

Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy  
at the University of Hamburg / IFSH (ed.)

# OSCE Yearbook 2017

Yearbook on the Organization for Security and  
Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)



**Nomos**

OSCE Yearbook

Volume 23 – 2017

Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy  
at the University of Hamburg / IFSH (ed.)

# OSCE Yearbook 2017

Yearbook on the Organization for Security and  
Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

Edited by the IFSH in co-operation with

Pál Dunay, George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies,  
Garmisch-Partenkirchen

P. Terrence Hopmann, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International  
Studies, Washington

Adam Daniel Rotfeld, Member of the Executive Board of the European  
Leadership Network, Warsaw

Andrei Zagorski, Moscow State Institute for International Relations,  
Moscow

Editor-in-Chief: Ursel Schlichting, Hamburg

Translator/Editors: Graeme Currie, Hamburg, Carolyn Benson, Berlin,  
Elizabeth Hormann, Cologne



**Nomos**

Articles of the OSCE Yearbook are indexed in World Affairs Online (WAO), accessible via the IREON portal.

**Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek** lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>

ISBN 978-3-8487-4786-3 (Print)  
978-3-8452-9042-3 (ePDF)

**British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-3-8487-4786-3 (Print)  
978-3-8452-9042-3 (ePDF)

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg/IFSH (ed.)  
OSCE Yearbook 2017

Yearbook on the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

IFSH

368 p.

Includes bibliographic references.

ISBN 978-3-8487-4786-3 (Print)  
978-3-8452-9042-3 (ePDF)

1. Edition 2018

© Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden, Germany 2018. Printed and bound in Germany.

This work is subject to copyright. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publishers. Under § 54 of the German Copyright Law where copies are made for other than private use a fee is payable to "Verwertungsgesellschaft Wort", Munich.

No responsibility for loss caused to any individual or organization acting on or refraining from action as a result of the material in this publication can be accepted by Nomos or the editor.

# Contents

*Sebastian Kurz*  
Foreword by the Chairperson-in-Office 9

*Ursel Schlichting*  
Preface 13

## I. States of Affairs – Affairs of State

### *The OSCE and European Security*

*Gernot Erler*  
“Renewing Dialogue – Rebuilding Trust – Restoring Security”:  
Germany’s 2016 OSCE Chairmanship – A Personal  
Retrospective and a Vision for the OSCE in 2025 23

*Lamberto Zannier*  
A Stronger OSCE for an Uncertain Future 35

*Sergey Utkin*  
Multilateralism in Russian Foreign Policy:  
A Toolbox for the Future 51

### *The OSCE Participating States: Domestic Developments and Multilateral Commitment*

*Olaf Leiß*  
Mission Unaccomplished: Turkey after  
Erdoğan’s Referendum 67

*Alena Vysotskaya Guedes Vieira*  
Pariah State No More: Belarus’ International Actorness  
against the Backdrop of the Ukraine Conflict 79

*Azam Isabaev*  
Uzbekistan after the Transfer of Power 91

## II. Responsibilities, Instruments, Mechanisms, and Procedures

### *Conflict Prevention and Dispute Settlement*

*Walter Kemp*

Civilians in a War Zone: The OSCE in Eastern Ukraine 113

*Pál Dunay*

Ukraine: The Country that Cannot Be Won, but Must Not Be Lost 125

*William H. Hill*

Current Trends in Transdnistria:  
Breathing New Life into the Settlement Process 143

*Simone Guerrini/Maria-Alexandra Martin*

The OSCE Mission to Skopje: Advancing Mandate  
Priorities through Partnerships and Innovation 155

*Harry Tzimitras/Ayla Gürel-Moran*

Cyprus: The Prospects for Peace 165

### *Comprehensive Security: The Three Dimensions and Cross-Dimensional Challenges*

*Lia Neukirch*

“Frozen” Human Rights in Abkhazia, Transdnistria,  
and the Donbas: The Role of the OSCE in a Shaky System  
of International Human Rights Protection Mechanisms 181

*Velimir Radicevic*

Promoting Cyber Stability between States: OSCE Efforts  
to Reduce the Risks of Conflict Stemming from the Use  
of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)  
in the Context of Global and Regional Security 201

*Benjamin Schaller*

Defusing the Discourse on “Arctic War”: The Merits  
of Military Transparency and Confidence- and Security-Building  
Measures in the Arctic Region 213

<i>Jenniver Sehring/Esra Buttanri</i> The Aarhus Centres Network – 15 Years of OSCE Support to Address Environment and Security Challenges at Local Level	227
--	-----

### III. Organizational Aspects

#### *OSCE Institutions and Structures*

<i>Astrid Thors</i> A Retrospective of My Time as OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities	245
---	-----

#### *External Relations and Influence*

<i>Marietta S. König/Carolin Poeschke</i> The OSCE Asian Partnership for Co-operation: Concept, Development, Trends	265
---	-----

<i>Loïc Simonet</i> The OSCE and NATO: Side by Side in a Turbulent World	279
---	-----

### Annexes

Forms and Forums of Co-operation in the OSCE Area	317
The 57 OSCE Participating States – Facts and Figures	319
OSCE Conferences, Meetings, and Events 2016/2017	337
OSCE Selected Bibliography 2016/2017	341
Abbreviations	359
Contributors	367





## Foreword by the Chairperson-in-Office

Austria assumed the Chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) at a time when the Organization saw itself confronted with a multitude of serious challenges. Violations of the OSCE's principles and values in recent years and a failure to implement agreements in good faith had damaged relations between the Organization's participating States. Challenges to peace and security, including armed conflicts and crises, the problem of violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism, and increasing lack of trust between states urgently had to be addressed.

