 1007/2004 (II.12.) on “harmonization of the participation of the government in the decision-making activities of the European Union” and its updated versions, 1169/2010 (VII.18.) and 1742/2014 (XII.15.). These documents set up structures, rules and mechanisms for a WGA to all EU policies, including the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

Governmental Resolution 152/2014, which stipulates that the minister of the Prime Minister's Office is responsible for coordinating and harmonising WGA activities, should be considered another legal tool reflecting the efforts of different parts of the government to act in concert.

Regarding legislation related to Hungary's WGA, Governmental Resolution 1682/2014 (XI.26.) established the Interdepartmental Committee for Coordination of International Development Cooperation, which plays a key role in coordinating governmental activities in the fields of development and humanitarian aid.

Turning briefly to structural changes aimed at facilitating a WGA, in 2014, the portfolio of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was expanded to include international trade, energy and international investments. One of the aims of this change was to better concentrate governmental efforts and activities in the domain of external relations.

A regulation adopted on 3 July 2018 regarding the structure and operation of the Prime Minister's Office is the latest legal document to expand the domains of governmental coordination through the establishment of the State Secretariat for the Aid of Persecuted Christians and the Hungary Helps Program within the Prime Minister's Office (cf. Hungarian Government n.d.). The Hungary Helps Program is tasked with coordinating all of Hungary's bilateral humanitarian aid activities as well as with participating in the implementation of the Hungarian international development policies and multilateral humanitarian aid efforts when the MFAT is in the lead. Both structures enable the government to respond to some global security challenges (e.g. migration) in a coherent manner.

The International Development Cooperation Strategy and Strategic Concept for International Humanitarian Aid of Hungary for the 2014–2020 period (Hungarian Government 2013), which was adopted in 2013, constitutes a solid basis for Hungarian governmental and non-governmental structures to work together in a coordinated manner in the field of development and humanitarian aid. The MFAT bears primary responsibility for its implementation.

The Western Balkans, the eastern and southern neighbourhoods of Hungary, the post-Soviet states as well as the Middle East and North Africa are the regions where Hungary seeks to play a proactive role in contributing to regional stability, settling conflicts and supporting democratic processes. For obvious reasons, though to different degrees, the stability of these regions has impacts on the security of Hungary. The 2014–2020 development strategy (ibid.) also gives priority to the sub-Saharan region and some underdeveloped states in Asia. What's more, protecting the rights of Hungarian minorities in the neighbourhood plays a significant role when shaping relations with adjacent countries.

When it comes to regions farther away from Hungary, the country's key priorities are migration, the positions of local Christian communities, and the stabilisation of security situations in the theatre. These have been the main guiding principles of Hungary's positions when discussing the common EU stances in areas such as Egypt, Libya, Mali and the Sahel. For example, the Hungarian Red Cross and the Prime Minister's Office have cooperated in efforts to provide humanitarian aid in Iraq. Furthermore, since the Hungarian government views halting illegal migration flows and countering hybrid threats as external challenges of vital importance to the country's internal security, it pays specific attention to these risks.

The aforementioned criteria have also been the main guiding principles when it comes to Hungary's positions on elaborating common EU policies and activities as well as on Hungary's contributions to efforts to settle crisis situations. These have included the launch of CSDP- or NATO-led missions, such as Operation Althea in Bosnia-Herzegovina, NATO's IFOR in Kosovo, the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan as well as the EUMM in Georgia. The MFAT usually assumes the leading position when it comes to coordination and cooperation with the concerned governmental bodies (e.g. the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Interior), and these effort have functioned smoothly to date.

Cooperation between the government and the National Assembly is regulated by Act XXXVI of 2012 (National Assembly 2012: Sections 62–68) and Act 10/2014 of the National Assembly (National Assembly 2014: Section 140). Government Resolution 1742/2014 (XII.15.) regulates cooperation between the government and the National Assembly, including when it comes to foreign and EU affairs. At present, Government Resolution 1742/2014 (XII.15.) regulates cooperation between the government and the National Assembly, which is the main body responsible for the supervision of governmental activities in EU affairs.

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

As a general rule, the Conference of State Secretaries for Administration within the Prime Minister's Office is the main body that coordinates and harmonises all activities at the governmental level.

