

# TOWARDS A TRUE EU COMMON DIPLOMACY

**Dr. Paula Lamoso González**

*In collaboration with Dr. Ignacio Molina A. de Cienfuegos and Dr. Pol Morillas Bassedas*

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This study has been commissioned by Nacho Sánchez Amor,  
Member of the European Parliament for the Socialist and Democrats  
(S&D Group)



**Nacho  
Sánchez  
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Eurodiputado

**POLÍTICA  
EXTERIOR**

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**Towards a true EU common diplomacy**

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Nacho Sánchez Amor, MEP  
European Parliament, ASP 14G 116  
Rue Wiertz 60, B-1047 Brussels, Belgium  
*nacho.sanchezamor@europarl.europa.eu*

Mel Ravelo Cordoves  
Office of Nacho Sánchez Amor, MEP  
*mel.ravelocordoves@europarl.europa.eu*

**TOWARDS A TRUE EU  
COMMON DIPLOMACY**



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# Preamble

**F**OREIGN policy agendas are inevitably conditioned to the continuous emergence of crisis of different nature worldwide, and the instinctive necessity to react to them. However, this embedded foreign policy reactivity leads to an everlasting bouncing from crisis to crisis restraining our capacities to reflect on its horizontal aspects and instruments, as occurs in the European Union, which is not that much different from the one of its Member States.

The careful analysis of the connections between the European Union's interest and objectives worldwide with the toolbox at its disposal is fundamental to avoid possible inconsistencies in its External Action, whilst at the same time essential to explore how to strengthen it.

Moreover, aside from the internal challenges the Union faces concerning its External Action internal dimension, our traditional soft power is ceasing to be functional. Authoritarian and illiberal systems attempt to jeopardize not only the EU's objectives and interests abroad but also multilateralism and the universality of human rights itself.

In this sense, the EU needs to count with own and permanent instruments in its External Action toolbox to strengthen its capacities and global actorness. The so-called "wishful thinking" is now to be left behind and move towards speaking the language of power, accounting all its elements: grammar, phonology and semantics.

In the words of the High Representative / Vice President, Josep Borrell, Europe "must learn quickly to speak the language of power". However, its exercise demands a clearer and strengthened structure of the EU's



External Action institutional design. What is more, its architecture needs to make the most of its already existing instruments and develop new ones that can complement and fill the gaps of its toolbox. This is a complex endeavour, possibly even more nowadays, as there are “too many faces and too many egos in European foreign policy”, leading again to Kissinger’s dilemma: “who do I call, if I want to call Europe?”.

Our current European Diplomacy architecture is defined by a hybrid nature, a mosaic of temporary personnel loans, which mainly big Member States can afford, and Commission clerks educated in 27 different cultures of external action –one for each Member State, plus the Commission’s–. Moreover, in EU Delegations seems to be certain geographical preferences –Iberians in America, or Frenchs in Africa–, which, despite the experience national diplomats can bring to the EU delegations in these regions, do not seem to reflect a fully-fledged European blueprint.

The conducting of the forenamed reflection has been one of my main objectives and responsibilities as Member of the European Parliament, specifically in the Foreign Affairs Committee, since the beginning of my term in 2019. Since, in my view, there seems to be little reflection on the EU External Action horizontal aspects, I seek to raise this issue for the European Parliament to address it.

Among the outcomes of this arduous endeavour, in a context of an EU Foreign Policy agenda that jumped from Syria to Nagorno-Karabakh, from Libya to Belarus or from Afghanistan to Ukraine, there are the recommendations of this study for a new European Diplomacy from its inception, as well as my proposal to create a European Diplomatic Academy and a stronger EU Cultural Diplomacy.

The creation of the European Diplomatic Academy, which is just a thread of this reflection, found its way through my proposal for a Pilot Project of the European Parliament to be implemented by the European External Action Service (EEAS) in 2021, given the need for our European Diplomacy to have its own diplomats trained, since the very beginning,

in a European perspective. This proposal started its implementation in January 2022, and is going along the right road.

Another two obvious challenges when acting as a global player is the absence of a common European cultural diplomacy and the EU's blindfold in crisis such as in Ukraine and Afghanistan. For the first, the EU needs an image of its own, distinguishable from national pictures, which vehicles our common identity and "European way of life". For the second, we need an automatic mechanism of flow of intelligence from each Member State to the EU concerning foreign and security issues occurring outside the Union. The EU needs to be as well informed as the best informed of the Member States.

To carry this reflection forward for its realization can be harder than we imagine. However, we are aware of the EU's capacities and needs to become a fully-fledged global actor. This study paves the way in this direction, and none of this would have been possible without the authors of this thorough study, as well as my colleagues in the European Parliament Committee for Foreign Affairs, particularly its Chair, David McAllister, and my esteemed colleague Tonino Picula. Moreover, my deepest gratitude to the colleagues of the EEAS, especially for their receptiveness and willingness to receive new ideas.

**Nacho Sánchez Amor**



# Executive Summary

**T**WENTY years ago, under the framework of the Convention on the Future of Europe, EU Member States, together with EU institutions, decided to reconfigure the institutional architecture of the EU external action in order to reinforce its international role. The result? The European External Action Service (EEAS), the only supranational diplomatic body in the world, was created, as well as the post of High Representative / Vice-President (HR/VP). However, ten years since its creation, the EU still lacks a true common diplomacy.

The HR/VP plays a double role: intergovernmental, linked to Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), and supranational, linked to the EU external relations, and, in so doing, it assigns a broad range of tasks. Nevertheless, its real power is its influence over EU external action actors: the President of the EU Commission, the President of the European Council, the various commissioners whose area of action has an external dimension, and the EU Member States. One of the major challenges that the HR/VP faces regarding CFSP is to reach consensus among the different Member States in order to achieve unanimity. Although Member States have a fairly shared perception of our common threats, what is lacking is agreement on the best way to respond, a key element that is clearly complicating the achievement of a true EU common diplomacy. Additionally, in its role of Vice-President of the Commission, another significant challenge of the HR/VP is to have real power to influence direct coordination over the commissioners whose area has an external relations dimension.

The administrative body created to assist the HR/VP in performing its job is the EEAS: an autonomous ministry with headquarters in Brussels and more than 140 delegations all around the world. One of its main strengths, and also one of its main weaknesses, is the hybrid character of its staff: EU officials and member state diplomats. Member state diplomats must continuously rotate and can only stay in Brussels for four, eight or, exceptionally, ten years. This temporal limit for member state diplomats working at the EEAS undermines the development of a true EU common diplomacy. The EEAS would clearly benefit from directly recruiting its own permanent diplomatic staff, particularly those with good skills in areas such as cybersecurity and climate change, where it currently lacks expertise. Although the EEAS has many resources at its disposal, it must use them more strategically and provide EU Member States with a strong sense of purpose.

A constantly shifting staff means the EEAS lacks a sense of an *esprit de corps* and improving this would clearly help to better develop the EU external action goals. Common training for both EU officials and member state diplomats would overcome these weaknesses and is essential in achieving a true EU common diplomacy. Creating an EU Diplomatic Academy would contribute to developing an integrated diplomatic service. It would support national diplomats constantly moving between their diplomatic services and the EEAS in achieving a common purpose. An EU Diplomatic Academy should provide in-person common and medium term training on management and politics for EU member state diplomats and EU officials, as well as others interested in becoming EU diplomats, thus building a strong network. All member state diplomats should also be required to spend a period of time in the EEAS at the beginning of their career, which would help develop better coordination between the different diplomatic services of the Member States and those of the EEAS. An EU Diplomatic Academy would also be essential for providing the necessary training to the permanent diplomatic personnel that the EEAS would eventually recruit directly.

At the same time, the EEAS must make its contributions more evident, particularly in Brussels. Empowering EEAS heads of unit so their

officials can provide real contributions with the research and reports they produce would have a significant impact. The HR/VP and the EEAS should also enhance their role as bridge builder between the CFSP and EU external relations, with a focus on their vital function as strategic planners of the EU external action.

