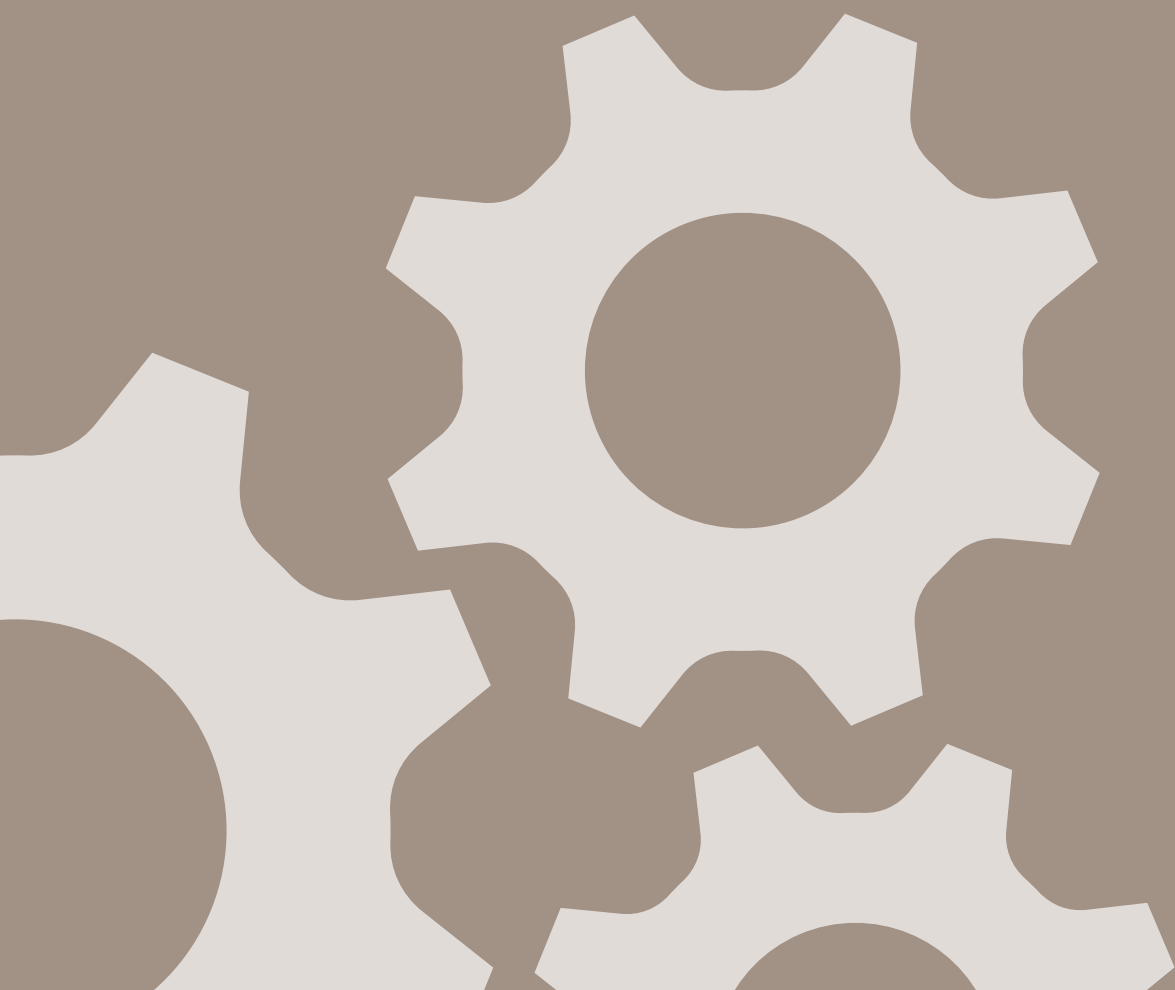

Guidelines for OSCE Staff

Strengthening Regional Co-operation on SSG/R



Executive Summary

This chapter discusses the rationale for pursuing a regional approach to SSG/R (section 1), identifies potential ways to strengthen regional co-operation on SSG/R (section 2), and provides guidance on applying a regional approach to SSG/R (section 3). Finally, a practical checklist is provided to help staff in the process (section 4).

Key points from the chapter:

- **Capitalize on potential benefits of a regional approach to SSG/R:** While SSG/R processes are primarily national in their scope and focus due to the country-specific institutional set-up of a security sector, a regional approach can bring many benefits that can make the OSCE support more effective and efficient. For instance, a regional approach can provide new entry points for SSG/R support at the national level, as it can bring new dynamics into reform processes and desensitize issues that may be difficult to address in the framework of a national context alone. Regional initiatives may also contribute to security sector institutions' ability to effectively address security challenges, especially those requiring transnational collaboration, and can provide a platform to facilitate the sharing of good practices and lessons learned among countries. Moreover, regional approaches may at times be a prerequisite for other activities. For instance, broad confidence-building among security sector institutions through regional events may be necessary for the success of subsequent efforts to strengthen operational co-operation across borders. Finally, regional approaches can strengthen the contribution of SSG/R to wider conflict prevention. At the same time, OSCE's efforts to support regional co-operation on SSG/R should not be conducted as ad hoc activities but should be designed to support broader national priorities and objectives for SSG/R in a given State.
- **Identify entry points for strengthening regional co-operation on SSG/R:** There are several possible entry points for OSCE programmatic activities in the field of SSG/R that can benefit from a regional approach. These include advancing development and implementation of relevant international norms and standards for the security sector, delivering capacity-building (e.g., through joint training and simulation exercises), facilitating operational co-operation and information exchanges (e.g., through study visits, joint events or development of joint action plans and strategies), supporting relevant co-ordination and information-sharing mechanisms, as well as professional networks and associations, and, last but not least, conducting research and data collection. When appropriate, encouraging and facilitating the participation of a broad range of stakeholders, including civil society organizations and private sector, in regional activities can contribute to confidence-building among the actors involved.