Between 2004 and 2018, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was responsible for coordinating EU affairs and policies. However, this responsibility was transferred to the minister of the Prime Minister's Office in 2018 by Government Resolution 94/2018 (V.22.).

Government Resolution 1007/2004 (II.12.) on the "harmonisation of the participation of the government in the decision-making activities of the European Union" establishes the Committee of EU Intradepartmental Coordination (CEIC) and its 52 working groups, which are the key structures for coordinating and harmonising the preparation and implementation of tasks emanating from EU membership. The CEIC is chaired by the state secretary of the Prime Minister's Office and overseen by the State Secretariat for European Policies and Coordination, which is also part of the Prime Minister's Office.

Each CEIC working group is led by a representative of the primarily concerned ministry and its staff. Additionally, each working group has permanent seats for representatives of the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Finance, and the permanent representation to the EU in Brussels, which together ensure the horizontal coordination of governmental activities.

Working Group 24 is responsible for the common foreign, security and defence policies, and ensures that the idea of a WGA is translated into practice. It is led by a representative of the MFAT and includes representatives from the staff of the minister of the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defence, and the Ministry of Finance. On the other hand, Working Group 27 is in charge of development and humanitarian aid, and led by the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and

Development in the MFAT. The two working groups closely cooperate to ensure coordination of the so-called '3D' (diplomacy, defence and development) activities. In addition to the working groups, the Interdepartmental Committee for Coordination of International Development Cooperation, comprising representatives of eight ministries, also ensures a coordinated governmental approach in the areas of development and humanitarian aid.

This integrated approach is supported by the fact that the minister of foreign affairs and trade is also responsible for policies related to foreign economic relations as well as for those involving energy, trade/ investment, migration and EU visa issues in addition to overseeing the domestic intelligence agencies.

Within the MFAT, the Directorate-General for EU Common Foreign and Security Policy and Neighbourhood Policy is the key structure for coordinating and harmonising intra-ministerial and intra-governmental activities relating to EU external relations, including crises and conflicts. Within the DG, a senior diplomat at the rank of deputy director-general is responsible for the proper functioning of this coordination mechanism. The DG operates in close partnership with the Directorate-General for Security and Non-Proliferation Policy, which is in charge of NATO affairs as well as of coordinating cooperation related to the common defence policy within the MFAT and with other concerned ministries, including the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Interior. The WGA is also facilitated by the Directorate-General for European Affairs, which is the main contact point both within the ministry and between the ministry and the State Secretariat for European Policies and Coordination within the Prime Minister's Office when it comes to EU policies.

Furthermore, the coordinated approach is enabled by the fact that the deputy state secretary for security policy, who is the political director of the MFAT, and the deputy state secretary for responses to migration challenges (whose responsibilities also include governmental activities within the UN and other international organisations) are under the supervision of the state secretary for security policy.

The legislative branch also approaches these issues in a coordinated manner. In 2002, the National Assembly established the High Committee on the European Union, which held its first meeting on 19 September 2002. Its objective has been to ensure both a consensus on integration-related issues among political parties in the National Assembly as well as coordination between the government and the National Assembly at the highest level. The committee's meetings are chaired by the president of the National Assembly. It consists of the leaders of the parliamentary groups (fractions) and the presidents of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on European Affairs, and the Committee on Justice. The prime minister and the minister of foreign affairs are permanent members of the meetings. The meetings are adjusted to the meetings of the European Council, where participants receive regular briefings on Hungary's positions.

The government of Hungary has developed close relationships with EU actors and institutions through its permanent representation to the European Union in Brussels, which is supervised by the minister of the Prime Minister's Office. Its staff mirrors the setup of the government, which enables it to contribute to any issue or policy.

Similarly, the staffs and coordination mechanisms of the Hungarian representations delegated to international organisations (e.g. the UN, NATO and the OSCE) are composed and regulated in such a way as to ensure a coordinated governmental approach.

In order to facilitate adoption of common EU decisions, the MFAT shares the positions of the Hungarian government with the embassies of the EU member states in Budapest as well as the European Commission representatives in Budapest prior to the meetings of the EU's Foreign Affairs Council and the European Council.

4 | How does your country operationalise a WGA?

As general rule, the Conference of State Secretaries for Administration is the main platform for preparing governmental decisions in Hungary and ensuring the coherence of governmental positions.