EU delegations are an asset for Member States, as their added value is clear when it comes to fostering relations with third countries and managing EU development aid. Nevertheless, the institutional division between EU Commission officials and EEAS officials within EU delegations should be revisited in order to provide support to all to achieve the best possible outcomes under the leadership of the Head of Delegation. The exchange of information between headquarters in Brussels and EU delegations abroad should be enhanced, and there should be more cooperation between the EEAS and the Commission when designing development policies.

# List of Abbreviations

CDSP: Common Defense and Security Policy

CFSP: Common Foreign and Security Policy

EEAS: European External Action Service

FAC: Foreign Affairs Council

HR/VP: High Representative / Vice-President

TEU: The Treaty on European Union

# List of Interviewees

Interviewee 1: EEAS official

Interviewee 2: EU Delegation official

Interviewee 3: Commission official

Interviewee 4: Former Council official

Interviewee 5: EEAS official 2

Interviewee 6: Commission official 2

Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

Interviewee 8: Member state diplomat





*“This is not a moment to think or act small.  
But a moment for investing in an ambitious Europe”<sup>1</sup>*

— Josep Borrell (HR/VP)

# Introduction

**T**HE European External Action Service (EEAS) is the only supranational diplomatic body in the world. The fact that Member States have decided to create a diplomatic body at supranational level questions the traditional forms of diplomacy, where Member States were the single protagonists. The nature of foreign policy has changed over the course of past decades, mainly because of the process of globalisation that led to an unprecedented interdependence among different countries and regions around the world. It also led to a blurred division between domestic and international politics. Currently, every single internal policy has an external dimension, which is affecting the interinstitutional political dynamics within the EU.

At the same time the global forces have also radically changed from a multipolar world where the EU felt fairly comfortable to one characterised by the confrontation between the US and China and the questioning of the EU core values based on democracy and rule of law.

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1 Speech by HR/VP Josep Borrell at the German Ambassadors Conference on 25 May 2020.

In addition, the EU is losing its power on the international stage at the same speed as its population is decreasing. By 2050, the EU will have lost 50 million of its inhabitants between the ages of 20 and 64, and the total population, including the UK, will stagnate at 500 million (Boussemart, J. M. and Godet, M., 2018).

The current Russian war in Ukraine is again altering the international stage as it simultaneously puts EU foreign policy to the test. Russia is challenging the core values of the EU and threatening the EU project. While the EU is offering a common response, it needs to take a step forward. In words of the HR/VP: “One of the lessons that we have to learn is that more than ever Europe must think strategically about itself, its environment and the world”. Furthermore, Borrell emphasised that it is in this moment that the geopolitical EU is born (Brzozowski, 2022).

Twenty years ago, through the Convention on the Future of Europe (2002–2004) that led to the *non nata* Constitution for Europe, and finally, to the Lisbon Treaty; which came into force in December 2009, Member States and EU institutions understood the necessity of strengthening the EU external action (the sum of CFSP and EU External Relations). To this end, it was decided to merge the post of High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy / Secretary General of the Council and the one of External Relations Commissioner into the same post: High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission (HR/VP). A decision was also taken to create the EEAS, a suprastate diplomatic service. The reconfiguration of the institutional architecture of the EU external action aimed to improve its coherence, consistency, and visibility at the same time that synergy was increasing between the different actors that represent the EU internationally, as well as between the external policies and the external dimension of the internal policies that are within EU competence (Balfour, 2013, p. 63).

Nevertheless, the hybrid character of the EEAS is complicating its development as a strong diplomatic administrative body. It fosters inter-institutional battles, particularly with the Commission, as it feels that with the creation of the EEAS, Member States have taken some of its

powers. Before the Treaty of Lisbon came into force, the Commission was fully in charge of EU External Relations, however, after the EEAS was set up, the Commission lost part of its structure and personnel (DG RELEX), which is now within the remit of the new diplomatic service.

Another consideration is the growing nationalistic and anti-European forces within Member States, which particularly affects EU External Action. The pandemic led Member States to appreciate the necessity of cooperation in order to be more efficient in achieving their collective goals (Hillion, Blockmans and Vimont, 2021, p. 2). Single Member States are unable to respond to global challenges alone. The current Russian war in Ukraine has put the importance of furthering the Europeanisation of EU Member States' diplomatic action and developing an autonomous EU on the international stage at the top of the EU agenda.

Ten years after the HR/VP was nominated and the EEAS began its work, there is still considerable room for improving EU coordination in its external actions in order to develop a true EU common diplomacy. This report aims to reflect on the current institutional architecture of the EU external action by pinpointing its major strengths and weaknesses. It concludes by providing different proposals for developing a true common diplomacy at the EU level.



# I

## **A New Institutional Architecture For EU External Action After Lisbon**

**T**HE Lisbon Treaty brought about a revolution in European Union (EU) external action architecture. As explained earlier, the two major changes were the creation of the post of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission (HR/VP) and the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS), the diplomatic service of the EU. The main purpose behind these changes was to provide EU external action with more coherence, continuity, and visibility in order to share a common voice on the international stage.

However, while the current EU external action institutional design has many strengths, it also has significant weaknesses that limit the impact of the EU on the international stage. The creation of the EEAS has been controversial for the two major EU External Action actors: the Commission and the Member States. The Commission was concerned about the intergubernamentalisation of EU external relations whereas Member States feared the supranalisation of the CFSP. These concerns provoked a sense of mistrust, not only towards the EEAS, but also towards the HR/VP, limiting their success on the international stage (Hillion, Blockmans and Vimont, 2021, p. 10).

## **1. The HR/VP**

Since the Lisbon Treaty's entry into force in December 2009, the HR/VP has been the voice of EU External Action in the global arena and is now the EU representative in every single aspect of its External Action. It was during the Convention on the Future of Europe (2002–2003) that Member States and EU institutions decided to merge the post of High Representative / Secretary General of the Council and that of External Relations Commissioner into the same role: HR/VP, a remit that also includes the role of permanent chair of the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC). The merger of these two functions into one role was contested, as many felt it would be too much work for just one person – especially as in practice, it is three functions in one role. A further weakness is that it is not the only role allowed by the Treaty to represent the EU abroad. The HR/VP shares this prerogative with the President of the European Council with regards to the CFSP, and with the President of the Commission with regards to the external relations.

### **a) Double character: intergovernmental and supranational**

The more intergovernmental or supranational role of HR/VP was the subject of long discussions during the Convention on the Future of Europe, predecessor of the *non nata* Constitution for Europe, and reframed as the current Lisbon Treaty. While the main purpose behind this reconfiguration was to minimise the fragmentation of EU external action, it also ensured the equilibrium between the intergovernmental dimension of the CFSP, part of the Council, and the EU external relations of the Community Pillar, part of the Commission (Gianfrancesco, 2013, p. 740). Additionally, the creation of the HR/VP contributed to interinstitutional balance while also guaranteeing the coherence of EU external action. The role would allow the EU to take advantage of its economic power in the world to better develop its political influence. In short, as it has been very much emphasised, it was essential to ensure that the EU could share a common message on the international stage.

The HR/VP has been assigned a broad range of different tasks that can be summarised in five key areas: initiative and agenda setting; coordination

and consensus building; representing and negotiating power; power of execution; and crisis management (Paul, 2008). Overall, these various tasks can be divided in two different groups: ones that are linked to the CFSP and others that fall under the external relations framework. Article 27.2 of the Lisbon Treaty stresses that “The High Representative shall represent the Union for matters relating to the common foreign and security policy. He shall conduct political dialogue with third parties on the Union’s behalf and shall express the Union’s position in international organisations and at international conferences”.

Within the area of CFSP, the HR/VP has been assigned four main competences. Firstly, the HR/VP yields the power of initiative. This means that he shall contribute by his proposals to the development of this policy (Art. 18.2 TEU). This prerogative is particularly relevant as it allows him to have power to set agendas within CFSP. Nevertheless, as emphasised in Art. 24.1 TEU, the HR/VP shares this power with the Member States. More importantly, HR/VP initiatives can only be successful if Member States decide to support them.

