We asked the Director of the European Commission's Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI) about European crisis response, EU support for demining in Ukraine and the challenges posed by emerging CBRN threats.



Demining action in Ukraine. Peter Wagner on the left.
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How the European Union promotes international cooperation to prevent and manage crisis situations

Interview with DR PETER WAGNER, Director of the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI), European Commission, Brussels

Dr Wagner, you lead the European Commission's Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI). Your department puts into action European foreign policy when it comes to responding to crisis situations, finding peaceful and stable solutions, promoting democracy and defending human rights. Can you give us some concrete examples on FPI's action?

PETER WAGNER: From rapid response to crises to public diplomacy or disinformation, FPI has a global footprint and a track record in delivering targeted responses to today's challenges. For example, take Ukraine, where we have been at the forefront in providing assistance to the Ukrainian government by supporting the set-up of the **Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine**.

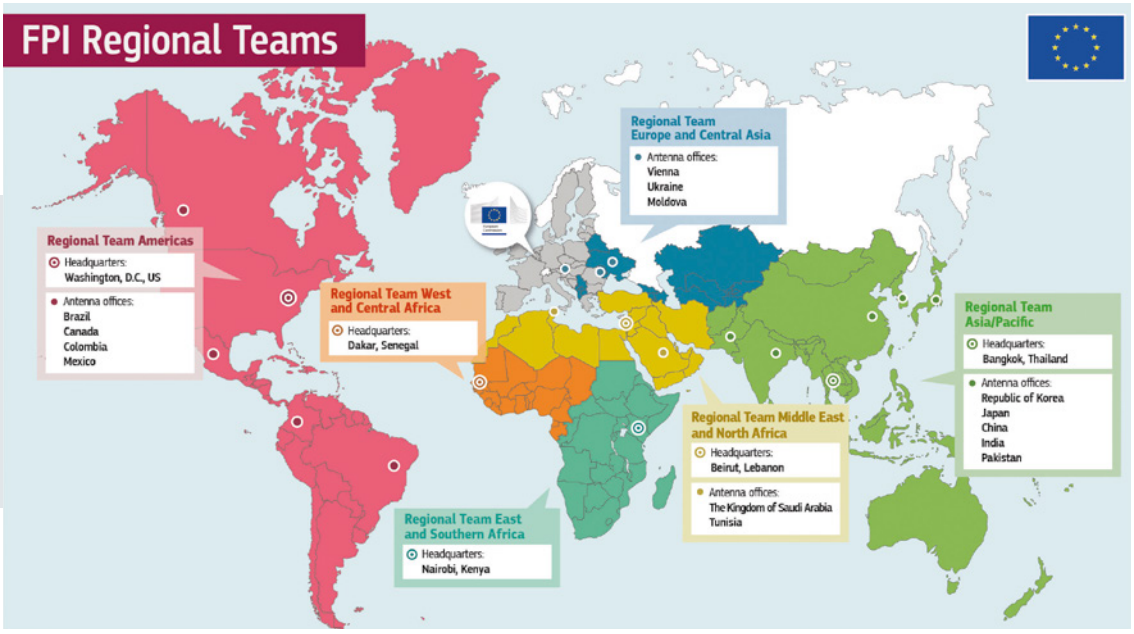
Another example is Syria, where we ensured our presence even during Assad's regime, working with civil society inside Syria and in exile. This continuing cooperation allowed us to react quickly to the emerging needs in the country. We are now working to help stabilise the country through support for transitional justice and reconciliation, mine action and prevention of radicalisation in zones previously occupied by ISIS.

That's a broad range of actions implemented in close collaboration with the FPI's regional teams. Where are the limits of FPI's work?

PETER WAGNER: I must emphasise that our interventions are always guided by the respect for international law, human rights, and the sovereignty of third countries. In addition, it is important to understand that we are the first responders: our actions are enablers, setting the ground for long-term, structural assistance to follow. To this end, ensuring coherence and cooperation with other EU policies and instruments is key.

Who makes the decisions regarding these actions and within what political framework?