In the case of EU affairs, including external relations, governmental coordination takes place within the relevant working group of the Committee of EU Intradepartmental Cooperation (CEIC), which also meets once a week. In the MFAT, the structure responsible for coordination takes the lead in efforts to elaborate the ministry's positions, which are shared with and commented on by the representatives of the other ministries participating in the working group.

In the case of the monthly meetings of the EU's Foreign Affairs Council and the European Council, the usual preparatory procedure is complemented by two video conferences held during the week prior to the meetings. During these virtual conferences, the concerned departments of the MFAT in Budapest and the staff of the permanent representation in Brussels discuss and finalise Hungarian positions.

In the context of the EU Global Strategy and crisis management, the government of Hungary is particularly interested in enhancing the EU's defence capacities and avoiding any duplications in the activities of the EU and NATO. For this reason, Hungary supports the development of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), the implementation of programmes within the European Defence Fund, and the development of the concept of European battlegroups. On the national level, Hungary is also making specific efforts to modernise its own military capabilities as part of the 'Zrinyi 2026' programme. In these areas, cooperation and coordination of positions between the MFAT and the Ministry of Defence are particularly strong.

The main direction of the governmental decision-making mechanism is bottom-up. Cooperation among ministries and other governmental agencies mainly takes place at the level of desk officers, whose common positions or debates over certain issues are submitted to the ministerial hierarchy for approval or settlement. The interactions of staffs are governed by protocols relating to intra-governmental and intra-ministerial affairs.

In cases that touch upon 'core national interests' (e.g. migration, rights of Hungarian minorities abroad, neighbourhood policies, Christians experiencing persecution, and sensitive human rights issues), decision-making shifts to a top-down direction. In such cases, the task of the

administrations is to implement the political guidance received from the political leadership above.

In the case of the CEIC's Working Group 24 (discussed above), the top-down direction means that the coordinator for the CSDP in the MFAT, through the established hierarchy, receives clear political instructions from the Prime Minister's Office. In such cases, the tasks of the administrations and the duties of the coordinators in the ministries are limited to carrying out instructions and sharing information with relevant partners.

Lastly, a note on training. Members of the government's staff do not receive any specific training on WGA-related matters. Instead, their participation in the coordination mechanism is simply a matter of 'learning by doing'.

5 | Conclusions

There is no official document in Hungary that has the term 'whole-of-government approach' in its title. Nonetheless, there are several governmental decisions (particularly regarding EU affairs) aimed at fostering effective intra-departmental cooperation, information-sharing and decision-making, drawing lessons and accountability. The decision-making mechanism is multi-tiered, which enables the concerned governmental structures to act in concert and to harmonise any diverging views and positions. It also provides sufficient space for discussing and resolving conflicting positions.

The current practice of the Hungarian Government ensures coherence and consistency as well as an integrated, coordinated and holistic approach to decision-making regarding external relations. The national approach is in line with the political objectives, spirit and ambitions of the EU Global Strategy, particularly in the domain of common defence policy.

In practice, national and bilateral interests occasionally prevail over the principled common EU approach in Hungarian decision-making. In implementing the principle of human security, the Hungarian government gives priority to joint activities when the security of Christian communities is at risk.

The main objectives and direction of governmental decisions are to ensure the exercise of a 'central' political will. The modifications introduced in the governmental setup and decision-making mechanism in recent years have enhanced the lead role of the Prime Minister's Office, encouraged the centralisation of power, and ensured more space for the top-down approach even though the bottom-up approach continues to be the basic direction of decision-making.

Hungary's political leadership has justified the shifts by citing the dramatic changes in the international balance of power, a need for more effective representation of the interests of the whole Hungarian nation at both the global and European levels, and a need for better linkages between responses to external and internal threats.

While the top-down approach theoretically allows for subjective decision-making, a lack of impact studies and potential collateral damage, high-level interventions and 'political steering' have also helped to effectively cope with the usual disagreements within the system, to take

swift decisions and to effectively address some global challenges, such as migration and the protection of 'core' national values.

The integration of foreign policy and relevant economic tools within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade has greatly contributed to the application of a WGA approach. However, there is a gap between the proactive conflict-preventive approach of the EU institutions and the basically reactive decision-making principles and mechanisms in Hungary. Sharing WGA-related best practices between the EU and national levels could prove useful for further developing Hungary's capabilities.

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