



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

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Romania Report

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1 | Introduction

The first time that a whole-of-government approach (WGA) was introduced and operationalised in Romania was in 2002, when the country's Supreme Council of National Defence (CSAT) was founded. The CSAT is an independent body working under the leadership of the president of Romania and accountable to the parliament, and it is responsible for elaborating the country's strategic vision as well as for providing oversight of and for coordinating all security- and defence-related policies and decisions. Its members are the president of the country; the prime minister; the ministers of foreign affairs, national defence, internal affairs, justice, economy and public finance; the heads of the domestic and foreign intelligence services; the chief of the general staff; the presidential adviser for national security; and the secretary of the Supreme Council of National Defence (CSAT). This wide-ranging composition ensures coordination and coherence in both decision-making and implementation.

Since Romania's constitution also makes the president the country's highest representative for foreign and security policy, the commander of the armed forces, and the person who sits on the European Council, this institutional setup ensures coordination with the EU level, as well. Results of this coordination are then passed down the hierarchy to all other institutions represented in the CSAT.

The CSAT has a permanent secretariat that keeps tabs on the calendar of tasks assigned to each institution in pursuit of the goals outlined in the annual programme and any other

strategic document. It holds regular meetings and also discusses and plans ahead for the coming year.

As mentioned above, the founding of the CSAT preceded the 2016 EU Global Strategy (EUGS) in terms of institutional setup, but the publication of the EUGS has been hugely instrumental in adding further substance to Romania's pre-existing institutional framework. For example, it has brought more coherence and coordination between the EU level and member states in addition to requiring the same level of coordination among line ministries in cases where the responsibility for various tasks lies with different EU affairs departments. The high profile of the EUGS and the related communication efforts (as well as outreach events organised in preparation for its release) have also led institutions across the legislative and executive spectrum (e.g. ministries and parliament) as well as civil society organisations to become more familiar with it.

Apart from permanent structured cooperation, topics that are of strategic or high importance generate their own set of interinstitutional instruments for cooperation and implementation. For example, the issue of military mobility involves cooperation among multiple ministries, including the Ministry of National Defence (MND), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), and the Ministry of Transport. Other examples include the Three Seas Initiative (with its own interministerial working group), Romania's (now failed) candidacy for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council, and its efforts to become an OECD member (with a working group at the government level). Previously, the Danube Strategy and the national strategy for the Black Sea region played a similar role.

Prior to the EUGS, it was NATO-related issues that generated the highest level of coordination and cooperation, from endeavours aimed at meeting various obligations to participation in missions abroad. To some extent, Romania's NATO and EU accession roadmaps, with their clearly set goals in coordination with the supranational policies of both bodies, and the benchmarks to achieve those goals helped to create a culture of cooperation among all levels and sectors of the administration.

However, Romania's presidency of the Council of the EU in the first half of 2019 marked the real coming of age, with the country achieving full maturity in its exercise of EU membership in the course of preparations for the presidency in 2018 as well as before that and during this presidency itself. The complexity of this exercise has made even personnel who had not previously been involved in EU-related coordination much more familiar with the workings of EU institutions and with the Brussels framework. One should also note that since even before these efforts to prepare for the presidency, Romania has had a European Affairs Coordination Council, which brings together all persons responsible for EU affairs in the line ministries in regular meetings.

In a nutshell, Romania's focus on security and its WGA have their roots in its strategic culture. This culture sees the country's position on the south-eastern border of the EU and NATO, close to historically hostile and revisionist regional powers and to turbulent nearby regions both to its south and its east, as an existential threat. The paradigm shift that it underwent thanks to its accession to NATO (in 2004) and the EU (in 2007) not only resulted in a clear foreign policy option, but also brought about internal reform (e.g. regarding the rule of law, pluralism, and checks and balances). These changes, in turn, have made many aware that

strategic stability is the cumulative result of foreign policy options and internal action in various sectors. What's more, the current WGA and integrated approach can probably be attributed to these realisations.

