

Three different career paths? Study on Finnish experts' cross-sector mobility between mission, secretariat and election observation

Summary in English

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Key findings

- Out of all the experts deployed by CMC Finland, 89 % have been deployed only to one of the sectors (mission, secretariat or election observation positions) and have not switched from one sector to another. Experts deployed to the mission and election observation sectors have especially not switched to other sectors.
- Out of all the experts deployed by CMC Finland, 11 % have been switching between sectors. The study highlights that amongst them 35 %, which is 24 experts, have switched from the civilian crisis management mission and/or secretariat positions to election observation but not returned to the civilian crisis management sectors.
- Even though those who switched from the mission sector to secretariat sector are only 7 % of the experts who have been in missions, around one third of experts who have been in secretariats, have been first in missions.
- The data of the study does not indicate that experts who have switched from the mission sector to the secretariat sector would apply and recruit only to secretariat positions and never return to missions.
- Out of all the experts, 46 % have been deployed only once and they have not been recruited to any position a second time.

Introduction

Some of the recent developments in the human resources policy of the EU's civilian common security and defence policy (CSDP) have highlighted a need to find seconded experts from more diverse backgrounds, including experts with a background in administrative and support positions. Furthermore, a thought that previous mission experience could support an expert's competence and wider knowledge in the context, and therefore increase their effectiveness, for example in secretariat positions or vice versa, has occasionally been brought up at CMC Finland. However,

whether and how often this kind of movement between sectors takes place has not been previously studied. The purpose of this study is to fill this gap.

This study looks at three sectors to which experts are deployed by CMC Finland: mission and secretariat positions within civilian crisis management, as well as international election observation positions. Experts in the mission positions work in the civilian crisis management missions of international organisations, experts in the secretariat positions work in headquarters and secretariats of the international organisations, and the election observers in the election observation missions of the OSCE and EU. The act on the Participation of Civilians in Crisis Management applies to secondments to all three sectors¹.

The study looks at whether experts have been nominated and recruited to positions in other sectors than their previous deployment. Furthermore, the study looks at the most common sector paths, that is, the order of the sectors where an individual expert has been deployed to. The time between deployments or nominations has not been factored in, so the new deployment may have taken place immediately after a previous position or there may be several years between positions.

This study only focuses on secondments through CMC Finland. However, it should be noted that in some cases experts may have gained experience from different sectors through working as a contracted staff member in a mission, for instance. Therefore, the study does not provide the complete picture of the experts' cross-sector mobility between different kinds of sectors during their careers.

604 experts deployed by CMC Finland since 2007, when CMC Finland was established, were found from the expert registry of CMC Finland in June 2026². 46 % of these experts have only been deployed once. 462 experts have been deployed to the mission sector, 103 experts to the secretariat sector and 111 experts to the election observation sector.

During the years 2016-2025 the annual average of experts seconded to the mission sector by CMC Finland has been around 140 experts and to secretariat sector around 31 experts. The averages have been calculated including all experts whose secondments fall at least partly within a given year. Hence, it does not mean this many experts would have been seconded at the same time. CMC Finland has deployed election observers only since 2022. Before that, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland deployed election observers. This study only includes the election observation

¹ Act on the Participation of Civilians in Crisis Management (1287/2004):
<https://www.finlex.fi/en/legislation/translations/2004/eng/1287>

² According to the Act on the Participation of Civilians in Crisis Management (1287/2004) CMC Finland must delete information from the expert registry of persons who have not been active in the last ten years. This means experts, who have not at least been nominated to positions or training by CMC Finland. Therefore, more experts have been deployed by CMC Finland, but their information is not anymore in the expert registry.

positions deployed by CMC Finland. During the years 2022-2025 there have been on average 44 elections observers deployed annually.

Findings

Out of all the experts deployed by CMC Finland, 89 % have been deployed only in positions in one of the sectors and they have not been deployed to other sectors. This observation is in line with the other findings in this study stating that the experts deployed by CMC Finland mainly stay within one sector and are not recruited into positions of the other sectors. Therefore, this study in fact suggests that CMC Finland has three sector paths even though the Act on the Participation of Civilians in Crisis Management applies to all three sectors. However, out of all the experts, 46 % have been deployed only once. Therefore, almost half of the experts have not even been able to move between the sectors.

Out of all the experts deployed by CMC Finland since 2007, 11 % have been deployed to positions in more than one sector. The study highlights that amongst them 35 %, (24 experts), have moved from a civilian crisis management mission and/or secretariat positions to election observation tasks, after which they have not returned to the civilian crisis management sectors (so far). As election observer deployments have been under CMC Finland for the past four years, it may be useful to examine whether this kind of movement between the sectors continues or increases in the future.

- Out of all the experts deployed to mission positions, 81 % have only been deployed to missions and have never been nominated to secretariat or election observation positions.
- Out of all the experts deployed to secretariat positions, 41 % have only been deployed to secretariat positions and they have not been nominated to positions in the other sectors.
- Out of all the experts in election observation positions, 72 % have been only deployed to election observation positions and they have not been nominated to positions in the other sectors.

These numbers indicate that very few experts deployed to especially mission and election observation sectors have been deployed to other sectors. This can indicate that they have skills, experience and interest only for positions within one sector. However, CMC Finland also opens fewer secretariat positions compared to mission positions, and election observers have been deployed by CMC Finland only since 2022. The number of experts who have been deployed to missions is significantly higher already due to these reasons. Out of all the experts deployed by CMC Finland since 2007, 62 % have been only in missions.

It is rare that the experts are recruited to secretariat and elections observation positions after mission positions. Only 7 % of the experts who have been deployed to missions have later been recruited to secretariats and 6 % to election observation missions. However, around one third of the experts who have been in secretariats, have been first in missions.

Only 1 % of the experts deployed to missions have stayed in the secretariat positions after they have been deployed for the first time to a secretariat position after a mission position. This does not indicate that experts who have switched from the mission sector to the secretariat sector would later apply and recruit only to secretariat positions and never return to missions. Therefore, in such instances, movement between the sectors occurs.

The study also looked at the sector paths of the experts, meaning which sectors and in which order the experts have been most typically deployed.

1. The most common path is that an expert has been in only one mission position and has not been seconded since.
2. The second most common is that an expert has been in two mission positions.
3. The third most common path is one secretariat position secondment.
4. The fourth most common path is three mission positions.
5. The fifth most common is one short-term election observation position.

These sector paths further highlight that it is very common for experts to be deployed into positions in only one sector, and that there are no highly common paths even when cross-sector mobility does occur.

Conclusion

Generally, the study indicates the separation between mission, secretariat and election observation positions: such a movement where, for example, mission positions would qualify an expert to secretariat positions, does not occur. Rather, the differing requirements of these sectors make a distinction between the expert profiles. However, it is still possible that individual experts move between sectors. From the point of view of human resources policy, it seems that diversifying the expert pool should take place mainly by increasing the number of experts with different backgrounds, rather than looking for experts who have expertise which allows deployment to many sectors.