ISSN 1648-2603 (print)
ISSN 2029-2872 (online)

VIEŠOJI POLITIKA IR ADMINISTRAVIMAS
PUBLIC POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION
2025, T 24, Nr. 3/2025, Vol. 24, Nr. 3

ENABLING CHANGE: ANALYSIS OF EUROPEAN UNION CIVILIAN MISSIONS THROUGH THE LENS OF THEORY OF CHANGE

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https://doi.org/10.5755/j01.ppaa.24.3.42457

Abstract. *This paper examines the implementation process of European Union (EU) civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) Missions using the Theory of Change framework, focusing on resources, outputs, and impact. The research employs a qualitative methodology, drawing on empirical data from in-depth interviews, conducted in December 2024, with purposively selected European External Action Service (EEAS), Member state representatives, CSDP Missions management representatives, directly involved in the planning and execution of CSDP missions. Despite the limitations of this study, such as only partial coverage of EU missions due to the sensitivity of the topic and limited access to information, it provides valuable insights into the process of mission implementation and the challenges that influence their outputs and impact. Based on interviews with selected experts, the study identifies strategic incoherence, limited expertise and fragmented coordination efforts as key obstacles, especially in advancing digital transformation. Although short-term outputs are visible, long-term technological progress is hampered by systemic inertia and institutional limitations.*

Keywords: *European Union, Civilian Mission, Theory of Change, Short-term Outputs, Long-term Impact.*
Reikšminiai žodžiai: *Europos Sąjunga, civilinė misija, pokyčių teorija, trumpalaikiai rezultatai, ilgalaikis poveikis.*

Introduction

In recent years, increasing attention has been drawn to the discrepancy between the ambitious objectives of European Union (EU) missions and their actual outcomes. The primary objective of the EU civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions is to build the institutional and operational capacities of partner countries, particularly in areas like rule of law, civil policing, and democratic governance. The goals and outputs of EU Missions are documented; however, there is a lack of information on the experience how these missions are implemented and what challenges impede achievement of

Missions' goals. The EU, as an international actor in this field aims to make an impact, thus, it is relevant also to evaluate the results and implementation experiences. While some performance analyses can be conducted analysing some official documents, the access to operational planning documents is not publicly accessible. Moreover, due to the sensitivity of the data, there is a notable lack of academic research drawing on the firsthand experiences of frontline officials

This paper aims to analyse the implementation process of EU civilian missions through the lens of the Theory of Change (ToC) framework, with a specific focus on goals, resources, outputs, outcomes and impacts. The paper addresses a significant research gap concerning the implementation process and impact of EU missions. The main research question is two-fold:

- What are firsthand experiences of frontline officials about goals, resources required to implement missions, achieved outputs and expected impacts of EU missions?
- What are the challenges encountered in the process of missions' implementation?

The research questions were addressed using unique qualitative data, incorporating testimonies from individuals directly involved in the implementation of the EU missions. Nine in-depth interviews were conducted in December 2024 with experts engaged in shaping EU missions, including representatives from the European External Action Service (EEAS), Member States, and CSDP mission management. Frontline officials were purposively selected through snowball sampling and personal networks, based on their direct involvement in the strategic planning and execution of civilian CSDP missions.

This article begins by presenting theoretical insights into how the principles of the Theory of Change (ToC) can be applied to the analysis of EU missions. It then outlines the methodology of the empirical research, followed by a discussion of the empirical findings. The article concludes with a summary of key findings and the study's limitations. In general, this article contributes to the discussion in two ways: (1) it adapts ToC principles to analyse the implementation of the EU civilian missions, concentration on the three core elements, namely, goals, inputs and outputs / outcomes / impact and (2) tests theoretical insights with empirical data, providing analysis of the implementation process and challenges of EU civilian missions.

Theoretical Background: Theory of Change

Theory of change (ToC) is one of the perspectives to understand impacts of EU external actions. As argued by Leisher, Bugan, and Ngo (2024), ToC is often used in the project design as 'it helps teams agree on hypothesized causal pathways to a desired goal and examine their underlying assumptions" (p.1). Therefore, this theory has been selected to analyse the EU missions in Ukraine, addressing ToC as a critical reflection method on the action undertaken and their rationale.