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

Romania's WGA policies date back to the establishment of the National Defence Supreme Council (CSAT), whose stated purpose in its founding law of 2002 (Parliament of Romania 2002) is to be "the autonomous authority invested, by the Constitution, with the unitary organisation and coordination of activities pertaining to national defence and security." The more recent National Security Strategy (for the period 2015–2019) (President of Romania 2015) plays a similar role and reiterates, under the signature of the president, that the document aims to "integrate organically the foreign and security policy, so that it may defend and advance national interest". The Strategy is, according to the Constitution and to Law 473/2004 regarding defence planning (Parliament of Romania 2004), "the main instrument underlying national defence planning and ensuring the strategic framework for unitary coordination and organisation of the activities pertaining to national defence and security, through the CSAT." However, beyond these explicitly formulated policies, Romania's domestic and external cooperation efforts are based on a number of other coordination mechanisms.

Of particular significance is the 2016 EU Global Strategy (EUGS). Romania's MFA and other line ministries were heavily invested in the elaboration of the EUGS under the coordination of the MFA's Policy Planning Department. As such, several outreach events were organised, and various branches of the administration were involved throughout the process. One of the reasons for the depth of engagement is that Romania had by then already started preparing for its presidency of the Council of the EU in early 2019. In fact, Pillar 3 ("Europe, as a stronger global actor") of the four on which Romania's presidency was based was almost entirely dedicated to supporting the implementation of the EUGS. Thus, every relevant sector has grown familiar with the EUGS and the associated tasks deriving from it, including the parliament and some thinktanks. At the same time, various formal or informal interinstitutional working groups were created. Since the EUGS provides a framework for longer-term goals, cooperation is structured, ongoing and involves regular meetings.

Romania has also tried (with mixed success) to streamline its development aid coordination. Romanian development aid used to be channelled through a special unit in the MFA, while some other elements of it (e.g. university scholarships for students from priority countries) were under the Ministry of National Education. In 2016, the Romanian Agency for International Development Cooperation (RoAid) was created, and its mission is to act as the single independent body coordinating development aid (as part of Romania's EU obligations). Its mission statement sounds ambitious, as it claims to unite the "work of the Romanian public institutions, the civil society and private sector towards the global efforts of sustainably alleviating extreme poverty and supporting stronger democratic institutions in developing countries." However, the strategic planning unit remains in the MFA, the budget is also allocated by the MFA, and input is collected via consultations with other ministries and agencies (including UNICEF, e.g., regarding development aid meant to improve children-related policies in target countries). Priority areas do not frequently change (with the neighbourhood and MENA being permanent target recipient regions), and annual planning is

carried out. Given the rather recent nature of this initiative to streamline policies and the related funding, it still works better in theory than in practice. Among the reasons behind the remaining shortcomings is the fact that external aid has never been a priority area for either the MFA or the government.

When it comes to defence policies, Romania's WGAs related to military mobility and the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) are examples of WGAs born out of the immediacy of certain topical issues. The policy is of high priority to Romania in light of its being host to several US and NATO bases and military facilities and of the general emphasis on interoperability, defence and security (not to mention its pledge to allocate 2% of GDP to defence in accordance with NATO commitments). This issue spans the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Internal Affairs and Transport as well as the intelligence services. In line with NATO's seven lines of action in the field of domestic resilience, Romania supported the European Commission's 2017 joint communication on resilience in the EU's external action (European Commission 2017) and tabled the joint proposal (with the other two members of the current EU Council presidency trio, Finland and Croatia) of a Council horizontal working party on countering hybrid threats, whose mission is to improve the resilience of the EU and its member states against hybrid threats and to support action to strengthen the crisis resilience of societies. Again, these are EU- and NATO-level policies that have triggered an integrated response mechanism in Romania. The MFA took active part in preparatory debates on the joint communication in Brussels, but the parliament has also published its own communication as a follow-up, which reinforces the recommendations in the EU document. By nature, hybrid threats are complex challenges that span multiple domains. Implementation therefore involves the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the MND, the intelligence services, the general secretariat of the government, and the presidential administration.

In terms of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), Romania has been an active contributor to NATO-, OSCE-, UN- and US-led missions abroad (e.g. in Afghanistan, Africa, the Balkans and Iraq). Its interest in civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) has therefore been longstanding. What's more, it has developed its CIMIC dimension in several ways (e.g. via the National Defence University and by participating in joint trainings and exercises with allies), and it continues to do so. One can also say that EU-level policies (e.g. those prescribing precise responsibilities to member states regarding their contributions to EU efficiency, deployment, pools of civilian experts, etc) have played an integrating role in Romania. What's more, they have been eagerly embraced owing to their potential to further structure this interinstitutional coordination and to give more weight to the civilian sector, which is currently less developed than the military one, such as by improving the legal framework, training, recruitment and financial instruments.