- **Support the effective application of regional approaches to SSG/R efforts:** Effective implementation starts with the appropriate consideration of regional approaches during the planning stage. In particular, when conducting a needs assessment, the regional dimension and the potential value of regional co-operation should be considered. If regional approaches are important in a given context, there is a need to assess the extent to which national actors have an interest in participating in such endeavours. The OSCE should ensure that it facilitates but does not lead regional initiatives. In case there is a lack of interest, the OSCE may consider taking an incremental approach towards building interest in regional co-operation through such measures as supporting the participation of experts in regional events or promoting bilateral sharing of information and experiences. At the same time, it needs to be recognized that regional approaches might not be relevant in every context and have their limitations.



1. Rationale

The latest UN Security Council resolution on Security Sector Reform acknowledges the important role of regional and sub-regional organizations in assisting UN Member States in undertaking reforms of their security sectors.¹ It also underlines the importance of partnerships and co-operation with regional and sub-regional organizations.

As the world's largest regional security organization that operates under the Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, the OSCE has an important role to play. Thanks to its geographical scope, the network of field operations and long track record as a platform for inclusive security dialogue and co-operation, the OSCE is well positioned to support regional approaches to SSG/R. This comparative advantage gives the OSCE a key added value. As noted in the 2019 report by the OSCE Secretary General, "Regional expertise acquired over the years and the OSCE's extensive network of field operations put the Organization in a position to make valuable contributions to global efforts to sustain peace and security, and thus to strengthen its role as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. By leveraging partnerships, we can optimize these advantages."²

Several OSCE commitments, particularly in the area of transnational threats, recognize the importance of strengthening regional security co-operation. The mandates of certain OSCE field operations also highlight the need to support regional initiatives. Although each security sector is country-specific and SSG/R is primarily a national process, there are several reasons why a regional approach to SSG/R support may be beneficial:

- **Regional approaches may provide entry points for SSG/R support at the national level:** Some SSG/R issues may be perceived as too sensitive to be discussed at the national level (e.g., sexual harassment or corruption in the security sector). Discussions at the regional level can desensitize and raise awareness on such issues, bringing a new dynamic into reform processes and opening doors for further progress. Moreover, supporting the development or implementation of regional commitments may make it easier to advocate for certain issues to be addressed at the national level. Providing a regional platform also makes it possible to bring together a variety of actors who may not be able or willing to meet at the national level. This can contribute to confidence-building among different stakeholder groups.
- **Regional approaches are necessary for addressing transnational challenges:** Many of today's security threats and risks (e.g., organized crime, trafficking in human beings, terrorism, cybercrime) are of a transnational nature. Addressing them effectively, therefore,

1 United Nations Security Council, *Resolution 2553 (2020)* (New York, 2020), S/RES/2553.

2 OSCE, *The OSCE Approach to Security Sector Governance and Reform (SSG/R): Report by the Secretary General of the OSCE* (Vienna, 2019), SEC.GAL/42/19, p. 12.

requires regional co-operation, as recognized in several OSCE commitments. Supporting regional exchanges among national security sector institutions is also important in order to promote confidence-building as a prerequisite for collaboration on addressing transnational challenges.

- **Regional approaches facilitate exchanges of good practices and lessons learned from reform processes:** SSG/R processes can be challenging in any country. Participating States can therefore greatly benefit from sharing experiences – whether positive or negative – from implementation of reforms in their security sectors. Regional events and activities can facilitate identification and sharing of such experiences. For example, the OSCE assists participating States in initiating or strengthening national action plans developed in the context of UNSCRs 1325 and 1540. Regional exchanges on good practices and lessons learned from implementation of such plans can contribute to strengthening commitment in some countries and can support ongoing reform efforts at the national level.
- **Regional approaches can strengthen the contribution of SSG/R to wider conflict prevention:** Supporting SSG/R initiatives at the regional level can provide a platform for facilitating dialogue and transnational co-operation. This can in turn contribute to confidence-building and to broader conflict prevention among States.

Info Box 1



Examples of OSCE Commitments Providing the Basis for Supporting Regional Co-operation among Security Sector Institutions

- ▶ **Politico-military co-operation:** “Reaffirming their respect for each other’s sovereign equality and individuality as well as the rights inherent in and encompassed by its sovereignty, the participating States will base their mutual security relations upon a co-operative approach. [...] They will continue to develop complementary and mutually reinforcing institutions that include European and transatlantic organizations, multilateral and bilateral undertakings and various forms of regional and subregional co-operation.”³
- ▶ **Police co-operation:** One of the guiding principles for the OSCE in this area is “enhanced co-operation among participating States and international and regional organizations.” Accordingly, the OSCE “supports subregional co-ordination and co-operation mechanisms.”⁴
- ▶ **Organized crime:** The OSCE “enhances the institutional capacity of the relevant stakeholders and strengthens law enforcement co-operation at the international, regional and national levels.”⁵
- ▶ **Cybercrime:** The OSCE “facilitates, at the regional and national levels, capacity-building and the exchange of information and best practices in investigating cybercrime and dealing with cyber evidence.”⁶
- ▶ **Border security management:** The OSCE “can offer its organizational framework for interaction on border-related issues with international regional and subregional organizations” [...] “increased co-ordination on border security and management at the subregional level may constitute a stepping stone towards the OSCE-wide establishment of open and secure borders.”⁷
- ▶ **Terrorism:** The OSCE’s comprehensive approach is “well suited to address at the regional level challenges posed by terrorism, to ensure respect for the rule of law, human rights and fundamental freedoms; to identify and address the factors conducive to terrorism; and to explore synergies in addressing new and emerging transnational threats and challenges to security and stability”; the OSCE will “pursue its activities to enhance co-operation and build capacity at the national, regional and subregional levels to prevent and combat terrorism [...] within a framework based on the rule of law and respect for human rights.”⁸

