

Investing in Afghanistan's future

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Investing in Afghanistan's future



Introduction

Ensuring stability in Afghanistan after the planned 2014 draw-down in NATO's presence in the country requires urgent action, agreed participants at "Investing in Afghanistan's Future." The discussion, co-organised by *Friends of Europe*, the Security & Defence Agenda (SDA) and Debating Europe, in partnership with the British Council and the NATO, considered the outlook for Afghan society to 2014 and

"We believe it is time to focus on Afghanistan's people – on governance, shoring up the civilian leadership, on the economy, on women and the media," said **Shada Islam**, Head of Policy at *Friends of Europe*. "A strong army but a weak civilian government is a recipe for chronic instability," she added.

"The coming transition in Afghanistan will not begin in 2014 with the withdrawal of NATO troops," said **Paul Smith**, British Council Country Director, Afghanistan. "It has already started and is well underway."

This transition, of which the end goal must be to enable the Afghan people to "command and control their own destiny" in order to create a secure, stable and prosperous country, should focus on three main processes: the withdrawal of international combat forces, the peace process, and democratic and fair elections, said **Pedro Serrano**, Director for South and Southeast Asia at the European External Action Service (EEAS).

These processes are already in place but need to be developed further in order to address the problems confronting Afghanistan, namely the issues of security, development and governance – encompassing corruption, rule of law, human rights and financing, among others.

In the most optimistic scenario, noted **Fatima Ayub**, Senior Policy & Advocacy Officer, Open Society Foundations, the 2014 draw-down would leave behind an Afghanistan with a minimally functioning central government and security forces capable of dealing with the ongoing insurgency.

Heading towards civil war?

Even this scenario may not become reality, as targeted assassinations and increasing political infighting in Afghanistan appear to suggest that the country will be facing a serious political crisis in the next few years.

"The fact is that the war in Afghanistan is escalating," Ayub underlined, adding: "There are signs that the country is slowly sliding towards civil war."

During her extensive travels in Afghanistan over the last year, **Nasrine Gross**, Founder and President of the Roqia Center for Women's Rights, Studies and Education in Afghanistan, has "not heard from one

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single Afghan who is not worried about the Western coalition leaving.” While it is true that the Afghan security forces do not currently have the wherewithal to stand alone against the insurgency, she said she was less concerned about the idea of civil war. The real threat continues to be the Taliban and other groups who are trained, armed and funded by sources outside of the country.

Whether future conflict comes from outside forces or not, concerns are escalating that Afghanistan's fledgling governance and security structures will be unable to meet the requirements of stability and sustainability as international support from both development aid programs and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) drops off following troop withdrawals in 2014.

“As much as I would like to subscribe to the ideas of functional development and capacity-building, I genuinely do not think that this is how the international community as a whole thinks about success in Afghanistan,” said Ayub. Instead, she suggested that the international community is more concerned with patching up the security threat presented by Afghanistan, rather than addressing the root causes of the instability in Afghan society.

Focus on people

“Afghanistan is not a geopolitical strategy,” noted Smith. “It is not a series of bilateral agreements. It is real. It is thirty million people who are tired of being pawns in other people's games and want to build a normal life for themselves and their children.”

The panel agreed that the way forward for a stable and sustainable Afghanistan is for the Afghan people – with support from the international community – to take upon themselves the task of creating capable governance structures while rallying national security forces and the will of the people around cohesive Afghan cultural ideals.

“The conclusion is not that the people do not care about what happens to their country,” said **Col. Michel Lalumière**, Chief of Staff, Combined Joint Interagency Task Force Shafafiyat, ISAF. “There are many entities on the ground that have the will but lack the tools and mechanisms to tackle the issues. Make no mistake; Afghanistan is in a race where the prize is the trust of the people.”

What role for the international community?

In any discussion on the future of Afghanistan, it is important to remember that currently, 90% of the Afghan budget is donor-financed, noted Serrano, adding that much remains to be done to ensure the country's sustainability.

The EEAS is currently negotiating a cooperation agreement on partnership and development with Afghanistan. This agreement will be the EU's first legal framework with the country and is a sign of the evolving and maturing relations between the EU and Afghanistan.