There is no doubt that the OSCE can play an important part in finding solutions for these complex issues and in restoring trust among states. The OSCE has proven itself to be an ideal platform for dialogue and has a unique, comprehensive array of instruments at its disposal. Its specialized institutions and field operations make important contributions to ensuring that our common values and concerns are implemented on the ground.

In the past few years, however, the crisis of confidence has crept into many areas within the Organization and is considerably limiting its functioning. Dialogue remains the prerequisite for restoring trust; taking decisions together can help in that respect and form the basis for joint ownership of the Organization's work. But this only works if there is openness to flexibility and a willingness to negotiate, putting the interests of the Organization as a whole ahead of national interests. If 57 states seek to implement their will without compromise, the system cannot work.

During our Chairmanship, we not only promoted the use of the OSCE and its instruments, we also built consensus to ensure that the Organization has the necessary means to carry out its mandate by, for instance, brokering agreement on a budget for 2017 and on the new leadership of the OSCE and its institutions. This shows that the OSCE States can come together on core issues. Clearly, we need more of that if we want the Organization to play a meaningful role in the many crises we are facing.

One area where the OSCE has been successful in overcoming mistrust in the past is security and defence. Today, the level of confidence is alarmingly low. The erosion of the conventional arms control regime in Europe must be reversed; this is in the interest of every single participating State. To foster the open and constructive dialogue necessary to re-establish trust in this area, we launched a Structured Dialogue on current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area, focusing on the mutual benefits of increased military transparency, predictability, and stability in the OSCE area. Austria also promoted effective multilateral responses to emerging challenges by supporting the full implementation and modernization of the Vienna

Document and fostering regular military-to-military exchanges. We all need to co-operate actively to prevent future military conflicts.

Armed conflicts continue to cause much suffering, displacement, and destruction in parts of the OSCE area. We must find ways to enable political solutions and underline respect for international law and human rights standards. Most importantly, in my view, we must do more to help the local populations that are suffering most from these conflicts; their safety must be a priority. During my visits to several of these crisis areas, I was struck by how the local population wants more active involvement of the OSCE because the Organization directly contributes to their safety.

A good example is the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine. Through its monitoring and reporting, the SMM has prevented a worsening of the situation and facilitated the repair of critical infrastructure. We must continue to support the SMM to fully carry out its mandate, but this requires unrestricted access and security for the monitors. The tragic death of one member of an SMM patrol, caused by a landmine, shows the importance of increasing the safety of the OSCE's personnel.

As OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, I paid several visits to Ukraine to push for pragmatic steps to de-escalate tensions and ensure better protection and living conditions for the local population. The parties must focus on the fate of the people in this devastated region and prevent a humanitarian and environmental disaster in the Donbas. All sides must fully implement the Minsk Agreements and strictly respect the ceasefire to which they have repeatedly committed themselves. It is the responsibility of all sides – and those who have influence over them – to enable a political process to succeed.

This is equally true for the other conflict situations in the OSCE area, in Nagorno-Karabakh, Transdniestria, and Georgia. Throughout our Chairmanship, we have supported all efforts to make tangible progress and find peaceful solutions there.

Another major challenge to security today is violent extremism and radicalization leading to terrorism, which targets and affects the internal stability of states, the rule of law, and our basic freedoms, such as freedom of expression and the freedom of religion or belief. On the one hand, we have to deal with the threat posed by the people from the OSCE area, who have already been radicalized, and re-integrate them, where possible, into our societies. On the other, we must focus on preventing radicalization, particularly of youth, while fully respecting and promoting human rights.

Professor Peter Neumann, my Special Representative on Radicalization, is helping us to better understand these dynamics and identify ways to effectively address root causes and triggers for radicalization. In September, we presented a report with concrete recommendations on how to improve the fight against violent extremism and radicalization.

During its Chairmanship, Austria also focused on topics such as cybersecurity, economic connectivity, and green economies, where all states can

gain from more co-operation. Progress in these areas will generate more trust and confidence, and will act as a catalyst for further co-operation.

The same is true for adherence to our agreed norms and standards, particularly in the human dimension. This is key to fostering trust as well as long-term stability and security. Respect for human rights, the rule of law, and democracy are prerequisites for and an integral part of security, stability, and prosperity. The comprehensive concept of security nurtured by the OSCE substantially depends on progress in the human dimension. Respect for human rights, the rule of law, and democracy strengthen the cohesiveness and resilience of our societies, and enable us to better counter threats to our security.

As a traditional bridge-builder, Austria will continue its efforts to help overcome differences between states and to promote an inclusive and co-operative security space. The challenges we face can only be addressed and overcome through critical, but constructive dialogue between states, civil society, and experts. Fostering a genuine dialogue across all OSCE dimensions has been a key priority. It can be achieved only with the strong engagement and ownership of all 57 participating States. We owe this engagement to our people, especially those directly affected by conflict and lack of security, who expect the OSCE to live up to its principles.



