



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

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Austria Report

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1 | Introduction

Austria has a long-standing tradition of contributing to international peacekeeping, diplomatic engagement, civilian crisis management, humanitarian aid and development cooperation. The Austrian whole-of-government approach (WGA) model has been particularly inspired by some 60 years of participating in peacekeeping operations, efforts aimed at promoting effective multilateralism, and the principle of international solidarity. By being an actively involved honest broker and by deepening a holistic approach over the years, Austria has developed a special understanding of joint action in external engagement as well as a collaborative spirit and readiness to mediate. Additional orientation has been provided via Austria's active membership in international organisations, especially the OSCE, NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme, and the UN (one of whose headquarters is based in Vienna). Furthermore, Austria's membership in the EU has been particularly crucial in many regards and has certainly contributed to intensifying its focus on both political priorities and operational collaboration. In addition, Austria has been seeking to actively contribute to the development of the EU's policies and operational capacities.

Altogether, ensuring an effective multilateralism is one of the priorities of Austria's foreign and security policies; this, by its very nature, fosters coherence among Austrian stakeholders. Given the current threats emerging from the erosion of the global rules-based order, this has never been truer than today. For these reasons, Austria plays an active role in different

multilateral fora and has formal coordination/cooperation procedures in place at all levels at the UN, the OSCE, the NATO-PfP and the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC).

Thematic frameworks of current relevance to Austria's external engagement are the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development UN Security Council resolutions; the EU Global Strategy (EUGS), its implementation and EU CSDP decisions; the NATO-PfP agenda; and the European Consensus on Development. This multilateral approach is also inspired by the recognition of the steadily increasing interconnectedness of external and internal security. For example, Austria's 2013 security strategy states (BKA 2013: 4): "Comprehensive security policy means that external and internal aspects of security are inextricably interlinked, as are civil and military aspects."

Over the years, crisis response has been shaped primarily by events in Austria's geographic neighbourhood, such as political upheavals in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968, the wars in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, and the so-called refugee or migration crisis of 2015. Security concerns regarding Czech and Slovak nuclear plants close to Austria's borders are another constant concern.

At the international level, one part of acting upon this recognition of interconnectedness between internal and external security has been the emphasis on complex operations against the backdrop of comprehensive policy programmes. A WGA has been a consequence. At the national level, a WGA is de facto built into all government decisions, as they are taken collectively, usually in the weekly cabinet (Council of Minister) meetings. In addition, a number of other legal and institutional provisions ensure that Austria's constitutional environment is respected, including its federal nature and its status of neutrality.

A WGA is also increasingly and explicitly being adopted in governmental programmes. The 2013 Austrian Security Strategy (ibid.) constitutes the cornerstone of Austria's overarching comprehensive approach, which is officially called the Comprehensive Security Provision (Umfassende Sicherheitsvorsorge). It postulates that modern security policy and efforts to respond to external conflicts and crises have become a cross-cutting issue that stands on an equal footing with other policy fields, and that "[s]ecurity decisions at both national and international level must be based on a comprehensive assessment of the situation by all of the stakeholders and a common understanding of the situation derived from this information" (ibid.: 10). On this basis, there is a growing understanding that policy coherence and existing interfaces need to be based on a comprehensive and integrated approach, allowing for active participation and implementation in a spirit of solidarity.

Government activities are based on an agreed governmental programme. These provide an overarching framework for the concrete division of competences as laid down in a specific law (i.e. the Federal Ministries Act (National Council 1986)) and the government's concrete work. A comprehensive approach to crises at the local and international levels has been increasingly reflected in government programmes.

Overall, a whole-of-government and, indeed, a whole-of-nation approach have emerged over the years in Austria's political priorities, and their implementation has been inspired and facilitated by active participation in international multilateral fora and through EU

membership. While representing a good balance between administrative professionalism and political pragmatism, this approach would still benefit from being made more systematic (as is discussed in greater detail below).

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

The Austrian Security Strategy (BKA 2013) promotes the implementation of WGA structures, including through different sectoral strategies. This concept basically systematises the interaction of various policy fields and stakeholders in addition to including a 'division of labour' among governmental and non-governmental actors. In contrast, Austria's Comprehensive Security Provision has only been implemented in parts to date.