Furthermore, following the December 2011 International Afghanistan Conference in Bonn, the EU has reaffirmed its commitment to assisting Afghanistan beyond the transition period, which ends in 2014 transition, throughout the decade of transformation.¹



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High-level conference, 27 January 2012

EU-CHINA PARTNERSHIP ON SUSTAINABLE URBANISATION
European Policy Summit, 3 May 2012

ASEAN AT 45: REGIONAL HOPES, GLOBAL CLOUD
High-level policy summit, 19 June 2012

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High-level conference, November 2012



PUBLICATIONS

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Op-ed, March 2012

RISING ASIA AND OLD EUROPE NEED TO WORK TOGETHER
Op-ed, March 2012

ENCOURAGING MYANMAR'S TRANSITION: A ROLE FOR EUROPE
Policy briefing, February 2012

PAKISTAN: CHARTING A COURSE FOR REVIVAL
Policy briefing, January 2012

EUROPE AND CHINA: RIVALS OR STRATEGIC PARTNERS?
Report, November 2011



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The international community's engagement with Afghanistan will be deepened and further defined this year through a set of conferences to be held in Chicago in May, Kabul in June and Tokyo in July, Serrano informed the participants. These conferences are all interlinked, addressing different aspects of the international community's engagement: security and development and the regional dimension, respectively.

Afghan security forces

One of the key topics of the Chicago conference will be how to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). This area concerns NATO and ISAF to a large degree but the EU will continue its commitment to supporting the civilian police, he explained.

"The aim beyond 2014 is that the ANSF be in the lead and take over responsibility for security," said Lalumière. "Already, the capacity that the Afghan forces are demonstrating is impressive."

Addressing a question about civilian oversight of the military, Serrano underlined that EU efforts are focussed on developing an accountable police force able to serve Afghan citizens.

The EU was complementing these efforts through supporting reform of the judiciary and penitentiary systems.

"We are distinguishing between the civilian police and the army," he noted. "We want to ensure that the civilian police are numerous enough and of a high enough quality to protect citizens' rights and provide a service to society." To this end, through its EUPOL Afghanistan mission, the EU provides leadership training and mentoring to the Afghan police forces

while continuing its financial support for police salaries through the United Nations Development Programme's Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan.²

Afghanistan's neighbours

The second conference, to be held in Kabul in June, will involve actors from the region such as India, Pakistan and China and will reinforce the importance of the regional dimension following the withdrawal of international combat forces.

Finally, Serrano noted, the Tokyo conference is concerned with ensuring the ownership of Afghanistan over its own development. International donors are already engaged in a number of areas in Afghan development, from the justice sector, through electoral reform, governance and human rights, to health and rural development. "The donors have to live up to their commitments and Afghanistan to the reforms it has agreed to carry out," he stated.

"If we want to be successful in Afghanistan, the EU must fulfil its commitments, as well as the Afghan authorities and the international community."

In the lead up to 2014, the EU has three main messages to impart to Afghanistan and its partners in the international community, Serrano underlined. Firstly,

the political and financial commitment from the EU remains firm, as well as cooperation in any number of other areas.

Secondly, effective engagement with Afghanistan can only be successful if the Afghan Government makes good on its commitments to addressing governance

¹ The Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan is a multi-lateral Trust Fund set up in 2002 as a mechanism for coordinating contributions as part of the international community's support for building the Afghan national police force. For more information: http://www.undp.org.af/whoweare/undpinafghanistan/Projects/sbgs/prj_lotfa.htm

² The conclusions of the Bonn Conference can be found on the website of the EEAS: http://eeas.europa.eu/afghanistan/docs/2011_11_conclusions_bonn_en.pdf

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reforms, while encouraging its civil society to fully play its role. Finally, the continued commitment of the international community is essential to Afghanistan's transition and transformation processes. NATO, the UN and other, particularly regional, actors must at least maintain, if not increase, their involvement in the processes currently underway in Afghanistan. "If we want to be successful in Afghanistan," he noted, "the EU must fulfil its commitments, as well as the Afghan authorities and the international community."

