



Press Release
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EUPOL Afghanistan partly effective in delivering on its mandate – say EU Auditors

A report published today by the European Court of Auditors (ECA) finds that the EU police mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL) has partly achieved its aim of helping to establish a sustainable and effective Afghan-owned civilian police. In the absence of a trained, fully-functioning Afghan police force, and with high illiteracy rates and widespread corruption in the Afghan police and justice systems, EUPOL managed to contribute to a reform of the Ministry of the Interior and professionalisation of the country's police. However, the continuing systemic weaknesses in the country's justice and police put at risk the legacy of the results achieved by EUPOL, as well as of the Afghan policing sector in general, after the phasing-out of the mission by the end of 2016.

“While external factors, such as lack of security and the almost complete absence of a trained and functional police force, may provide some explanation for EUPOL's mixed results, other shortcomings can be attributed to the mission itself. The ECA makes a number of recommendations, applicable not only to EUPOL Afghanistan, but also to other CSDP missions aiming to improve their effectiveness and the sustainability of the outcomes achieved,” commented **Hans Gustaf Wessberg**, the ECA Member responsible for the report.

The EU auditors note that the EU managed to establish a European civilian police mission in Afghanistan in a very unstable environment. Its mandate, which was to strategically advise the higher echelons of the police force and create links to a wider rule of law, provided a hitherto-missing building block in the country's police and justice services, thus ensuring EU added value. From a difficult start, where EUPOL's deployment proved cumbersome and it suffered from considerable logistical and staffing constraints, EUPOL has gradually gained recognition for its expertise and contribution to reforming the country's police.

However, EUPOL did not manage to bring together all European actors as initially intended. This was due in part to the mission's limited size and also to competition from other European and international efforts. In spite of this, EUPOL contributed to enhanced cooperation with the EU Member States on the ground and sought to promote international cooperation.

When it comes to results, EUPOL helped the Afghan police to gain some public trust by supporting the implementation of basic principles of civilian policing, but the Afghan police and justice systems continue to suffer from systemic weaknesses, including inadequate institutional development, an ineffective legal framework and limited staff capacity. Other factors such as undue political influence, corruption and the focus on counter-insurgency policing continue to hinder institutional development of the criminal justice sector as a whole. Connecting the national police to justice reform was one of the areas in which it was most challenging for EUPOL to demonstrate results. The audit also noted that EUPOL's assessment and reporting systems were not suited to the mandate because they were too basic, without sufficient focus on results and added value throughout most of the period audited.

The sustainability of the results of EUPOL's work and of the Afghan policing sector in general will depend on the willingness of the Afghan authorities to take ownership of the outcomes, on the security situation and on funding from the EU and other international stakeholders. Concerns also remain as to how the EU can build upon EUPOL's achievements and whether maximum value will be obtained from the disposal of the mission's significant assets.

The purpose of this press release is to give the main messages of the special report adopted by the European Court of Auditors. The full report is on www.eca.europa.eu

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Notes to editors

ECA special reports are published throughout the year, presenting the findings of selected audits of specific EU budgetary areas or management topics. This Special Report (7/2015) entitled “**The EU police mission in Afghanistan: mixed results**” assesses whether EUPOL Afghanistan was effective in delivering its mandate.

The audit focused on whether EUPOL was well planned and coordinated, whether it had received adequate operational support and guidance, whether it contributed to the progress of the Afghan National Police and, lastly, whether the phasing-out of EUPOL was adequately prepared. The audit covered the period from EUPOL’s launch until end 2014, with a particular focus on its activities after 2012.

Following the overthrow of the Taliban regime, the European Union (EU) and its Member States committed themselves to supporting the Government of Afghanistan by establishing a stronger framework for the rule of law in the country. The EU police mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL) is a civilian mission developed in 2007 in the context of the EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP).

EUPOL Afghanistan activities are principally carried out by police and rule of law experts seconded from EU Member States, as well as contracted international experts and local staff. The mission works through training and mentoring, advising and monitoring the senior leadership of relevant Afghan institutions. EUPOL Afghanistan implements its mandate along three lines of operations: advancing institutional reform of the Ministry of the Interior, professionalising the National Police, and connecting the National Police to the wider justice system. At the time of the audit in late 2014, EUPOL had operations in Kabul, Herat and Mazar-e Sharif.

The total cost of EUPOL for the period May 2007 to December 2014 was close to €400 million, with security-related costs accounting for almost one third. As at the end of 2014, the EU had deployed a total of 32 CSDP missions, of which 16 had been completed and wound up and 16 were still ongoing.

Recommendations

EU auditors recommend that:

- The EEAS should work with the Member States to ensure that future CSDP missions receive sufficient logistic, technical and human resources to be able to operate at close to full authorised capacity;
- The EEAS and the Commission should develop support functions to assist with the rapid, efficient and consistent deployment of CSDP missions;
- The EEAS and CSDP missions should work together to further improve the effectiveness of each activity;
- In order to improve the sustainability of CSDP mission outcomes, the EEAS should ensure that sustainability aspects are embedded in the operational planning of all mission activities by systematically assessing the local needs and capacity to sustain outcomes;
- The Commission and the EEAS should ensure that the CSDP missions are phased out and related assets liquidated smoothly.

For detailed observations and recommendations, please consult the full report at www.eca.europa.eu