The OSCE Network of Think Tanks and Academic Institutions: A Short Presentation

Naida Mehmedbegović Dreilich
Researcher, Institute for Peace Research and Security Studies at the University of Hamburg

naida.m@ifsh.de

The OSCE Network of Think Tanks and Academic Institutions is an autonomous OSCE-related track-II initiative. It is neither an OSCE structure nor subordinated to the OSCE or its participating States. The network's members are research institutions from across the OSCE area that are engaged in academic research and policy analysis on issues relevant to the OSCE's security agenda.

The network was founded by more than a dozen research institutions in Vienna in June 2013. It was inspired by a proposal made by OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier in July 2011. The network currently includes 44 institutions from 32 countries: Albania, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Mongolia, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, the UK and the USA.

The network "provides expertise, stimulates discussion and raises awareness of the OSCE. It contributes to the ongoing security dialogue within the OSCE framework. It helps to address common threats and challenges and contributes to the efforts supporting the Helsinki+40 Process and future OSCE dialogue formats. In a more long-term perspective, the network helps to clarify the substance of and the process towards achieving the participating states' shared vision of a Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian Security Community. The network is used for the exchange of expertise and the coordination of activities between its members."[1] It "co-operates with a point of contact within the OSCE Secretariat" and conducts research, provides discussion papers and offers expert presentations on "its own initiative or upon invitation by the OSCE Chairmanship, participating states, the OSCE Secretary General, OSCE Institutions or other OSCE structures".[2]

The network's working instruments include: network meetings, the steering committee, the network co-ordinator, the website (http://www.OSCE-network.net/) and project co-ordinators. The network meeting ideally comprises representatives of all member institutions, will usually convene once a year, takes decisions on the network's activities, and elects the co-ordinator and the members of the steering committee. The steering committee is a narrower body of about five members, including the network co-ordinator, that takes decisions in the periods between the network meetings. The network co-ordinator "serves as the contact point for the member institutes, the OSCE Chairmanship, the […] OSCE Secretariat and the participating States", "liaises with the Press and Public Information Department of the OSCE Secretariat", and "steers the process of fundraising for and implementing network projects".[3] Project coordinators are responsible for the implementation of specific network projects in terms of both content and budget. The latter is of particular relevance, as the network itself, which is an informal body and has no legal status, can neither apply for nor administer any funds.

In April 2014 the network published a study on "Threat Perceptions in the OSCE Area", which analyses and compares a broad spectrum of threat perceptions among governments. This is intended to provide background input for the OSCE's Helsinki+40 Process. The study is based on 18 country reports from institutes and think tanks in participating States well distributed over the OSCE area. It was presented on 29 April 2014, at the invitation of the Swiss OSCE Chairmanship, during a Helsinki+40 meeting in the Vienna Hofburg.

---

1   OSCE Network of Think Tanks and Academic Institutions, Mission Statement, Vienna,30 October 2013, at: http://OSCE-network.net/about/mission-statement.html.

2   Ibid.

3   OSCE Network of Think Tanks and Academic Institutions, Working Instruments, Vienna,30 October 2013, at: http://OSCE-network.net/about/working-instruments.html.

On 3 December 2014 representatives of the OSCE Network launched the study "The Future of OSCE Field Operations (Options)". The purpose of this study is "to help stimulate discussions on the value and future of the field operations of the OSCE."[4] The launch event, moderated by OSCE Secretary General Lamberto Zannier, was part of the "OSCE Parallel Civil Society Conference 2014" – an NGO event held to complement the 2014 OSCE Ministerial Council Meeting in Basel. It was also attended by Ambassador Philip McDonagh, Head of the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the OSCE; Ambassador Fred Tanner, Senior Adviser to the OSCE Secretary General and Claus Neukirch, Deputy OSCE CPC Director.

---

4   OSCE Network of Think Tanks and Academic Institutions, The Future of OSCE Field Operations, Vienna, December 2014, p. 2.

This article was first published with Brill | Nijhoff publishers, and was featured on the Security and Human Rights Monitor (SHRM) website.

Security and Human Rights (formerly Helsinki Monitor) is a journal devoted to issues inspired by the work and principles of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It looks at the challenge of building security through cooperation across the northern hemisphere, from Vancouver to Vladivostok, as well as how this experience can be applied to other parts of the world. It aims to stimulate thinking on the question of protecting and promoting human rights in a world faced with serious threats to security.

Netherlands Helsinki Committee
Het Nutshuis
Riviervismarkt 4
2513 AM The Hague
The Netherlands

www.nhc.nl