ToC is widely used to describe the process of reaching the desired outcomes in a long and a short term context as well as analysing the measures to reach them. It is often considered as "a tool that outlines the establishment of long-term change mechanisms to address specific complex societal problems" (Leknoi, Yiengthaisong, Likitlersuang, 2025 p. 3), "description of a sequence of events that is expected to lead to a particular desired outcome" (Vogel, 2012 p. 5), "as a mainstream approach to evaluation" (Lam, 2020, p. 5), or "the causal mechanisms through which programs are expected to create impact" (Vadrevu, Jain, Parsekar 2024 p. 2). Following the literature review, the large number of publications about theory of change are in the field of medicine, especially psychology, rehabilitation (Hudson et al. 2024; Chan et al, 2024; Herbert, 2023), as well as in environment related processes, especially those focused on SDGs. Thus, ToC is widely used in the fields where specific goals of the process need to be achieved.

In a public policy and public sector context also other factors, such as human resources, infrastructure, contribute to the model of theory of change, that is the possible reason why many international and intergovernmental organisation exploit ToC in international developmental projects as "a framework for describing changes resulting from project implementation phase" (Leknoi, Yiengthaisong, Likitlersuang,

2025 p. 3; Murphy and Jones 2021; Vogel, 2012). In public policy field ToC often is related to political and/or social change. On the other hand, theory of change model is criticized for the time required to build trust, breakdown unhelpful hierarchical barriers and build consensus in order to enable a constructive dialogue with multiple and diverse stakeholders (Vogel, 2012). It is noticed that stakeholder not always has capacity to get involved in the change process and the success of participation and change implementation at large depends on the method of involvement, extent of participation and intention of engagement (Forsyth 2018; Lam 2020). Muggaga et al. (2025) argue that the theory of change has faced criticism for often oversimplifying real-world complexities and for struggling to represent causal chains within large, complex systems without losing important nuances related to how change occurs (Armitage et al., 2019, Morkel, 2024). Nevertheless, due to its' flexibility ToC remains one of the popular frameworks for explaining the developmental processes and "evaluating impacts pathways" (Blundo-Canto et al. 2024). Moreover, ToC has a significant promise for application in various research approaches that involve "active and deliberate engagement with stakeholders and/or other system actors, with multiple impact pathways operating in complex systems" (Vogel, 2012, Belcher Bonaiuti, Thiele, 2024 p. 1).

However, the literature analysis shows that there is no consensus on how ToC is described, and more importantly, what are the elements, components, steps and models of ToC. Leisher, Bugan, and Ngo (2024) analysed 22 articles, published between January 2012 and December 2023 on ToC and identified major elements of ToC, and then tested them over 3 years with 73 teams from 18 countries. There findings show that the most common component of the ToC (found in all articles/guides) is participation of stakeholders/interested parties in theory of change development. This shows a co-creative aspect of this theory. Major part of the literature also agrees that ToC "includes both short and long-term outcomes/intermediate results or lower and higher-order outcomes" and "articulated assumptions". Other important elements are that ToC "states goal/impact statement/target/desired result", "examines the evidence base of assumptions", "Includes activities/actions/strategies/strategic approaches/interventions", and uses illustrations highlighting direct cause-and-effect links (p.3). Thus, according to Leisher, Bugan, and Ngo (2024), analysing phenomenon from the ToC perspective, it is relevant to focus on several questions: (1) What are the goals? What is the mission? What are outcomes? These questions help to set the target of change and make it measurable through the concept of SMART ((Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timebound) goals. (2) What is the context? What is the situation? These questions help to develop a common understanding of the context, including social, economic, political, and institutional settings. (3) Who are stakeholders? Who are core interested parties? What is the composition of the team developing it? These questions help to assure the accuracy and utility of a ToC systems and associated stakeholders" where ToC is applied. (4) What are strategic approaches? What are assumptions with evidence? These questions identify activities/actions/interventions undertaken and help to hypothesize causal links between components in a theory of change. (5) What are results? These questions help to understand achievability of short-term and long-term results. Literature also emphasize the importance of visualization and narratives in the ToC as these elements provide a causal pathways both in graphs and in detailed descriptions (Leisher, Bugan, and Ngo, 2024).

In summary, the general model of ToC used in this article is presented in the Figure 1. This model outlines a structured framework that emphasizes three core components essential for understanding and guiding change processes: (1) Goals (Mission for change); (2) Inputs (including financial recourses, human capital), (3) outputs /outcomes/ impact (short-term results, long-term results).

