

### Fact Sheet – Protection of Civilians

**Description:** The NATO policy on the Protection of Civilians (POC) was agreed by NATO nations at the Warsaw Summit in 2016. NATO's approach to PoC is based on legal, moral, and political imperatives and recognizes NATO's responsibilities to conduct operations within applicable international law, which may include international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international refugee law as applicable. This policy now needs to be implemented into NATO core business and this is the role of the NATO Bi-SC PoC project team.

**Mission:** The mission is to ensure that there is a common understanding of what PoC means to NATO, and to ensure that our operational staff, planners, and forces are trained individually and collectively, to understanding the nature of threats to civilians and being able to foresee and take appropriate action to counter those threats is a core component within all NATO and NATO-led operations and missions. This understanding includes further acknowledgement that NATO can only contribute the overall effort to protect civilians, and for PoC to be effective, it requires a comprehensive approach founded on strong civil-military interaction, information sharing and trust.

**Categories:** Protection of Civilians is a multi-dimensional subject that is being integrated into the planning and conduct of operations. At its heart it is the need to understand the operating environment, acknowledging that NATO will need to work with other non-military actors in the achievement of mutual goals. Categories for such interaction and for the implementation of this important and highly relevant topic include:



- Understanding the Human Environment – this also includes understanding enhanced through many cross cutting topics such as Children and Armed Conflict, Conflict Related Sexual and Gender Based Violence and over all Gender aspects, as well as other culture based elements including CPP
- Mitigating Harm
- Facilitating Access to Basic Needs
- Contributing to a Safe and Secure Environment
- Operationalisation of PoC into NATO thinking through:
- Doctrine, Individual Training, Exercises, engagement and outreach, working with partners
- Interoperability with other approaches among International Organisations and nations – e.g. UN DPKO, EU

**Year Founded** This Project was initiated through collaboration with Norway and several lead NATO nations in 2015 at the NATO CD&E Working Group. Dedicated effort started following tasking from the international staff and international military staff in the autumn of 2015. This led to the launch of the NATO policy on PoC at the Warsaw Summit in July 2016.

**Headquarters:** This is a fully collaborative project that encompasses the IS and IMS at NATO Headquarters, Allied Command Operations, and Allied Command Transformation.

**Offices:** IS Women Peace and Security and PoC Section; SHAPE J9; ACT Strategic Policy and Plans, and ACT Operational Experimentation.

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**Milestone Events:** *Protect the People Round Table*, NY/DC (7-8 September 2017)  
*PoC Experiment* – Sofia, Bulgaria (18 -22 September 2017)  
*Wilton Park (UK) seminar* (links to UK FCO) – United Kingdom (October 2017)  
*Round Table – Royal Netherland Embassy, DC 6 December 2017*  
*Bi- SC Approval of NATO PoC Military Concept* (December 2017)  
*VIKING Exercise 18* (April 2018)  
*Brussels Summit “From policy to capability”*(July 2018)  
*Exercise TRJE 18* (September-October 2018)

**Publications:** NATO Transnet, PoC Work floor (read ahead/event series publications); and  
“Overcoming Protection of Civilian Failures – The Case for an Evolutionary Approach within NATO,” OPEN Publications, [www.openpublications.org](http://www.openpublications.org)

**Websites:** TRANSNET. <https://portal.transnet.act.nato.int/>  
NATO ACT. [www.act.nato.int/what-we-do](http://www.act.nato.int/what-we-do)  
OPEN Publications. [www.openpublications.org](http://www.openpublications.org)

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