## Preface

In April 2017, the OSCE community was shocked by a tragic incident in which a member of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine died: “On 23 April an SMM patrol consisting of six members and two armoured vehicles was driving near ‘LPR’-controlled Pryshyb (34km north-west of Luhansk) on a secondary road previously used by the SMM. At 11:17, one of the SMM vehicles (second in line), with three members on board, was severely damaged as a result of an explosion, possibly after coming into contact with a mine.”<sup>1</sup> As a result of the explosion, the American paramedic, Joseph Stone, died and two other OSCE Mission Members were injured and taken to hospital. Joseph Stone’s death was the first among OSCE monitors, who were deployed to Ukraine to monitor the sides’ compliance with the cease-fire agreements, reached in 2014 and 2015 as part of the effort to manage the conflict in and around Ukraine, and it was the first time ever that a member of an OSCE field operation was killed in action.

Has the OSCE lost its innocence, as Walter Kemp puts it?<sup>2</sup> Had the situation in eastern Ukraine been underestimated? Or had the OSCE been over-rated? The events in 2017 have tested the ability of a civilian mission to operate in a war zone.<sup>3</sup> Is it justifiable at all, to send unarmed observers into zones of hot conflict?

The death of a member of the SMM suddenly made us aware of the persistently dangerous conditions under which the OSCE monitors work, including access restrictions, harassment, and threats to their lives or physical condition.<sup>4</sup> Just a brief look into two arbitrarily chosen SMM reports, out of hundreds, which are issued on a daily basis, is sufficient to illustrate this:

The SMM’s monitoring and freedom of movement are restricted by security hazards and threats, including risks posed by mines, UXO and other impediments – which vary from day to day. [...] At the Stanytsia

---

1 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine, Spot Report: One SMM patrol member dead, two taken to hospital after vehicle hits possible mine near Pryshyb, Kyiv, 23 April 2017, at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/312971>. Cf. also: OSCE Identifies American Monitor Killed in Eastern Ukraine, RadioFreeLiberty/Radio Europe, 24 April 2017, at: <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-dead-osce-paramedic-named-joseph-stone/28449349.html>; Walter Kemp, *Civilians in a War Zone: The OSCE in Eastern Ukraine*, in this volume, pp. 113-123, here: p. 118.

2 Cf. Kemp, cited above (Note 1), p. 118.

3 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 113.

4 Cf. also: United States Mission to the OSCE, Response to OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine Chief Monitor Ertugrul Apakan as delivered by Chargé d’Affaires, a.i. Kate M. Byrnes to the Permanent Council, Vienna, April, 27, 2017, PC.DEL/547/17, 28 April 2017, available at: <https://www.osce.org/permanent-council/315026>.

Luhanska disengagement area, a Ukrainian officer of the JCCC told the SMM that its safety still could not be guaranteed in the areas surrounding the main road due to the possible presence of mines and UXO. [...] At an ‘LPR’ checkpoint on the edge of the Zolote disengagement area, armed men told the SMM that its safety still could not be guaranteed in the fields and side roads due to the possible presence of mines and UXO. [...] Ukrainian Armed Forces personnel told the SMM that the road leading from Katerynivka to Popasna was mined and they did not have authorization to let the SMM pass. [...] The SMM still could not travel south of the bridge in government-controlled Shchastia (20km north of Luhansk), as Ukrainian Armed Forces personnel said there were mines on the road south of the bridge.<sup>5</sup>

At 13:27 on 24 February 2017, the SMM heard a burst of small-arms fire (three to five shots) at close range while preparing to launch a mini unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) from the north-western edge of non-government-controlled Yasynuvata (16km north-east of Donetsk) [...] The SMM patrol members took cover behind one of their vehicles and saw four men in military-style camouflage clothing carrying AK-variant automatic assault rifles about 30m to the south. The men shouted “Stand still!” in Russian [...] and then approached, with two of the men kneeling and aiming their weapons at the SMM while the two others advanced in short movements. One of them seized the mini-UAV from the ground. The SMM members loudly identified themselves as OSCE in Russian and English. The four men withdrew with the mini-UAV. When 15-20m away, one of them fired a burst of small-arms fire (three to five shots) that impacted on the snow about five metres from the SMM vehicle, behind which the patrol was taking cover. [...]

Earlier in the day, around 12:15, two men carrying AK-47s and wearing military-style camouflage clothing typical of ‘DPR’ members engaged in conversation with an SMM patrol member in the centre of non-government-controlled Pikuzy (formerly Kominternove, 23km north-east of Mariupol). One of them, apparently intending to demonstrate that his firearm was functional, pointed the weapon into the air and fired a round.<sup>6</sup>

Initially tasked with gathering information and reporting on the security situation on the ground, monitoring human rights violations, and facilitating dialogue in order to contribute to reducing tensions and fostering peace, stabil-

---

5 OSCE, Daily Report, *Latest from the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM)*, based on information received as of 19:30, 18 April 2017, Kyiv, 19 April 2017, at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/312281>.