The first component is *Goals,* which represent the *overarching mission* or intended impact that the initiative or intervention seeks to achieve—often driven by a clearly defined vision for social, institutional, or organizational change. These goals serve as the foundation for planning and evaluating progress.

The second component is *Inputs*, which includes the various resources required to initiate and sustain the change process. These inputs typically encompass *financial resources*, *infrastructure,* including technology and *human capital*, including skills, knowledge, and time dedicated for the task implementation.

This component also includes all strategic partnerships or organizational assets that are used for in the implementation. In this paper we adapt the research question distinguished for ToC model by Belcher, Bonaiuti &Thiele (2024): what monetary incentives, skills, capacities, infrastructure, technology or other support is needed by downstream actors to enable or encourage them to take the actions needed to produce outcomes and achieve impacts?

The third component consists of *Outputs / Outcomes / Impact*, which are categorized into *short-term* and *long-term* results. Outputs are immediate results of the project or initiative. Short-term outcomes may include immediate changes in knowledge, attitudes, or behavior, while long-term outcomes refer to sustained impacts that align with the broader goals of the intervention.

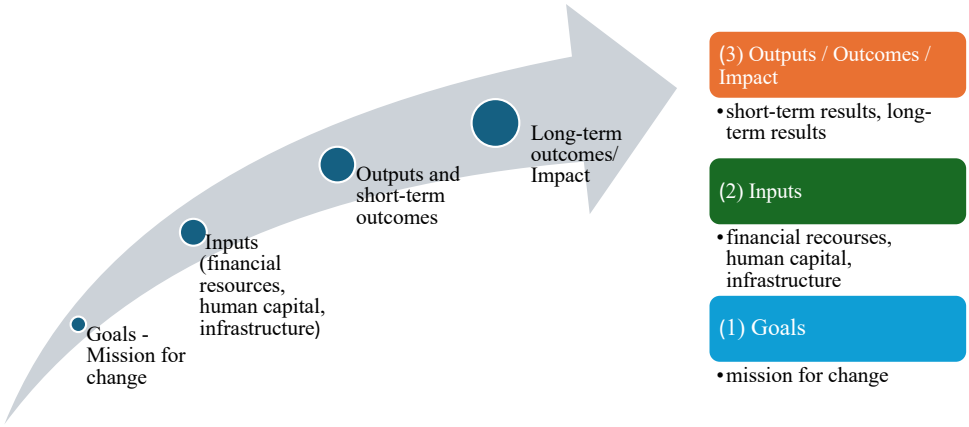

Figure 1. *General model for theory of change (Source: Authors)*

Together, these three components form a logical pathway, illustrating how specific inputs contribute to desired outcomes, and how those outcomes ultimately lead to the realization of long-term goals. This ToC model not only helps visualize the cause-and-effect relationships but also supports effective planning, monitoring, and evaluation of initiatives. Following this theoretical framework, we analyse the implementation of EU Civilian Missions.

EU Civilian Missions: Understanding the Context and the Core Stakeholders

Civilian CSDP missions are deployed in fragile or post-conflict settings, often supporting Security Sector Reform (SSR) - a process aimed at improving the accountability, effectiveness, and democratic governance of security institutions such as police, border control, and justice systems (USAID, 2009; UNODC, 2016). In recent years, these reforms have taken on new urgency. Organised crime networks and hostile actors have adopted sophisticated digital technologies - ranging from encrypted messaging to AI-driven disinformation and cyberattacks - posing complex challenges for national institutions (Europol, 2021; Europol, 2023).

EU civilian missions aim for long-term institutional transformation in partner countries through sustained SSR. Digital tools, especially those falling under the KET category, support this goal by increasing the resilience, efficiency, and accountability of national security institutions (Council of the EU, 2023; Klikūnas, 2025).

Missions also partner with external actors such as EU agencies (e.g., eu-LISA, Europol), Member States, and civil society to introduce technologies that address real-time challenges (SIPRI, 2023; EEAS, 2024). These strategies reflect a recognition that KETs can enhance both mission agility and host-country capacity. These efforts rest on key assumptions: that missions are institutionally flexible, that local partners are willing and able to adopt digital tools, and that Member States will continue to provide long term support missions politically and financially (Belcher, Bonaiuti & Thiele, 2024; Drucker, 2023; Raube & Vanhoonacker, 2020).

