

# Equipping the European Union for the 21st century

*National diplomacies, the European  
External Action Service and the  
making of EU foreign policy*

Rosa Balfour, European Policy Centre  
Kristi Raik, Finnish Institute of International Affairs



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# Preface and acknowledgements

This paper has been prepared in the framework of the joint research project of the EPC and FIIA on “The European External Action Service and National Diplomacies”, co-directed by the two authors. The project examines the ways in which the member states adapt to the EEAS and vice versa, the positioning of the EEAS and national foreign services in EU foreign policy-making, and the restructuring of European diplomacy. It aims to offer key insights into understanding EU foreign policy capabilities, as well as its ability for renewal in a changing world.

The paper draws on case studies conducted as part of the project by researchers in 14 member states. It has benefitted greatly from insights and feedback by the research group and the steering committee of the project. The authors would like to thank the authors of the case studies: Cornelius Adebahr, Vít Beneš, Caterina Carta, Laura C. Ferreira-Pereira, Andrea Frontini, Grzegorz Gromadzki, Ruby Gropas, Sabina Lange, Jakob Lewander, Ignacio Molino, Sara Norrevik, Mark Rhinard, Fabien Terpan, George Tzogopoulos, Louise van Schaik and Alena Vysotskaya G. Vieira. They are also grateful to the members of the steering committee: Graham Avery, Poul-Skytte Christoffersen, Renaud Dehousse, Antonio Missiroli, Hanna Ojanen, Elfriede Regelsberger and Richard Whitman. Last but not least, they would like to thank their assistants, Andrea Frontini and Teemu Rantanen, for practical help as well as substantive contributions to the project.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
DG	Directorate-General
EEAS	European External Action Service
EU	European Union
FAC	Foreign Affairs Council
HR	High Representative
HR/VP	High Representative/Vice-President
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States

**1**



# 1. Introduction

Looking back, the times when the Convention on the Future of Europe established the European External Action Service (EEAS) seem like another epoch. The European Union (EU) had just approved one of its best written and most appreciated foreign policy documents – the European Security Strategy – and was setting about to propel itself into the 21st century with a super foreign minister and a new diplomatic service which would overcome the institutional dualism between the Commission and the Council, smooth out the bureaucratic bottlenecks which made the EU's dowry of a broad and sophisticated toolbox slow and complicated, and build a new consensus around a European foreign policy.

Then came the referenda in France and the Netherlands, the negotiations for a new treaty, another rejection in Ireland, and further negotiations for the Lisbon Treaty; followed by the financial, economic and political crises. The leaders of European countries (in most cases not the same who had contributed to the Convention on the Future of Europe) found themselves with a new European External Action Service and did not know what to do with it.

In 2013 European foreign policy is at a complicated crossroads, pushed and pulled in different directions. The motorway of the general relative decline of Europe is crying out for more Europe and stronger political unity if a 'European way of life' is to be maintained for the generations to come. Size matters, as Timothy Garton Ash argued.<sup>1</sup> If Europe wants to survive, it needs to work on its politics of scale.

<sup>1</sup> TG ASH, 'The Crisis of Europe. How the Union Came Together and Why It's Falling Apart', *Foreign Affairs*, September 2012.

Even so, can the EU in its current shape swim in a sea of sharks? The European model is challenged by changing patterns of global power and interdependence which question the legitimacy and effectiveness of the EU's international posture, arousing doubts on the role the EU should play in the global arena. The absence of the EU as a global player is not just a problem for Europe, but also for the world. For global governance to work, it is necessary to have actors that are willing and capable of taking initiatives and pushing the agenda forward. In the past the EU has played such a role when confronted with issues like human rights, multilateral trade liberalization, climate, and the regulation of financial markets.

Internally, the consequences of the financial and economic crisis are producing a push towards rationalizing resources and making savings. National foreign services are under the dual pressure of the economic crisis and an overall decline in the importance of traditional diplomacy, while the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty and the creation of the EEAS are supposed to stimulate an internal logic towards more EU integration and burden-sharing in foreign policy.

But the crisis is also producing a backlash and second thoughts on the opportunity and wisdom of the European project in the first place, not only in well-known Eurosceptic countries but also in those traditionally committed to integration. Differences between the large countries which have driven EU foreign policy have recently resurfaced, making the EU bereft of leadership. In the absence of the old inner core pushing for common foreign policy, other countries are building different and non-typical coalitions in an effort to take the driving seat to rethink EU foreign policy.<sup>2</sup> To make matters more complex, there is a mismatch between patterns of leadership on economic and political issues and on foreign policy matters.

Against this background, this paper asks how to equip European foreign policy for the 21st century. What kind of diplomatic system will be at the service of European foreign policy, forging together EU and national elements? How are the EEAS and national diplomacies going to find a *modus vivendi* and a new division of labour? How are national and EU foreign services going to reinvent themselves to remain relevant and efficacious?

2 E.g. the initiative by Italy, Poland, Spain and Sweden to prepare an EU global strategy, launched in July 2012 [www.euglobalstrategy.eu](http://www.euglobalstrategy.eu).

The navel-gazing Brussels seems adept at is not sufficient to rise to the multi-dimensional challenges of the contemporary world of crisis and change. Much of the debate in European foreign policy circles focuses on the strategy: What should the EU do to improve its international performance? This paper asks a different question, which is inextricably linked to the previous one: Does the EU have the institutional and political structures to pursue its foreign policy priorities and strategies?

The paper argues that the EEAS needs to be at the centre of an 'emerging EU system of diplomacy',<sup>3</sup> shaping it and not just being shaped by others, and creating a new sense of unity. The Lisbon Treaty established the EEAS, headed by the new High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP), as a historical innovation aimed at making the EU's external action more consistent and visible. Amid heavy inter-institutional battles, the Service merged some of the former external relations parts of the Commission and the Council Secretariat. It was tasked with assisting the HR/VP in carrying out her triple-hatted mandate, judged by some commentators as a mission impossible: conducting the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), presiding over the Foreign Affairs Council, and acting as Vice-President of the Commission, who also coordinates the Commission's share of EU external action.<sup>4</sup>

The EEAS has contradictory mandates. It is expected to 'coordinate' (policies, institutions, member states, embassies, ministers, collective action, financial resources), provide leadership, and develop new ideas and policy entrepreneurship. But it is not supposed to challenge national foreign policy, to step on the toes of national diplomacies, or interfere with national priorities and interests.

It is essential for both the legitimacy and effectiveness of European diplomacy that the EEAS interacts smoothly with national foreign services. The intergovernmental nature of EU foreign policy needs to be overcome by building a sense of 'joint ownership' of the EEAS among the member states. In other words, an inclusive and all-participating approach is required from both sides. It is equally

3 S KEUKELEIRE, M SMITH & S VANHOONACKER, *The Emerging EU System of Diplomacy: How Fit for Purpose?* DSEU Policy Paper 1, March 2010.

4 Council Decision establishing the organization and functioning of the European External Action Service, 2010/427/EU, 26 July 2010.

necessary to break down the Berlin Wall that has risen between the EEAS and the Commission. The capability of the EEAS to develop new ideas and policy entrepreneurship, while generally providing added value, depends crucially on the integration of “community” policies in the policy mix.

This paper addresses the forms, shapes and means of coordination within, between and across EU institutions and policy areas (section 2), the relationship between the expectations for coordination and the need for leadership and policy entrepreneurship (section 3), the relationship between national and EU diplomacies in terms of policy substance and in terms of burden-sharing and division of labour (section 4), how these issues are at play in the EU’s global network of Delegations working on the ground (section 5), and finally, whether and how the EEAS can strengthen a European foreign policy culture (section 6).

These are necessary bases for the development of a policy which is not just the sum of national and EU foreign policies, but a *European* foreign policy, building on national strengths, compensating for national weaknesses, and drawing together inputs from the whole system to create the vision.



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## 2. Coordination needed — the quest for consistency

Consistency has long been the quest of repeated EU treaty reform. Consistency at the EU level has a twofold dimension. The first is *horizontal* and regards coordination across institutions and policy fields. It thus relates to ensuring that EU policies are coherent and consistent — in other words that the CFSP does not go against migration policy. Merging together the staff, tools and components of the Commission and the Council dealing with external relations and foreign and security policy was carried out precisely with this aim, as was the double-hatting of the High Representative/Vice President of the European Commission.

*Vertical* consistency refers to ensuring, at a minimum, that the member states and the EU institutions do not carry out policies and positions which contradict each other, or better still, that they complement each other, or at best, that they sing from the same hymn sheet. Hence, the abolition of the rotating presidency in the field of foreign affairs, the designation of the HR/VP with a third hat as Chair of the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), and the permanent Chairs of the Political and Security Commission and of the Working Groups within the EEAS.

