

## 'OSCE to have civilian rapid reaction capability for more efficient crisis response' from El País (19 November 1999)

**Caption:** On 19 November 1999, the same day as the signing of the European Security Charter by OSCE participating states in Istanbul, the Spanish daily newspaper El País considers the Charter's purpose and provisions.

**Source:** El País. 19.11.1999. Madrid. "La OSCE tendrá un cuerpo civil de reacción rápida para responder con mayor eficacia a las crisis", auteur:Tertsch, Hermann; González, Miguel.

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[http://www.cvce.eu/obj/osce\\_to\\_have\\_civilian\\_rapid\\_reaction\\_capability\\_for\\_more\\_efficient\\_crisis\\_response\\_from\\_el\\_pais\\_19\\_november\\_1999-en-ec429e38-e1eb-43dd-9eda-5a8348069c4e.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/osce_to_have_civilian_rapid_reaction_capability_for_more_efficient_crisis_response_from_el_pais_19_november_1999-en-ec429e38-e1eb-43dd-9eda-5a8348069c4e.html)



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## OSCE to have civilian rapid reaction capability for more efficient crisis response

Hermann Tertsch/Miguel González — Istanbul

The Charter for European Security will not bear Boris Yeltsin's signature. The Russian leader left Istanbul yesterday, so the document will be signed today by his foreign minister, Sergei Ivanov, as will the revised Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE). Knut Vollabaek, the Norwegian Chairman of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), announced this morning that the signing ceremony planned for yesterday had been held over to today, and early this afternoon he confirmed that agreement had been reached. The Charter for European Security is the outcome of a long-standing Russian drive to offset NATO enlargement by revitalising the OSCE. The aim is to update the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, which helped end the Cold War, with a new scenario for European security in the 21st century.

The Charter proclaims the right of states to territorial integrity and condemns terrorism, but it also emphasises that security is linked to respect for human and minority rights and to the development of democracy and the rule of law. The document recognises that recent conflicts in Europe have been conflicts within states rather than between them, although this passage was toned down to overcome reservations on the part of Russia, which is wary of any 'interference' in its internal affairs. Nor was it easy to persuade Moscow to accept inclusion in the Charter of one of the basic principles of the OSCE: that each member state is entitled to verify another member state's fulfilment of its obligations, with regard to human rights as well as to other matters.

Conflict prevention will continue to be the OSCE's field of action. And that is where the main innovation lies: the establishment of a civilian rapid reaction capability. This arrangement, proposed by the United States and supported by the European Union, is similar to that in force in the UN, whose Secretary-General holds a list of military units that may be used for crisis management, provided that the countries supplying them so agree.

In this instance, the arrangement concerns judges, police officers and other aid and cooperation specialists, rather than military units. They will be included on a list on which the OSCE may draw for suitable resources according to circumstances. The OSCE has specialised in civil operations such as the organisation and monitoring of elections.

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