Furthermore, Romania has always been supportive of an approach that sees the EU's crisis-prevention role as being complementary to NATO, as opposed to EU collective defence, which is seen as overlapping. There have been ongoing efforts to use the EU's crisis management and relief framework as an anchor to further develop both external (i.e. with other countries) and internal cooperation. Although Romania already has quite a lot of experience in this field (including in emergency services infrastructure, capacity of intervention, etc), it still needs to consolidate it. Among the government bodies involved, the MFA currently plays the coordinating role (because it has also been coordinating EU civilian missions abroad). The Ministry of Internal Affairs is the main contributor to such efforts, but some specialised tasks

are also assigned to the Ministry of Justice, the MND and the intelligence services, especially when they involve cybersecurity, strategic communications and hybrid threats. Furthermore, the European Defence Fund (EDF) provides a good concrete anchor to help boost cooperation between the MND, the Ministry of Economy, and the domestic defence industry (i.e. private entities). The Ministry of Public Finance, which co-funds this cooperation, and the Ministry of Education (for the R&D part) are also a part of it.

When it comes to maritime security, Romania's security assessment views the Black Sea as a particularly vulnerable soft spot. For this reason, the country places emphasis on maritime security and has coordinated and cooperative policies regarding related goals. As an overarching principle, Romania allocates a lot of importance to NATO-EU cooperation. It sees its security interests best represented by NATO, which, from the country's perspective, was also the first supranational organisation into which it was integrated, in 2004, which was followed by EU accession in 2007. Furthermore, Romania is involved in the Three Seas Initiative and the EU's Danube Strategy in addition to having its own strategy for the Black Sea region. It has joined these framework initiatives in the hopes of throwing the weight of cooperation on a number of civilian fields in the pursuit of strategic and often security-driven goals. Some of them have not produced much in terms of outcomes, and some of them (e.g. the Three Seas Initiative) are still in their infancy. Nevertheless, efforts are being made to bring relevant actors together to create a permanent form of cooperation.

Romania's strategic partnership with the United States, which has pretty much developed in parallel to the country's NATO contribution, has also helped to integrate policies, since the dialogue with the US comprises not just military operations, but also a number of other issues, such as ones related to taxes, immunities and litigation. At the same time, however, the administration sees the EU as the political body with the highest potential to generate frameworks that are immediately transferrable into national policies and mechanisms (much like the adoption of the *acquis* in the pre-accession period), and that, through subsidiarity, encourage cooperation with the local authorities and society at large. This is especially the case given the fact that these cooperation mechanisms with local authorities, which determine questions such as who is in charge of what, have been all but lost since the end of the Cold War. Therefore, all policies that have both an EU and NATO dimension translate quite quickly into WGAs, and a security-related mini-infrastructure exists among the relevant ministries.

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

In most cases of dealing with external and internal conflicts and crises, Romania's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) represents the focal point of coordination and cooperation at the national level, as it is uniquely equipped to integrate both the EU and NATO paradigms. The Ministry of Defence (MND) and the Ministry of Internal Affairs are also regular participants in the WGAs. The presidential administration and the Supreme Council of National Defence (CSAT), as the highest coordinators and decision-makers, represent the highest level of integration and the bearers of the political message in addition to supervising the strategic planning documents, such as the National Defence Strategy (President of Romania 2015). Other bodies that often play a role are the ministries of Transport (infrastructure), Energy, Economy and Education; the intelligence services; and the general secretariat of the

government (as an integrator, making sure that the prime minister has a 360-degree view of important issues at stake).

The parliament (Chamber of Deputies) has been slower to catch up owing in part to its lack of an autonomous strategy and analysis capacity. Despite its nominal mission of exercising oversight of government policies, the relevant professional support of the parliament most often will simply request the necessary information from the line ministries, which obviously will not process that information in a critical way. However, there are exceptions (which have increased in frequency with the exercise of the presidency of the Council of the EU), such as in the cases of the Committee on European Affairs and the Committee on Foreign Affairs. However, these exceptions have to do with the quality of the parliamentarians and advisers involved rather than with any institutional facilitating conditions. In addition, most governments have traditionally passed a significant (and most often unjustified) number of emergency ordinances, thereby bypassing the formal legislative process and decreasing the importance and influence of parliament. Last but not least, parliamentarians are seldom qualified or eager to understand international affairs, which is a job they prefer to leave to the MFA.