The Lisbon Treaty is not particularly helpful in clarifying responsibilities for consistency, except for reiterating the need for it in more than one Article: ‘The Union shall ensure consistency between the different areas of its external action and between these and its other policies. The Council and the Commission, assisted by the High

Representative (HR) of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, shall ensure that consistency and shall cooperate to that effect'.<sup>5</sup>

There are different levels at which coordination is necessary: within the EEAS, between institutions, over time, on the ground, among the foreign ministers and, of course, between the European and national levels.

Within the EEAS, a merger between parts of different institutions took place. The different working cultures of the Council, Commission and national diplomats struggled to find a new language, and the fact that during its first year and a half the staff were scattered across different buildings in Brussels did not help. Low staff morale, caused by the chaotic and prolonged transition, has had a negative impact on the creation of an *esprit de corps* and a common working culture even within the Headquarters. Within the EEAS, insufficient communication flows between the Corporate Board, cabinets and Directorates-General (DGs) are seen to have undermined the unity of the system. Twenty-four months of working together have done much to improve the situation, but this has not contained the damage done to the EEAS's image outside the Service.

It is within the EEAS that a crucial aspect of coordination between policies takes place. The EU's crisis management structures have been included in the EEAS, bringing together the CFSP and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). The internal structures dealing with the CSDP have been subject to changes to make crisis management more operational. But while member states seem satisfied with the current arrangements in principle, the European Parliament is less impressed with the degree to which the recent CSDP missions are integrated into the broader political and strategic outlook of EU foreign policy, especially in view of the recently approved strategies to the Sahel and the Horn of Africa and the three CSDP missions in Niger, Somalia and Mali.<sup>6</sup>

Coordination is also necessary between the institutions, particularly but not exclusively between the EEAS and the Commission. Much of the substance of the EU's external relations falls under the

5 Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Art. 21, point 3.

6 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, *Report on the Annual Report from the Council to the European Parliament on the Common Foreign and Security Policy*, A7-0252/2012, European Parliament, Brussels, 29 August 2012.

remit of the Commission rather than the EEAS, such as trade, aid, enlargement, the Commissioner for the EU's neighbourhood policy and the external impact of internal policies, from energy to migration and climate change. EU policies towards North Africa and the Middle East, for example, were reformulated after the Arab Spring by focusing on three particular areas: economic assistance, trade liberalization and mobility.<sup>7</sup> None of these areas is of EEAS competence, but concern the Commission and the member states. In this case, the relevant Commission DGs and the EEAS have worked well together, and the creation of bilateral task forces between the EU and Tunisia, then Jordan, followed by Egypt has helped mobilize resources and interest from different parts of the European institutions, although the impact on actual policy remains to be seen. A similar assessment can be made of the cooperation between DG Enlargement of the Commission and the unit in the EEAS, although it must be said that the EU's dealings with the Balkans and Turkey had always been split between the Commission and the Council before the creation of the EEAS and working habits were consolidated.

But other areas have seen less successful instances of coordination, both in institutional and operational terms. The Commission has ambitious plans for an external energy policy – much needed in view of Europe's dependence and at times of diversification of energy sources. This also involves integrating energy into EU foreign policy and conducting energy diplomacy. But coordination and the division of labour between the Commission and the EEAS have so far been poor. Migration issues remain firmly managed and led by the Commission's Home Affairs directorate, including the diplomatic dimension, despite the increasing centrality of migration-related tools such as visa liberalization or mobility partnerships in foreign policy. Similarly, but with the balance tipped differently, the Directorate-General of the Commission for Humanitarian Aid is often encroached upon by parts of the EEAS's crisis management structures, challenging the principle of the independence and neutrality of humanitarian aid.

All too often, coordination is seen as a zero-sum game, and can degenerate into turf wars. Coordination of policy can lead to more effective policies all round, to the advantage of all involved, without

7 EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND HIGH REPRESENTATIVE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY POLICY, *Joint Communication on a Partnership for a Shared Prosperity and Democracy in the Mediterranean*, 8 March 2011; "A new response to a changing neighbourhood", COM(2011) 303, 25 May 2011.

implying that traditional community policies like trade, development or climate should be subordinated to foreign policy objectives. What is important is getting the overall package right. Inter-institutional coordination for the sake of more ‘joined-up’ policies requires not just inventiveness and initiative on the part of the EEAS; the other institutions, the Commission first, need to put their institutional interests behind them and take the initiative of involving the EEAS at the policy-shaping stage, not just to implement policies or to mediate diplomatically when a crisis occurs.

Coordination over time and continuity of policy was another key area in need of improvement to ensure follow-up on commitments made and initiatives undertaken. The EU has a dense web of institutionalized relations with external countries, where dialogue is maintained by scheduling meetings on a regular basis. Yet at times the regularity and institutionalization of summitry hid the fact that the substance of relations was not up-to-date and dynamic, as US President Barack Obama’s refusal to participate in the EU-US Summit in 2010 reminded the Spanish Presidency of the EU. It was not that relations with the EU were not seen as important to Washington, but that there was no need to meet if the agenda was not sufficiently dense and relevant.

The Lisbon Treaty made the President of the European Council responsible for representing the EU internationally at his level, with the President of the Commission responsible for areas of competence of the Commission. But the preparation of the summits has been transferred from the rotating presidency to the EEAS. A large part of EEAS energy and resources has been dedicated precisely to this task. These provisions provide continuity of representation over time for the EU, making sure that third countries have recognizable interlocutors. Similarly, the EEAS’s role in preparing the agenda for summits and ensuring follow-up after each summit has already produced some improvements. The only European Council meeting dedicated to foreign policy since the new post-Lisbon system was put into place yielded little substance, but some guidelines for coordination and consistency.<sup>8</sup>

Coordination on the ground through the new and enhanced EU Delegations represents one area which could revolutionize EU

8 EUROPEAN COUNCIL, ‘Annex I. Internal arrangements to improve the European Union’s External Policy’, *European Council 16 September Conclusions*, EUCO 21/1/10, REV 1, CO EUR 16, CONCL 3, Brussels, 12 October 2010.

foreign policy from the periphery. For a third country, to have a single interlocutor dealing not just with trade and aid, but also with security, diplomacy, and all the other aspects of EU external action can provide real added value. EU Delegations are now tasked with coordinating the positions of the member state embassies on the ground. While the success of this transition to a more united EU position on the ground varies from country to country, most observers regard the process of change as positive (see section 5 of this paper).

Coordination with the foreign ministers in the Foreign Affairs Council has seen many improvements. Over time, the foreign ministers have been more accepting of the need to take a back seat, especially if compared to the first weeks of the EEAS, when the EU cacophony was most audible, with the foreign ministers and prime ministers exploiting every possible opportunity to position themselves in the media, especially in reacting to the upheavals in North Africa and the Middle East. Now, EU coordination in the preparation of statements is far more consensus-building in nature. The FAC meetings are also more smoothly and successfully run, even if there are complaints over the tardy distribution of documents and over the meeting agendas being too long. Having permanent Chairs of the CFSP Working Groups and of the Political and Security Committee has also played a part in creating an environment which is more conducive to consensus.

But mutual trust remains to be built. The foreign ministers have not refrained from producing public ‘alternative’ proposals or letters on how foreign policy can be improved.<sup>9</sup> Despite reassurances that these efforts are supposed to be constructive, in Brussels these initiatives are perceived to mine the ground on which the HR/VP and the EEAS are standing. The simple fact that they have occurred without involving the EEAS and the HR/VP, and without involving all member states, suggests that EU and national foreign policies and diplomacies are not sufficiently integrated. On the other hand, little initiative has been forthcoming from the EEAS, which has caused frustration and a vacuum filled by coalitions of member states.

9 Joint letter from the Foreign Ministers of Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland and Sweden to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Catherine Ashton, 8 December 2011; Final Report of the Future of Europe Group of the Foreign Ministers of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Spain, 17 September 2012.

That said, High Representative Catherine Ashton has been encouraging innovative thinking in some areas, such as by putting on the table discussions on horizontal topics which are usually not the bread-and-butter issues of international diplomacy, such as energy or natural resources management. The informal meetings of foreign ministers in the ‘Gymnich’ format could play a more important role in addressing the key areas in which the member states do not see eye to eye, rather than those areas in which consensus is more easily reached, and give the foreign ministers a greater say in shaping policy. They could also provide an informal venue for discussing initiatives which may be proposed by one or a group of member states but which should need leadership from the EEAS to fly.



3



### 3. Catch-22: The leadership conundrum

One requirement for the EEAS to be able to coordinate is the willingness of others to be coordinated. Coordination and leadership should not be alternatives. The second requires the first, and the first should lead to the second, unless one supports a minimalist EEAS as a secretariat for the member states.

The HR/VP and the EEAS were not endowed with leadership and authoritativeness. On the contrary, the member states were inclined to play down the role of the new body when making the decisions to implement the Lisbon Treaty and set up the new Service. There was no blueprint for the creation of the EEAS. The short period of time in which its structure was devised showed the extent to which this new body was to be born in the midst of turf battles. Pre-emptive attacks against the choice of the High Representatives have poisoned the context, excessively personalizing a broader debate on EU foreign policy which has existed at least since the Maastricht Treaty created the Common Foreign and Security Policy in 1992.