6 OSCE, *Spot Report by the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine: Armed men open fire close to SMM in Yasynuvata and Pikuzy*, Kyiv, 25 February 2017, at: <https://www.osce.org/ukraine-smm/301821>.

ity, and security,<sup>7</sup> the SMM was soon assigned a leading role in monitoring compliance with the Minsk agreements, signed in September 2014 and February 2015, taking on new duties, such as monitoring the ceasefire, verifying the withdrawal of heavy weapons, and monitoring the Russian-Ukrainian state border – duties, which were usually carried out by UN military peacekeeping operations, i.e. by armed peacekeepers.<sup>8</sup>

Although some of the participating States questioned whether the OSCE was reaching the limits of what a civilian peace operation could achieve in a war zone, there was no explicit call to pull SMM out of eastern Ukraine, as Walter Kemp observes.<sup>9</sup> And while some pointed to the limitations of the SMM and considered the civilian nature of the Mission to be inadequate in a conflict environment, others considered that it was exactly the civilian nature of the OSCE Mission that was an asset, which would make it easier for all sides to accept its deployment and to view it as a neutral actor:<sup>10</sup> First, it is highly questionable whether Russia would have agreed to the deployment of an armed (UN) peacekeeping operation. Since the EU was considered to be a party to the conflict, which allegedly originated in the dispute about the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, the same might have been true for an EU mission.<sup>11</sup> Second, although the unarmed OSCE monitors would be completely defenceless in case of violent attacks, it is precisely due to their vulnerability that neither party perceives OSCE observers as a threat.<sup>12</sup> Third, the OSCE SMM enjoys political credibility and the support of all 57 OSCE participating States, including the Russian Federation. And fourth, *no* OSCE presence would have meant the end of *any* international presence in the region and since there seemed to be “no viable alternatives [...] the priority was to keep the monitors safe while maintaining the presence of the SMM in the region”<sup>13</sup>

Operations in conflict and war zones are highly dangerous – this must be clearly seen. However, I strongly tend to support Stephanie Liechtenstein when she writes: “The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) is the only organization on the ground in eastern Ukraine that provides impartial facts about a confusing conflict that has been going on since 2014. During the past three years, the OSCE SMM has performed essential work in a dangerous conflict environment for which it receives far too little attention and recogni-

---

7 Cf. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Permanent Council, *Decision No. 1117, Deployment of an OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine*, PC.DEC/1117, 21 March 2014, at: <http://www.osce.org/pc/116747>.

8 Cf. Larissa Daria Meier, OSCE Peacekeeping – Conceptual Framework and Practical Experience, in: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 2016, Baden-Baden 2017*, pp. 149-163, here: p. 159.

9 Cf. Kemp, cited above (Note 1), p. 119.

10 Cf. Stephanie Liechtenstein, “OSCE, keep going!” In: *Security and Human Rights Monitor*, 27 April 2017, at: <https://www.shrmonitor.org/osce-keep-going>.

11 Cf. Kemp, cited above (Note 1), p. 119.

12 Cf. Meier, cited above (Note 8), p. 158-159.

13 Kemp, cited above (Note 1), p. 119.

tion. [...] The OSCE SMM should keep going. The work that the Mission has been performing is far too important to be stopped or scaled down. The OSCE SMM deserves full support by all OSCE participating States.”<sup>14</sup>

\*\*\*

The OSCE Yearbook 2017 opens with a contribution by Gernot Erler, Germany’s “Mr. OSCE” in 2016, who discusses in his personal retrospective on Germany’s OSCE Chairmanship 2016 how current developments and the new disruptive forces are affecting the multilateralism upon which the entire OSCE depends. Former OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier looks back on his years in office and offers his personal views on how to make the OSCE “more effective, efficient, and resilient”. This – in his words – “will [...] require not only new capacities but, first and foremost, reconsideration of some of the fundamental policies and structures that underpin OSCE operations”. Subsequently, Sergey Utkin, from the Moscow-based Primakov Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) at the Russian Academy of Sciences, investigates the question of whether the often heard claim that “Russia prefers bilateral agreements to multilateral ones, since the former are better suited to securing Moscow’s interests” is justified.

OSCE participating States in the focus in 2017 include Turkey, where the political situation following the referendum, which drastically increased presidential powers, is the subject of Olaf Leißer’s contribution. Alena Vysotskaya Guedes Vieira describes how Belarus’ efforts to promote diplomatic negotiations on the Ukraine crisis resulted in an unprecedented enhancement of the country’s international actorness. Finally, Azam Isabaev considers the situation in Uzbekistan following the first peaceful transfer of presidential power since independence.

In the section on conflict prevention and dispute settlement, Walter Kemp provides a key update on the ongoing work of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine. In particular, he outlines the political and operational challenges that the OSCE faces in dealing with the conflict and discusses the possibilities and limitations of a civilian mission operating in a war zone. Pál Dunay, whose contribution also deals with the conflict in and around Ukraine, focuses on the current political situation and some of the potential long-term international implications. Former Head of the OSCE Mission in Moldova, William H. Hill, looks at efforts to revive the Transnistria conflict settlement process, while Simone Guerrini and Maria-Alexandra Martin look at the recent work of the OSCE Mission to Skopje. Also in this section, Harry Tzimitras and Ayla Gürel-Moran, from the PRIO (Peace Research Institute Oslo) Cyprus Centre, address a conflict, which sometimes seems to be neglected in the OSCE context: the possibility of reviving peace talks in Cyprus.