Notwithstanding, the HR/VP enjoys a privileged position as President of the Foreign Affairs Council (Art. 18.3 TEU), as it allows him to guide the discussions and the work of this Council formation to achieve its own goals. This is a clear strength in the hands of the HR/VP as a permanent presidency gives him a considerable amount of power. However, Member States understood it as a weakness, as inevitably the HR/VP together with the EEAS develop their own agenda regarding Council meetings. In a sense, as a member state diplomat explains, the EEAS has effectively become a 28th member state, which creates a sense of mistrust.<sup>2</sup>

In addition, on its own motion or at the request of a member state, the HR/VP also has the prerogative of convening extraordinary Council meetings within 48 hours, or if it is an emergency, within an even shorter period (Art. 30.2 TEU). As well, Art. 15.2 TEU allows the HR/VP to take

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2 Interviewee 8: Member state diplomat



part in the European Council works, which facilitates his influence in shaping the EU international agenda (Paul, 2008, p. 17).

The HR/VP is also in charge of the management and the implementation of the CFSP (Art. 18.2 TEU). When Member States must take a decision for qualified majority voting, in the case that a member state refuses to follow this procedure by declaring vital and stated reasons of national policy, the HR/VP must speak with this specific member state in order to find a solution. If he does not succeed, the Council would then decide by qualified majority voting that, on this matter, the process of decision making will be unanimity (Art. 30.1 TEU).

The HR/VP has also executive powers. The Art. 26.3 TEU stresses that the “common foreign and security policy shall be put into effect by the High Representative and by the Member States, using national and Union resources”. Nevertheless, as the Art. 32 TEU underlines:

“Member States shall consult one another within the European Council and the Council on any matter of foreign and security policy of general interest in order to determine a common approach. Before undertaking any action on the international scene or entering into any commitment which could affect the Union’s interests, each member state shall consult the others within the European Council or the Council. Member States shall ensure, through the convergence of their actions, that the Union is able to assert its interests and values on the international scene. Member States shall show mutual solidarity. When the European Council or the Council has defined a common approach of the Union within the meaning of the first paragraph, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Member States shall coordinate their activities within the Council. The diplomatic missions of the Member States and the European delegations in third countries and at international organisations shall cooperate and shall contribute to formulating and implementing the common approach”.

In TEU Art. 34.2, a particular reference is made to the United Nations Security Council, highlighting that “When the Union has defined a position on a subject which is on the United Nations Security Council agenda, those Member States which sit on the Security Council shall request that the High Representative be invited to present the Union’s position”.

The HR/VP has also the capacity to propose the special representatives of the EU which are nominated by the Council following the qualified majority voting process of decision making. He has also right of initiative in concluding international treaties, which in the CFSP remit, can only be initiated by the HR/VP or, by the Commission when it refers to a supranational policy. In its task of coordinator and consensus builder, the HR/VP is particularly powerful, especially in its role as Head of the Foreign Affairs Council. One of the main tasks of the HR/VP within the CFSP is to forge consensus among Member States. Regarding his coordinating role, TEU Art. 36 confirms that the HR/VP “shall regularly consult the European Parliament on the main aspects and the basic choices of the common foreign and security policy and the common security and defence policy and inform it of how those policies evolve. He shall ensure that the views of the European Parliament are duly taken into consideration. Special representatives may be involved in briefing the European Parliament” (Paul, 2008, p. 18).

In short, the Lisbon Treaty has designated to the HR/VP the tasks of managing, completing and executing the CFSP while also ensuring the implementation of Council and European Council decisions. While the HR/VP is meant to be the cornerstone of EU foreign policy, its margin of manoeuvre depends on the will of the Member States, as the Treaty specifies that the HR/VP “shall contribute by his proposals to the development of that policy, which he shall carry out as mandated by the Council” (Art. 18.2). In practice, this means that the CFSP remains within the Council, and therefore in the hands of Member States. The HR/VP is therefore in charge of implementing the decisions taken by the Council, for which it has several instruments at its disposal: EEAS, EU delegations and EU special representatives (Paul, 2008, p. 19).

Following Art. 42 TEU, the Common Defense and Security Policy (CDSP) is an integral part of the CFSP, providing the EU with the operational capacity of “drawing on civilian and military assets”. In this political area, the HR/VP shares its power of initiative with the Member States and the decision making is by unanimity. Likewise, the HR/VP can suggest the use of national or EU instruments, and is also responsible for crisis management. In this regard, the HR/VP shares responsibility with the Council of making certain that the Political and Security Committee (COPS) carries out its duty to exercise political control and ensure the strategic direction of crisis management operations (Art. 38 TEU).

As Art. 42.1 TEU highlights, the CSDP is an integral part of the CFSP. The different tasks related to civilian and military means include “joint disarmament operations, humanitarian and rescue tasks, military advice and assistance tasks, conflict prevention and peace-keeping tasks, tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making and post-conflict stabilisation” (Art. 43.1 TEU). The European Council adopts the decisions needed in order to establish their scope and objectives, as well as the general conditions for their implementation, while the HR/VP, acting under the authority of the Council and in close and constant contact with the Political and Security Committee ensures the coordination of the civilian and military aspects of these tasks. The fact that the HR/VP places itself in a central position in crisis management is perceived as a step forward in the improvement of both horizontal efficiency and consistency (Paul, 2008, p. 20).

Regarding external relations, the Commission enjoys the exclusive right of initiative (Art. 17.2 TEU), and as a result, the HR/VP in its role of Vice-President of the Commission, is the person that executes this privilege. The HR/VP is also in charge of ensuring consistency of EU external action, as well as coordinating the other aspects of the EU external action (Art. 18.4 TEU) as part of its responsibilities derived from the EU external relations. As such, one of the main tasks of the HR/VP is to support the President of the Commission in coordinating the external dimension of the work of every single EU Commissioner (Von der Leyen, 2019).

Under the Juncker Commission, the meetings with the other commissioners did not experience a proper relevance. However, President Jean-Claude Juncker, together with his Vice-President in charge of external relations, Federica Mogherini, introduced a coordinated approach between the EU external relations and the CFSP (Commission-EEAS). In order to continue with the objective of ensuring the coordination and the coherence between the CFSP and the external action of the EU, the current President of the Commission, Ursula Von der Leyen (2019–2024), has created a permanent group within the Commission called EXCO in order to provide better coordination of EU external relations. In short, the aim of this group is preparing the Commissioners' college meetings. This group is co-chaired by the diplomatic council of the President of the Commission and the Chief of Cabinet of the HR/VP (European Commission, 2019). It is considered absolutely crucial to achieving a more coherent EU external action, as the different Commission DGs working with internal policies can implement initiatives that have a profound impact on EU external action.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the role of co-chair is perceived as a strength and a weakness for the HR/VP, as it is the President of the Commission that leads meeting discussions: a clear example of the major interest the current President of the Commission has in actively controlling the external agenda of the Commission (Helwig, 2019, p. 6).

In short, the HR/VP must perform all the tasks attached to the three significant positions assigned by the Lisbon Treaty. First, as President of the Foreign Affairs Council, the HR/VP must conduct the strategic agenda and the different works of the CFSP. Second, as High Representative of the Council, he has the power to present proposals and initiatives for Member States to discuss, while he represents the EU abroad in order to coordinate the positions of the different Member States previous to consultation of the different committees of the Council and the Political and Security Committee. Third, as Vice-President of the Commission, the HR/VP has the power of initiative in external relations, while he also must coordinate,

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3 Interviewee 3: Commission official

inside the Commission, the external dimension of the supranational policies (Calleja Marazuela, 2014, p. 21). Finally, for the HR/VP to be able to successfully accomplish all these tasks, he must also collaborate with the EEAS, EU delegations abroad and EU special representatives (Paul, 2008).

## **b) HR/VP relations with the EU External Action's different actors**

The HR/VP must work with a broad range of different actors that have a say in EU external action, including the President of the Commission and the President of the European Council, as well as the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Heads of State or Government of the Member States. This needs to be in close cooperation with the College of Commissioners in order to coordinate the external dimension of the EU internal policies. As a result, the HR/VP role has been designated “bridge-builder” (Gianfrancesco, 2013) because the HR/VP must build bridges between the Council and the Commission, as well as with the College of Commissioners.

The main power wielded by HR/VP is to influence other major EU External Action actors. As such, the leadership role is the major strength for the HR/VP if he has the political appetite to explore all possibilities. However, the fact that he must rely on his political instinct in order to be able to fruitfully conduct EU external actions can also be perceived as a weakness of the EU external action system. It is essential to make clear that the margin of manoeuvre for the HR/VP mainly depends on the interest that the President of the European Council and the President of the EU Commission would have in playing an active role in EU external action.