Since its creation, the EEAS has had an uphill struggle to demonstrate its relevance and added value; its leadership is still in the making. The trick intrinsic to the creation of the EEAS was to ensure that all parties, the Council, the Commission and the member states were included. 'Ownership' on the part of the member states was supposed to be a creative way to overcome the traditional debate between federalism and intergovernmentalism. Unable to overcome the resilience of the role of member states in foreign policy, the EEAS tries to include them. But so far, member state 'ownership' has overly focused on staffing issues rather than on the virtuous circles and synergies that such a merger could generate.

European capitals have been ambiguous towards the EEAS and the HR/VP. Official positions of the member states suggest that there is a gap between the expectations from the EEAS and its actual delivery, which is at the heart of the leadership conundrum. Member states argue that the EEAS already has the means and the commitment: it is expected to deliver on coordination. They also recognize that some achievements have been made, in civilian and military crisis management structures for instance, and especially with the Delegations.

At the same time, member states do not want to grant the HR/VP or the EEAS much room for manoeuvre. For instance, they claim that they support the HR/VP speaking on behalf of the Union – but only once the green light has been given by the member states. In itself, this is an achievement. When the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions broke out, for example, foreign ministers and prime ministers raced to seize the media opportunity to be the first to respond to those eventful days. The lesson learnt has been that this cacophony of voices backlashed against Europe as a whole and that the first response should come from the HR/VP. Many foreign ministers have agreed on the need to take a step back where public diplomacy is concerned, in favour of a single message coming from Brussels. However, because such a message should only emerge following consultation with the 27, the HR/VP is then criticized for not responding in a timely enough fashion. So far, the HR/VP has not been entrusted with the flexibility to react to events without doing the phone call round of the capitals, nor has she felt that the time was ripe to test her room for manoeuvre in this area.

When scratching beneath the surface, diverse attitudes towards the EEAS emerge which undermine its ability to develop a more centralized and effective leadership. First of all, all capitals emphasize the need for the EEAS to be ‘complementary’ to national diplomacies. Even the most committed, such as Germany or Italy, see the prospect of the transfer of certain functions or tasks as not being imminent and more burden-sharing as problematic. No member state is planning to shift the balance in foreign policy-making towards the EEAS. On the contrary, most claim to be waiting for the EEAS to prove its added value before contemplating its strengthening.

Some member states use alibis to justify this position, arguing that *other* countries are less committed to European integration. Many fear that foreign policy is nationalizing, while at the same time expecting EU foreign policy to become more important. Fears about the rise of national interests in commercial diplomacy or intra-EU competition

for hard and soft assets, such as resources and visibility, have eroded trust between member states. Many are sceptical because of what they perceive as too strong an influence of Britain, France and Germany on the EEAS and in particular on the HR/VP. Some even see the HR/VP as a Trojan horse for British interests. Leadership by the big three (or five or six, for that matter) is a sensitive question for reasons related to the history and national identity of the smaller European countries. These perceptions have all been feeding into foreign policy-making.

There is much ambivalence towards the 'big three', seen in the other capitals at one time as obstacles, often blocking or hampering common foreign policy and the development of the Service, but also as the most important enablers of EU foreign policy initiatives. It is well-known that they often disagree on matters of foreign and security policy and, if they do reach agreement, it is usually something that most if not all member states can go along with. However, other member states feel strongly about their right to be involved and consulted. 'The big three' have better access to the EEAS and more influence on agenda-setting and preparation of decisions thanks to the practice of including them in consultations in an early phase of the policy-making process, before the formal involvement of member states.<sup>10</sup> Their leadership is to some extent inevitable because of their resources and global outreach. They are the most likely countries to have a position on most international issues, unlike some of the smaller member states. But such leadership would not be accepted without structures and practices that involve the smaller ones.

The constellations of leadership, influence, and initiative in foreign policy are changing, however. In many respects, the so-called 'big three' were always more of a perception than a reality, and are certainly not a block. In the past, France appreciated its security cooperation with Britain also to counter-balance the Franco-German axis. That way, France maintained its key role in both economic and political-foreign policy issues. This French-British *entente* was recently reiterated through the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya, from which Germany abstained. Yet, with London's increasing detachment from the EU, this alliance may not have positive repercussions on European integration and may remain limited to intergovernmental cooperation.

<sup>10</sup> S. LEHNE, *The Big Three in EU Foreign Policy*, The Carnegie Papers, Carnegie Europe, Brussels, July 2012.

Germany's role in EU foreign policy is also showing signs of change, moving away from the traditional civilian power model which has characterized its entire post-World War Two history. That said, the leadership 'maps' in economic and international issues still do not overlap: Berlin is still far from driving foreign policy. Beyond the so-called 'big three' there are other European countries keen for the EU to punch at least at its weight, if not above, which are not part of the traditional inner core of European integration, such as Sweden and Poland. Furthermore, member states and coalitions of member states can emerge and vary according to the issue at stake. In other words, there is no enduring group of countries which could play a stronger role for EU foreign policy, and more 'variable geometry' is a possible scenario. The challenge for the HR/VP and the EEAS is to channel this foreign policy energy into EU policy.

This fragmentation of leadership is counterbalanced by another trend. Whatever the limits to European cooperation and brakes on further integration in the foreign policy field, the 'habit of cooperation'<sup>11</sup> has proved resilient, although not always translating to a 'coordination reflex'.<sup>12</sup> The story of the former French President Nicolas Sarkozy's Union for the Mediterranean showed that the attempt to sideline the EU in favour of a broader institutional set-up was not possible. Not only did like-minded countries on Mediterranean issues (such as Spain and Italy) not appreciate undermining existing EU policies, but Northern EU member states also preferred to ensure that European policies towards that region remain firmly anchored to EU institutions and structures.

The following year, when Sweden and Poland proposed the Eastern Partnership, they appeared to have drawn some lessons from France's experience: the Eastern Partnership was developed together with the Commission, thus Sweden and Poland successfully 'uploaded' their national preferences to the EU by strengthening its relations with Eastern Europe and without fostering divisive politics. Other recent examples in which the EU member states resorted to cooperation include the Balkans, Iran, and partially Syria. In the Sahel, Somalia, and the Horn of Africa, a mix of interests and opportunities made all capitals, including London, consider the EU

11 H WALLACE, 'Analysing and Explaining Policies', in H WALLACE, & W WALLACE (eds), *Policy-Making in the European Union*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000, pp. 65–81.

12 K GLARBO, 'Wide-awake diplomacy: reconstructing the common foreign and security policy of the European Union', *Journal of European Public Policy* 6:4, 1999, pp. 634–51.

the most appropriate level to deal with the challenges there, the limit to the ambitions being that the CSDP missions launched, while comprehensive, are circumscribed in scope and small in size. The real challenge is to overcome the differences in order to work together in the best possible ways and on a broader and deeper range of issues, beyond the smaller areas on which consensus is reached.

So far, the EEAS and the HR/VP have been caught in a Catch-22 situation: their leadership will not be possible so long as the member states are not willing to cede some ground, but without leadership the EEAS will not be able to persuade member states of its value.

Responsibility is a two-way street: modest ambitions for EU foreign policy in the member states and an inability or unwillingness and slowness to adapt to the post-Lisbon situation have meant that a transfer of what can be called a 'leadership capital' from the capitals to Brussels has not occurred.

On the EEAS side, the new structures have yet to produce a compelling vision and relevant tools and strategies to persuade member states to strengthen the centre of this emerging diplomatic system. The EEAS needs to move beyond the aspiration to act as a coordinating secretariat for 27 member states and the EU institutions. Instead, it should position itself as a 'policy entrepreneur', tapping into a network of diplomacies across Europe and around the world to produce leadership from within. Many European diplomats eagerly await such an inspirational role for the EEAS.

Such policy entrepreneurship is to be based on the EEAS acting as a hub, the centre of a network based on knowledge. This requires flows of information and analysis between the Delegations, the Headquarters, the member states and the EU, across and between policy areas and the institutions responsible for them. The EEAS should take the lead in conducting the strategic planning for external relations, not the member states nor the Commission. Initiative from the member states remains valuable, but the EEAS needs to pull together initiatives emerging from the member states to turn them into common policy. Forward-thinking and leadership need to come from the centre.





4



## 4. The EEAS and national diplomacies: Partners or rivals?

The establishment of the EEAS inevitably changes the relationship between EU and national foreign policies, but a new constellation to serve Europe in the world has yet to take shape. There is much potential, and some early experiences of division of labour exercises, burden-sharing arrangements, strategies to avoid duplication, and rationalization of services already exist. On the other hand, there is a tendency to view the EEAS as the 28<sup>th</sup> foreign service, in which case its relationship with the national diplomacies is bound to be one of competition.