Civil society has functioned as an echo chamber for the establishment for a long time, having been deliberately structured as such since the beginning of its development. As the country was nearing NATO membership, it had not yet developed a functional civil society with healthy debate around security issues, as per NATO requirements. To fulfil this condition, the security establishment of the time (especially the intelligence agencies) created supposedly 'independent' thinktanks and NGOs, but in reality they were almost exclusively populated with offshoots of the system (e.g. retired staff, former diplomats and political cronies) tasked with reiterating the messages of the main institutions. This has made it very difficult for other truly independent outlets to emerge and gain in substance and influence, as donors are also few and virtually no public money is allocated to them. However, as the complexity of issues has increased, the need to reach out to partners that can make a real contribution has made at least some of the previously reluctant institutions much more open to consultation and cooperation.

One area of external action that is sometimes (though more indirectly) linked to the prevention of conflicts and crises as well as to post-conflict reconstruction is economic diplomacy. A WGA has permanently functioned much less here than in other fields, partly owing to persistent disagreements over whether the primary stakeholder should be the MFA or the Ministry of Economy. As a result, the interinstitutional structures have faced constant change as well as the complications that inevitably come with being subordinate to two ministries. With few exceptions, the diplomats in charge of economic diplomacy have had little if any training in trade, economics or business. As a result, the success of Romania's economic diplomacy, including as an instrument contributing to stability and peace, differs from country to country depending on the individual diplomats' talents and capacity to learn and understand the needs of bilateral business and economic relations.

4 | How does your country operationalise a WGA?

Romania has several administrative structures and processes that facilitate WGAs. First, there is the group comprising the presidential administration, the Supreme Council of National Defence (CSAT), and the MFA as focal points and overall coordinators and integrators of horizontal and vertical cooperation as well as of strategic planning. The second group is made up of the interministerial committees and working groups focused on issues of strategic importance. The general secretariat of the government, as the integrator of policies overseen by various ministries, provides an additional umbrella for coordination. Last but not least, the EU affairs departments of various ministries reflect the setup at the EU level and translate it to their own institutions. It is worth mentioning that during Romania's presidency of the Council of the EU, the MFA's Presidency Coordination Unit was the one that played a crucial role in streamlining consultations and cooperation among various institutions.

In terms of how the country operationalises its WGA and with what degree of success, there has been overall continuity with regard to Romania's strategic orientation as well as to its foreign and security policies. Perceptions and political/societal consensus have not changed much over the years, and strategic political objectives have also received widespread support from society. The process of socialisation into the Western system of values and institutional framework that took place during Romania's integration into NATO (in 2004) and then the EU (in 2007) has helped to build an institutional culture of sharing major goals and means, which is now instrumental in maintaining coordination and continuity. Even in more recent times, in which consensus on the country's general strategy has been wavering under governments with populist and revisionist inclinations, the same elements have contributed to bottom-up pressure and continued coordination. What's more, the 'cooperation reflexes' of professionals in the state apparatus have helped to prevent a discontinuation of this kind of integrated policymaking.

Furthermore, although Romania is admittedly an agenda-taker (which is not always a good thing), the EU framework is at least reflected in its domestic institutional framework, which in turn leads to internal coordination. Continuity at the top is also helped by the crucial role of the president, who, according to the constitution, has a five-year term in office and has traditionally won a second term, which means that there are usually 10-year spans of policy and staff continuity. There is also continuity in the composition of the MFA, the MND, the Ministry of Interior, and the intelligence services. Although professionals do come and go, there are many who circulate within the system of related institutions. One should mention, however, that even if this does provide for continuity, it can also cause major problems in terms of transparency, meritocracy and talent mobility. Indeed, since Romania's public administration as a whole is rather cloistered and non-transparent, it has few sources of fresh ideas and is plagued by groupthink.