PETER WAGNER: The decision to launch a specific FPI action is taken by the European Commission under the political steer of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, in close



In close cooperation with the head office in Brussels, the FPI Regional Teams design and implement projects close to the place of action.

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consultation with the European External Action Service (EEAS) and other Commission services.

This being said, FPI also ensures the management of two key foreign policy tools: the European Union missions under the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the **European Peace Facility**, with a budget of €17bn, which provides military equipment to armed forces of partner countries such as Ukraine, Lebanon, or Somalia.

Dr Wagner, the European Union will play an important role in post-war Ukraine. One of the challenges will be the demining of the country, as the territory is littered with hundreds of thousands of mines causing daily casualties. What role will FPI play in the "cleansing" of Ukraine?

PETER WAGNER: We have been actively engaged in Ukraine's mine action long before the full-scale Russian invasion. Since 2022, the issue of mine contamination has escalated exponentially, posing a significant threat to the country's safety and stability. In response, FPI has scaled up its efforts, becoming the leading EU service for humanitarian mine action in Ukraine.

Can you please give further details on these actions?

PETER WAGNER: We delivered large demining machines, detection dogs, and an array of explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) tools, while also supporting NGOs in survey and clearance operations. Furthermore, we're driving innovation in mine action, exploring new technologies and methods to enhance our response. Since 2022, FPI has contributed over €72m to mine action in Ukraine, as part of the EU's total support of around €85m. We're working closely with the Ukrainian government to strengthen mine action governance, supporting the development of a **National Mine Action Strategy**.



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> **FPI has become the leading EU service for humanitarian mine action in Ukraine.**

How is cooperation with international partners organised in this area?

PETER WAGNER: At an international level, we're leveraging the EU's convening power to coordinate support from Member States and other partners. This has already resulted in a Team Europe commitment of €360m for mine action in Ukraine. Looking ahead, we will co-host the Ukraine Mine Action Conference next year, which will provide a platform to mobilise global support, share best practices, and explore innovative solutions to the challenge of mine contamination.

Let's turn to the topic of chemical, biological, radiological and chemical (CBRN) risks and threats and highlight a major EU initiative in international cooperation under your leadership, the EU CBRN Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence (EU CBRN CoE) initiative, which celebrated 15 years of success in May 2025. Could you briefly explain the objective of this initiative with 63 partner countries around the world?

PETER WAGNER: In a rapidly evolving CBRN landscape, we tackle risks systemically, promoting a culture of cooperation, information-sharing and mutual support. The EU CBRN CoE in-



Regional crisis management field exercise "Border Shield 2025", hosted by Moldova in October 2025
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> **In a rapidly evolving CBRN landscape, we tackle risks systemically.**

itiative not only enhances the security and resilience of our partner countries but also contributes to the European Union's own security and stability, demonstrating the EU's commitment to a safer and more secure world for all.

How will this initiative keep pace with the new era of challenges we are entering, with new threats ranging from synthetic biology to AI-assisted proliferation?

PETER WAGNER: We are adapting our approach to ensure that the initiative launched by the EU 15 years ago remains relevant and effective. We are expanding our focus to include these emerging threats, while continuing to address traditional CBRN risks. This includes enhancing our capabilities in areas such as biosafety, biosecurity, and synthetic biology, as well as exploring the potential risks and benefits associated with AI and other digital technologies.

What about training and the exchange of best practices?

PETER WAGNER: We are investing in capacity-building and training programmes that address the needs of our partner countries, including the development of national CBRN strategies, legislation, and regulations. We are also promoting the sharing of best practices, expertise, and technologies among our partner countries to foster a culture of cooperation and mutual support.

This means that the EU CBRN CoE is a flexible instrument.

PETER WAGNER: You are right; we are committed to ensuring that our initiative remains flexible and adaptable, with a strong focus on sustainability and ownership by our partner countries. We are working closely with our partners to develop tailored solutions that meet their specific needs and priorities, and to ensure that our activities are aligned with their national and regional strategies.

Dr Wagner, thank you very much for these insights.

The interview was led by Hartmut Bühl.

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