So far, neither partnership nor rivalry has become the dominant mode of the relationship. Since its launch, the EEAS has been careful to underline that it does not aim to replace the ministries of foreign affairs of the member states, but is there to bring added value to European diplomacy. Likewise, many member states have been recalling that it is not the purpose of the EEAS to make national diplomacies redundant. The establishment of the EEAS has put the foreign apparatuses of member states on the defensive, to claim their continued primary role in promoting national interests and safeguarding sovereignty. Complementarity has been the keyword to diffuse suspicion among the MFAs and build up the legitimacy of the new actor.

The processes of interaction between the capitals and Brussels, however, are far more complex and cannot be captured by 'complementarity'. In order to fully utilize the potential of the EEAS, the member states should go beyond an emphasis on complementarity and re-think burden-sharing and the division of labour between national and EU-level diplomacy.

There are two levels at which the EEAS can provide added value to national diplomacies and possibly lead to new patterns of burden-sharing. Firstly, the EEAS (and the EU more broadly) provides added value at a political level, through empowerment and a multiplying effect gained by member states through acting together and speaking with one voice. This level is of key importance, since it is essentially about Europe's global role and ability to pursue a common agenda. The political dynamics between EU and national foreign policies include uploading, downloading, offloading and cherry-picking. Secondly, the EEAS is useful at a practical/bureaucratic level by carrying out certain tasks which complement or replace the work of MFAs.

4. 1

#### UPLOADING, DOWNLOADING, OFFLOADING AND CHERRY-PICKING

The relationships between national and European foreign policies can vary from member states 'uploading' their national priorities to Brussels in order to reap the benefits of EU engagement, commitment, financial resources, and size, to 'downloading' preferences and adapting to policy shaped at the EU level. Some member states 'offload' competences to Brussels, unable or unwilling to cover all areas of international relations, and others 'cherry-pick' pragmatically according to views about the best possible gains.

The political added value of common foreign policy is difficult to measure and even more difficult to maximize due to the adherence of member states to national prerogatives and their tendency to cherry-pick. For instance, what does France have to gain from subsuming its relations with the Southern Mediterranean under a common EU policy? How can Germany benefit from prioritizing the EU's Russia policy over bilateral relations? What do member states gain from letting EU delegations speak on their behalf in external countries?

For medium-sized and small member states, uploading national priorities to the EU level has a considerable multiplying potential. Recent examples of member states transforming national goals into EU policies include the initiative to establish the European Institute of Peace, pushed by Sweden, and Poland's active role in offsetting the European Endowment for Democracy. The list of the EU's 'Strategic Partners' includes countries which were firmly pushed by some member states, such as Mexico being backed by Spain. Even if there is the risk of expanding the list of areas the EU should address,

the contributions of member states with different traditions, relations and approaches can enrich EU foreign policy and increase its legitimacy.

The EU has been effectively used as a “power multiplier” also by the big member states, most notably France, which has consistently aimed to upload its foreign policy ambitions to the European level in an effort to remain a powerful global actor. In recent years it has seen itself as the only proactive country among the three largest member states with regard to strengthening EU foreign and security policy, for example being one of the initiators of CSDP missions, especially in Africa. The EEAS itself was based on a German idea.

Apart from promoting national pet projects, the EU counts as a shield or an umbrella, and also as an instrument for seeking positive solutions when dealing with difficult partners and handling crisis situations. For the Baltic countries, it is of great symbolic as well as practical importance that their relations with Russia are part of the broader framework of EU–Russia relations. Slovenia acts through the EU in order to contribute to the stabilization of the Western Balkans. The EU also acted through its High Representative to support Spain in its dispute with Argentina over the expropriation of Spanish Repsol from the Argentinian oil company YPF.

Uploading is not a one-way street, but requires the adjustment of national preferences and views so as to make them acceptable to the Union as a whole. Even when the EU is pragmatically viewed as a means of strengthening national priorities, adaptation processes can occur. The example of the ‘Europeanization’ of the Union for the Mediterranean is a case in point. Furthermore, member states’ positions can be influenced a priori by the EU, and not just ex post facto as with the Eastern Partnership, which showed the adaptation of relatively recent member states such as Sweden and Poland. Germany has been the most adaptive among the big member states and ready to accept further limitations to national sovereignty. Several smaller member states are willing to go along, not least because in practical terms the sovereignty of small states is more limited and they have more to gain from subsuming under common norms and structures.

For most member states, the EU provides a vehicle for a far more global outreach than through the national dimension. Through the EU, countries with a tradition of foreign policies focused on their own neighbourhoods can have relations with further corners of the world. The countries which joined in 2004 moved full circle from not having a foreign policy upon the fall of the Berlin Wall, to having a foreign

policy focused overwhelmingly on joining the EU, to developing policies to deal with their neighbours, and now a global one through the EU. The maps of national and EEAS Delegations worldwide show how the outreach of the EU can provide added value and presence for all member states but a few (see the maps in section 5).

‘Cherry-picking’ is also a common feature of cooperation on foreign policy issues, where member states can view the EU as useful only in certain areas. The United Kingdom (UK) is often sceptical regarding the value of uploading national priorities, fiercely guards its sovereignty in foreign policy, and doubts the ability of the EEAS to increase the leverage of the UK or the EU internationally. However, London sees the EU’s sanctioning regime against Syria, its role in talks with Iran, and its new policies and CSDP missions in the Horn of Africa as conducive to strengthening its own positions. Seen from London, cherry-picking does not necessarily produce those dynamics which make cooperation more of a habit than a case-by-case cost-benefit analysis.

A distinction that matters for (potential) burden-sharing between EU and national diplomacies is that between high-priority areas and low- or non-priority areas. In certain issues of key importance, such as representation in the United Nations or defence-related matters, most member states prefer to limit the EU’s role to the minimum. Relations with the United States are a different kind of high priority where member states compete for the attention of the White House and grudgingly accept the fact that Washington increasingly prefers to deal with Brussels rather than 27 members. In some other high-priority areas, EU backing or empowerment can be very important, but there is no question about the EU replacing national diplomacy – such as relations with Russia and the eastern neighbourhood for the eastern member states.

Not surprisingly, member states have a more relaxed attitude towards allowing a greater role for the EU in non-priority areas, above all geographically remote regions. In issues that have little political salience, the logic of efficiency can be allowed to dominate considerations about the division of labour between the EU and the national level. The challenge, of course, is when the diversity between the member states is such that there is no convergence.

Finally, apart from high and low priorities, there are so-called ‘declaratory priorities’ that are formally high on the agenda, but where member states willingly shift the burden to the EU. This kind of ‘offloading’ can be observed with regard to value-based issues such

as democracy and human rights. Here member states can converge (in so far as the so-called 'values' do not interfere with some key national interests), or can use the EU as a protective shield in those cases in which third parties may not appreciate the EU expressing its concern over such values.

Yet if the EU only moved forward on the marginal foreign policy issues, its level of ambition would be low, as would the incentive for further cooperation. In other words, if the member states are mainly interested in outsourcing to the EU areas of marginal importance, the EU can hardly have more than a marginal role as a global actor. It is the EU's role in key areas, such as in the neighbourhood, in relations with major powers and representation in key multilateral fora that really determines whether the EU can have a stronger global voice.

#### 4. 2

#### RE-STRUCTURING AND RATIONALIZING

There is much work to be done in building up the structures of practical burden-sharing and materializing the potential of the EEAS. With few exceptions (such as Germany and Poland), most member states have made substantial cuts to their budgets for diplomacy since 2009 as a consequence of the economic crisis. Some have also restructured their ministries due to efficiency considerations and/or following changes in governing majorities. None of these changes have been carried out in light of the existence of the EEAS.

Yet, compared to the political benefits of joint action, at the practical level it is easier in principle to estimate and operationalize the added value of the EEAS. National sensitivities and questions related to state sovereignty do pose hurdles also to practical burden-sharing, another obstacle being the self-survival instinct of Ministries of Foreign Affairs (MFAs) as bureaucratic entities. However, the logic of efficiency is compelling especially at times of austerity when foreign services face budgetary pressures and need to rationalize their activity.

Efficiency considerations thus have an important role to play in building up and legitimizing the position of the EEAS vis-à-vis national diplomacies, even if enhanced political commitment to common action remains vulnerable to the limits imposed by intergovernmentalism and national identity. From the viewpoint of rationality and efficiency, there are compelling reasons for transferring at least some of the functions of national diplomacies to the EU

level. Rather than having, say, 15 embassies of EU member states in Baku or 7 in Montevideo, in addition to a delegation of the EU that spends much of its time and resources on coordinating among the member states, would it not make sense to have just one large EU delegation representing the whole Union and limit national missions to a minimum? Rather than having separate national reporting from each hotspot around the world, would it not make sense to rely more on reporting by EU diplomats? And rather than maintaining national consulates in far-away locations, would it not be more efficient to centralize at least some consular services in the EU (providing additional resources were available to cover the labour-intensive costs of consular services)?