Among his duties, the President of the European Council represents the EU on the international stage within the scope of the CFSP at the level of Heads of State or Government. However, if he decides to be active in this area, there can be overlaps with the HR/VP, as there would be if the President of the Commission decided to play an active role in external relations. Currently, this is precisely what is happening, as the President of the European Council Charles Michel and the President of

the Commission Ursula Von der Leyen both have great interest in the EU external action. Consequently, the job of the HR/VP is more difficult, especially as the HR/VP must also closely collaborate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the country in charge of the rotating presidency of the Council (Bilancia, 2010).

## **2. The European External Action Service**

The EEAS is the *administrative body* created to be at the service of the HR/VP and offer support in achieving its duties. It is directly linked to the HR/VP and even shares its responsibility and political dependence on the Member States (the Council) in CFSP and on the Commission and the European Parliament in the area of external relations. Not only is the EEAS politically controlled by the Member States as they appoint their diplomats to fulfil its highest positions, but also by the Commission and by EU Parliament by way of its co-decision power over the EU budget. As Murdoch and Geys (2014) highlight, as it happens in the case of the HR/VP, for the EEAS to provide major coherence to the EU external action, it has to closely work with the traditional EU external actors, particularly, the Commission and Member States. This is because the success of the EEAS very much depends on the willingness of these actors to work with it as the final decision making relies on them (Merket, 2012, p. 647).

The very first task assigned to the HR/VP was to set up the EEAS. The Lisbon Treaty did not include details of its organisation nor its function. It only stressed that these details would be delivered via a Council decision following a proposal made by the HR/VP after presenting queries to the European Parliament and obtaining prior approval by the Commission (Art. 27.3 TEU). In short, the Lisbon Treaty defines the EEAS as a diplomatic service under the authority of the HR/VP. As in the case of the HR/VP, it has a hybrid character, where its functions linked to the supranational policies (external relations) converge with those linked to intergovernmental policies (CFSP).

This hybrid character, which is even reflected in its physical location between the Council and the Commission, limits the effectiveness of the EEAS. As already noted, both the Council and the Commission have been sceptical of its creation. The Commission has reservations about whether the EEAS can function effectively because it does not consider the EEAS an institution but rather a service, and thus, it should behave as such. In the words of a member state diplomat, the Commission would very much like to have the EEAS within its own structure.<sup>4</sup>

In short, the EEAS is a service at the service of the European Council, the Council, the Commission, and the HR/VP. This is important because it reinforces its capacity to provide a global view of EU External action and contributes to promote its role of coordinator.<sup>5</sup> The EEAS is also not a policy maker. As a former Council official highlights, the EEAS is considered an instrument for EU external action. Its major added value is its EU delegations abroad, particularly if led by a good HR/VP who works together with Member States and the Commission in areas where they exert real power.<sup>6</sup>

As it does not form part of an EU institution, the EEAS is configured as an autonomous body, and therefore, remains independent from the Commission and the Council. Headquartered in Brussels, it is composed of more than 140 delegations representing the world's major diplomatic network. The EEAS is managed by a Secretary General assisted by three Deputy Secretary Generals that deal with economic and global issues, political affairs; defence, security, and crisis management. In charge of providing assistance to the General Secretariat of the Council, to the Commission, and to the diplomatic services of EU Member States, the EEAS ensures the coherence and consistency of EU external action.

Another relevant EEAS task is to design and implement the programmes and financial tools linked to EU external relations. The responsibility for EU development assistance is divided between the

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4 Interviewee 8: Member state diplomat

5 Interviewee 6: Commission official 2

6 Interviewee 4: Former Council official

EEAS and the Commission: the EEAS is responsible for the programming and implementation of EU aid, while the Commission administers the EU budget.

The Lisbon Treaty also established that the EEAS should be composed by personnel from European institutions, in particular from the Commission and the Council. Additionally, after two years, civil servants from the European Parliament can also be transferred to the EEAS, as well as diplomats from Member States. One of the major weaknesses faced when consolidating a strong EU diplomatic service is the fact that member state diplomats are only allowed to work in the EEAS for a maximum of eight, or exceptionally, ten years. This has resulted in a lack of a common administrative diplomatic culture that is restricting the development of a true *esprit de corps* within the EEAS.

As a Commission official notes, while this lack of administrative diplomatic culture is currently understood as a handicap, if used well, it could also be considered an added value. To bring people within the service with distinct views and diverse understandings can provide different viewpoints on issues which contributes to a more global perspective, allowing the EEAS to have a wider understanding of issues. However, EEAS staff need to build a strong *esprit de corps*, a common understanding of EU external threats, and a clear assessment of the main EU external action priorities. Another strength from this mix of personnel is that if it relies on the EEAS capacity to connect its two branches, supranational and intergovernmental, it can, led by the HR/VP, be a more effective instrument to coordinate and to enhance the coherence of EU external action.<sup>7</sup>

A further advantage to this mix of staff is that while Member States bring political knowledge to the EEAS, it is EU officials that bring EU management expertise. As one EEAS official highlighted, diplomats that spend a period of time working in the EEAS enhance their global perspective and build a better understanding of how the EU works,

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<sup>7</sup> Interviewee 3: Commission official



often bringing with them a commitment to collaboration with the EEAS when they return to their national diplomatic services.<sup>8</sup>

Overall, this cross-fertilisation process offers great added value that contributes to building the EU, while also functioning as an EU socialising process among young diplomats. Yet, as an EEAS official notes, the fact that member state diplomats must rotate after a number of years weakens the service, as it lacks permanent diplomatic staff. In addition, this continuous rotation of personnel means that the EEAS must have staff dedicated to continuously recruiting new personnel which generates an immense workload for the EEAS human resources department. The same EEAS official also observes that a further weakness that must be resolved is the fact that some member state diplomats have problems finding an interesting position once they return to their national diplomatic services.<sup>9</sup>

The rotation of staff also implies that EU Member States must guarantee that when these diplomats complete their term within the EEAS, they have a role waiting in their national diplomatic service. In short, that their reincorporation to the national diplomatic services is ensured. This is not the case for EU officials, where personnel transferred from EU institutions to the EEAS do not have the possibility to return to their post of origin. Although changing this would not contribute to strengthening the EEAS *esprit de corps*, it does represent a major weakness in furthering EU external action coordination. During the negotiations that led to the decision to create the EEAS, it was agreed that at least 60% of staff would come from the EU institutions and 33% would come from the national diplomatic services of Member States. Therefore, mobility between EU institutions is not encouraged – and is even discouraged, especially as EU officials' career development within the EEAS is limited, as the majority of management posts are filled by member state diplomats. In this regard, mainly due to the willingness of Member States to fill EEAS management positions, the EU diplomatic

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8 Interviewee 1: EEAS official

9 Interviewee 1: EEAS official

service has a surplus of management posts and a lack of base positions.<sup>10</sup> As a consequence, young EU officials do not want to work in the EEAS and its staff is becoming older and stagnated.<sup>11</sup> Also connected to a lack of a true *esprit de corps* within the EEAS, different sections of the EU external action are divided even physically, for instance, INTCEN and Security and Defence operate in different buildings.<sup>12</sup>

The EEAS staff is composed of five main categories: officials, temporary agents, contract agents, local agents, and seconded national experts, as well as external staff such as trainees and junior professionals. At the end of 2020, these numbered 1,647 officials and temporary agents; 1,091 local agents; 539 contract agents; 472 seconded national experts; 39 junior professionals in delegations; and a further 855 external staff and trainees. In total 2,286 (49.24%) were working at headquarters whereas 2,357 (50.76%) were working at EU delegations and offices around the world.

In addition to EEAS staff in delegations, we must include the 3,771 Commission officials that were also deployed to EU delegations, as well as the percentage of member state diplomats working at the EEAS (35,18%), which fairly meets what is required from the EEAS decision, one third of member state diplomats (EEAS, 2021). In 2019, EU member state diplomats represented 33.37% (EEAS, 2021). Although the required numbers, member state diplomats mainly fill management positions and so the 1/3 quota does not respect a fair distribution between posts at all levels.