A core document is the Strategic Guideline on Security and Development of October 2011 (BMEIA and BMLV 2011), which provided for an explicit WGA: "The Austrian contribution to security and development is a task for the whole of government. The joint goals can only be achieved through a coordinated, complementary and coherent [3C] approach by all actors (whole-of-government approach – WoGA). Resources in security and development must be allocated in the most concerted way" (ibid.: 5). This approach has evolved over several stages, especially in light of the experiences of Austria's engagement in South-East Europe – in particular with NATO-led missions in Kosovo (KFOR) – and Afghanistan (ISAF and RSM) as well as with the EU-led training mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA). Beginning in 2014 and continuing to this day, ministries and (increasingly) civil society have been regularly involved in a workstream steered by the Federal Chancellery, i.e. the elaboration of the Foreign Deployment Concept (Auslandseinsatzkonzept) in the fields of planning for early warning, crisis prevention and management, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction as well as handling its underlying legal issues.

While the sectoral strategy for defence policy of 2014 (BMLV 2014) and the Military Strategic Concept 2017 (BMLV 2017) stipulate that Austria's armed forces have to contribute to the implementation of the Comprehensive Security Provision within the framework of the Austrian Security Strategy, the 2017 sectoral strategy for foreign policy continues to be in draft form. Nevertheless, the draft document does reflect and inspire current foreign policy priorities and, like the policies for internal security and defence, the foreign policy doctrine details international challenges as well as national priorities and responses. Prevention and management of crises and conflicts is one of the underlying priorities.

Complementary to the Austrian Security Strategy (BKA 2013) and the Strategic Guideline on Security and Development (BMEIA and BMLV 2011), the three-year programme on Austrian development policy 2019–2021 (3YP) (BMEIA 2019a) engages in the humanitarian development-peacebuilding nexus as well as in dialogue, mediation and conflict transformation in different regions, especially in South-East Europe, the Eastern Neighbourhood and sub-Saharan Africa. A conceptual priority is civilian and military capacity-building. The programme calls for all Austrian actors to engage in joint efforts to achieve human security through viable local capacities and institutions on the ground. Active civil society engagement is appreciated as a major contribution.

As they represent decisions taken by Austria's federal cabinet, the three documents mentioned in the paragraph above are binding on all government actors. For the time being, these three strategies provide the basis for additional non-binding guidelines for implementation. NGOs are consulted in the elaboration of strategies and may associate themselves on a voluntary basis as part of a so-called whole-of-nation approach.

Summing up, Austria's WGA framework for responding to external conflicts and crises is a mixed approach that combines formal and informal elements within the overall concept of the Comprehensive Security Provision. However, implementation guidelines remain informal, and there continue to be certain discrepancies regarding resource allocation and the sharing of competencies and responsibilities among the stakeholders involved.

In terms of international reference frameworks, as already mentioned, Austria bases its global engagement in international peacekeeping and peace-support operations, development cooperation, humanitarian action and disaster relief on the following major international frameworks: the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; UN Security Council resolutions; the 2016 EU Global Strategy for the foreign and security policy (EUGS), its implementation and EU CSDP decisions; the NATO-Partnership for Peace (PfP) agenda; and the political priorities developed in the framework of the OSCE and the European Consensus on Development (as reflected in the 3YP).

Austria particularly focuses on EU policies that establish a mutually reinforcing relationship, and it was actively involved in drafting the EUGS. In fact, even before the EUGS was adopted in 2016, Austria's security strategy (BKA 2013: 12) had clearly stipulated that "[t]he EU, as a comprehensive community of peace, security and solidarity, provides the central framework of action of Austria's security policy", and that "Austria will be involved in every dimension of EU security policy".

As part of further shaping the EU's role as a credible and reliable security provider, the EUGS has generally fostered increased collaboration among various stakeholders in Austria at the national level with a view to follow up on the concrete commitments of the EU's member states laid down in the EUGS, as the following examples demonstrate:

First, the EUGS promotes the EU's integrated approach, resilience and external action, among other priorities, while stressing the importance of complying with international humanitarian law. As the Federal Ministry of Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs (BMEIA) states on its website (BMEIA 2019b): "The protection of civilians and the commitment to upholding international humanitarian law are longstanding Austrian foreign policy priorities."

Second, geographical priorities of the EUGS (e.g. Africa) have had a clear impact on Austria's engagement. Austria's focus on Africa has been strengthened, and the use of military as well as civilian assets – from the foreign ministry and the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) – has been promoted. Consequently, Austria's increasing engagement in Mali (MINUSMA, EUTM Mali) and in Western Africa is generally in line with the EUGS. There is also Austrian support for ECOWAS in the fields of humanitarian support training and SSR. Indeed, Austria's current engagement in Mali can be viewed as a test case for Austria to strengthen a coherent WGA to external engagement.