This is not how most member states' foreign services see the relationship between national and EU diplomacy in the foreseeable future. The above questions are about as radical as the idea of majority voting in the CFSP or a single EU seat in international organizations. Even those national diplomats who value reporting from the EEAS and support a coordinative role for EU Delegations do not consider that the EEAS could or should replace the work of MFAS. And even those who support the strengthening of the functions of the EEAS are opposed to doing this at the expense of national MFAS. However, as the debate on deepening foreign policy integration is gathering pace, such questions are needed to paint possible horizons and frame the debate on directions to be taken.

For the time being, the broadly shared reluctance of MFAS to even consider a transfer of functions is a major obstacle to the strengthening of EU foreign policy capacity and full utilization of the potential of the EEAS. A common argument of national diplomats is that the EEAS is too weak and too new an institution to be able to take over any tasks from the MFAS. However, it is often the same people who are opposed to concrete steps to strengthen the EEAS, while using the weakness argument as an alibi to resist change.

A similar entrapment characterizes the debate about the resources of the EEAS. The budget and personnel of the EEAS are so limited that the Service is hardly able to take on considerable new functions: in 2012 the administrative budget was €489 million (out of the total EU budget of €147.2 billion), which is at a similar level to the MFAS of Spain and the Netherlands. In terms of personnel, the imbalance is even bigger: with 3,346 employees (June 2012), the EEAS staff is smaller than that of the seven largest foreign services of the member states (the Netherlands being the seventh). At the same time, most



member states are categorically against increasing EEAS resources, referring to the very difficult budgetary constraints at the national level. The possibility of making savings by the transfer of resources from national to European diplomacy has not been seriously discussed (yet).

But there are signs of increasing willingness among the member states to consider the potential economies of scale to be gained through the EEAS, above all by making better use of its network of delegations. This shift is not primarily driven by a principled support for deeper integration, but rather by sheer budgetary pressures. Spain has been closing down embassies and has started to consult with the EEAS in order to manage its cuts; some options of co-location in third countries are beginning to be explored, as are other cost-saving opportunities (see section 5).

From the efficiency perspective, the EEAS is one among many opportunities and solutions for MFAS to 'do more with less', the other options being burden-sharing with partner countries, other national government agencies, non-governmental actors, and so forth. In order to adjust their capacity for global action to a variety of demands of the state, citizens and businesses, MFAS need to engage different stakeholders and re-assess their functions.<sup>13</sup> The EEAS has yet to establish its place in the changing configuration of actors. Unlike the other MFA stakeholders and collaborators, the EEAS actually has the potential to take over some of the core functions of diplomacy, in addition to its potential as an innovative policy entrepreneur operating across sectoral borders. In functional terms, the locus of EEAS added value lies in the Delegations.

13 B HOCKING, J MELISSEN, S RIODRAN & P SHARP, *Future for Diplomacy: Integrative Diplomacy in the 21st Century*, report, Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', October 2012.



5



## 5. EU Delegations: Revolutionizing EU foreign policy in the field?

The work of EU Delegations is one of the most important contributions of the EEAS that is seen to bring tangible added value from the perspective of national diplomacies. The EEAS took over the external service of the Commission that currently consists of 140 Delegations around the world. These are further strengthened by their legal status representing the Union and tasked with coordinating the embassies of the 27 member states on the ground.

This global network is not just implementing external assistance projects and dealing with trade issues, but is the interface of the EU on the ground, having contacts with political, business and civil society actors, and having knowledge of key developments in countries around the world. Third countries thus have a single interlocutor to discuss not just trade and aid, but also political relations, security, energy, natural resources, and migration issues. Staffing in the Delegations has now achieved the aim of including one-third coming from national diplomacies.<sup>14</sup> This has considerably enriched the knowledge, skills and working culture of the Delegations, making them better equipped to become the first interface with third countries. National military attachés are seconded to a few Delegations, such as in New York and in Pakistan. The larger Delegations are also better staffed with officials dealing with cross-cutting issues. As the importance of the Delegations becomes evident to non-European interlocutors, this will feed back not just to the Headquarters in

<sup>14</sup> In fact, nearly 38% of EEAS staff in Delegations at AD level come from the member states, while in Brussels that same percentage is just over 20. Overall, 26.9% of EEAS AD staff come from the member states. See The European External Action Service, Staffing in the EEAS, June 2012.

Brussels but also in the member states. In other words, once Pretoria and Mexico City start knocking on the door of the EU Delegation rather than of the Dutch or Spanish embassies, the importance of the EEAS will become clearer also in the capitals.

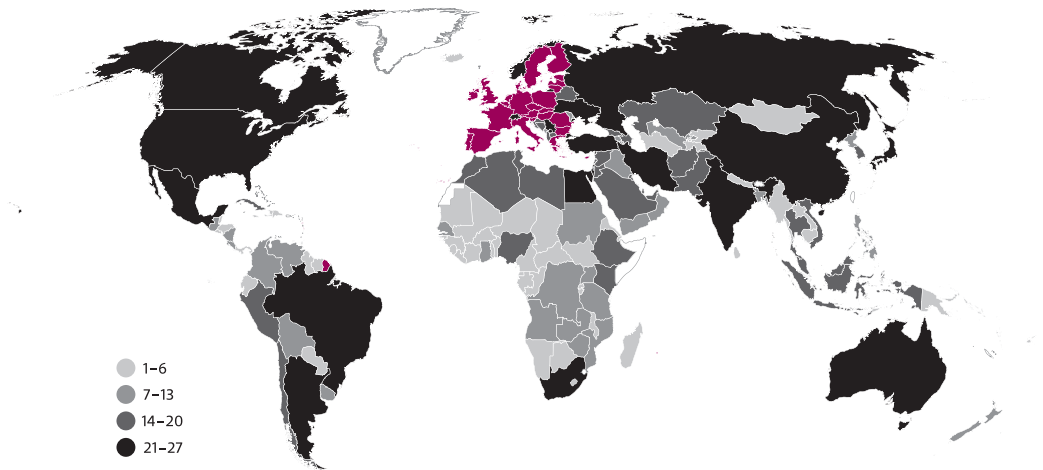
The outreach of the EU's global network is also, per se, an added value. Only France, Germany, Britain, Italy and Spain have more missions abroad than the EU. There are no more than 7 countries in the world where at least 25 member states have an embassy,<sup>15</sup> and cuts in national budgets are forcing member states to make choices about locations and the costs of representation abroad. The maps below indicate the density of national embassies of the member states and the global outreach of EU Delegations.

The early phase of upgrading the EU Delegations has been relatively successful, and in most cases the member states accept the new coordinating role, even if there are important exceptions and considerable variation between locations. The variation is partly due to differences between the Heads of Delegation: their background (Commission, MFA or other), experience and level of initiative. The diplomatic communities are also quite varied according to location, and country of origin, making it difficult to draw generalizations. A new information-sharing system, ACID, introduced recently among embassies and EU Delegations on the ground, is also helping to bring the local diplomatic networks together, providing concrete added value for all member states. It is important to bring the system into full operation globally; this will require additional efforts also from the member states.

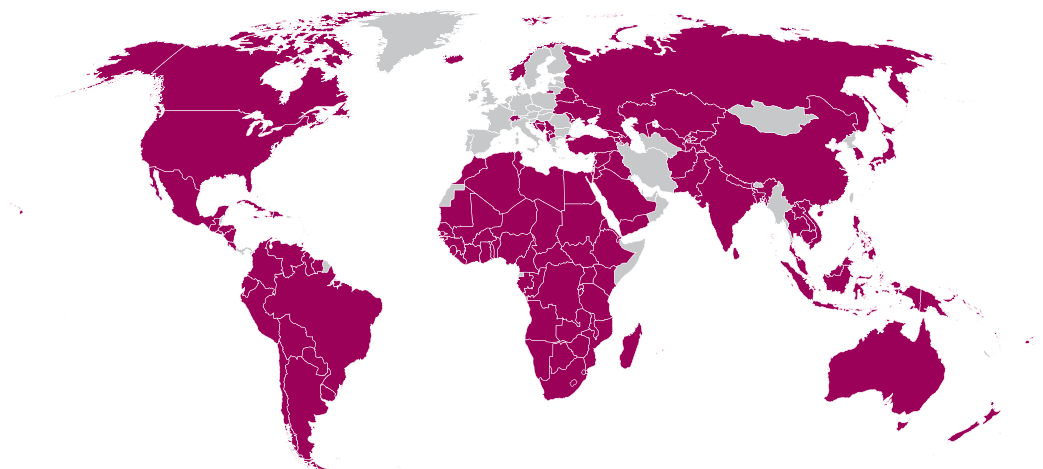
Unsurprisingly, EU coordination and a new representative role has been relatively easy to establish in less important and peripheral locations where member states have fewer political interests at play and where the status and rank of their diplomats is more modest and leaves more room for accepting leadership by EU representatives. The easiest cases are locations where one's own country has no representation. These Delegations provide access and information and can be used as extensions for the conduct of national foreign policy. At the same time, they do not compete with national representations and fit neatly with the principle of EEAS complementarity. But these cases are not limited to peripheral countries. The EU Delegation in Syria was deliberately kept open while member states were closing

<sup>15</sup> China, Egypt, India, Israel, Japan, Russia and the United States.

theirs precisely to have an important antenna in the country, and is reported to be working very well. Altogether, there are 86 countries in the world where less than every fourth member state has a diplomatic representation; an EU Delegation exists in 53 of these. In 115 external countries, less than half of member states are represented; the number of EU Delegations in these countries is 80.