To remain effective, SSR must therefore include a digital component. The 2023 Civilian CSDP Compact, adopted by the Council of the EU, responds to this need by promoting "a more systematic approach towards technological innovation for civilian CSDP" (Council of the EU, 2023). It highlights KETs, such as artificial I ntelligence, data analytics, and cybersecurity, as tools to boost mission adaptability, resilience, and impact (European Commission, 2021).

These ambitions should be operationalised through a multi-actor institutional setup. FAC, PSC, and CIVCOM define priorities, while the EEAS and its directorates (CPCC, SecDefPol, PCM) coordinate implementation. On the ground, civilian missions work with seconded experts and host-country institutions to realise these mandates (EEAS, 2024; Klikūnas, 2025). However, realising the Compact's digitalisation agenda remains uneven due to limited resources, political divergence among Member States, and gaps in technical expertise (Raube & Vanhoonacker, 2020; SIPRI, 2023).

EU civilian CSDP missions involve multiple actors across different levels of governance. At the strategic level, the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), composed of the foreign ministers of EU Member States, defines the EU's foreign and security policy and approves the launch of missions (Council of the EU, 2023). The Political and Security Committee (PSC), made up of senior diplomats from Member States' Permanent Representations, provides political oversight, while the Committee for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management (CIVCOM) offers technical planning advice (EEAS, 2023; Kostanyan, 2016).

The European External Action Service (EEAS) translates these strategic decisions into operational terms. As the EU's diplomatic and crisis management body, the EEAS oversees planning and coordination for civilian missions through directorates like the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC), the Security and Defence Policy Directorate (SecDefPol), and the Peace, Crisis Management and Conflict Prevention Directorate (PCM) (EEAS, 2023; Kostanyan, 2016). Civilian CSDP Missions (Missions) themselves act as implementing agents, staffed primarily by experts seconded from Member States. They work closely with host-country institutions, which are both partners and primary beneficiaries - especially in areas such as digitalisation, capacity-building, and governance reform (Klikūnas, 2025; EEAS, 2024).

Short-term outputs, such as advisory support, training programmes, and coordination mechanisms, help address immediate needs while laying the foundation for broader reforms (Belcher, Bonaiuti & Thiele, 2024; Drucker, 2023).

The long-term impact is the emergence of a tech-enabled security sector - characterised by institutionalised digital practices, enhanced local digital literacy, and stronger ties with EU institutions. This transformation contributes not only to better governance but also to increased public trust and the ability to respond to complex, tech-driven threats (Europol, 2021; UNODC, 2016; Raube & Vanhoonacker, 2020).

Research Methodology

The research methodology is grounded in a qualitative approach. The study draws on findings from 9 in-depth interviews, conducted in December 2024 with experts involved in shaping EU missions, including representatives from the European External Action Service (EEAS), Member States, CSDP mission management. Participants were selected based on their direct involvement in the strategic planning and implementation of civilian CSDP missions. They were recruited through personal networks, and their agreement to take part in the study. The majority of interviews were conducted in person at EEAS head-

quarters in Brussels, Belgium. However, several interviews, particularly those involving mission staff and foreign ministry officials, were conducted remotely via online platforms, due to the geographical dispersion of participants across Africa, Asia, and Europe. Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and focused on two main topics: (1) What are firsthand experiences of frontline officials about goals, resources required to implement missions, achieved outputs and expected impacts of EU missions? (2) What are the challenges encountered in the process of missions' implementation?

The interview questions were designed to address these two questions. The structure of interviews allowed interviewees to navigate topics at their discretion, using prompts as entry points for deeper reflection. Given the potentially sensitive nature of the topics under investigation, strict anonymization measures were applied to protect participant confidentiality and foster an environment conducive to candid and critical discourse. Interview data were subjected to content analysis. Codes were assigned based on the institutional affiliation of the respondents (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Codes of Informants*

Informant code	Affiliation, position	Institutional role
CP1, CP2, CP3, CP4	CPCC	directly oversee the running of missions
PC1	PCM Peace, Crisis Management Directorate	carries out strategic reviews of the Missions and lead the EU civilian CSDP missions
SE1	SecDefPol	coordinates and develops strategies and policies
HO1	Civilian CSDP Mission, Official in leading position	leads the mission
MS1	Mission staff member	related to the technological domain in the mission
MF1	Ministry of Foreign Affairs representative	have or had roles representing their countries in different relevant formats - Political, Security Committee, CIVCOM, etc.