3 OSCE, *OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security* (Vienna, 1994), DOC.FSC/1/95, p. 3.

4 OSCE, *OSCE Strategic Framework for Police-Related Activities* (Vienna, 2012), PC.DEC/1049, pp. 3, 7.

5 Ibid, p. 5.

6 Ibid, p. 7.

7 OSCE, *OSCE Border Management and Security Concept* (Ljubljana, 2005), MC.DOC/2/05, p. 4.

8 OSCE, *OSCE Consolidated Framework for the Fight against Terrorism* (Vienna, 2012), PC.DEC/1063, pp. 3, 4.

- ▶ **Trafficking in human beings:** The SR/CTHB “will further promote and facilitate, within existing resources, all forms of co-operation among OSCE participating States, including at the bilateral and regional level, where appropriate, and collaboration with major international bodies and entities engaged in combating trafficking in human beings, as well as relevant NGOs.”⁹
- ▶ **Anti-corruption:** The Ministerial Council encourages participating States “to facilitate the recovery of stolen assets as part of national measures as well as in the framework of international and, where appropriate, regional co-operation and ensure beneficial ownership transparency” and “tasks the OCEEA to explore [...] the opportunities for co-operation with national, regional and international initiatives, promoting the principles of transparency, citizen participation and accountability.”¹⁰ The OSCE participating States recognize “the need to prevent and combat corruption at international and national levels in a comprehensive way, including by addressing the links between corruption and money laundering, and through the effective implementation of asset recovery measures and improved international and regional co-operation.”¹¹
- ▶ **Money-laundering:** The OSCE participating States “welcome that the OSCE [...] continues to assist participating States, at their request, with developing and/or harmonizing their national anti-corruption legislation, in line with their international commitments, with ensuring practical implementation and effective enforcement through exchanges of experience and good practices at the regional, sub-regional and national levels” and “express support to the work of [...] regional bodies and [...] to ratifying or acceding to and fully implementing relevant regional and international instruments to counter money-laundering and the financing of terrorism [...]”¹²

9 OSCE, *Decision No. 1107 Addendum to the OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings: One Decade Later* (Vienna, 2013), PC.DEC/1107/Corr.1, p. 8.

10 OSCE, *Ministerial Council Decision No. 5/14 on the Prevention of Corruption* (Basel, 2014), MC.DEC/5/14, pp. 3, 4.

11 OSCE, *Ministerial Council Decision No.6/20 on Preventing and Combating Corruption through Digitalization and Increased Transparency* (Tirana, 2020), MC.DEC/6/20, p. 1.

12 OSCE, *Ministerial Council Declaration on Strengthening Good Governance and Combating Corruption, Money-Laundering and the Financing of Terrorism* (Dublin, 2012), MC.DOC/2/12, pp. 3, 4.

2. Identifying Entry Points for Strengthening Regional Co-operation on SSG/R

Figure 1: Entry points for strengthening regional co-operation



2.1 Development and Implementation of International Norms and Standards

International norms and standards developed for security sector institutions at the regional or global (UN) level can provide important entry points for SSG/R programmatic activities. Promoting and reviewing implementation of such norms and standards at the regional level ensures that States are not left in isolation but are part of a wider multilateral process. It can also help to build further commitment through, for example, one or several peer States encouraging one or several fellow States to move forward with implementation. Furthermore, ratification of the same norms and standards by several OSCE participating States can provide the basis for regional capacity-building support to implementation of the commitments made. Examples of international norms and standards in the field of SSG/R include the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security, the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), UNSCR 1540 (2004) and the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC).

When supporting the development and implementation of SSG/R-related international norms and standards at the regional level, the following entry points could be considered:

- Mapping existing international commitments relevant for the security sector that States are yet to ratify or implement in order to identify possibilities for programmatic support;
- Identifying opportunities for developing new international norms and standards for the security sector at the regional level;
- Raising awareness on the importance of adhering to SSG/R-related international norms and standards, and offering support for their national implementation;
- Supporting regional capacity-building initiatives and development of regional strategies and action plans on how to implement SSG/R-related elements in international commitments made by States;
- Organizing regional workshops, seminars and study trips to discuss progress and to exchange experiences in implementation of relevant commitments.

Case Study 1



Regional Seminars on OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security

The Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security is a cornerstone document for the principle of democratic governance of the security sector. Since 2008, regional seminars on the Code of Conduct have taken place annually across the OSCE area (e.g., Central Asia, Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Black Sea region, the Baltic Sea region, the Mediterranean region, and North America). The seminars have aimed at explaining how the Code of Conduct is relevant for all participating States, which has helped to put politically sensitive commitments into perspective and has ensured that no State is excluded from the process. The seminars have also enabled other participating States with comparable contexts and backgrounds to exchange experiences and lessons learned. In addition to six official OSCE languages, the Code has been translated into several other languages to facilitate regional discussions and support outreach and awareness-raising both within and beyond the OSCE area.

On the 25th Anniversary of the Code in 2019, the participating States reaffirmed their strong commitment to the Code by adopting a Ministerial Commemorative Declaration.¹³ The States reconfirmed that the knowledge, skills and experience of both women and men are essential to efforts aimed at furthering peace, security and stability in the OSCE region, including the implementation of the Code of Conduct, and committed to ensuring and promoting their equal opportunities and full and meaningful participation in that process. They also welcomed the continuation of outreach efforts on the Code of Conduct for the benefit of the OSCE Partners for Co-operation.

2.2 Regional Capacity-Building

Capacity-building at the regional level is often pursued by bringing together national stakeholders from different States at workshops, seminars or training events. Sharing experiences in implementing reforms among States facing similar challenges can contribute to confidence-building. Moreover, capacity-building at the regional level can enhance learning through “peer-to-peer” exchange and encourage the collective identification of issues and lessons learned. It can also contribute to harmonizing processes and practices of security sector professionals across a given region. For instance, the OSCE Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe offers opportunities for both enhancing knowledge and building contacts among senior border security officials from across the OSCE, which contributes to mutual trust necessary for future collaboration. At the same time, it needs to be recognized that capacities and approaches may vary across a given region; consequently, regional capacity-building initiatives have to be adjusted accordingly.