Underlining the importance of her fellow discussant's analysis, Ayub warned that, for all the discussion underway, there are not any real economic commitments to Afghanistan after 2014. "Afghanistan is largely aid dependent," she reminded, "and the budget is completely skewed, with 40% of revenue currently consumed by security services. Once aid levels fall, we must consider what effect the ensuing economic instability will have."

Stabilising the region

"The regional players are very important for the future of Afghanistan," stated Gross. The inclusion of Afghanistan's neighbours in the processes currently underway is imperative for a peaceful transition in the country.

As the regional conference in Kabul approaches, it is vital that the regional players recognise their common interest in stability in the region. "Failure of one neighbour is a great danger to every player in the region," said Serrano. "The priority is the stability of

Afghanistan. In order to accomplish this, we must bring together the various actors and improve a shared understanding on the common issues at stake."

While conducting these discussions, the different dynamics around the region need to be dealt with separately, either through bilateral agreements or through third party interventions, he suggested.

On the technical level in some areas, certain regional actors are interested in continuing and expanding cooperation, noted Lalumière. "Security issues are an easy example but we are also seeing some cooperation between regional players on trans-border crime. An alignment of interest prompts discussion, which is part of the natural evolution of stabilisation," he elaborated.

Cooperation on a technical level is a good step but it is not enough, said Ayub, adding that "regional players can only be engaged politically. If we are to engage these actors productively, we must continue talking to them."

Fixing Afghanistan's political deficit

Afghanistan is facing a growing insurgency, as the attacks that took place on 15 April 2012 demonstrate, Ayub stated, suggesting further that conflicts distort economies and the political fabric of societies. Countries that are in conflict have not achieved a single Millennium Development Goal, according to last year's World Development Report, released by the World Bank.

She believes that, in order to truly advance in stabilising Afghanistan, the drivers of the conflict must be overcome and all factions within the country must be able to meet and come to a genuine political settlement.

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“What is currently being presented as a political process is in reality only discussion about a political process,” she noted, adding that successful negotiations to end the ongoing conflict must be held between more than just the Americans and the Taliban. The challenge is to include all of the power brokers in Afghanistan in the process and allow them to reach an agreement among themselves.

An important step in this process is the elections proposed for 2014, underlined Gross. “The 2014 elections must happen and they must be free, fair and transparent. For this to occur we need to effect changes in electoral law and the electoral commission. The work needed to make these changes must start now.”

“The 2014 elections must happen and they must be free, fair and transparent.”

Though she agrees with her co-panellist, Ayub said she was uncertain that the current conditions on the ground in Afghanistan will allow these free and transparent elections to take place. In the absence of a fair and democratic transition of political leadership, she posits, there is a greater risk of a slide towards more armed conflict.

“We need to discuss what a political process looks like in Afghanistan,” she said. “As it stands now, there is no political framework in place to manage competing interests. This is the point that needs to be underscored.”

“We need to discuss what a political process looks like in Afghanistan. As it stands now, there is no political framework in place to manage competing interests.”

Powerful families

As Ayub sees it, the political pattern currently emerging in Afghanistan is one where networks of powerful families control large sectors of the economy.

In addition, there is a proliferation and fragmentation of armed groups throughout the country.

In the absence of a commonly-held notion of a state to provide protection and run the country, against a backdrop of increasing insecurity as to whether the ANSF will remain cohesive after the withdrawal of ISAF troops, she expressed concerns about the possibility of a civil war.

In sum, Ayub said that 2014 will bring one of two possibilities. There will either be recognition on the part of the current Afghan administration that it needs to hold a productive dialogue in the absence of support from ISAF, or the power brokers in Afghanistan will believe that they can continue to fight the war, thus prolonging the conflict and perpetuating the hardship for the country and its people.

Integrating equality and justice in the Afghan cultural identity

The question of redefining Afghan culture is quite pertinent to the process of transition the country is undergoing, panellists said. “People often speak about Afghanistan as a three-legged stool, comprising governance, security and socio-economic development. I believe it is a four-legged chair. Without the fourth leg of culture to stabilise it, the whole structure is liable to collapse,” noted Smith.