The empirical analysis is structured to reflect how different institutional actors, ranging from field-level mission staff to senior policymakers, perceive strategic objectives, resource availability, and expected impacts within the context of civilian CSDP missions, with a particular emphasis on technological capacity and knowledge transfer. The discussion's structure is based on the three core components of the Theory of Change: (1) *Mission Goals*, which examine the overarching objectives, intended impact, and the broader vision for social, institutional, or organisational change; (2) *Inputs*, referring to the resources required to initiate and sustain the change process. This includes a focus on financial resources and infrastructure, such as technology and human capital (skills, knowledge, and the time dedicated to implementing tasks); (3) *Outputs* / *Outcomes* / *Impact*, which analyse both the immediate results achieved and the anticipated long-term effects. Outputs are the direct and tangible results of a project or initiative. Short-term outcomes may involve immediate changes in knowledge, attitudes, or behaviour, while long-term outcomes refer to sustained impacts that align with the overarching goals of the intervention.

The research design received ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of Kaunas University of Technology (Protocol No. M4-2024-19, dated 28 November 2024).

Discussing the process of the EU Civilian Missions implementation: Goals, Inputs, Outputs, Outcomes, and Impact

Mission Goals: How Interviewees Define or Contest Strategic Objectives

Across the interviews, a consistent theme emerged: setting meaningful and coherent goals- especially technology-related ones - is a persistent challenge. This difficulty stems from fragmented leadership, unclear priorities, and the absence of internal expertise. Some of participants (CP1) emphasized that the EU Member States frequently shift their priorities based on domestic political considerations, leading to fluctuating strategic objectives. The informant illustrated how different MS propose unrelated agenda items such as carbon neutrality, thereby blurring core security aims. Also noted the difficulty of agreeing on coherent technological goals, especially in politically sensitive regions like Armenia and Azerbaijan. Another informant in the same role (CP2) argued that technological goal-setting is structurally impaired. "*Neither Moldova nor EEAS can define what they need technologically without having experts on board. Even drafting job descriptions requires prior expertise*"(CP2). Eventually, this creates a circular dependency: goals require experts, but experts are recruited only after goals are set. Meanwhile CP3 emphasized that ideas in the tech domain often collapse due to a lack of sustained ownership: *"Every idea needs an owner. If the champion leaves, the idea fails"* (CP3). The absence of operational concepts and the limited utility of available guidelines further weakens goal clarity. The same informant detailed how the "Train, Reform, Equip" principle was reduced to "Train and Equip" due to the absence of risk management for advanced technologies. The participant referenced Somalia as an example where Member States opted out to avoid political and ethical liability and cited the failure of initiatives like the 6th Technological Cluster for CSDP, aimed at supporting tech goal development: *"EU MS had no time to engage, so the initiative died out"* (CP3). The informant from the same directorate added that Member States sometimes knowingly set unattainable goals as symbolic gestures rather than implementable plans: *"We include it to show interest and signal engagement, even when we know we can't deliver"* (CP4).

Speaking about goal setting process, an informant from another directorate explained that the formal process of goal-setting involves CPCC drafting proposals which are then reviewed by CIVCOM. Still, political consensus often limits innovation: "*If you need to add specific functions, all Member States must agree. Even proposing an environmental adviser opens a political box"* (PC1).

Some informants noticed that the goal of missions are not always clear, also identified a lack of strategic vision in tackling cross-border organized crime:

"We don't even know what the missions are for. Is it substance or just a political signal?" (SE1). <EU tends to…> *"deal with symptoms - like piracy at sea - rather than systemic enablers such as financial networks and technology"* (HO1).

Also the lack of mutual understanding between domain experts and tech experts that undermines integrated planning was noticed: *"OIF* <Operational Implementation Framework> *is where both sides should meet, but we have no one who speaks both languages"* (CP4).

Participants (MS1, MF1 and HO1) also criticized the overall strategic logic of civilian CSDP, noting that ministers rarely engage with substantive questions and that mandates often reflect political showmanship rather than problem-solving: *"No one knows what CSDP missions are for"* (MF1).

Thus, summarizing, this section reveals significant ambiguity and fragmentation in strategic direction, particularly regarding digital transformation. The lack of internal expertise, mission ownership, and inter-institutional dialogue prevents the emergence of coherent and realistic goals in the technological domain.