Third, the EUGS has been setting the framework for the further evolution of internal coordination, cooperation and collaboration in two regards. On the one hand, with regard to increased European integration, the Austrian government adopted in 2017 the report on Austria's participation in the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), including the participation in four projects and the National Implementation Plan 2017 (Council of Ministers 2017). On the other hand, based on Council Decision (CFSP) 2018/1797 of 19 November 2018 (Council of the European Union 2018), Austria decided to increase its commitment by engaging in two additional projects and taking the lead in one project. What's more, in addition to implementation of the EUGS, in consultation with five other ministries, the BMEIA prepared a national report to the Council of Ministers on Austria's contribution to the Civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) compact (BMEIA 2018).

Fourth, Austria has actively contributed to and taken a proactive stance towards discussions of the EU's Capacity Building in Support of Security and Development (CBSD) initiative, its Instrument for Peace and Stability, and its African Peace Facility.

Finally, Austria's presidency of the Council of the EU in the second half of 2018 saw successes related to stimulating coherent action at various levels. The first involves the establishment of the Civilian CSDP Compact, which fosters the EU's capacity to deploy civilian crisis-management missions. The second is related to the fact that the EUGS's objective of "strengthening of peace and ensuring the security of the EU and its citizens" increasingly blurs the boundary between internal and external security. For this reason, during its presidency, Austria called for flexible and preventive measures to protect the EU's external borders and to address irregular migration.

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

At the federal level, Austria's WGA has both horizontal and vertical aspects. For example, horizontal inter-ministerial coordination normally involves a wide range of actors, including the Federal Chancellery and several ministries. While the lead ministries are the foreign (BMEIA), defence (BMLV) and interior (BMI) ministries, other ministries involved include the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection (BMASGK); the Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF); the Ministry of Digital and Economic Affairs (BMDW); the Ministry of Constitutional Affairs, Reforms, Deregulation and Justice (BMVRDJ); the Ministry of Sustainability and Tourism (BMNT); the Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology (BMVIT); and the Ministry of Finance (BMF). Vertically, there is cooperation with organisations such as the Austrian Economic Chamber (WKO), the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), the parliament, the federal states (Laender) and civil society organisations (discussed in more detail below). The National Security Council (with the involvement of parliamentary parties) and several more specialised coordination mechanisms at different levels ensure both strategic and day-to-day coordination.

Austria's WGA efforts also involve NGOs, the private sector and research/academic institutions. For example, the Vienna-based Global Responsibility Platform for Development and Humanitarian Aid serves as an umbrella organisation for 35 NGOs with humanitarian and development expertise and mandates, represents civil society in coordination mechanisms, and contributes to the mutual exchange of information with the ministries. NGOs receive 10 to

15 percent of Austria's Foreign Disaster Fund, which is administered by the BMEIA and has an annual budget of EUR 15 million. Furthermore, the Austrian Development Agency disposes of a separate NGO budget line, the BMEIA and the Austrian Red Cross organise regular seminars on the dissemination of international humanitarian law in cooperation with the universities of Graz and Linz, and the Austrian Red Cross has provided CIMIC trainings and training for police officers on the mandate of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Regarding the private sector, companies young and old are increasingly active, are filling funding gaps on the basis of multilateral commitments (e.g. SDGs), and are getting more and more involved in coordination mechanisms. In terms of research and academia, there are several specialised institutes that contribute to the public debate surrounding security and defence policies, including the Austrian Institute for European and Security Policy (AIES), the Austrian Institute for International Affairs (OIIP), the Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution (ASPR), the National Defence Academy (LVAK) and the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna. In addition, these institutions are regularly commissioned by various ministries to undertake related research work.

Before moving on to discuss other relevant players, a geographical focus is necessary: Austria's WGA efforts currently focus on South- East Europe (SEE), the MENA region, the Near and Middle East, and North and sub-Saharan Africa. Of these, given its geographic proximity, political instability, elements of radicalisation, and migration flows, the SEE region is of crucial importance to Austria's security interests and can be defined as being of 'strategic' importance to Austria. The high number of Austrian troops deployed there – over 350 in Bosnia and over 460 in Kosovo (BMLV n.d.) – together with substantial financial and political support, shows the country's strong commitment to this region. Austria complements its military engagement by deploying a contingent of almost 180 soldiers to UNIFIL in Lebanon (ibid.). In Western Africa, Austria's civil and military engagement is increasing on the basis of a WGA (in particular with EUTM Mali). However, as stipulated in the 2011 Strategic Guideline on Security and Development (BMEIA and BMLV 2011), joint actions are to be given priority over unilateral projects. This principle of concentrating human resources, capabilities and assets has also been introduced at the strategic level, such as with the 3YP (BMEIA 2019a).