Map 1. The density of EU member states' embassies outside the Union.



Map 2. EU Delegations cover most of the world.  
Maps compiled by Teemu Rantanen.

The most difficult test of the ability of EU Delegations to pull the member states together is posed by the key locations where member states are not likely to give up national representations any time soon, if ever, but where the concerted action of the EU is all the more important for Europe's ability to maintain global relevance and impact. In international organizations the EU continues to be represented in most cases by the rotating presidency – a step back compared to the Lisbon Treaty. The infamous 'UK issue', where the UK blocked EU statements in a number of multilateral bodies because of a disagreement over whether the statements can be launched "on behalf of the EU" or "on behalf of the EU and its member states" until specific rules were defined by the Council in October 2011<sup>16</sup>, did considerable damage to the EU's standing in the multilateral fora and poisoned the atmosphere inside the EU.

In Washington, Beijing, New Delhi, Moscow, Cairo, and Tokyo it is most challenging for the EEAS to be more than the 28th member state. It is also in these locations, where each member state prioritizes national representation and reporting, that the coordinating role of the EEAS is most vital.

Member states hold different views on the desirability of policy initiative and judgment originating from EU Delegations. Some emphasize the role of Brussels and national capitals in defining policy guidelines that have to be implemented in the field, whereas others are willing to give the Delegations more leeway and appreciate policy proposals made by the Delegations on their own initiative.

The EEAS has been too slow in involving the Delegations in policy-shaping. Some national MFAs are concerned about the EU Delegations sometimes representing the Union without having a clear mandate to do so, but the Delegations are also criticized for not being active enough. Faced with such contradictory expectations, they have to gradually build up their role, win trust among the member states and be aware of national sensitivities, while at the same time spending considerable time in their new coordinating role.

Although acknowledging the new role of the EU Delegations, no member state has so far explicitly tied the planning of their national diplomatic network to the existence of the EEAS. Until the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, the prospect of one day having

16 COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, *EU Statements in multilateral organisations – General Arrangements*, 15901/11, Council of the European Union, Brussels, 24 October 2011.



EU Delegations was so uncertain that it played practically no role in national planning. Since the establishment of the EEAS, national needs and constraints have continued to determine relevant debates in the member states. However, the EEAS has started to be taken into consideration in finding ways to manage cuts. If, due to financial constraints or changed priorities, a member state is forced to close down a national embassy in a location where an EU Delegation exists, it can look into ways to compensate for that loss by relying on the EU Delegation for information, contacts and access to local players. On the other hand, if a member state needs to strengthen its contacts and presence in a location where there is no national representation, an EU Delegation can be a helpful stepping stone and facilitator.

There is considerable interest among the member states and in the EEAS in co-location arrangements, notably the possibility of placing national ‘laptop diplomats’ on the premises of EU Delegations. For instance, the UK Ambassador to Morocco, who is also the non-resident Ambassador to Mauritania, is using the EU Delegation in Nouakchott when he travels there. This is a mechanism of practical cooperation rather than true foreign policy integration. The member state that uses the co-location opportunity covers the financial costs and takes care of the practical arrangements as far as possible, so as to minimize the additional administrative burden for the EEAS. The ‘laptop diplomats’ remain purely at the service of their national MFAs, maintaining national loyalties and responsibilities. However, such arrangements can have spillover effects such as fostering closer ties between national and EU diplomats and blurring the boundary between national and EU action.

Another form of burden-sharing is joint embassy premises. Following a British initiative, the EU, the UK, the Netherlands and Germany share a building in Tanzania. The embassy of Luxembourg has been established on the premises of the EU delegation to Ethiopia, and the EEAS and Spain have just agreed on the establishment of the embassy of Spain on the premises of the EU Delegation to Yemen.

The EEAS is not the only partner for national diplomacies seeking co-locations. Several MFAs are engaged in burden-sharing arrangements with partner countries, including both EU member states and outsiders. The Nordic countries have a particularly rich experience of burden-sharing, with close to 30 co-location arrangements currently in place (mostly among two countries), notably involving EU outsiders Norway and Iceland, with new ones being planned. In addition, the UK has just reached an agreement to share locations with Canada

in Commonwealth countries. In the future, with the strengthening of the EEAS, the latter should become the key partner for MFAs in establishing new co-locations and other burden-sharing arrangements, simply because EU Delegations can provide better access and outreach on the ground than most embassies of the member states.

One area where there is vast potential for burden-sharing and a strong interest among some member states (most notably the Benelux and Baltic countries, but also Finland and some other smaller countries) in developing EEAS capacity is consular services. Currently, the EEAS is examining what coordination could be achieved in the consular aspects of crisis evacuation. However, without significant additional resources, which are not to be expected in the foreseeable future, any consular work would be to the detriment of policy and political work. The Delegations already complain of being overstretched – additional expectations without offering the means to deliver could work against the consolidation of the EEAS vis-à-vis the member states.

To a certain extent, the strengthening of EU Delegations happens at the expense of the visibility and access of member states' embassies. Strong EU ambassadors can overshadow member states' diplomats. For smaller member states in particular, the system of the rotating presidency offered important opportunities to raise one's profile and visibility. Losing these opportunities is the price to be paid for being part of common representation. Altogether, EU Delegations can offer significant political benefits thanks to common representation and outreach, access to local players, reporting and information-sharing. They also have the potential to rationalize European diplomacy and make it more cost-effective, allowing member states to focus national resources on key national priorities and to rely on the services of the EU network elsewhere.

6



## 6. Building a European foreign policy identity

### 6.1

#### IN SEARCH OF TRUST AND OWNERSHIP

According to the neo-functionalist, Haasian vision of European integration, political adherence and loyalty to common structures would follow from pragmatic cooperation. However, foreign policy is largely believed to be immune to the neo-functionalist logic as it is an area that lies at the heart of national sovereignty. The ability of the EEAS to disprove this assumption and steer foreign policy integration away from rationally motivated cooperation towards a shift of political loyalties is questionable in the short run. Yet in the longer term, this is precisely what the EEAS needs to be able to do: to strengthen the sense of ownership and loyalty on the part of the member states and contribute to a shared foreign policy identity for Europeans that is strengthened alongside national identities.

Building trust and legitimacy among the member states, particularly among national diplomats, is a major challenge. However contradictory and inconclusive the perceptions and attitudes detected in the ministries, some generalizations can be made about little trust, some nostalgia for the rotating presidency, and criticism of the role of the Commission.

Attitudes towards the EEAS<sup>17</sup> seem to differ from their earlier attitudes towards the work of presidency countries and towards the previous DG for External Relations of the Commission. What is more,

<sup>17</sup> This section draws heavily on the many interviews conducted in the MFAs in fourteen member states during 2012 in the framework of the project run jointly by the EPC and FIIA on the EEAS and national diplomacies. Its results will be published in March 2013.

the EEAS and its Head are at times unfavourably compared to their predecessors representing the member states in the Council, notwithstanding the disparity in structures and powers at the disposal of the current and previous HR.

The presidency country used to be seen by MFAs as ‘one of us’, whereas the EEAS is not. Presidencies were perceived as more open to the input and influence of fellow member states, but access to the EEAS, especially to the higher levels of the organization, is more difficult except for the largest member states. This has changed the patterns of uploading. In pre-Lisbon times, member states used to build alliances with the presidency if they wished to promote their priorities on the EU agenda. Nowadays, smaller member states need to build coalitions of like-minded countries in order to make their case to the EEAS. A degree of equality among the member states was guaranteed by rotation: the pet project proposed by one could survive on the transmission belt of the rotating system. The presidencies were also seen as having a different, more diplomatic style of communication. Yet in spite of the nostalgia for the presidency system in the member states, they do value the increased continuity that the EEAS provides.

Not only is the EEAS believed to be less attentive to national sensitivities than the presidencies were, it is also perceived as not safeguarding the common European interest in a similar manner to the Commission. The trust that many member states traditionally have in the Commission has not been transferred to the EEAS.<sup>18</sup> On the contrary, the position of the Commission, or former Commission officials, in the EEAS has been widely criticized for being too influential. The way in which the Commission handled the negotiations on setting up the EEAS and promoted its institutional interests during the transition phase has created bad blood between the Commission and the EEAS, and is seen as detrimental in the national capitals. Furthermore, the Commission’s bureaucratic culture is seen as ill-suited to constitute the core of European diplomatic culture, and former Commission officials are criticized for not having the necessary skills for diplomatic work. The majority of the EEAS staff

<sup>18</sup> It should also be noted here that trust in the Commission has decreased with the economic crisis.

have a background of working in the Commission, which explains the dominance of Commission working culture in the Service.<sup>19</sup>

Some of the sources of distrust can be addressed by the EEAS, some by member states' MFAs, whereas some go beyond the EU's foreign policy and relate to broader problems of European integration and diplomacy at large.