Inputs: Resources, Capacities, and Enabling Conditions

Resource availability, both human and financial, was cited by nearly all interviewees as a structural barrier to delivering technology-related outcomes. Inputs are insufficient, fragmented, and poorly adapted to the demands of digital transformation.

The stagnant budgets were mentioned as one of the issue: *"Three new missions were launched, but the funding stayed the same. Only Ukraine managed to increase its share"* (CP1). Moldova's case was used to show reliance on Dutch bilateral support for tech-related projects. *"Usually EU MS don't give good experts, because they are better paid comparing to mission salaries. Current CSDP structure is not serving its purpose in this sense"* (CP1). An informant from the same directorate (CP2) noted Moldova's limited project budget of €1.2 million over two years, with the Netherlands contributing an additional €4 million through external channels. This indicates structural dependence on non-EU funding mechanisms. Both experts (CP1 and CP2) described how cyber experts are difficult to recruit: "*Seconded positions remain vacant for over a year*," (CP2) "*MS won't send top experts - they're better paid at home*" (CP1). It was noticed that limited internal capacity pushes missions to act as intermediaries with institutions like CERT-EU. The expert also criticized procurement procedures, lack of foresight, and inadequate IT infrastructure. *"We are still operating like it's 1980. Even SharePoint isn't deployed across missions"*(CP1).

Another informant from the same directorate lamented a deep digital skills gap in leadership: *"Supervisors don't know how to use Outlook, while some staff use AI. That creates knowledge silos"* (CP3). The same gap was noticed by another expert from different directorate, who emphasized that *"awareness does not equal competence"* (SE1). Experts from different directorates (PC1 and CP1) noted that CPCC lacks an independent budget or capacity to conduct strategic foresight, making it difficult to prepare or adapt missions for technological engagement. Moreover, it was notices that EU civilian missions are unattractive to high-level experts. Even when job descriptions are well-designed, the lack of adequate compensation discourages applications: "*One Danish colleague took a year to convince to come to EUAM Ukraine*" (CP4).

Some experts voiced concerns over the blocking of academically supported initiatives due to bureaucratic turf wars: *"nobody wants new players, such as Academia" (*MF1). *"For academia engagement there is a need for project funds. For now the visiting experts and specialised teams was the way out"* (HO1). CPCC and the EC were described as gatekeeping funding and access to missions, undermining partnerships with academic institutions and civil society. Other experts concluded that many staff are under-trained and that internal EEAS culture resists innovation and fresh human resources: *"Nobody wants new players. It's threatening"* (MS1).

Overall, the data reveals a misalignment between resource needs and institutional arrangements. Financial constraints, recruitment bottlenecks, and bureaucratic conservatism limit the capacity of missions to adapt, let alone lead, in the technological domain.

Outputs, Outcomes, Impact: Observed Results and Anticipated Impact

In a discussion about missions' outputs, outcomes and impact, the experts pointed to modest short-term outputs and aspirations for longer-term impact, though the latter remain largely unrealized due to systemic limitations. Informants mentioned the use of mobile teams and visiting experts as quick-response mechanisms: *"These teams operate for 3–6 months and can deliver specific tech-related support, but they're not institutionalized*" (CP1). Another expert from the same directorate noted that onboarding delays and mismatches between mission priorities and expert profiles hinder effectiveness: "*In some areas, local counterparts like Moldova's Cybersecurity Agency are ahead of EU missions*" (CP2). The same expert also criticized internal procurement choices, such as the decision to purchase Huawei phones for secure communication due to cost, despite being non-compliant with EU standards. The basic digital uptake was also mentioned: "*AI is used for public outreach but not for core mission tasks*" (CP3). The informant recalled an incident involving a fake recruitment letter in Mali, which missions failed to respond to effectively, exposing gaps in cybersecurity readiness. Expert from another directorate raised concerns about fragmented infrastructure: "*Missions aren't digitally connected. We still operate on clustered, ad hoc systems*" (SE1). The informant argued that without technical literacy, policy-level decisions would be uninformed. Nevertheless, the informant from other directorate cited a positive example where "*a Digital Transformation Officer was added to EUAM Ukraine's mandate at the request of local actors and supported through the*