In terms of government stakeholders currently engaged abroad, Austria's armed forces have been contributing to international peacekeeping efforts since 1960, deploying altogether more than 100,000 Austrian troops and civilians in more than 50 missions abroad. Also, there are currently around 30 members of the interior ministry (BMI) deployed abroad in advisory positions and civilian missions of the OSCE, EU and UN with a focus on the SEE region, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (e.g. the OSCE mission in North Macedonia, SMM Ukraine, EUMM Georgia and the OSCE mission in Tajikistan). Overall, current civilian and military deployment can be summarised as follows: Total: 1,110 EU (military), 376 EU (civilian), 13 NATO, 493 OSCE, 27 UN. Furthermore, the Austrian Development Agency focuses on least-developed countries (LDCs), partner countries in the SEE region, and (with a global view) countries in fragile contexts.

In this framework, the scope of Austria's WGA can be described as 'system-wide' in South-East Europe (including trade and economic incentives) and in the Eastern Neighbourhood, and as 'medium' in West Africa as well as in other African countries and regions, such as where the efforts of various Austrian stakeholders (e.g. the Austrian Economic Chamber, the Austrian Development Agency, defence attaches and civil society organisations) are concentrated or

where training programmes are in place, such as in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, or Accra, Ghana, home to the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC).

4 | How does your country operationalise a WGA?

In terms of administrative structures and processes, the formal WGA level coordination/cooperation at the top level is ensured in Austria by the weekly sessions of the federal cabinet – officially known as the Council of Ministers – and, more specifically on security matters, by the National Security Council (NSC). This central advisory body to the government in matters of foreign, security and defence policy is composed of ministers, members of parliament, and designated liaison officers.

In all ministries, intra-ministerial coordination mechanisms exist to discuss WGA-relevant topics, including external conflicts and crises. Inter-ministerial working groups serve as platforms for information exchange as well as the preparation and negotiation of strategies regarding countries, regions or specific topics. Specific coordination units and structures are in place within and among relevant ministries (especially the BMEIA, the Federal Chancellery, the BMI and the BMLV) to prepare coordinated positions and instructions for discussions of crisis and conflict situations in the relevant council.

Regarding crisis management, the formal format of the National Crisis and Disaster Management (SKKM) panel includes representatives from all federal ministries, all federal provinces, and the rescue and fire services (BMI n.d.). Meetings of this body, which is housed within the BMI, are convened in the event of major incidents or trainings. Based on the Ministerial Council Decision of 20 January 2004 (BMI 2004), the National Crisis and Disaster Management (SKKM) framework had been reorganised and put under the guidance of the BMI's director-general for public security. Supplementing the WGA is the 'SKKM Penta++', an informal gathering of the SKKM panel that brings together senior civil servants from the BMI, the BMEIA, the BMLV, the Federal Chancellery, the Vice Chancellery, the Cabinet Office of the head of state, and one of the federal provinces. This group meets regularly (at least once a month) to be briefed on and to discuss related matters, including (potential) external conflicts and crises. Furthermore, procedures related to responding to cyber-crises are regulated by Austria's Network and Information System Security Act (NISG) (National Council 2018). The tasks within the coordination structures are shared between the Federal Chancellery and the BMI and supported by two (inter-ministerial) coordination committees: IKDOK (Inner Circle of the Operational Coordination Structure) and OpKoord (Operational Coordination Structure) (BKA, BMI, BMLV and BMEIA 2019).

In more horizontal terms, there is extensive formal and informal coordination and cooperation between executive and legislative powers. For example, regular coordination takes place in parliamentary committees (e.g. the Foreign Policy Committee or the Defence Committee). Austrian contributions to international crisis management and peace missions require formal approval by the Main Committee of parliament. Parliamentarians are also regularly involved in annual 3YP preparations, which has led to some criticism regarding the separation of powers.

According to the Austrian Development Act (EZA-G) (National Council 2019) and the updated 2012 Austrian Mission Statement of all stakeholders as an integral part of the 3YP (BMEIA

2019a: 24–25), as well as in line with the Vienna 3C Appeal (ADC 2010), consultation processes are run throughout the year and include NGOs and other Austrian civil society actors. In this regard, since 2011, a 3C conference has been organised annually on WGA-related topics at both the policy and operational levels.