13 OSCE, *Commemorative Declaration on the Occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security* (Bratislava, 2019), MC.DOC/1/19.

When supporting regional capacity-building, the following entry points could be considered:

- Identifying challenges which are shared by participating States in a given region, and determining whether the States could benefit from regional capacity-building;
- Supporting capacity-building through regional training, simulation exercises, workshops and “peer-to-peer” seminars;
- Considering how capacity-building support delivered at the regional level can be tailored to different national contexts and needs;
- Incorporating sharing of national experiences, good practices and lessons learned as part of a regional capacity-building and allowing enough time to exchange and discuss these in smaller formats (e.g., working groups);
- Ensuring that, where appropriate, a broad range of state and non-state actors, including from civil society and the private sector, are invited to participate in regional capacity-building events to promote confidence-building and facilitate co-operation among all relevant stakeholders.

Case Study 2



Regional Capacity-Building on Combating Cybercrime

In 2017–2019, the OSCE Secretariat’s Transnational Threats Department (TNTD), in close co-operation with the OSCE Field Operations in South-Eastern Europe, piloted a regional capacity-building project on combating cybercrime and cyber-enabled crime. The project aimed to enhance police training capacities on this topic through a series of thematic training courses, complemented by a training-of-trainers programme. Each beneficiary country nominated two practitioners as future “national trainers” who, alongside other criminal justice professionals, completed six regional training courses. In the project’s second phase, the national trainers developed and organized their own courses in national languages, tailored to the needs and realities of each beneficiary country, monitored and supported by the OSCE. After the first round of national training courses, a regional workshop was organized for the trainers to exchange experiences, good practices and lessons learned. This was followed by a second round of national training courses, complemented by curriculum development for police academies. The project concluded with a regional conference. Based on the results and lessons learned, TNTD launched a similarly designed capacity-building project in Central Asia in 2021.

2.3 Operational Co-operation and Information Exchange

Many security-related challenges require concerted action and information sharing among security sector institutions across borders – for instance, transnational organized crime, terrorism, trafficking in human beings and illicit goods, migration, or cybersecurity. Thanks to its geographical scope and wide network of field presences and institutions, the OSCE can effectively support efforts to enhance operational co-operation and information exchange at the regional level. For instance, joint simulation training exercises, which bring together agencies from different States, can promote better co-operation and build trust and confidence. Such transnational co-operation can also advance mutual understanding of legislation and procedures applicable in different States, which can improve ability of security sector institutions in the region to address common security challenges. Through cross-border co-operation and information exchange, security sector institutions, including those responsible for management and oversight, can also benefit from experiences and know-how of their counterparts in other countries when enhancing their own operational capacities. All of this is important for a well-functioning security sector, as it can increase its effectiveness, efficiency and responsiveness.

Support for operational co-operation and information exchange at the regional level may at times need to start with smaller steps, particularly in cases where regional co-ordination mechanisms are missing or there is an absence of political will for closer cross-border collaboration. Such steps may include supporting interested States in participating in relevant events in their region, which may contribute to broader confidence-building or awareness-raising about SSG/R-related issues that are gaining prominence in neighbouring countries. Another such small step may be supporting bilateral exchanges between two States. Strengthening bilateral co-operation between two States that either face similar challenges or share cultural similarities can be an effective strategy for enhancing wider regional co-operation in the future.

When supporting operational co-operation and information exchange at the regional level, the following entry points could be considered:

- Identifying security challenges that require operational co-operation and information exchange at the regional level;
- Facilitating networking between the security sector institutions of neighbouring States through joint activities (e.g., through joint events such as conferences, workshops, seminars or simulation exercises);
- Promoting the benefits of regional operational co-operation and information exchange (e.g., through sharing of best practices on study visits);
- Supporting the harmonization of standards and practices at the regional level (e.g., through development of a regional manual);
- Supporting the development of regional strategies and action plans to address common challenges;

- Organizing study visits of security sector representatives to other States of the region, which have undergone similar reforms;
- Facilitating participation of security sector officials in relevant regional events, which are likely to promote confidence-building or to raise awareness about SSG/R.

Case Study 3



Bilateral Co-operation between Ukraine and Lithuania on Countering Terrorism

In 2018–2019, the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine facilitated bilateral co-operation on countering terrorism between the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine (SBGSU) and the Lithuanian State Border Guard Service (LSBGS). In 2018, Lithuanian officials conducted a training on terrorism and cross-border crime risk profiling for 25 Ukrainian colleagues in Odessa. Since Lithuania had already introduced an automated risk profiling system at its borders, LSBGS representatives also participated in a working group developing the terms of reference for an automated risk profiling system for Ukraine. In 2019, representatives of SBGSU conducted a study visit to Lithuania, where together with LSBGS they developed IT solutions for the automated risk profiling system for Ukraine as well as three e-profiles for the system focused identification of terrorism threats, trafficking in human beings, and smuggling of weapons, ammunition and explosives. Thanks to its experience with automated profiling systems, Lithuania provided guidance, expertise and advice for introducing a similar system in Ukraine.

2.4 Co-ordination and Information-Sharing Mechanisms

In some regions, operational co-operation and information exchange among security sector institutions, including those responsible for management and oversight, from different countries is already institutionalized through specifically dedicated co-ordination and information-sharing mechanisms. There include, for instance, the Regional Cooperation Council's Integrative Security Sector Governance (RCC/ISSG), the South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC), including SEESAC's Regional Security Sector Reform Platform, the RACVIAC Centre for Security Cooperation, Police Co-operation Convention for Southeast Europe, the Central Asian Border Management Initiative 2020 (CABMI) or the Association of European Police Colleges (AEPC). Such mechanisms can provide entry points for various SSG/R programmatic activities. Rather than duplicating the efforts of such structures, the OSCE can generate added value by providing the necessary expertise and support to their activities that are in line with the OSCE's programmatic priorities. Occasionally, the OSCE may support establishment of new regional co-ordination and information-sharing mechanisms among security sector institutions from different States to respond to a new emerging need.