When it comes to gender distribution, at the end of 2019, while the ratio was close to equal, 48.65% were women, they held the majority of contract agent (59.37%) and local agent (54.5%) positions. In addition, the majority of women occupied lower-level category roles, more than 65% of AST and AST/SC, whereas they were the minority in AD positions, at fewer than 38%. Despite this, it's important to also note that the representation of women in management positions increased from 17% in 2011 to 27.4% in 2020 (EEAS, 2021).

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10 Interviewee 1: EEAS official

11 Interviewee 8: Member state diplomat

12 Interviewee 3: Commission official

Another element that is closely monitored, even though the recruitment is strictly based on merit, is the nationality of staff (EEAS, 2021). The EEAS pays particular attention to ensuring a balanced recruitment of personnel between Member States that have joined the EEAS prior to 2004 and those that have joined the EEAS in 2004 and later. In 2011, the percentage of EEAS personnel whose nationality was from Member States that joined the EU in 2004 or later was 15%, while by the end of 2020, this figure was 23%. While this represents a higher percentage than the share of Member States post 2004 enlargement within the EU population, which is 20% (EEAS, 2021), it's important to note that the positions they occupy are not well represented in high levels. It's important to note that the positions they occupy, regarding the different levels within EEAS hierarchy, are not well represented in high levels. As an EEAS official stresses, Eastern countries are making significant efforts to offer the EEAS good candidates, including women, in order to fill management positions.<sup>13</sup>

Another feature of the EEAS that can be understood as both a strength and weakness is the amount of resources at its disposal. The EEAS enjoys significant resources in terms of personnel and funding, much more than any member state foreign affairs service. Nevertheless, as a Commission official stresses, the EEAS is not making the most of these. One of the added values of the EEAS is to provide strategic papers with new and interesting ideas. It can introduce debates about different international issues within the Council as member state diplomatic services do not have the capacity in terms of staff or expertise. However, this is only considered positive if Member States perceive the EEAS contributions as useful. In addition, as a former Council official notes, what the EEAS very much lacks is the ability to have strategic debate about what should be considered EU external threats and interests. While the CFSP is meant to be based on values, it also must consider EU interests; and there are quite significant divergences between Member States regarding security issues.<sup>14</sup>

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13 Interviewee 5: EEAS official 2

14 Interviewee 4: Former Council official

As one Commission official points out, currently, the EEAS has evolved into a briefing machine, providing briefings without quality control. If officials do not reflect on the papers they work on, they do not provide added value. One reason for this is that there is no clear distribution of responsibilities. The fact that no one has the ownership of the briefings means that too often, the quality of the documents produced by the EEAS is quite poor.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, this Commission official also highlights that the number of administrative procedures a dossier needs to pass in order to be approved is problematic, particularly when responding to an ongoing crisis. Nevertheless, there is an advantage, as once a common position is reached, it has the full support of 27 Member States and 450 million citizens.<sup>16</sup> This is directly linked to the process of decision making, the unanimity requirement, and the challenges that Member States currently face in taking decisions. It is necessary to stress that the CFSP still requires the full competence of the Member States and if qualified majority voting were introduced in this policy area, the risk would be that Member States that do not agree with the final voting would not participate. This would mean that the decision is not fully embraced by all 27 Member States, thus diluting its strength and affecting the international perception of EU unity. As a consequence, instead of strengthening the system it could weaken it.<sup>17</sup>

Currently, Member States are more politically divided than they have ever been, which highlights another weakness of the CFSP: the above mentioned unanimity requirement. If the EU must always wait for its 27 members to agree on every decision, it risks entering into a sort of motionless situation where Member States are unable to decide. As a member state diplomat and former EEAS official points out, they have introduced themselves into a dynamic of cumbersome organisation that is making the EU lose too much time in decision making. In order to overcome this situation, it would be essential to reintroduce an “obligation of result,” which would require Member States to remain in

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15 Interviewee 6: Commission official 2

16 Interviewee 6: Commission official 2

17 Interviewee 4: Former Council official

the room until a decision is made on the specific issue under discussion. Otherwise, the EU risks being perceived internationally as irrelevant.<sup>18</sup>

In words of a former Council official, a significant weakness is the difference in the perception by members states of how the EU should respond to an international crisis. For instance, Eastern countries have more confidence in the US than the EU for protection against Russian aggression.<sup>19</sup> This is a response to different strategic cultures due to historical reasons, and also to clear differences in the perception of threats due to different geographical placements and historical perspectives. In this context, we can clearly distinguish the North and the East from the West and the South, where countries like France, which are more likely to deploy defence forces, differ Germany or Sweden, which are often more reticent.

The fact that EU External Action is divided among so many different actors can be seen as a major weakness in its ability to achieve and promote a common voice from the EU to the international stage. In order to overcome this challenge, EU actors must be absolutely coordinated. At the forefront of this coordinating strategy are the HR/VP and the EEAS. The HR/VP must have the trust and cooperation of the Member States and EU institutions, particularly the President of the European Council and the President of the Commission in order to properly perform its function. Since the Treaty of Lisbon has come into force, the EU Parliament has become a more relevant external action player. As Wisniewski (2013) notes, it has taken advantage of the intra-institutional dynamics within the EU political system, during the EEAS process of configuration, in order to obtain even more external action institutional powers than those already established in the Lisbon Treaty. The European Parliament was supposed to play a secondary role in the process of configuration of the EEAS but, through its power wielded via control over the EU budget, it is now one of the most

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18 Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

19 Interviewee 4: Former Council official

influential actors, even being able to veto any final decision (Raube, 2015; Morillas, 2014).

As has already been highlighted, and further noted by a Commission official, the fact that the President of the European Council and the President of the Commission want to respond to international issues, to travel to third countries and to have high visibility abroad both highly affects and limits the political capital and the margin of manoeuvre of the HR/VP,<sup>20</sup> not to mention additional coordination challenges that could arise. The actions and agendas of the President of the Commission, the President of the European Council and the Member States should be led and coordinated by the HR/VP together with the EEAS. Only then will the EU fulfil its purpose of sharing a single, unified message to the global stage.<sup>21</sup>

Another aspect that is limiting the power of the HR/VP is that the current President of the Commission has undermined the influence of all of the Vice-Presidents of the Commission. The current President of the Commission decides what is included in the college agenda in an autonomous way, as she communicates directly with the different Commissioners without having to consult with the specific Vice-President who coordinates the related area of action.<sup>22</sup> All of these factors, in addition to larger Member States' strong interest in conducting their own foreign policy, serve to limit the power of the HR/VP.

The HR/VP and the EEAS must also resolve another challenge, to get full backing from all 27 Member States. As one member state diplomat and former EEAS official stressed, for the HR/VP and the EEAS to be successful, they must have the support of the Member States, and be more ambitious in moving ahead. Some Member States have lost enthusiasm for seconding the EEAS, particularly the Eastern and Central Member States, as they do not feel well represented among its staff.<sup>23</sup>

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20 Interviewee 6: Commission official 2

21 Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

22 Interviewee 6: Commission official 2

23 Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

The HR/VP, together with the EEAS, define the EEAS strategic planning, primarily to design development cooperation programming for all regions worldwide. However, as it is accountable to EU Parliament, the Commission administers the budget and manages its implementation. Therefore, in practice, the Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development has authority over the entire programming process. Obviously, those that administer the budget have an influence on it, even if significant decisions are taken at the Council level and the HR/VP has a foot in both branches.<sup>24</sup> In this regard, it is relevant to stress that the Commission keeps inside its structure senior staff that can influence the overall programming cycle.

Development aid is one of the most important areas of EU External Action. The influence that the EU has in the world very much depends on the money it spends helping third-world countries. EU power in this area is divided between the Commission and the EEAS in terms of strategic planning and programming. With the creation of the EEAS, the main goal in this area was to link EU development aid with the objectives of the CFSP, making it more coherent and efficient, which is why the programming and management cycle was settled within the EEAS. However, as the budget administration would remain within the Commission, a weakness was introduced within the process –even though the HR/VP, as part of the Commission, plays a key role (Tannous, 2013, 343–344).