---

14 Liechtenstein, cited above (Note 10).



Under the heading of “comprehensive security – the three dimensions and cross-dimensional challenges”, Lia Neukirch reviews the functioning of human rights protection mechanisms in frozen conflict situations, particularly in secessionist entities that remain in a protracted state of legal uncertainty. Cyber/ICT security issues have grown in prominence on the agendas of OSCE participating States, hence, Velimir Radicevic, from the OSCE Secretariat’s Transnational Threats Department (TNTD), discusses what needs to be done to enhance global cyber stability between states and reduce tensions and the risks of conflict that can arise from the use of ICT technologies. Benjamin Schaller deals with an exciting region that has, so far, hardly played a role in the OSCE context, but for which co-operation within the OSCE and, in particular, OSCE confidence- and security-building measures (CSBMs) could serve as a model: the Arctic region. Concluding this section, Jenniver Sehring and Esra Buttanni look at the vital environmental work of the OSCE Aarhus Centres 25 years after the signing of the Aarhus Convention.

In the section on OSCE institutions and structures, Astrid Thors provides her own very personal retrospective on her tenure as the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM).

Finally, in the section on the OSCE’s external relations and influence, Marietta S. König and Carolin Poeschke discuss the successes and shortcomings of the work of the OSCE Asian Partnership for Co-operation during recent Asian Contact Group Chairmanships, most recently Germany’s in 2017. In a concluding article, Loïc Simonet gives a brilliant and exhaustive review of relations between the OSCE and NATO as two key elements of European security architecture.

We are grateful to the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in 2016, Austria’s Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs Sebastian Kurz, for contributing this year’s foreword.

At this point, the publishers and the editorial staff would like to thank all our authors for their dedicated contributions and co-operation. It is their creativity, expertise, and engagement that have made the Yearbook possible and make it inimitable.

\*\*\*

In an interview given in September 2017, the newly appointed OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger made a sober observation: “The reappearance of the OSCE on the political radar means that security in Europe is not in a good state. Because when we become visible, this means that there are problems – and indeed there are problems, such as the crisis in Ukraine.”<sup>15</sup> However, it is exactly in cases of crisis and conflict that the OSCE is needed – as an impartial observer and mediator. And it is exactly the crisis in and

---

15 Cited in: Stephanie Liechtenstein/Thomas Seifert, Die schlaflosen Nächte des OSZE-Chefs [The OSCE Chief’s Sleepless Nights], Wiener Zeitung.at, 8 September 2017, at: [https://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/europa/europastaaten/915766\\_Die-schlaflosen-Naechte-des-OSZE-Chefs.html](https://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/europa/europastaaten/915766_Die-schlaflosen-Naechte-des-OSZE-Chefs.html) (author’s translation).

around Ukraine where the OSCE has shown that it is highly operational: An advanced SMM team started its work in Kyiv on 22 March 2014 in the morning – less than 24 hours after the Permanent Council’s consensual adoption of the Mission’s mandate on the evening of Friday, 21 March. Three days later, several teams had been deployed to regions outside Kyiv and, within a week, SMM monitors had been deployed to all locations specified in the Permanent Council’s decision.<sup>16</sup> Since then, the SMM and the OSCE as a whole has fulfilled its role as an observer and mediator better than others might have done. Moreover, the OSCE decisively contributes to upholding discussions between Russia and Ukraine. In this context, the Trilateral Contact Group, chaired by a representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, should also be highlighted.

Despite “very confrontational rhetoric” between Russia and the Western states, despite numerous conflicts, emerging nationalism and decreasing trust, Secretary General Greminger observes that “there seems to be a certain insight that one must talk to another despite all the divergences. Here, the OSCE offers itself as a platform.”<sup>17</sup> The OSCE’s apparent weakness ultimately proves to be its strength: “We can talk about anything. That is the OSCE’s welcome offer”, as a German newspaper wrote.<sup>18</sup> It calls the OSCE a “relationship booster”, the “group therapy among the international organizations”<sup>19</sup> – with “group therapy” referring to the OSCE’s tradition of silent diplomacy. Thus, in times of crisis, more therapists seem to be needed – impartial mediators, observers, and civil conflict managers. For this, the OSCE needs the support of its participating States: “The OSCE does not need a protecting power. But countries that are committed to the OSCE.”<sup>20</sup> And, I would like to add, it needs *people* on whom it can rely. In this respect, former Secretary General Lamberto Zannier writes: “Having worked for and with a wide range of international organizations, I can confidently say that the OSCE staff ranks among the most committed and efficient.” One of these committed members of staff was Joseph Stone.

---

16 Cf. Claus Neukirch, The Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine: Operational Challenges and New Horizons in: Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 2014*, Baden-Baden 2015, pp. 183-197, here: p. 185.

17 Cited in: Liechtenstein/Seifert, cited above (Note 15) (author’s translation).

18 Friedhard Teuffel, Die stille Diplomatie der OSZE: Mehr internationale Gruppentherapie, bitte! [The OSCE’s Quiet Diplomacy: More Group Therapy, please!], in: *Der Tagesspiegel*, 11 April 2017, at: <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/die-stille-diplomatie-der-osze-mehr-internationale-gruppentherapie-bitte/19660510.html> (author’s translation).

19 Ibid. (author’s translation).

20 Ibid. (author’s translation).

I.