When supporting co-ordination and information-sharing mechanisms at the regional level, the following entry points could be considered:

- Mapping existing regional co-ordination and information-sharing mechanisms in the field of security sector and identifying opportunities for engagement with them. This can be included in a broader SSG/R needs assessment;
- Raising awareness among national security sector institutions and professionals about existing regional co-ordination and information-sharing mechanisms, including at relevant national and regional events;
- Providing support to relevant co-ordination and information-sharing mechanisms through technical support and capacity-building;
- Supporting the establishment of new regional co-ordination and information-sharing mechanisms between security sector institutions to respond to new emerging needs if there is serious interest and commitment on behalf of the States concerned.

Case Study 4



Hot Pursuit Protocols in South-Eastern Europe

The OSCE Presence in Albania, in close co-operation with other OSCE field operations in the region, supported the conclusion of Hot Pursuit Protocols (HPP) between Albania, Kosovo,¹⁴ North Macedonia and Montenegro. The Presence facilitated the establishment of an expert working group tasked with drafting and negotiating HPP and organized simulation exercises on their operationalization on the ground. The Protocols were the first of their kind in the region and significantly contributed to increasing co-operation and trust between the Albanian border police and their counterparts in the region. They not only intensify and improve cross-border information exchange and co-operation, but also increase effectiveness of the fight against organized crime and illicit trafficking as they allow police agencies to pursue and apprehend criminals beyond their administrative borders, without the need to request a prior authorization. The involvement of the OSCE as an impartial facilitator helped build mutual confidence and trust among all stakeholders from the region, which was essential when introducing such a novel instrument.

14 All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population in this text, should be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council resolution 1244.

Case Study 5



Regional Platform for the Exchange of Good Practices

The Regional Anti-Corruption Platform for Internal Control Departments of border and law enforcement agencies of the OSCE participating States of South-Eastern Europe, Ukraine, and Moldova was launched in September 2019.¹⁵ It was established within a joint project of the the OSCE Secretariat's TNTD and OCEEA. With the broader objective to continue strengthening good governance of the security sector, this interactive regional platform has facilitated the exchange of anti-corruption practices and further strengthened the implementation of effective anti-corruption policies and measures at the national and regional level.

2.5 Professional Networks and Associations

Promoting and supporting regional networks and associations of experts can also be an effective means of advancing the sustainability of regional co-operation. Professional networks and associations can contribute to sharing of experiences, facilitating collaboration, and harmonizing practices and processes. There are a number of regional professional networks relevant for SSG/R within the OSCE area (e.g., European Network of National Human Rights Institutions, Balkan Asset Management Interagency Network). Some of the professional networks were established by the OSCE – for instance, the OSCE Border Security and Management National Focal Points Network, the OSCE Counter-Terrorism Network or the OSCE Police Academies Network.

When promoting and supporting regional professional networks and associations, the following entry points could be considered:

- Mapping existing regional professional networks and associations in the field of security sector and identifying opportunities for engagement with them (this can be done through an actor mapping exercise, ideally integrated in a broader SSG/R needs assessment);
- Raising awareness among national security sector institutions and professionals about relevant regional professional networks and associations that they may wish to join;
- Providing support to regional professional networks and associations for security sector in the form of technical assistance and capacity-building;
- Involving regional professional networks and associations when implementing SSG/R programmatic activities, including as in-kind contributors or implementing partners;
- Supporting the establishment of new regional professional networks and associations for security sector actors.

15 OSCE, *Regional OSCE-supported Anti-Corruption Platform for South-Eastern Europe, Ukraine and Moldova launched in Vienna* (23 Sep 2019).

Case Study 6



Regional Network of Organized Crime Prosecutors

The Permanent Conference of Organized Crime Prosecutors (PCOCP) is a network of prosecutors that connects 13 organized crime prosecution offices from the Western Balkans region and the EU (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia). The Network was established with the support of the OSCE Mission to Serbia in 2016 with the aim to improve regional co-operation and information sharing and, as such, increase the efficiency of transnational organized crime investigations. The Network was launched at the international conference on complex organized crime and corruption investigations organized by the OSCE Mission to Serbia in May 2016 where prosecutors from the region and several EU countries signed a joint Declaration of Intent. In November 2016, the second meeting concluded with the transformation of the initiative into a Permanent Conference of Organized Crime Prosecutors. In October 2017, the third meeting of the PCOCP, in co-operation with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation, institutionalized the Permanent Conference and created a Secretariat on a rotational basis. The first Chairmanship of the Secretariat for the following four years was granted to Serbia as the initiator of the initiative with the OSCE Mission's support. An Executive Board to manage the work of the PCOCP was also established and currently consists of Serbia, Romania, North Macedonia and Montenegro. The Board engages in annual meetings to exchange information, improve capacities and share best practices. The Network continues to grow: Greece joined in June 2019 while Austria accepted the invitation to join the Network and sign the Declaration in 2021.

2.6 Research and Data Collection

Conducting research and collecting data is part of the OSCE's work in many thematic areas, including SSG/R. The OSCE often also develops research-based knowledge products for the security sector in the form of guidelines and handbooks to raise awareness on certain topics or support national actors in implementing certain reforms.

Conducting research and collecting data on the security sector at the regional level has several benefits. It can help to measure and compare progress in national implementation of security sector reforms across several States, which can contribute to strengthening commitment and determination of those States that may be lagging behind. Furthermore, comparing experiences of different countries may help to identify common gaps and challenges, which can provide a basis for future capacity-building on either the national or regional level. It can also contribute to identifying good practices and lessons learned that can be factored in future SSG/R programmatic activities, making the OSCE's support more effective and efficient. Last but not least, outcomes and findings from such comparative research can facilitate regional co-ordination

and co-operation on SSG/R processes among States, contributing to mutual understanding and confidence-building.