In Romania, WGAs are very often the result of bottom-up pressure from the various levels of the administration. In other words, when there is a perception that cooperation is necessary, the administration will request that the management of the institution reach out to the other relevant institutions. Alternatively, given that the level of representation on the EU Affairs Coordination Council is that of state secretary and director general, but that the heads of the EU affairs/external relations departments also participate, the middle-management level has

direct access to coordination discussions and can directly interact with counterparts in various other ministries.

In comparison, there are fewer instances of continuity at the top (political) levels. This is not necessarily a result of disagreements over agendas or strategic orientation. In fact, such disagreements have only been present with the current ruling coalition, and Romania has otherwise enjoyed broad cross-party agreement on its foreign and security policy for decades. This can be attributed to the so-called 'Snagov Agenda', a negotiated consensus at the beginning of the NATO and EU accession processes that had all political forces subscribe to the 'red lines' of political infighting to prevent domestic policy disagreements from spilling over into the realm of foreign policy. Instead, the main reasons for discontinuity at the top levels is political instability, frequent changes in government, a lack of institutional memory, or the absence of the kind of continued multi-stakeholder dialogue that would ensure a common understanding of the issues at stake.

Given these circumstances, the level of coordination very much depends on the particular organisational culture of one institution or another. Cooperation and coordination are also greatly facilitated by European or other external programmes that require (and train) strategic planners to perform a number of related tasks, such as to coordinate, to do multi-annual budgeting and to set multi-annual priorities. Again, much more happens at a theoretical level and less is translated into practice, but the organisational culture is almost always built around external programmes, where they exist.

Some of the enablers of a WGA are the above-mentioned EU programmes and trainings that help prepare personnel; EU and NATO frameworks reflected in the domestic setup; UN, multilateral and US strategic partnership frameworks providing incentives and mechanisms (including fixed calendars and benchmarks) for cooperation; continuity and training of personnel in the spirit of cooperation; and continuity of consensus on the strategic orientation of the country and the priorities of its foreign, security and development policies.

On the other hand, the disablers are an insufficient formalisation of institutional mechanisms (e.g. auditing, monitoring, evaluation, multi-annual planning and budgeting); inadequate formal institutional memory; political incoherence and irresponsibility; de-professionalisation both within politics and the state administration; cronyism within the state administration, where civil servants enjoy relative impunity and there are few instruments for accountability; a lack of openness to civil society; the absence of a capacity for self-regulation; a lack of (human and financial) resources; and poor management.

5 | Conclusions

Overall, Romania has a well-articulated WGA in terms of legislation, regulations and its institutional setup. This WGA has been in place for a long time, which has generated quite a remarkable culture of cooperation, coordination and integrated policymaking – sometimes fully formalised, sometimes rather informal, but with quite a high degree of continuity.

The main success factors have been the umbrella provided by the Supreme Council of National Defence (CSAT), the country's NATO and EU integration processes, and the framework of a

well-articulated strategic orientation with across-the-board political consensus and widespread societal support. Permanent coordination with the EU and NATO (coming from the perception that satisfactory performance within these two organisations has high added value for the country and the potential to raise Romania's profile) have also been helpful because the internal setup has mimicked the supranational one. The intensive training programmes that have also come with EU accession have contributed to the education of personnel in the same spirit of coordination and cooperation. These skills were more recently honed in the run-up to and during Romania's presidency of the Council of the EU in the first half of 2019, which has allowed for the genuine, massive, collective exercise of the theoretical framework learnt during the first years of integration.

Overall, therefore, Romania's WGA works quite well at the input level. In contrast, the output level has been less satisfactory and efficient in practice, mostly because of generally poor management, a lack of accountability and resources within the state administration, de-professionalisation, cronyism, and insufficient formalisation of institutional mechanisms (e.g. regarding auditing, monitoring, evaluation, multi-annual planning and budgeting), which results in an inadequate formal institutional memory. We can add to this political instability and irresponsibility, political short-sightedness and 'short-termism', a lack of high-level guidance and leadership, and reluctance to be open to civil society and other stakeholders that could offer incentives for self-regulation. This has lowered the level of ambition and placed the focus on delivery rather than on stewardship and initiative-taking.

Compared to other countries, the number and level of responsibilities that Romania has taken on is not modest for a country with recent experience in navigating the EU environment – and the degree of coordination that has been achieved is quite good.

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