States of Affairs – Affairs of State



## The OSCE and European Security



Gernot Erler

## “Renewing Dialogue – Rebuilding Trust – Restoring Security”: Germany’s 2016 OSCE Chairmanship – A Personal Retrospective and a Vision for the OSCE in 2025

### *Germany’s 2016 OSCE Chairmanship in Retrospect*

I believe the results of Germany’s OSCE Chairmanship can be summed up in a few theses:

*First:* It was right to assume responsibility for the OSCE and, hence, for the European security architecture. Precisely because the security situation in Europe is more critically balanced than at any time since the end of the Cold War, the German Chairmanship was keen to take a stand for multilateralism and a rules-based order by committing itself to the revitalization of the OSCE. The Organization remains the only forum where dialogue between all sides is ongoing, though it is increasingly a dialogue between adversaries and less one among like-minded – or at least respected – partners, as it was in the early days of the Charter of Paris.

Under current conditions – continuing deterioration of relations with Russia, erosion of the OSCE’s normative basis, no substantive progress in implementing the Minsk Agreements on the conflict in and around Ukraine, a flare-up of the precarious Nagorno-Karabakh conflict during our Chairmanship in April 2016 – we had no choice but to focus on at least containing negative developments, preventing the emergence of new conflicts, and defending the OSCE *acquis* against growing opposition, particularly in the human dimension.

The unpromising situation we inherited meant there could be no guarantee of success for our OSCE Chairmanship. Nevertheless, we were able to make our priorities felt in several key regards:

The foreign ministers of the OSCE participating States had expressly requested more opportunities for dialogue at the Belgrade Ministerial Council in 2015. On 1 September 2016, in response to this, an informal OSCE ministerial meeting was held for the first time in many years, and was well received. The format used in Potsdam was taken up by the 2017 Austrian OSCE Chairmanship, who held another such meeting on 11 July, dedicated to the topics of combating terrorism and security policy/conventional arms control. This format should also be continued by the coming chairmanships.

---

Note: The views contained in this contribution are the author’s own.

Wherever reasonable and practical, we involved the OSCE Troika (consisting of the previous Chairmanship, the current Chairmanship, and the coming Chairmanship) to ensure greater continuity and thematic stability. The adoption of an agenda for the future of the OSCE by the foreign ministers of Germany, Austria, and Italy at the Ministerial Council in Hamburg created new momentum and defined a framework for priority fields of action on the part of the Organization: developing new forms of dialogue, strengthening sustainable conflict resolution, reviving conventional arms control, collectively addressing global challenges, and creating an OSCE that is more capable of delivering results.<sup>1</sup>

And finally, we were able to establish economic connectivity – i.e. creating linkages, integrating, and establishing economic co-operation, which can also help to build political confidence – and migration as two new key political topics within the OSCE and give each of them concrete form by means of a Ministerial Council Decision. We also expanded OSCE discussions of cyber issues to all three OSCE dimensions and were able to achieve consensus to adopt a second package of confidence-building measures on cyber-security in spring 2016. The OSCE is, thus, the only UN regional arrangement to pass measures of this kind. Other regions of the globe, such as East Asia, are looking to the OSCE and wish to learn from it in this regard.



*Figure 1: Informal meeting of OSCE foreign ministers on 1 September 2016 in Potsdam – Glienicke Bridge (© Photothek)*

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Hamburg Declaration of the incoming OSCE Troika: A Strong OSCE for a Secure Europe*, MC.GAL/11/16, 9 December 2016, at: <http://www.osce.org/cio/287946>.



*Second:* Deep reservations exist “East of Vienna” at the thought of a more effective OSCE. During its Chairmanship, however, Germany exerted considerable effort to encourage the overcoming of old thinking and to enhance the Organization’s capabilities:

One central concern was to enhance the abilities of the OSCE across the entire conflict cycle – particularly with regard to civil crisis management, as a means of solidifying the OSCE’s role as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. Therefore, in 2016, we initiated a dialogue among the participating States and organized conferences throughout the year where we used our Chairmanship role to discuss topics, including mediation, dialogue facilitation, early-warning, crisis response, and strategies for lasting peace. On the margins of the UN General Assembly in September 2016, a number of foreign ministers attended a high-level side event on strengthening civil crisis management and the OSCE as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter.

However, despite organizing a special retreat for OSCE ambassadors on the topic of the conflict cycle and carefully producing relevant draft decisions, the German Chairmanship did not succeed in achieving consensus among the OSCE participating States in the negotiations prior to the Ministerial Council on further practical steps, such as providing the OSCE Secretary General with a small fund to strengthen the OSCE’s ability to react to developing crises. Nonetheless, there was a very broad consensus among the OSCE participating States in favour of continuing to work intensively on this topic. In operational terms, at least, we succeeded in placing practical cooperation with other organizations on a permanent footing by, for instance, establishing a UN liaison officer at the OSCE, who will, among other things, facilitate the adoption of UN standards by the OSCE.

The German Chairmanship dedicated a great deal of attention to the topic of the OSCE’s legal personality, as the practical limitations that prevent the OSCE from performing effective conflict prevention and crisis management are obvious: The OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre (CPC) cannot lead crisis operations, such as the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (SMM); the OSCE is restricted in its ability to enter into contracts in areas, such as tendering out services, and contracts of employment often have to be handled by the incumbent OSCE Chairmanship.