When conducting research and collecting data at the regional level, the following entry points could be considered:

- Identifying common governance- and reform-related topics and issues that are addressed by security sector institutions from several OSCE participating States and may benefit from comparative research;
- Designing research in a way that its findings and conclusions can serve as a basis for future SSG/R programmatic support, be it at national or regional level;
- Engaging national security sector actors, including those for management, internal and external oversight, and relevant professional networks and associations (both national and regional) when planning, designing and conducting research;
- Presenting and disseminating findings and outcomes from research to security sector institutions from the States concerned at relevant national and international events.

Case Study 7



Implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in the OSCE Region

In 2020, the OSCE Secretariat's Gender Section, with the support of external researchers, conducted a study on National Action Plans (NAP) on the implementation of the UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). The study builds on similar research done in 2014 and provides research-based evidence on the implementation of the WPS agenda across the OSCE region. It combines a desk-based analysis of NAP from 36 OSCE participating States and a more detailed field research-based assessment of five NAP from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Serbia and Ukraine. The analysis shows that the range of issues the NAP cover is growing, although attention is still paid to the traditional "pillars" of WPS activity, notably participation and prevention. There has been an increased focus on prevention since 2014 and NAP have begun to feature emerging WPS issues, such as disasters and violent extremism. Much room for improvement remains in the sphere of budgeting and the specification of financial arrangements, as most NAP do not feature even a "broadly defined" budget, let alone specific allocations to defined agencies or initiatives. Various good practices emerged from both desk-based and field research, which informed the study's recommendations in the following areas: (1) framing and developing NAP, (2) NAP implementation, (3) NAP monitoring and evaluation and (4) support of the OSCE and other international organizations in NAP development and implementation.

3. Applying Regional Approaches to SSG/R

This section highlights some of the main factors that should be taken into consideration in applying a regional approach to broader SSG/R programmatic activities.

3.1 Ensuring That Regional Co-operation on SSG/R Takes Place within a Broader Framework of Support

Support for regional co-operation on SSG/R needs to take place within a framework of broader support for SSG/R in a given State. Strengthening regional co-operation on SSG/R should therefore not be pursued in the form of ad hoc activities. It needs to be clearly linked to national priorities on SSG/R and the overarching objectives of SSG/R support by the OSCE in a given State.¹⁶

For instance, strengthening regional co-operation on SSG/R may be identified as a priority for OSCE support if a national priority is to enhance the fight against transnational organized crime. Careful consideration is also needed on how to enhance the sustainability of regional support, with particular reflection on building the capacity of national actors to lead such co-operation, ensuring that follow-up to regional initiatives is planned from the outset, and placing such support within a broader framework of SSG/R engagement. For instance, in the context of accession to the EU, a tool often used for supporting bilateral co-operation is “twinning projects,” in which one EU Member State offers its expertise and experience on the implementation of EU legislation to another State.¹⁷ While this does not apply directly to the OSCE, the approach of twinning may be a useful strategy for embedding study visits in a framework of a more long-term co-operation and experience-sharing in order to support participating States in the implementation of OSCE norms and principles.

16 For more, see the chapter “Results-Oriented Programming in the Field of SSG/R.”

17 See European Commission (no date), *Twinning* [accessed 28 October 2021].

3.2 Including a Regional Dimension in Planning and Implementing SSG/R Activities

OSCE staff engaged in implementing SSG/R activities should ensure that the challenges and opportunities of applying a regional approach are considered already at a planning stage. SSG/R needs assessments should thus include analysis of the regional dimension in order to identify potential benefits and feasibility of a regional approach, which should subsequently inform project development and design. Among other things, this involves understanding the regional political dynamics and assessing common SSG/R-related challenges in a given region. Assessments should also consider existing regional initiatives and commitments, which may provide entry points for SSG/R activities at the national level and map existing regional bodies (networks, associations, etc.) that work with security sector institutions. Finally, assessments should also take into account lessons learned from the experiences of other States in the region in implementing similar reforms.¹⁸

In considering opportunities and challenges for applying a regional approach to SSG/R activities during the planning phase, OSCE staff should take advantage of experiences and knowledge of their colleagues from other OSCE Executive Structures, especially those operating in a given region. Regular planning and co-ordination meetings between different Executive Structures (e.g., regional meetings of heads of departments or heads of missions), as well as various focal points networks, can be used for this purpose. Focal points can, among other things, support efforts to identify common regional needs, share expert advice, find opportunities for pooling resources and create informal networks. Different focal point networks across Executive Structures offer an opportunity to share experiences and knowledge resources with neighbouring field operations. In less formal settings, ad hoc consultations with colleagues working on the same thematic issues in neighbouring countries can provide invaluable input to planning and designing SSG/R activities.

These colleagues can be instrumental also during the implementation phase. They can share experiences, good practices and lessons learned from their SSG/R programmatic activities. Consultations with colleagues can also help identify opportunities for pooling resources or developing new joint regional initiatives across different OSCE Executive Structures.

18 For more, see the chapter “Needs Assessments in the Field of SSG/R.”

3.3 Promoting the Understanding that Regional Co-operation on SSG/R Can Be Cost-Effective

Investing in enhancing regional co-operation on SSG/R between participating States may have a long-term impact that will offset potential initial costs in terms of resources or time necessary to build mutual trust. It is important to recognize that regional co-operation on SSG/R can be cost-effective despite a certain initial investment required at the beginning. It can therefore be beneficial for the OSCE to work with existing structures and mechanisms facilitating regional co-operation in order to strengthen their capacities and thus increase the long-term sustainability of support for reform efforts in the region. Moreover, in some cases there may be cost benefits if expenses or resources for implementing SSG/R activities are pooled. Finally, the OSCE should raise awareness of the fact that, from a national perspective, it may be often more cost-effective to tackle common challenges, such as transnational organized crime or trafficking in human beings through regional co-operation.