Many member states complain of a lack of transparency and information-sharing as a major problem that has exacerbated suspicions about the three largest member states controlling the agenda, but is not only related to the "big three issue". There have been problems with both the scope and timing of EEAS information-sharing. During the early phase of the EEAS, member states were receiving less information on CFSP-related matters than in pre-Lisbon times. In particular, many member states considered reporting on meetings of the HR/VP with external partners to be inadequate, which raised questions about mandate (the capitals simply do not know whether the HR/VP is acting within the scope of the agreed common line) and sometimes complicated bilateral relations.

As for timing, the practice of distributing relevant documents very close to the meetings (the FAC in particular) was broadly criticized by the member states. Such a practice can be used as a form of power, especially if some member states have been informally involved in the preparation and others not, which is common practice and again favours the larger ones. Limited access by smaller member states to the higher level of EEAS officials underlines this problem, although it is to some extent inevitable – the EEAS leadership simply cannot be in daily contact with all 27 member states. Information-sharing in the other direction, from European capitals to the EEAS, tends to be even more difficult.

On the positive side, informal contacts between the EEAS and MFAs at the lower level are working reasonably well: member states' diplomats are fairly satisfied with the responsiveness and openness of their colleagues in the EEAS when it comes to informal consultations; this goes for both the Headquarters in Brussels and EU Delegations abroad.

19 Initial staff included 2805 people transferred from the Commission (including 1084 local agents) (Source: European External Action Service, *Report by the High Representative to the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission*, 22 December 2011). In comparison, the number of EEAS staff in June 2012 totalled 3346 (European External Action Service, *Staffing in the EEAS*, June 2012).

The substance of what the EEAS has been doing is part of the problem regarding the lack of trust. The Service has been criticized for not preparing decisions and meetings (notably foreign ministers, but also other levels) with sufficient substantive analysis, for not being strategic enough, and not bold enough in taking the initiative. This is partly due to the difficulties of the start-up phase when building up the organization, recruitment of staff and other practicalities inevitably occupied much time, and some improvement has already been acknowledged. But it also ties in with the leadership conundrum discussed above and the difficulties of taking the initiative when surrounded by mistrust.

The MFAs are uneasy with the EEAS as a new actor that competes with them and challenges their traditional role. In spite of assurances that the Service is not meant to replace national MFAs, the latter do have to adjust to the new body and deal with pressures to accept reduced visibility and a lower profile. This poses a challenge at two levels. First, to the extent that the EEAS has the same functions as the MFAs, there is pressure for centralization and rationalization that takes place at the cost of the MFAs. Second, the EEAS poses a more fundamental challenge to the diplomatic system and diplomacy as an institution that regularizes inter-state relations, being a fundamentally new kind of actor on the diplomatic scene that does not fit into the old categories.<sup>20</sup> In this sense, the EEAS is an additional existential challenge to national MFAs that have been struggling with a decline in traditional diplomacy for years.

Finally, the overall mood in the EU and the level of trust that member states have in the Union inevitably spills over to all common institutions, including the EEAS. Since the launch of the EEAS, the rise of euroscepticism and nationalism, decreased trust in the Commission, the strengthened influence of large member states and self-feeding perceptions of re-nationalization have all contributed to a difficult atmosphere for building up the Service. On a positive note, public opinion in most member states is still favourable towards common EU foreign policy, with 64% of the population supporting the idea and just 26% opposing (support for common security and defence policy being even higher, 73% for and 20% against).<sup>21</sup>

20 J. BÁTORA, *Does the European Union Transform the Institution of Diplomacy?* Discussion Papers in Diplomacy, Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', 2003.

21 European Commission, Standard Eurobarometer 78, Autumn 2012.



The rotation of staff between national diplomacies and the EEAS is a key element of the Service and one of the main instruments for ensuring a sense of ownership and trust among member states. It builds on the experience of participation in CFSP institutions, which has functioned as a rather successful tool for the socialization of national diplomats to the EU framework.

There are expectations, in the longer term, that the rotation system of the EEAS will contribute to the strengthening of a European foreign policy identity and the emergence of a supranational diplomatic class. This could balance the intergovernmentalism of common foreign policy, which is oriented towards defending national interests, by strengthening a European mindset and habit of considering broader European interests among national diplomats, despite the variety of national backgrounds, as the experience of CFSP institutions such as the Political and Security Committee or the former Policy Unit of the Council Secretariat shows.<sup>22</sup> The EEAS has the potential to function as an incubator for European diplomats that complements these processes of socialization.

According to the Council Decision establishing the EEAS (Art. 6(9)), national diplomats are to constitute at least one-third of all EEAS diplomatic staff, while permanent officials from the EU should make up at least 60%. As of June 2012, the proportion of national diplomats had reached 27%. So, despite tensions around the recruitment process, the Service is close to reaching the one-third target and completing the staffing marathon, with a reasonably balanced representation of each member state. The next challenges are to integrate the staff from different backgrounds into a common culture and make the rotation work so that there is regular and smooth circulation between Brussels and the national capitals. It would advance the cross-fertilization of European diplomats if the permanent staff of the EEAS could also be rotated to national MFAs, and not just vice versa.

Where the EEAS has so far succeeded is in attracting highly qualified and motivated staff from national diplomacies. There has been stiff competition for posts in the EEAS, indicating a high level of interest among the member states. Promoting their diplomats to the

22 MKD CROSS, 'Building a European Diplomacy: Recruitment and Training to the EEAS', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, vol. 16, issue 4, 2011, pp. 447–464.

EEAS has been a priority for most MFAs, although there is variation as to the intensity of encouraging staff to seek positions in the Service. In spite of the well-known troubles of the transition phase and low morale among EEAS staff, diplomats posted to the Service tend to be highly motivated to make the new structures work smoothly and deliver. The staff transferred from the Commission and Council Secretariat are also very committed to the common EU foreign policy cause, although the same people have been very critical of the early steps of the Service.<sup>23</sup>

Although there have been no formal national quotas, MFAs and even some national parliaments have been keen to keep track of the number of their diplomats in the Service, paying particular attention to high-level posts. Having one's own people in the Service is a way to gain access and control; it helps to ensure that one's national perspective is put in the boiling pot of EU foreign policy at all stages of pre-cooking and cooking. (This is not to say that all member states would stay in active contact with their diplomats once they leave national structures – they do not, in fact.) It is also in the interests of the EEAS to have member state views well-represented in the kitchen. Rotating diplomats from MFAs bring to the service knowledge of national priorities and sensitivities, which is highly valuable for the policy-making process in Brussels and helps to ensure the legitimacy of EU positions and actions in the global arena.

In order to utilize the potential of the highly motivated and professional staff, to draw people from different backgrounds together and maintain the attractiveness of the Service, an investment in creating an *esprit de corps* is essential. The variety of experiences and perspectives of its staff is an asset of the EEAS, but these need to be brought together into a joint pool of skills and a sense of community. A shared working culture should also be consciously reinforced.

Joint training is necessary with a view to realizing all of these goals and needs to be designed in line with the unique nature of the EEAS. Apart from traditional diplomatic skills such as reporting, negotiation and cross-cultural interaction, a special consideration of Europe's place in the world and a European perspective on global problems needs to be nurtured. At the same time, EEAS staff need to be able to confront three different kinds of audiences: not only those external to the EU, but also those of the member states who may view the EU

23 AE JUNCOS & K POMORSKA, paper presented at EUIA Conference, Brussels, 3–5 May 2012.

and its foreign policy with suspicion, and finally those internal to the EU machinery where inter-institutional rivalry is a constant threat to the pursuit of common goals. In addition to passing on specific knowledge and skills, training always has the function of fostering personal ties and networks that are invaluable in later careers. Training should not be limited to skill transfer and improvement, but should aim to create more opportunities for EEAS staff to work with European diplomats. Encouraging the joint participation of EEAS and national diplomats in existing training schemes could also help foster a common diplomatic culture.

Even if the EEAS succeeds in building a strong *esprit de corps* and eventually a new supranational diplomatic class, there is the danger that the Service will remain distant from national foreign policy structures. The number of national diplomats moving from MFAS to the EEAS and back is inevitably small: for example France, which has the highest proportion of staff in the EEAS in comparison with other member states, had sent 31 national diplomats to the Service by June 2012; this is a minuscule number (less than 0.5%) compared to the over 6,700 diplomats working for the French MFA.