Jaap De Hoop Scheffer
former NATO Secretary General



Javier Solana
former EU High Representative for CFSP

The issues changing global security

The SDA's **cyber-security initiative** is challenging many of the security and defence communities' most deeply held beliefs. The SDA is the only regular forum in Brussels devoted to analysing and debating the future of defence and security policies. It brings clarity and new ideas to the rapidly changing security and defence policy scene through its regular roundtables, debates, reports, international conferences and press dinners.



Gábor Iklódy
NATO Assistant Secretary General for
Emerging Security Challenges
*Public-private cooperation in cyber-security,
January 2012*



Heli Tiirmaa-Klaar
Cyber Security Policy Advisor,
European External Action Service
*International cooperation on
cyber-security, May 2012*



Christopher M. Painter
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*International cooperation on
cyber-security, May 2012*



Neelie Kroes
EC Vice-president for the Digital Agenda
*Public-private cooperation in cyber-security,
January 2012*



Cecilia Malmström,
EU Home Affairs Commissioner
Defining cyber-security, November 2011



Troels Oerting
EUROPOL Assistant Director of Operations
*International cooperation on
cyber-security, May 2012*

Recent activities:

- International cooperation on cyber-security
- Public-private cooperation on cyber-security
- Global governance
- Report "Cyber-security: The vexed question of global rules"
- Developing Europe's cyber-defences
- Defining cyber-security



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The future stability of Afghanistan depends heavily on forging an identity as a nation with rich cultural traditions. He said the way forward for Afghanistan depended on: investment in education, a responsive and responsible civil society, and a sense of cultural cohesion around which the nation may build an identity.

For the last decades, Afghanistan, one of the world's oldest civilisations, has been an "incipient nation, always on the verge of defining itself," stated Smith. The seemingly endless conflicts that have torn through the country for the last thirty years have denied Afghanistan essential processes in education, training and professional development, resulting in a dearth of professionals in all sectors, from health to agriculture and administration to engineering.

"In order to ensure a stable and sustainable future for Afghanistan, investments must be made in helping to create an indigenous Afghan civil society that carries weight with the formal government," he underlined.

An important element of empowering civil society lies in the respect of fundamental human rights. In the case of Afghanistan, women's rights have become a major issue, notwithstanding the country's constitution, which guarantees equal rights for men and women, explained Gross.

The role of women

While women do work in government and business, they remain a small minority that is shrinking at an alarming rate. In 2003, 33% of government employees were women, a number which has now dropped to 21%, she noted, adding that 85% of Afghan women are illiterate and 77% live in rural areas, sometimes with no access to drinkable water.

"The freedoms that Afghan women have gained are now in danger because the government of President Hamid Karzai has been ignoring women's rights and presenting clear messages that devalue women," Gross said.

Furthermore, over the last decade, extremist Muslims have been disseminating counter-productive ideas about the role of women in society. "When Mullahs say it is against Islam for women to leave the house, it is extremely dangerous for the future of Afghanistan," she warned. "This is not Islam but, if we Afghans who believe in fundamental rights do not have good mechanisms in place to prevent such erroneous beliefs, we are part of the problem."

When considering social inclusion, it behoves Afghan decision makers and their partners in the international community to activate the wealth of human resources represented by the country's youth. "For good or for ill, Afghan's youth are the people who will be running the show in the future," noted Smith.



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Young people have a key role

Currently, there are numerous initiatives in place that are trying to help youth to find their voice and achieve traction on social action, he informed the participants. In dealing with the younger generations of Afghans, care must be taken to avoid being patronising while at the same time working to empower them.

“In my experience, the sector of the population who are the most adamant about democratic and fair change in Afghanistan is the youth,” Smith said, adding that “we have to find practical means to enable the youth to put their ideas into action.”

Smith said it was imperative that the international community invested in helping Afghanistan find its own democratic governing structures that are culturally relevant. An appropriate area to begin would be the most oft-cited concern among Afghan youth, namely the rampant level of corruption in the country, the panel agreed.