3.4 Capitalizing on Existing Regional Knowledge Resources, Co-ordination and Information-Sharing Mechanisms

For supporting regional initiatives and ensuring co-operation across OSCE Executive Structures engaged in a given region, capitalizing on existing knowledge resources and information-sharing mechanisms can be useful in order to identify opportunities, common challenges, best practices and lessons learned. Online information-sharing tools can also provide an important platform for enhancing regional co-operation and collaboration among OSCE staff, as well as serving as useful resources for security sector professionals and civil society.



Info Box 2



OSCE Online Tools for Co-ordination and Information-Sharing

- ▶ **POLIS Knowledge and Learning Platform**: A comprehensive knowledge management platform for information related to transnational threats and security developed by the OSCE Secretariat's TNTD. It consists of a Digital Library, an Events Calendar, and Country Profiles. In order to access most materials, registration is mandatory. Moreover, some materials are restricted to law enforcement only.
- ▶ **Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Information System (TANDIS)**: A platform developed by the ODIHR's Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Department to share and promote practical initiatives and to provide information on issues related to tolerance and non-discrimination across the OSCE region. It includes information received from the OSCE participating States, specialized institutions and other relevant organizations; country pages providing information on national initiatives, legislation, specialized bodies, statistics, etc.; thematic pages with information related to different key issues, such as racism and hate crime; international standards and instruments; and information from intergovernmental organizations, including country reports and annual reports. The system is available in English and Russian, but materials in the collection are also available in other languages.
- ▶ **Legislationline**: A free-of-charge online legislative database created by ODIHR's Legislative Support Unit to assist OSCE participating States in bringing their legislation into line with relevant international human-rights standards. It provides direct access to international norms and standards related to specific human dimension issues and to domestic legislation and other documents of relevance to these issues. The database is available in English and Russian.
- ▶ **OSCE E-learning Platform**: A learning platform for online courses developed by the OSCE. Some courses are open to public while others are restricted only to selected participants. To enrol in a course, prior registration is mandatory.
- ▶ **OSCE Communities**: An online solution that provides a virtual team workspace for remote collaboration and co-ordination on OSCE projects. This can be a useful tool particularly for projects that are implemented jointly by OSCE staff from more than one unit, department or Executive Structure, or in co-operation with external partners. It not only enables easy and secure sharing of all necessary materials in one place but also enables joint editing of documents, co-ordination through shared calendar(s) and timeline(s), and collaboration on creating different types of content. Each working space is accessible only to the users specifically assigned to it.

3.5 Following a Step-By-Step Approach

National ownership is a key prerequisite for the OSCE's support to SSG/R. As mentioned above, strengthening regional co-operation on certain SSG/R-related issues needs to be in line with national priorities. If the will necessary to engage in regional initiatives is lacking in a given State, the OSCE should recognize it. In order to support the development of interest in regional initiatives, taking an incremental, step-by-step approach could still be considered. Such approach could, for example, initially only aim to support regional co-operation on a technical level by, for instance, supporting the participation of national experts in regional training courses. This may contribute to both building confidence between participating States and highlighting the benefits of a regional approach, thus paving the way for a more comprehensive form of regional co-operation in the future.

3.6 Recognizing That Regional Approaches Have Their Limitations

Although States in a given region may share similar challenges, specific national requirements must not be overlooked. Regional priorities should thus always be carefully examined against national priorities to ensure that there is complementarity and, hence, a rationale for the OSCE to support them within a given State.

In some circumstances, regional approaches may also not be beneficial: for example, when States are at different stages of implementation of a certain reform process or when a participating State does not share (or does not perceive itself as sharing) similar challenges with neighbouring States. Moreover, sometimes the mandates of OSCE field operations in a given region vary too much to allow for a coherent regional approach. Certain field operations do not have mandates for regional programmatic activities and require assistance from one of the OSCE Institutions or the OSCE Secretariat if they are to give effective support to such initiatives. Appropriate assessments, including timely communication with host authorities, and exploring of possibilities with other OSCE Executive Structures, are thus essential to ensure that the benefits and challenges of a regional approach are well understood.



4. Checklist

The following checklist is intended to help programme/project management staff in:

- Identifying opportunities and entry points in different types of OSCE programmatic activities that can benefit from a regional approach;
- Applying a regional approach to planning and implementing SSG/R activities.

The purpose is not to “check” every item, but to provide an aide-memoire to consider key aspects and suggestions that might be relevant for your daily work.

Identifying Approaches to Strengthening Regional Co-operation on SSG/R

Development and implementation of international norms and standards

- ☐ Map existing international norms and standards relevant for the security sector, which States are yet to ratify or implement, in order to identify possibilities for programmatic support;
- ☐ Raise awareness on the importance of adhering to SSG/R-related international norms and standards;
- ☐ Support national implementation of SSG/R-related international norms and standards through capacity-building;
- ☐ Support regional capacity-building initiatives and development of regional strategies and action plans on how to implement SSG/R-related elements in international commitments made by States;
- ☐ Organize regional workshops, seminars, and study trips to discuss progress and to exchange experiences in implementation of relevant norms and standards;
- ☐ Identify opportunities for developing new international norms and standards for the security sector at the regional level.

Regional capacity-building

- ☐ Identify challenges which are shared by participating States in a given region, and determine whether the States could benefit from a regional capacity-building;

- ☐ Support capacity-building through regional training, simulation exercises, workshops and “peer-to-peer” seminars;
- ☐ Consider how capacity-building support delivered at the regional level can be tailored to different national contexts and needs;
- ☐ Incorporate sharing of national experiences, good practices and lessons learned as part of a regional capacity-building, and allow enough time to exchange and discuss these in smaller formats (e.g., working groups);
- ☐ Ensure that, where appropriate, a broad range of state and non-state actors, including civil society and private sector, are invited to participate in regional capacity-building events to promote confidence-building and facilitate co-operation among all relevant stakeholders.