Finally, another important weakness of the EEAS is the interest in asserting influence from Member States and other institutions, where concerns focus on autonomy and control applied from the Member States (Kostanyan & Orbie, 2013; Furness, 2013; Kostanyan, 2016). Furness (2013) was the first to analyse EEAS autonomy, stressing that the control mechanism designed by Member States limits the margin for manoeuvre of this new body. He also asserts that Member States have kept some capabilities which overlap the prerogatives of the EEAS and, as a consequence, limit its power, at least, in the short term.

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24 Interviewee 4: Former Council official

However, Furness (2013) also established that the EEAS would have the chance to increase its autonomy in the longer term. To this end, Morillas (2020) highlights the high level of autonomy enjoyed by the EEAS and the HR/VP regarding the policy-making process of the EU Global Strategy, while Kostanyan (2016) also analysed the EEAS through the lens of the principal agent, concluding that it enjoys very limited autonomy. Henökl & Trondal (2015) have also looked at the autonomy of the EEAS by examining the level of independence of its staff. The inclusion of large numbers of member state diplomats within the EEAS can also be understood as a major weakness if they do not develop a true *esprit de corps*, as it could happen that these national diplomats defend their country's interests instead of EU interests. This risk is augmented within EU delegations where Member States would be tempted to more closely control their interests by appointing national diplomats in key posts.

The control exercised by Member States over the EEAS could also be considered further weakness of EU common diplomacy. Member States retain important decision-making powers within the Foreign Affairs Council and within the Political and Security Committee. In addition, they second national experts within the EEAS and fill its highest positions with national diplomats both at headquarters and in delegations.<sup>25</sup> As a member state diplomat notes, Member States sense they are not equal, that the EEAS mainly listens to the two largest Member States, France and Germany, as they always have a stronger position than the other Member States on foreign policy.<sup>26</sup>

The Commission also attempts to keep the EEAS under its control through the retention of competencies, the administration of budget, and the inclusion of Commission staff within EU delegations. The European Parliament also aims to apply some control mechanisms through its budget co-decision power regarding the external relations budget and EEAS staff regulations, as well as through the nomination of EU heads of delegations. A significant weakness of the EEAS in getting backing from Member States, as a member state diplomat and former EEAS official

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25 Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

26 Interviewee 8: Member state diplomat



strongly noted, this is due to the fact that the EEAS has been unable to determine its exact added value.<sup>27</sup>

The HR/VP as head of the EEAS has also the responsibility of providing the necessary training to its staff related to supranational and national diplomatic practices. To this end, the creation of a Diplomatic Academy formed part of discussions during the Convention on the Future of Europe, but finally, it was not included in the Lisbon Treaty (Guinea Llorente, 2010).

During the Convention on the Future of Europe, the member of the European Parliament Íñigo Méndez de Vigo highlighted the necessity of creating an EU Diplomatic Academy. He suggested training would function as a very effective tool in building personal relations between the different EU External Action actors while promoting a better understanding between the different national backgrounds and interests, essential to creating “a common European strategic and administrative culture” and a “spécificité du métier diplomatique européen” (Méndez de Vigo, 2002, p. 6).

Before the Lisbon Treaty came into force, the European Parliament also asked for the creation of an EU Diplomatic Academy in order to provide a harmonised curriculum to EU member state diplomats and EU officials focused on external action (European Parliament, 2009, p. 14). In May 2010, in its final report to the European Council, the Reflection Group on the Future of Europe 2030 called for an EU Diplomatic Academy in order to help develop a common diplomatic culture. However, the Council Decision of July 2010 only mentions in Article 6 that “[s]teps shall be taken in order to provide EEAS staff with adequate common training, building in particular on existing practices and structures at national and Union level” (Council Decision, 2010).

In 2020, the EEAS made two major changes on training. Firstly, it readapted its training programme to the COVID situation and, secondly, it launched four roadmaps for training: assistants to delegation heads; budget, contract and finance assistants; political officers and diplomats; and newly appointed managers. The training maps, which were first launched in 2019,

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27 Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

are implemented to ease career planning for EEAS staff and consist of a set of minimum skills and knowledge that EEAS staff must obtain immediately before or soon after moving to another job profile. The training maps also contribute to creating an *esprit de corps* within the EEAS, while fostering career development and mobility. Nevertheless, to be truly useful, the EEAS must clearly align its training with current diplomatic affairs.

The EEAS must also put in action further training programmes, such as the diplomatic training secondment programme, which provides junior diplomats with a better understanding of CFSP and EEAS working methods, as well as the EU decision making process. Another recently launched programme is the “Toolkit 4 Programming,” which offers EEAS diplomats a political dimension for its external programmes. With the Commission, the EEAS has also organised several other courses.

There are also several programmes for personnel exchanges such as, for instance, the diplomatic exchange and secondment programme, which takes place between EEAS officials and diplomats from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Member States. These would last for two, or exceptionally, three years, and should be simultaneous and reciprocal, involving officials of equivalent level.

Training is a key element in the development of an *esprit de corps* within an organisation, and here the EEAS has several weaknesses. Although the EEAS has been working on providing various training options for EEAS officials, as an EU delegation official observes, there is a lack of continuous and systematic formative programmes within the EEAS, particularly, when it comes to in-person team meetings in Brussels.<sup>28</sup> As one member state diplomat and former EEAS official highlights, such trainings are essential for member state diplomats seconded to the EEAS, as they have very little knowledge about how the EU works.<sup>29</sup> In words of an EEAS official, EU diplomats have almost no training in management, so they are very interested in these types of courses when they are in the EEAS.<sup>30</sup> At the very

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28 Interviewee 2: EU Delegation official

29 Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

30 Interviewee 1: EEAS official

least, they should have access to introductory management training before they start working in the EEAS.

To this end, Henökl (2015) conducted a behavioural analysis of EEAS decision-making, which stressed that the origin of the EEAS has affected its administrative decisional behaviour as the national diplomats were introduced in the EEAS too quickly and without being properly trained, particularly with regards to management. As an EU delegation official underlines, even if there is a training programme that EEAS staff has to follow before being deployed in an EU delegation, it only lasts for one week. Therefore, these training programmes are inadequate in terms of duration and content. The EEAS lacks a permanent training programme designed specifically for each role would perform, whether it is within political section, a communication official, etc. It would include an introduction to the delegation, including its aims and how these are achieved, as well as background and preparation for various tactical situations.<sup>31</sup>

Of even more relevance would be to offer opportunities to connect with people doing the same job in other delegations, also important for those nominated as head of the delegation. EU delegations are quite different from one another, depending on what specific Commission policies are of special relevance in each country and these EU policies are essential as they strengthen the EU presence abroad. Therefore, a specific training programme on EU core policies would offer much added value, particularly for the member state diplomats.<sup>32</sup> Finally, a language training programme could address a further EU diplomatic weakness raised by a Commission official: EEAS staff deployed in EU delegations often do not have proper knowledge of the language of the country in which they are working.<sup>33</sup>

Although the decision on the creation of the EEAS clearly defines its composition, tasks and budget, its political mandate is more ambiguous according to it. The European Council has not provided the EEAS with any clear strategy to determine what its mission is. There is no mention

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31 Interviewee 2: EU Delegation official

32 Interviewee 2: EU Delegation official

33 Interviewee 3: Commission official

of the role of the EEAS in pursuing EU strategic objectives in either the 2016 EU Global Strategy or its follow-up implementation reports (Hillion, Blockmans and Vimont, 2021, p. 4).

### **3. The EU Delegations**

As we have already highlighted, in addition to its headquarters in Brussels, the EEAS also has more than 140 EU delegations based in third countries and in different international organisations. EU delegations are directed by a Head of Delegation who works under the authority of the HR/VP and, therefore the EEAS. EU delegations are part of the EEAS, forming part of the external administration of the EU. They represent the EU abroad and implement EU External Action policies.

As Art. 221.2 TFEU stresses “[European] Union delegations shall be placed under the authority of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. They shall act in close cooperation with Member States’ diplomatic and consular missions”. The Head of the Delegation is therefore the EU representative in the third country or the international organisation where the EU delegation is based. The main task of EU delegations is to provide information and to coordinate the diplomatic services of EU countries. The EU delegations report directly to the Secretary-General of the EEAS, as (s)he is responsible for its financial and administrative evaluation.