Tackling corruption

“The level of corruption in Afghanistan and how it has evolved in the last decade has made it totally disproportionate compared with the existing capacity to tackle it,” noted Lalumière. Simply put, the Afghans are asking for a set of checks and balances to address the issue of corruption. There is a lack of suitably robust institutions capable of validating allegations of corruption and following through with prosecution.

“Tackling corruption in Afghanistan is a matter of enabling the justice system to evolve and become more robust,” noted Lalumière. “The system should operate without intimidation, interruption and influence from

the outside”. Much effort has gone into addressing this issue in the past and currently there is a lot of positive energy on the ground to be harnessed in the fight against corruption.

Progress has been made, particularly in the fight against those who grow, process, and sell narcotics, he noted. These commendable actions have demonstrated that, with a concerted effort, the Afghan justice system can be made to operate against the criminal actors who have been enjoying impunity during the past decade.

Future leaders

As a final point, Smith urged the participants to consider that Afghanistan needs help identifying its future leaders. Creating a culturally cohesive and equal society in Afghanistan is contingent on the next generation of well-educated professionals that could benefit from an improved Afghan educational system.

“Tackling corruption in Afghanistan is a matter of enabling the justice system to evolve and become more robust.”

While Afghan school and university systems have come a long way, there is still much work to be done, he admitted.

For example, at the current time only 5% of university lecturers in Afghanistan have obtained a PhD, while less than 30% have a post-graduate degree at all.

“I believe that, if we are to use international money for any one developmental purpose over any other, we should use it to pay the salaries of the most relevant sectors for the future stabilisation of the country, such as schoolteachers, civil servants and doctors,” Smith concluded.

Programme

Evening debate — 24 April 2012

Ensuring stability in Afghanistan after the planned 2014 draw-down in NATO's presence in the country requires urgent action on an array of fronts. An improvement in domestic governance structures is critical. Currently, a lack of commitment to the rule of law, coupled with widespread corruption and heightened insecurity, hinder human and economic development in Afghanistan. Stronger civilian institutions are needed. The future of Afghanistan also depends on the strength and vitality of its people, including the ability of its reformers, business leaders, civil society groups and women to operate without restrictions. The recent international conference in Bonn has promised continued support for post-2014 Afghanistan. But with aid budgets under pressure, can this pledge be fulfilled? How can the international community best assist in developing human, institutional and regulatory capacities in the country? What are the key challenges ahead and what role can the EU play in assisting the transition? Can modern models of education and society survive post 2014 and can an Afghan identity emerge and co-exist with new models of education? What lesson have we learned about cultural needs and investment in people? Will Afghanistan's civil society structures remain influential or will they be overtaken by traditional versions?

Speakers & Moderator



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How Europeans see the crisis

Since its launch in 2011, the idea behind *Debating Europe* has been a simple one: connect European citizens and politicians together in an online debate. From the start we've taken a 'bottom-up' approach with the citizens very much in the driving seat, asking the questions they want answered and putting forward their opinions for the politicians to react.

To date, *Debating Europe* has interviewed more than 320 policy-makers and experts from across the political spectrum. This includes:

- 53 MEPs
- 20 national ministers and state secretaries
- 19 national MPs
- 9 EU Commissioners
- 2 Prime Ministers
- President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy

Each agreed to answer some of the 2,000 comments sent in to us from citizens online, including from a growing community of some 30,000 people following us on Facebook and Twitter.

It's been a high-level, and truly pan-European debate, with citizens and policy-makers from every country in the EU having joined in.

We have synthesised the key debates held so far in our first annual report, which you can read at www.debatingeurope.eu/2012report

There was, of course, much we were unable to fit into this report, and you can visit *Debating Europe* to see more and to take part in the debate yourself.

Our thanks to the European Parliament, Microsoft and Gallup for their support.



Martin Schulz,
President of the European Parliament



I welcome the successful Debating Europe initiative launched by Friends of Europe and Europe's World. It has the double merit of engaging an expert and young audience and prompting politicians and leaders to think critically about a number of complex questions. As leader of Europe's only democratically elected institution I cannot but welcome this forum, the transparent and direct exchange of questions, ideas and, ultimately, solutions.