Operational co-operation and information exchange

- ☐ Identify security challenges that require operational co-operation and information exchange at the regional level;
- ☐ Facilitate networking between the security sector institutions of neighbouring States through joint activities (e.g., through joint events such as conferences, workshops, seminars or simulation exercises);
- ☐ Promote the benefits of regional operational co-operation and information exchange (e.g., through sharing of best practices on study visits);
- ☐ Support the harmonization of standards and practices at the regional level (e.g., through development of a regional manual);
- ☐ Support the development of regional strategies and action plans to address common challenges;
- ☐ Organize study visits of security sector representatives to other States of the region, which have undergone similar security sector reforms;
- ☐ Facilitate participation of security sector officials in relevant regional events, which are likely to promote confidence-building or to raise awareness about SSG/R.

Co-ordination and information-sharing mechanisms

- ☐ Map existing regional co-ordination and information-sharing mechanisms in the field of security sector, and identify opportunities for engagement with them;
- ☐ Raise awareness among national security sector institutions and professionals about existing regional co-ordination and information-sharing mechanisms, including at relevant national and regional events;
- ☐ Provide support to relevant co-ordination and information-sharing mechanisms through technical support and capacity-building;
- ☐ Support the establishment of new regional co-ordination and information-sharing mechanisms between security sector institutions to respond to new emerging needs if there is serious interest and commitment on behalf of the States concerned.

Professional networks and associations

- ☐ Map existing regional professional networks and associations in the field of security sector, and identify opportunities for engagement with them;
- ☐ Raise awareness among national security sector institutions and professionals about relevant regional professional networks and associations that they may wish to join;
- ☐ Provide support to professional networks and associations for security sector in the form of technical assistance and capacity-building;
- ☐ Involve regional professional networks and associations when implementing SSG/R programmatic activities, including as in-kind contributors or implementing partners;
- ☐ Support the establishment of new regional professional networks and associations for security sector actors.

Research and data collection

- ☐ Identify common governance- and reform-related topics and issues that are addressed by security sector institutions from several OSCE participating States and may thus benefit from comparative research;
- ☐ Design research in a way that its findings and conclusions can serve as a basis for future SSG/R programmatic support, be it at the national or regional level;

- ☐ Engage national security sector actors, as well as relevant professional networks and associations (both national and regional), when planning, designing and conducting research;
- ☐ Present and disseminate findings and outcomes from research to security sector institutions from the States concerned at relevant national and international events.

Applying Approaches to Strengthening Regional Co-operation on SSG/R

Ensuring that regional co-operation to SSG/R takes place within a broader framework of support

- ☐ Is strengthening co-operation among security sector institutions in a region part of national priorities for security sector reform in a given State?
- ☐ Does the national security strategy include the objective of strengthening translational co-operation with other countries?
- ☐ Do national actors have capacities to engage in regional co-operation on common security threats and risks?

Including a regional dimension in planning and implementing SSG/R activities

- ☐ Have challenges and opportunities of regional approaches been considered during the project/programme development phase? Has a regional dimension been included in the project's/programme's needs assessment?
- ☐ Have existing regional initiatives and commitments, which may provide entry points for reform efforts at the national level, been considered when planning SSG/R-related programmatic activities?
- ☐ Have lessons learned from the experiences of other States in the region in implementing similar reform efforts been taken into account when planning SSG/R support in a given State?
- ☐ What regular OSCE meetings and focal points networks can be used to plan and co-ordinate SSG/R activities at the regional level?
- ☐ Have colleagues from other OSCE Executive Structures working in a given region been consulted?

Promoting the understanding that regional co-operation on SSG/R can be cost-effective

- ☐ Has awareness been raised on the fact that the long-term benefits of regional co-operation are likely to outweigh initial costs?
- ☐ Are there regional structures that the OSCE could collaborate with or support, including through pooling resources?
- ☐ Has awareness been raised on the fact that it is often more cost-effective to tackle common challenges through regional co-operation?

Capitalizing on existing regional knowledge resources, co-ordination and information-sharing mechanisms

- ☐ What existing OSCE co-ordination and information-sharing tools can be used to support regional initiatives?

Following a step-by-step approach

- ☐ Where national will for regional SSG/R approaches is weak or missing, has an incremental, step-by-step approach been considered?
- ☐ Are there opportunities to support regional co-operation on the technical level (e.g., by supporting participation of experts from a given State in relevant regional events), which are likely to promote confidence-building or awareness-raising about norms and standards related to SSG/R?
- ☐ Are there opportunities to organize a study visit for security sector officials from a given State to a fellow State in the region that has undergone similar security sector reforms?

Recognize that regional approaches have their limitations

- ☐ Are regional priorities in the field of SSG/R in line with national priorities in a given State and, hence, provide a rationale for support by the OSCE?
- ☐ Has an appropriate assessment on the benefits and challenges of a regional approach to SSG/R support been made?
- ☐ Have potential benefits of a regional approach to SSG/R activities been communicated to host authorities?



5. Resources

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- ▶ OSCE, *Ministerial Council Decision No. 5/14 on the Prevention of Corruption* (Basel, 2014), MC.DEC/5/14.
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- ▶ OSCE, *OSCE Strategic Framework on Police-Related Activities* (Vienna, 2012), PC.DEC/1049.
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- ▶ OSCE, *The OSCE Approach to Security Sector Governance and Reform (SSG/R): Report by the Secretary General of the OSCE* (Vienna, 2019).
Available at: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/8/a/414725.pdf>.
- ▶ United Nations Security Council, *Resolution 2553 (2020)* (New York, 2014), S/RES/2553.
Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3893781>.

Websites

- ▶ Twinning: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/funding-and-technical-assistance/twinning_en
- ▶ POLIS Knowledge and Learning Platform: <https://polis.osce.org/>
- ▶ Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Information System (TANDIS): <https://tandis.odhr.pl/>
- ▶ Legislationline: <https://www.legislationline.org/>
- ▶ OSCE E-learning Platform: <https://elearning.osce.org/>
- ▶ OSCE Communities: <https://confluence.osce.org/>