Following Art. 5 of the Council decision for establishing the EEAS:

“Each Union Delegation shall be placed under the authority of a Head of Delegation. The Head of Delegation shall have authority over all staff in the delegation, whatever their status, and for all its activities. He/she shall be accountable to the High Representative for the overall management of the work of the delegation and for ensuring the coordination of all actions of the Union. Staff in delegations shall comprise EEAS staff and, where appropriate for the implementation of the Union budget and Union policies other than those under the remit of the EEAS, Commission staff.

3. The Head of Delegation shall receive instructions from the High Representative and the EEAS, and shall be responsible for their execution. In areas where the Commission exercises the powers conferred upon it by the Treaties, the Commission may, in accordance with Article 221(2) TFEU, also issue instructions to delegations, which shall be executed under the overall responsibility of the Head of Delegation. 4. The Head of Delegation shall implement operational credits in relation to the Union's projects in the corresponding third country, where sub-delegated by the Commission, in accordance with the Financial Regulation”.

EU delegations are composed of staff from the EEAS who work on Foreign Policy. Moreover, in the countries where EU delegations manage development aid or where they execute supranational policies, EU delegations will necessarily include staff from the Commission. In this case, it is the Commission that issues instructions to its staff, even though they must also follow instructions from the Head of the Delegation and operate under his responsibility. The Head of Delegation ensures the development of EU delegation work and the effective coordination of all EU actions on the ground. The Head of the Delegation is also the budgetary authority, while also has the power of representing the EU before the state where the delegation is placed, for instance, for the conclusion of contracts and appearance in legal proceedings.

Another task designated to EU delegations is to share information with Member States embassies. EU delegations are permitted, at the request of Member States, to provide embassies with support in diplomatic relations and consular services.

These EU delegations are a success of the new EU external action institutional architecture brought about by the Lisbon Treaty. As a member state diplomat and former EEAS official points out, EU delegations have been very useful for the coordination of meetings between Member States and local authorities, obtaining information and sharing political messages. Member States, particularly smaller Member States and

third partners, benefit very much from the added value brought by EU delegations.<sup>34</sup>

However, as one member state diplomat and former EEAS official highlights, EU delegations could bring even more added value to Member States. Currently, they spend most of their time coordinating different member state positions and do not have enough time to focus on the primary functions of their role: to provide a better understanding of what is going on in the country where they are based, to obtain a stronger sense of the political reality of the country, and to prepare reports to share with Brussels that process this information.<sup>35</sup>

As an EEAS official stresses, the main task of an EU delegation is to coordinate and, therefore, the main instruction that Heads of Delegation must follow is to come to an understanding among the different Member States.<sup>36</sup> Working with 27 different Member States is complicated, particularly in the current context, as they must bring together widely diverging views from countries such as Poland or Hungary, which do not always respect basic core EU values. Nevertheless, Member States clearly understand and very much appreciate the added value of the EU delegations.<sup>37</sup> As an EEAS official highlights, another element that clearly distinguishes an EU delegation from a regular member state embassy is its size in terms of staff and resources.<sup>38</sup>

The coordinating role of the delegations, when functioning properly, has two positive consequences: it strengthens the standing of the delegations vis-a-vis the national embassies, and gives them more authority in the third country in which they are posted. This enables delegations to carry out more direct diplomacy with the governments of the third country, which contributes to increasing the importance of the EU and the international perception of its unity. Of course, Member States continue

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34 Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

35 Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

36 Interviewee 1: EEAS official

37 Interviewee 3: Commission official

38 Interviewee 1: EEAS official

to do their own bilateral business, but EU coordination gives continuity of engagement and policy implementation, while also reinforcing the role of the head of the EU delegation (Balfour, 2013, pp. 64–65).

While setting up the EEAS, one of its main advantages for Member States was it would save money from national budgets by co-locating national diplomats in EU delegations abroad. This would allow Member States to have their people in a third country without having to spend money on infrastructure by sharing offices with the EU delegation. However, as one member state diplomat and former EEAS official stresses, as a consequence of frustration or EEAS disinvestment by some Member States, the perception is that some feel less interested in this option.<sup>39</sup> While not always the case, as it depends on the country, it is important to analyse it case by case.<sup>40</sup>

Another advantage of EU delegations is they have better managed some problems still encountered by the EEAS in Brussels, for instance, the fragmentation of the EU external action between different actors. As a Commission official notes, because everyone in delegations is together, they work much better, and this contributes to a sense that the EU delegation is the contact point for all EU issues.<sup>41</sup>

In terms of weaknesses, as an EEAS official observes, although most EU delegations are well staffed in terms of quantity, they lack trained personnel with an appropriate profile. This EEAS official also highlights that when a delegation has development aid projects, the budget includes a line for hiring personnel. Those that join the delegation enjoy contracts *ad vitam aeternam*, however, as development aid approaches are constantly shifting, staff do not always have the capacity to readapt their profiles to new circumstances. It is essential to provide training so these employees have the skills to adapt to different EU external action lines of action.<sup>42</sup>

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39 Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

40 Interviewee 8: Member state diplomat

41 Interviewee 3: Commission official

42 Interviewee 1: EEAS official

Other weakness inside the EU delegations, as an EU delegation official notes, would be the fact that Commission staff working with development or neighbour policies do not always serve the EU Head of Delegation. This is because it is the Commission that decides their career path and future promotion, not the Head of Delegation. Therefore, there is a major difference inside EU delegations between EEAS staff and Commission staff, as the future career development of EEAS officials is linked to the Head of Delegation. Commission officials also have their own extra budget for travelling, etc., over which the Head of Delegation has no control. As a result, their position within the delegation is almost autonomous, which is not always helpful for alignment and attainment of EU delegation objectives.<sup>43</sup>

## **4. The President of the European Council**

The tasks of the President of the European Council includes the management and promotion of the works of the Council and the representation of the EU on the international stage at the level of Heads of State and Government (Art. 15.6 TEU). The decision to create the post of President of the European Council reflects the will of Member States and EU institutions to provide the EU with more international visibility and continuity; the same objective behind the creation of the post of HR/VP. It would be problematic if there were differences in opinion between the two, which could have an enormous effect on the reputation, power and influence of the EU. Nevertheless, the probability of being in such situation is quite low, as the last word would always be in the hands of the European Council.

If there is a problem in this regard it would be due to the personality or the interests of the person in charge of the post of President of the European Council. Neither Herman Van Rompuy nor Donald Tusk, the two permanent Presidents of the European Council after Lisbon, had great interests in this political area, that is why, so far, there has been

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43 Interviewee 2: EU Delegation official



any disagreements with the HR/VP. However, as previously noted, this is not the case of the current President of the EU Council, Charles Michel, who has a major interest in being involved in the external representation of the EU. In any case, if there is any disagreement, the role of President of the European Council would prevail over that of HR/VP, as the latter is only permitted to implement political decisions that the Heads of State or Government have already taken in the European Council (Art. 18.2 TEU). While it is the case that the HR/VP has been assigned the task of crisis management, he must always follow the mandate given by the Council and the European Council (Art. 43 TEU).

## **5. The President of the European Commission**

The Commission is responsible for external relations, and all internal policies within the remit of the Commission also have an external dimension.