strategic review process" (HO1). The lack of meaningful contribution to tech-savvy countries, like Ukraine, was mentioned by some expert: "*We can't teach them - they are ahead*" (CP4). MF1 and MS1 underscored the reactive, fragmented nature of long-term planning. Mandates were seen as performative, disconnected from ground realities, and overly reliant on external actors like the US or the UN. Informants concluded that systemic flaws in the EEAS structure and its unclear relationship with the EC fundamentally undermine the EU's ability to deliver lasting impact: "*We are just subscribers and users of technology. If we want change, we need Horizon projects and Commission engagement*" (MF1). It was noticed, that "*... if you want to be an important player, you need money and EC has the money. Austrians made precedent by transferring funds directly to EU Missions, but we are still not players comparing to others*" (CP4).

In summary, the interviews revealed that while short-term outputs such as rapid team deployments and experimental digital practices exist, the potential for long-term technological transformation remains hindered by systemic inertia, capacity gaps, and a lack of strategic coherence.

Conclusions and limitations

ToC represents a conceptual framework for interpreting the complexity inherent in societal transformation, and while it is frequently employed in project planning and implementation, it might be used for mission evaluations as it facilitates hypothesized causal pathways leading to a specific objective, while also enabling critical examination of the assumptions underpinning these pathways. This paper employed ToC framework for revealing impacts of EU external actions.

There is a significant research gap in the field of assessing the impacts of the EU missions. While it is possible to access some general data about the missions, the access to operational documents (OPLAN) which set out mission aims, objectives, and short- and long-term goal, are not publicly accessible. Moreover, the documents set the aims but do not reflect the experiences implementing the goals. In this context, testimonies from those directly involved become an essential source for assessing experiences.

Nevertheless, the study has several limitations regarding the number of interviews. The selection of informants was performed using snow ball sample and interviews do not cover the representatives from all missions. This might result in not full coverage and does not reveal the full landscape of mission outputs. In addition to this, the topic is rather sensitive thus, informants might be not fully open, especially speaking about challenges they experience in mission implementations.

The findings reveal significant ambiguity and fragmentation in the strategic orientation of missions, particularly regarding digital transformation. This strategic incoherence is largely attributed to a lack of internal expertise, weak institutional ownership, and limited inter-institutional coordination. These factors collectively hinder the articulation of coherent and attainable objectives within the technological domain.

While short-term outcomes are observable, the long-term impact, such as prospects for sustained technological transformation are significantly constrained by structural inertia, institutional capacity deficiencies, and an absence of a coherent strategic framework. The experts emphasized, that although short-term outputs are evident, the prospect for sustained technological transformation remains constrained by systemic inertia, institutional capacity deficits, and an overarching lack of strategic coherence.

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POKYČIŲ SKATINIMAS: EUROPOS SĄJUNGOS CIVILINIŲ MISIJŲ ANALIZĖ POKYČIŲ TEORIJOS POŽIŪRIU

Anotacija. *Šiame straipsnyje nagrinėjamas Europos Sąjungos (ES) bendros saugumo ir gynybos politikos (BSGP) civilinių misijų įgyvendinimo procesas, remiantis pokyčių teorijos modeliu, sutelkiant dėmesį į išteklius, rezultatus ir poveikį. Tyrime taikoma kokybinė metodika, remiantis empiriniais duomenimis, gautais iš 2024 m. gruodžio mėn. atliktų išsamių interviu su tikslingai atrinktais Europos išorės veiksmų tarnybos (EIVT), valstybių narių atstovais, BSGP misijų valdymo atstovais, tiesiogiai dalyvavusiais BSGP misijų planavime ir vykdyme. Nepaisant šio tyrimo ribotumo, pvz., tik dalinio ES misijų aprėpties dėl temos jautrumo ir ribotos prieigos prie informacijos, jis suteikia vertingos informacijos apie misijų įgyvendinimo procesą ir iššūkius, kurie daro įtaką jų rezultatams ir poveikiui. Remiantis interviu su atrinktais ekspertais, tyrime kaip pagrindinės kliūtys, ypač skaitmeninės transformacijos pažangai, nurodomos strateginis nesuderinamumas, ribota kompetencija ir fragmentuotos koordinavimo pastangos. Nors trumpalaikiai rezultatai yra matomi, ilgalaikę technologinę pažangą stabdo sisteminė inercija ir instituciniai apribojimai.*

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