A further achievement of the German OSCE Chairmanship was the timely adoption of the OSCE budget. Though it should be a formality, the passing of the budget is all too often an annual struggle for the new Chairmanship. This was no exception in Germany’s case and it was only on New Year’s Eve 2015, one day before the start of our tenure, that we finally managed to overcome the tough opposition of a number of participating States, thanks, in part, to the strenuous efforts at the highest levels of the German Federal Foreign Office. It should be noted, in particular, that we succeeded in

creating four new positions at the CPC to help it shoulder the sharp rise in work it has had to face, partly as a result as of the SMM.

Another thing I consider an achievement of our Chairmanship was our success, under difficult conditions and in the teeth of fierce opposition from a number of participating States, in ensuring that the most important annual event in the OSCE's human dimension, the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM), was held as planned in Warsaw.

On the other hand, it is deeply regrettable and does not augur well for the OSCE's *acquis* of values, that obstinacy on the part of several states East of Vienna made it impossible to achieve consensus on key draft decisions in the human dimension at the Ministerial Council Meeting in Hamburg, despite our tireless efforts. Examples include the proposed definition of anti-Semitism – important in areas such as criminal justice and education – and draft decisions on freedom of opinion and the media. Nonetheless, by holding high-level Chairmanship conferences on, for example, tolerance and diversity, we have made a contribution to ensuring that the OSCE continues to deal with important topics of social concern, while simultaneously taking a stand against populism and intolerance.

It was also deeply regrettable that no decisions were taken during Germany's Chairmanship to appoint successors to the departing OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. Despite strenuous efforts on Germany's part, it was not possible to put together the necessary consensus. Overall, it became clear that personnel questions and annual discussions of the budgets and mandates of field operations gave too many opportunities to those who seek to throw a spanner in the works of the OSCE.

*Third:* There can also be divisions among Western partners and allies on questions relating to the OSCE, and they do not take advantage of all the OSCE has to offer. So far, the EU has not made full use of the OSCE's potential as an instrument for its Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP).

On budgetary questions, a number of the larger EU member states, in particular, have failed to recognize the role that the OSCE has played in strengthening common Western values and interests and are not willing to invest more in the Organization. Maintaining the policy of zero nominal growth means that the OSCE's already slim budget of just under 139 million euros in 2017 (roughly 141 million euros in 2016) is shrinking in real terms year on year, which leads to the OSCE gradually losing attractiveness compared to other organizations.

Furthermore, in 2016, the temptation of using the OSCE, above all, as a forum for pursuing disputes by means of verbal confrontation was once again unmistakable, even though this tends to lead to polarization among the participating States rather than the working out of common interests.

Taking this into account, it is hardly surprising, but still unsatisfactory, that the EU is not participating as effectively in OSCE decision-making as it should, particularly since EU members make up around half of OSCE participating States and contribute over 70 per cent of the Organization's budget. The fact that the OSCE Chairmanship will be held by four EU states in succession (Germany 2016, Austria 2017, Italy 2018, Slovakia 2019) provides the EU with an opportunity to advance a budgetary review process that would, among other things, question the sense of continuing the zero nominal growth policy.

*Fourth:* Germany worked hard to strengthen the OSCE's conflict-management instruments, particularly the then Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who made numerous trips to conflict areas: twice to Ukraine and also to Moldova/Transdniestria, Central Asia, and the Caucasus. However, the OSCE cannot resolve any conflicts without the political will of the participating States but can only, at best, contain them.

The focus on crisis management in and around Ukraine was to be expected: By providing close political and operational support – in areas such as staff acquisition, financing, and mission safety – we helped to ensure that the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine was even more effectively prepared to carry out its growing range of tasks – including closer integration with the Trilateral Contact Group and the Normandy Format.

With regard to the still precarious Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, while the fighting that broke out in April 2016 was the fiercest of the last 20-plus years, it proved possible to, at least, contain it by means of diplomacy and mediation, and a fragile ceasefire was restored. Thereafter, at the initiative of the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan, the German Chairmanship developed proposals for expanding the monitoring team of the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on the conflict, Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk, and for a mechanism to investigate ceasefire violations. Unfortunately, neither of these proposals has, so far, been taken up.

By deliberately pursuing a strategy of incrementalism, we succeeded in bringing about a number of specific improvements in the remaining frozen conflict situations: In the Transdniestria conflict, we not only succeeded in organizing the first official meeting of the 5+2 format (the two conflict parties; the OSCE, Ukraine, and Russia as mediators; plus the USA and the EU as observers) for some time, but also achieved agreement on concrete steps to move forward in the areas of education and transport (Berlin Protocol) – recognition of Transdniestrian diplomas and vehicle number plates – and a Ministerial Council Decision on the final resolution of the conflict.

With respect to the conflict in Georgia, at the Geneva International Discussions between Georgia, Russia, the USA, and representatives of the breakaway entities of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, under the joint chairmanship of the UN, the OSCE, and the EU, the previously suspended Incident

Prevention and Response Mechanisms at the administrative borders within Georgia were successfully restored.

