

Structures

The OSCE's key permanent structures are the Council of Ministers, which has governing functions; the Permanent Council and Secretariat, in Vienna, for day-to-day political interaction; the Forum for Security Cooperation, in Vienna, a focal point for arms control, disarmament and confidence-building measures; the Chairman-in-Office, who has overall executive responsibilities; the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, in Warsaw (formerly the Office for Free Elections); and the High Commissioner on National Minorities, in The Hague.

Temporary structures and mechanisms are created as needed to deal with specific security problems. These include diplomatic and expert missions, visits by personal representatives of the Chairman-in-Office, and missions (currently stationed in 10 countries). Permanent structures and temporary mechanisms are listed at the end of this chapter.

Functions

The OSCE deals with "soft" security and stability issues, as distinguished from the "hard" issues that are within the scope of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Decisions are reached by consensus among the participating states.

Soft issues are divided into three "dimensions". The military and diplomatic dimension is the core of OSCE activities. It includes negotiating and implementing arms control and disarmament arrangements, early warning, preventive diplomacy, crisis management, and post-conflict rehabilitation.

The human dimension addresses human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as the rule-of-law and the democratization process.

The economic dimension, including science, environment and technology, has the potential for tackling security issues that are rooted in economic, environmental and technological problems.

Resources

The OSCE has about 150 people on staff. Temporary help is provided by participating states at their expense. Major activities are carried out with voluntary contributions.