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The British Council: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

The British Council celebrates its 78th birthday this year. From modest beginnings we now boast over 220 offices in over 100 countries and territories across the world. Although we receive a core government grant to underpin our on-the-ground presence we earn the 72% of our resources by teaching English, winning and delivering education and development contracts and working in partnership with public bodies, donors and the private sector. In total, for every £1 of government funding received, we earn an additional £2.65 from other sources.

We have consistently proven successful at turning this investment into impressive impact. Last year more than 3 million people in the UK were involved in our international programmes and they, in turn, reached more than 600 million people around the world through direct, indirect or media engagement, that is one in ten of the world's population.

This brief outlines the challenges that the British Council has confronted in the past, is engaging with today and our expected areas of focus in the future.

Yesterday

We were established in 1934, with the support of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, as 'The British Committee for Relations with other Countries', to actively promote an understanding of Britain across the world through our ~~lan~~1448 Copenhagen and increasing aggressive competition between European powers. The 2nd World War provided impetus for cultural relations to become a tool to strengthen relationships with allies, heal political tensions with foes, and identify with those seeking refuge in the UK – all of whom would shape our post war future.

Throughout the Cold War when links between Whitehall and the Kremlin were frozen, the British Council continued to develop relations with the people of the USSR. Through cultural activities such as opera exchanges, music tours and educational visits we kept the communications channel between civil sectors open. This cultural foundation was a firm basis on which the UK could build relations once the political ice began to thaw in the 1980's.

The chaotic break up of Yugoslavia, tensions in the Middle East and the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have all been opportunities for the British Council to build trust and mutual understanding between peoples of different cultures, and to prepare the ground for a return to normality once conflict subsides.

Thus, 'people to people' engagement through cultural relations, particularly in times of conflict and when there has been a deficit of political trust between countries, has been a constant thread to our work throughout our history. Of course, we don't need to be at war to witness conflict. We are constantly surrounded by threats to our social cohesion – and these societal rifts are our day-to-day battle ground. The British Council continues to engage in the challenges of today.

Today

We engage in cultural activities in support of UK's strategic endeavours to enhance prosperity and increase stability. In peaceful times and times of crisis we develop relationships with communities around the world. Where international relations create temporary barriers between countries, we seek to swiftly re-establish cultural relations and create a channel for peaceful cooperation and for the development of opportunities and solutions to shared problems.

We increase opportunities for the UK in the big emerging economies such as China, India and Brazil. We support security and stabilisation in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. We help to bring international opportunities to people living in isolated countries such as Zimbabwe and Burma. We deliver sustainable international development by improving skills and education systems and helping to secure good governance, and promote anti-corruption and social inclusion.

We also have a long-term track record in building people-to-people relationships, as well as linking schools, universities and arts bodies among the UK's traditional trading partners and historic friends: the US, the Commonwealth and European countries.

Focusing much of our attention on the next generation – tomorrow's decision-makers – we provide opportunities for them to interact and engage on through our programmes, implemented on the ground all over the world. These programmes are inspired from our core activities – the arts, education (including science), communication (including English language teaching) and 'society' – a broad term embracing governance, migration and social cohesion.

Tomorrow

We will remain a cultural 'business'. We will continue to earn a large and increasing portion of our income through our worldwide English language teaching programmes and exams, sponsorships and partnerships.

We will constantly shape our activities and structures to ensure that we remain relevant, and that we increase our impact as an asset for the UK.

We will continue to work with UK educators, artists, language specialists, scientists, sports people, policy-makers and young people to create international opportunities and connect them with their peers internationally.

British Council EU Office, Brussels

Our office in Brussels is the 'hub' of British Council's activities around the world, as seen through the prism of the European Union. We ensure that our programmes, whether in support of social cohesion, social integration, further education, sustainable development, or conflict prevention and resolution, reflect the broad objectives of the European Strategy EU 2020.

We seek co-funding and service contract opportunities from the European Commission and we align our work with other like-minded institutions. Of special note is our leading role in EUNIC – the European Union National Institutes for Culture – a network with increasing significance for the EU and the European External Action Service in its potential to provide cohesive and informed advice in shaping the cultural component to EU foreign policy structures and developments.

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