Overall, therefore, despite occasional bouts of mere crisis management, small successes were achieved in resolving the protracted conflicts, which it is now incumbent to build upon. In this, one thing remains clear: With the instruments it possesses, the OSCE cannot resolve these conflicts. It can do no more than contain them and ameliorate their humanitarian consequences. Without the clear political will of all sides in the conflict, there can be no solutions.



*Figure 2: Ukraine, destroyed bridge in Sloviansk (© Photothek)*

*Fifth:* We were successful in reconfirming the role of the OSCE as the central platform for security dialogue in Europe. Perhaps the most significant decision of the Hamburg Ministerial Council was the announcement of the launch of a “Structured Dialogue” on current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area. Activities within this framework have already begun, and an initial progress report was presented at the informal meeting of OSCE foreign ministers in July 2017. A number of meetings, attended by high-ranking representatives of OSCE States and chaired by Germany’s OSCE Ambassador, Eberhard Pohl, were held to discuss the topics of threat perceptions, military doctrines, and force postures, as well as questions concerning the current rules-based European security order and the inadequate implementation of existing arms-control regimes, such as the Vienna Document, by individual participating States. At the formal Ministerial Council

Meeting in December 2017, the ministers took note of a report that enables the continuation of the Structured Dialogue and the transition to an operational phase in which the OSCE participating States, with the involvement of military experts, will agree on a method of representing force postures and military exercises in the OSCE area (“mapping”) as a means of producing a commonly accepted military fact base that can be used to raise trust and predictability once again.

From a German point of view, it would be welcome if this initiative were also to expand later to encompass the topic of conventional arms control in Europe. More than ten years after Russia’s de facto withdrawal from the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) and, in view of Russian opposition to the position that the Vienna Document requires modernization, it is high time that the foundation was laid for new arms control instruments. We want to continue to contribute to this effort, in a way that stays true to our two-track approach of justified, proportionate, and purely defensive reassurance measures, on the one hand, and concrete offers of security dialogue to Russia on the other.

A key undertaking of the German Chairmanship – precisely in view of Russia’s suspension of the CFE Treaty – was our consistent effort to ensure a substantial modernization of the Vienna Document. To this end, Germany, together with other OSCE participating States, made a range of concrete proposals to strengthen the mechanisms for risk reduction, for enhancing military transparency, for more effective verification measures, and for strengthening the OSCE as an impartial actor. A very large number of OSCE participating States agree with our approach that substantial modernization of the Vienna Document remains indispensable for security and co-operation in Europe.

*In conclusion:* It is worth investing in the OSCE and working to shape its available instruments. In the face of tangible scepticism on the part of a number of participating States, we successfully expanded political dialogue within the Organization while creating openings for new partners, including representatives of civil society. An example of the latter is the Chairmanship conference on “Connectivity for Commerce and Investment”, which was held in Berlin in May 2016. It not only gathered together 900 participants from more than 60 states, but also boosted the involvement of the private sector in OSCE events, with more than half of the conference attendees representing the business community. The decision of the Austrian OSCE Chairmanship to extend our initiative and to keep the topic of connectivity high on its agenda is most welcome.

More than 90 outreach events sought to raise awareness among civil society organizations of opportunities in a range of areas where the OSCE can provide support. At the Hamburg Ministerial Council Meeting, a space was created for the first time to facilitate contacts between government delegates

and civil society representatives, and events were held on a wide range of current key OSCE issues. The large amount of positive feedback that we received on this new format following the Ministerial Council should encourage the creation of similar opportunities in the future.

And yet – the concept of multilateral security is currently being called into question in the OSCE area more strongly than at any time since the end of the Cold War. There are many widely different reasons for this: the Russian factor, isolationist tendencies in the USA, the growing self-confidence of OSCE participating States in regions such as Central Asia, and the growth of nationalism and populism. However, simply as a result of our deep integration in international political and economic structures, Germany's position can only be to support the strengthening of multilateralism and the processes of a rules-based order and international law. Finding allies for this, especially in the OSCE area, and continuing this work with trusted partners and friends will remain a priority task for German foreign policy in the near future. We can pursue this course within the OSCE by expanding the Organization's agenda to cover new challenges, allowing us to demonstrate the concrete benefits of co-operation – including connectivity, conventional arms control, migration, and the implementation of existing OSCE commitments in the human dimension.

#### *“OSCE 2025” – A Positive Vision*

In 2025, the OSCE will still be one of the world's largest co-operative security organizations. It will continue to perform its work – as usual. At its major meetings, almost all of its 57 participating States will still want to rise to speak their (usually prefabricated) words. Then it will be the turn of the Partner States. Not every speaker will stay within the time limit, particularly not those from the larger participating States. Repetition among all these speeches will be unavoidable. Perhaps it is just as important that the attendees get to know each other, see each other regularly, and fall into conversation on the margins of the official programme. The OSCE is a large organization like others, and it functions in the same way.

Some elements of this modus operandi produce familiarity. Since the conflict in Ukraine, no OSCE conference has taken place without a more or less disputatious exchange between the Russian and Ukrainian ambassadors. The equally predictable clash between the ambassadors of Armenia and Azerbaijan has an even longer history, which not infrequently comes out in relation to agenda items that have nothing to do with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Efforts to change this established and familiar way of working even slightly have no chance and are, therefore, never even attempted. The only thing that appears to offer a prospect of success is the “additive approach”.