It is also far from certain whether strengthening the EEAS, if it happens over the coming years, will contribute to a shared foreign policy identity among the member states. There is much evidence of the Europeanizing impact of Brussels experience at the individual level, be it in the service of national representations or the EU. However, there is no straightforward link between the socialization of individual diplomats to the EU framework, the scale of which has so far been limited, and EU orientation at the level of national foreign policy.

A well-functioning system of rotation between the EEAS and MFAS is one way (though not sufficient in itself) to strengthen such a link and ease the tensions between national and EU foreign policies. It would be in the interests of MFAS and the EEAS alike to make it a norm across the EU that the best and brightest European diplomats serve in the EEAS at some point in their careers. This requires the concerted efforts of the EEAS and MFAS.

From the perspective of MFAS, sending their best people to the EEAS is a double-edged sword: a well-functioning EEAS is in their interests, as it is to be represented by their best. The side effect is that the smaller diplomacies in particular lose out on human resources. From the perspective of human resource management of MFAS, the promotion of staff to the EEAS is therefore not unproblematic, and it makes rotation all the more important.

At the individual level, while the EEAS has been rather attractive for national diplomats, there has been some concern that leaving the MFA can be detrimental to one's career. Fitting the career systems of the EEAS and MFAs together can be a challenge. There are no established patterns as to how the MFAs will grade the experience of their diplomats in the EEAS. Being away from one's home organization always entails the risk of being forgotten and marginalized.

On the other hand, attracting the best and brightest national diplomats back home after EEAS posting can also be a challenge, in particular for countries where material benefits in the national service are considerably lower than those offered by the EU. However, it is not just a matter of money – many diplomats of smaller member states in particular consider work in the EEAS more prestigious and stimulating than in their national MFA.

In order to address these concerns and make the most of the rotation system, MFAs need to make an effort to ensure the smooth return of their people from the EEAS and adequate acknowledgement of their EEAS experience. Once national diplomats return home, MFAs have much to gain from their experience in the EEAS and inside knowledge of the EU.

7



## 7. Conclusions: How to make the most of the post-Lisbon structures

In mid-2013 the High Representative, Catherine Ashton, is due to present her Review of the first two and a half years of the European External Action Service. As part of the process leading up to the Review, the High Representative will convene with the foreign ministers in a Gymnich meeting in March 2013 to discuss achievements, solutions to problems and the way forward to ensure that the EEAS is fully equipped to manage global challenges (and European problems) by the time the next HR/VP assumes office. The Review should also help to avoid making the same mistakes when setting up the next Commission.

This is an opportunity that should not be missed. The EU's wide-ranging toolbox, size, economy, and experience as a unique peace, democracy and development project make it well-qualified to deal with the multidimensional challenges of the present world. It now needs to make sure that it is also equipped with a functioning foreign policy structure to use these assets. These are also needed to manage Europe's global decline.

After a difficult birth, the EEAS needs to become the EU's internal policy generator and worldwide interface for dealing innovatively with global affairs. This means making great improvements in relations with the Commission and with the member states' Ministries of Foreign Affairs. The latter are the focus of this paper.

Both the member states and the EEAS need to take EU foreign policy seriously. The 'complementarity' advocated by the member states is simply too little. Equally, the EEAS should not limit its ambition to areas in which there is consensus between the member states. The intergovernmental nature of EU foreign policy needs to be

overcome by building a sense of shared ownership towards the EEAS among the member states and by working on joined-up and holistic policies. Moreover, the work of the EEAS need not be to the detriment of national foreign policies and diplomacies. Diversity will remain a key feature of the EU, all the more so if it continues to enlarge.

Initiative and forward-thinking from the member states also remain valuable, but the EEAS needs to take charge of strategic planning, be bolder in taking the initiative, and pull together initiatives put forward by the member states to turn them into common policy. Forward-thinking and leadership need to come from the centre.

Greater synergies between the national MFAs and the EEAS would have a positive impact on shaping policy, developing ideas and making strategy. Simultaneously, in light of diminishing resources, cost-cutting and efficiency considerations might not only make savings, but also contribute to legitimizing common foreign policy. Working in tandem, the EEAS and the MFAs have huge potential for strengthening EU foreign policy, including the role of the member states.

Incidentally, the Commission may also find that heeding some of the points below may serve the purpose of strengthening the EU's foreign policy capacity.

#### GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EEAS

- Seize the opportunity offered by the Review. The EEAS should set the stage for the Review by writing its first draft, which identifies the key areas to be addressed, with a short- and long-term view, with practical and visionary elements.
- Make the Review process inclusive and participatory beyond the HR/VP and foreign ministers, within the service, with the member states, and with the European Commission and Parliament. At least one meeting between EU and national Secretaries-General, political directors and managing directors should be dedicated to working towards the Review, on the basis of the EEAS's first draft.
- The Delegations are the crown jewels of the EEAS. Member states have almost unanimously appreciated the increased role and functioning of bilateral Delegations. Contacts and communication between the Delegations and Headquarters in Brussels need to be enhanced with the aim of making the Delegations key shapers of policy. This would provide added value not just for the central level of policy-making, but also for the member states.



- Improve political reporting from the Delegations (across the geographical and thematic board). This would serve the purpose of helping persuade MFAS of the importance of the EEAS, not just because duplicating reporting is neither cost-effective nor useful, but because the EEAS should be capable of outstanding quality of reporting. If member states could rely broadly on general reporting by the EU delegations, this would allow them to focus their own reporting on issues that are nationally sensitive or particularly relevant.
- Build shared ownership through enhanced and regular consultation. Member states need to be consulted and involved regularly, however time-consuming this may be. Transparency, information-sharing, and opinion-gathering need to be systematic. Regular efforts to take into consideration the views of all member states are essential for winning trust among MFAS.
- Devise personnel policies to encourage officials in Brussels to work in the Delegations. This will allow more national diplomats to join the Headquarters, appreciate the work of the service, and improve the general rotation between Brussels, European capitals and the EU's global network.
- Develop an EEAS 'right of initiative'. The long-term objective of the EEAS is to become the 'policy entrepreneur' of the EU, gathering inputs from the member states and the institutions, but relying on its exclusive knowledge and ability to carry out innovative policies to develop new thinking in international relations.
- Foster a shared working culture. In order to utilize the potential of the highly motivated and professional staff, to draw people from different backgrounds together and maintain the attractiveness of the service, an investment in creating an *esprit de corps* is essential.

#### POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MEMBER STATES

- Seize the opportunity offered by the Review to shape the EEAS and EU foreign policy. Enhancing the ability of the institutional structures to make use of the existing foreign policy resources and tools is an essential part of reviving the EU's global approach.
- Member states need to play their part in ensuring commitment to the EEAS. Two years of observing the EEAS should be sufficient time to realize that without political backing it will remain lame. MFAS should end this focus on staffing and concentrate on giving the EEAS the necessary weight to conduct foreign policy and implement its decisions.

- Currently, information-sharing is an unhelpful one-way street. MFAS could start by sharing more information with the EEAS, especially if they expect to continue receiving EEAS information. In doing so, the member states would contribute to building an environment which is more conducive to consensus.
- The HR/VP is overburdened with tasks and cannot be in more than one place at the same time. The foreign ministers can be of help, either by making permanent the current practice of having the foreign minister of the country holding the rotating presidency deputize for CFSP matters, or by electing a deputy or deputies to take over some tasks.
- Those ministries planning budget cuts, embassy closures and restructuring should do so in light of the tasks that the EEAS already carries out. In particular, MFAS should make better use of reporting and representation by the EU Delegations. The EEAS should become the key partner for MFAS in planning co-locations and other burden-sharing arrangements in the field.
- It would be in the interests of MFAS and the EEAS alike to make it a norm across the EU that the best and brightest European diplomats serve in the EEAS at some point in their careers. This requires concerted efforts by the EEAS and MFAS. The latter need to think about providing career paths for their diplomats returning from their period in the EEAS. If rotation needs to be ensured, going to Brussels must be as interesting as returning to the national service.

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# Equipping the European Union for the 21st century

## *National diplomacies, the European External Action Service and the making of EU foreign policy*

Rosa Balfour, European Policy Centre  
Kristi Raik, Finnish Institute of International Affairs

European foreign policy is at a complicated crossroads. The European model is challenged by changing patterns of global power and interdependence, and the economic crisis is producing a backlash on the integration project. National foreign services are under the dual pressure of the economic crisis and an overall decline in the importance of traditional diplomacy, while the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty and the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS) are supposed to stimulate an internal logic towards more EU integration and burden-sharing in foreign policy.

This report asks how to equip European foreign policy for the 21st century. What kind of diplomatic system will be at the service of European foreign policy, forging together EU and national elements? How are the EEAS and national diplomacies going to find a *modus vivendi* and a new division of labour?

The authors argue that the EEAS needs to be at the centre of an emerging EU system of diplomacy, shaping it and not just being shaped by others, and creating a new sense of unity. At the same time, it is essential for the legitimacy and effectiveness of European diplomacy that the EEAS interacts smoothly with national foreign services.