5 | Conclusions

Austria's strategic culture concerning international engagement is evolving towards a more coordinated and coherent approach. However, overall, it continues to be fragmented to a certain degree owing to the various mechanisms of coordination at different levels as well as budgetary regulations. In addition, Austria's WGA still seems to be inspired to a considerable degree by informal gatherings and personal leadership.

Austria's Federal Ministries Act (National Council 1986), which sets out the administrative architecture of the ministries, does not explicitly propel inter-ministerial cooperation in a WGA sense, as it is designed to delineate competencies between the various ministries (i.e. to build boundaries rather than bridges). The only body with the power to coordinate all relevant governmental players is the federal chancellor (via the 'Kompetenz-Kompetenz' of the Federal Chancellery). This setup legally puts a constraint on the implementation of the full spectrum of WGA. However, policy-wise, Austria's Comprehensive Security Provision (discussed above) represents a layer of the WGA at the strategic level.

There is a mix of instruments in Austria to support the implementation of its WGA. This includes institutional arrangements (e.g. the Foreign Disaster Relief Fund (AFDRF) managed by the BMEIA, the Austrian Platform of Development and Humanitarian Aid, and evaluations of guidelines and programmes) and ad hoc mechanisms (e.g. pooled funding for Austria's civil-military engagement in Mali). However, a certain weakness lies in the fact that there is no overarching strategic platform, stabilisation fund or task force. Pooled funding has been met with political resistance and, due to budget-law constraints, a compromise at the inter-ministerial level has yet to be achieved. The humanitarian angle of external engagement (e.g. the AFDRF, for which the federal cabinet makes decisions) reflects an existing imbalance between short-term political decision-making needed to respond to crises and a needs-based human-security approach stressing prevention tools. A more coherent and strategic approach regarding a transparent, foreseeable and sustainable allocation of financial means would minimise the risk of political instrumentalisation as well as enhance the financial predictability for implementing partners.

As far as the concrete functioning of a WGA-oriented setup is concerned, work on a practical basis can be assessed positively despite constitutional gaps and a certain disconnect that persists between the working and political levels. Moreover, in practice, a compulsory implementation of a WGA is hampered by a certain degree of reluctance, which has prevented full political backing. But since it is a relatively young working method, and one that often depends on engagement by individuals ('champions'), a WGA would need constant political backing.

International debate contributes to sustaining joint efforts to establish a WGA (e.g. the EUGS, but also the SDGs, the UNDP and World Bank policies). Inter-departmental coordination and

the effectiveness and quality of institutional arrangements varies and is predominantly driven by individual leadership as well as the significance of the respective policy for Austria. Furthermore, departments in different ministries with a key role in implementing a WGA are often understaffed, and personnel-training efforts are often undertaken on an ad hoc basis. Indeed, more human resources should be dedicated to a WGA, as more staff could administer more programmes, thereby creating a leverage effect for certain prioritised areas. There is a strong willingness among experts and staff at the working level across the line ministries to implement a WGA, but the necessary political leadership at the strategic level has yet to live up to its full potential.

In conclusion, regarding Austria's WGA-like approach, the current state of play can be summarised as follows: First, without any doubt, the spirit of a WGA is shared by Austrian stakeholders (especially in the administration) as well as at the level of experts and NGOs. However, a systematic WGA is limited to a certain degree by the existing legal framework (e.g. division of competencies among ministries and the deployment of personnel) as well as by budgetary legislation (i.e. the 'budget sovereignty' of the ministries involved). Second, coherence issues under the umbrella of a WGA can and should be improved through a number of measures (e.g. comprehensive political guidance, prioritisation of a WGA at the political level, specialisation of personnel, inter-ministerial trainings and pooled funding) and by having a more consistent institutional framework. Third, enhanced political backing of a WGA could contribute to a more proactive management as well as to higher and more sustained funding to address conflicts and crises. Fourth, prioritisation based on joint assessments and analyses of all stakeholders in given contexts could be improved to substantially promote coherent action. Fifth, strategic communication would be a prerequisite for the successful implementation of a WGA. And, lastly, the establishment of WGA focal points drawing on, for example, expertise from respective country teams in the lead ministries would certainly improve the preparation of joint action, and this work should be interlinked with the NSC and/or the federal cabinet.

Altogether, one can expect that Austria will continue its interactions at the EU level related to further strengthening WGA and comprehensive cooperation and thereby benefit, in turn, from an enhanced WGA at the national level.

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