When it comes to the relationship between the HR/VP and the President of the Commission, their tasks are clearly defined by the Treaty (Art. 17.6 TEU). The main task of the President of the Commission is to lead the Supranational Executive and define the general guidelines under which the Commission will execute its functions. The President will also determine the internal organisation of the Commission to ensure the coherence, efficacy and collegiality of its actions and also the nomination of its Vice-Presidents, with the exception of the HR/VP. The President of the Commission also takes part in European Council meetings and directs the Vice-President in charge of the EU external relations to coordinate the external action of the Commissioner's college, at the same time that it is part of its deliberations. Lastly, the President represents the EU in the G7.<sup>44</sup>

As already highlighted, the current President of the Commission and President of the European Council both have great interest in

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44 Europa.eu: [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/presidents\\_es1](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/presidents_es1)

being involved in EU external action. This is creating a sense of EU cacophony on the international stage, as they are even competing over who responds first to an international crisis, which makes the job of the HR/VP much more challenging. During this term of the President of the Commission, the role of all Vice-Presidents has also been undermined, as has already been noted.<sup>45</sup>

## **6. The European Parliament**

The European Parliament has limited powers when it comes to CFSP as it is a purely intergovernmental area. Therefore, the European Parliament does not have the capacity to veto any decision in the area of CFSP or in the area of CSDP. However, following the Treaty of Lisbon, the co-legislative role of the European Parliament and the Council has been extended to include the EU budget, which means that the European Parliament has *de facto* power over the CFSP budget. In practice, it has significant influence on what the EU does in this political area. With regards to the HR/VP, the European Parliament has the power to approve the College of Commissioners and can also pass a motion of non-confidence. In addition, each designated commissioner must take part in a hearing before the responsible/s EU Parliament committees after responding to a written questionnaire and presenting his/her declaration of interest. The EU Parliament has the power to reject any designated commissioner if they feel it appropriate. As a consequence, the member state of the rejected commissioner must replace the designated commissioner if it does not want the EU Parliament to vote down the entire Commission as a collegiate body.

One of the main powers of the European Parliament in the area of the CFSP is its control over the HR/VP, as he must defer to the European Parliament on any matter related to CFSP and CSDP. At the same time, the HR/VP has a duty to provide information on the evolution of decisions adopted in these areas. The HR/VP must ensure that the opinions of the European Parliament are duly taken into consideration. The European Parliament also enjoys the

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<sup>45</sup> Interviewee 6: Commission official 2

possibility of asking questions to both the Council and the HR/VP. Lastly, there are two yearly debates within the European Parliament on the progress of the implementation of the CFSP and the CDSP (Art. 36 TEU).

## **7. Member States**

Foreign policy is the single EU policy area that remains fully intergovernmental. This means that even though Member States work together to achieve a CFSP, they can pursue their own national foreign policy. Member States also have power of initiative together with the HR/VP. As a Commission official notes, the main weakness in this context is the fact that Member States have different perceptions of external threats. Although they increasingly have the same interests on the international stage, tools like the “Strategic Compass” are very helpful in developing a common understanding in how to respond to the external challenges, particularly when facilitating a diverse group to view challenges through the same lens.<sup>46</sup> Member States also have absolute power to take decisions in this area at EU level, as, in most cases, the process of decision making requires unanimity.

Foreign policy remains the single EU intergovernmental policy within the EU where the process of decision making requires unanimity. The fact that the 27 Member States must reach a consensus before taking any decision presents a difficult challenge and slows down the ability to provide a response at the EU level. This is why there is constant debate about the reconfiguration of the process of decision making in this policy area, even though unanimity and qualified majority voting each have positive and negative consequences. Also, while EU institutions are more in favour of extending qualified majority voting to CFSP, Member States, particularly smaller ones, prefer to keep unanimity.

Going from unanimity to qualified majority voting would contribute to the impression that the CFSP is much more than the sum of its parts.

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<sup>46</sup> Interviewee 3: Commission official

Supporters of qualified majority voting claim that, in practice, decisions at EU level are, in the vast majority of cases, *de facto*, taken by consensus. Also important to note is that “the prospect of a vote by qualified majority is a powerful catalyst to engage all actors in finding compromises, an outcome acceptable to all through building effective consensus, and to achieve unity. The pursuit of agreement means greater ownership of the decisions taken, which should be implemented in ‘a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity’”.<sup>47</sup>

Nevertheless, if CFSP decisions are mostly taken by unanimity in the area of external relations, the rule is qualified majority voting, which occasionally can provoke conflicts among institutions. In this case, the Council decides together with the EU Parliament by qualified majority voting on the priorities of EU development funds regarding candidate countries, neighbouring countries, development partners, and other non-member countries. However, Member States decide by unanimity on other issues related to these countries within the framework of CFSP such as, for instance, security requirements. This can weaken the EU influence on the international stage, as third countries take advantage of these inter-institutional conflicts to advance in their own interests, which may be contrary to the those of the EU. Introducing qualified majority voting in CFSP would make policies more coherent and cohesive and the EU stronger when interacting with third countries.<sup>48</sup>

Also of relevance is the discussion on a possible reform of the CFSP, which fluctuates between two approaches. The first is a proposal to keep the CFSP outside EU policy action structures and give much more margin of manoeuvre to Member States. The second proposal is to include the CFSP within the supranational architecture of the EU. This would mean that the Commission would have the right of initiative and decisions

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47 Communication from the Commission to the European Council, the European Parliament and the Council. A stronger global actor: a more efficient decision-making for EU Common Foreign and Security Policy. COM (2018) 647 final. Brussels. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0647&from=EN>, pp. 3.

48 Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik. *The EU Common Foreign and Security Policy*. <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/topics/dossiers/the-eu-common-foreign-and-security-policy>

would be taken by the Council and EU Parliament by qualified majority voting. While these two options are quite radical, alternative proposals could introduce qualified majority voting within the Council, without the involvement of the Commission or EU Parliament, or establish more flexibility formulas in the CFSP, or opt for ad-hoc groups of like-minded Member States built around specific interests that would act together, or create a permanent European Security Council.<sup>49</sup>

The main weakness of the EU when it responds to a crisis is the potential lack of unity among Member States, as some prefer to act independently and show a strong resistance in EU involvement. They might consider a proposal for a group of Member States together with the HR/VP, but not the EU as such.<sup>50</sup>

Even though the HR/VP enjoys the power of initiative, (s)he would never promote a major initiative without previously having the support of Member States, particularly larger ones. When Member States work together with the HR/VP, the EU has more impact on the international stage, as happened in the case of Iran's nuclear deal. However, to garner strong support from Member States is not easy. For the EU to develop a true common diplomacy, Member States must politically support it. Nevertheless, there are only few Member States that would surrender their sovereignty to the EU in the CFSP or even subordinate it to the EU by modifying the process of decision making from unanimity to qualified majority voting (Lehne, 2017). The trust among various Member States is only achievable by working together and improving common understanding.

Member States have committed to creating a strong diplomatic service, working together with the EU institutions. However, there is a contradiction in their willingness to build and achieve a stronger and better coordinated CFSP with the creation of a common diplomatic service and the HR/VP and their preference to keep these instruments under their control. Member

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49 Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik. *The EU Common Foreign and Security Policy*. <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/topics/dossiers/the-eu-common-foreign-and-security-policy>  
50 Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

States do not provide these with the political mandate and the necessary autonomy and room to manoeuvre to achieve a true common diplomacy and a strong EU voice on the international stage (Sus, 2016). Here there is no major differences among the large or small Member States. Even though the small Member States have more of a need for the EU to have a say on the international stage, they want to keep their power of veto. This is the only power they have to influence the CFSP. While large Member States are in a better position to influence the CFSP, they see EU common diplomacy as a supplement to their national foreign policy (Sus, 2016).

More generally, Member States support a stronger CFSP in order to better achieve their own national foreign policy objectives. However, they are also aware that by actively promoting the EU to act internationally on their behalf, their national foreign policy may be undermined, limiting their own room to manoeuvre. Member States would prefer the EEAS and the HR/VP to complement their national foreign policies and national diplomatic services, so they can exert control and use them to promote their national objectives. However, as Duke (2012) has stressed, the reluctance of some Member States to let the EEAS to become a strategic actor makes it more difficult to develop any possible strategic direction.

So, at the same time that Member States complain that the EEAS is not providing a real added value in terms of ensuring coherence over different foreign policy instruments and the coordination of EU external action, they also do not want to share more competences with the EU. The current HR/VP has highlighted that while foreign ministers lament the various crises around the world, they are incapable making a decision on collective action. Member States still prioritise national foreign policy, particularly those EU Member States where there has been a rise in nationalist and anti-system parties, which puts the achievement of a truly collective CFSP at risk (Denninson, 2019).

Finally, Member States play an increasingly relevant role in external relations, which is a competence of the Commission. This is because most internal policies have an external dimension and in relations with a third country, there are often several topics to discuss, the majority of which are within the competence of the Commission. Additionally,

the focus of the CFSP is becoming more economic in scope, and as a result, those that have a broader picture are the Heads of State and Government, who more often take decisions related to external action.

## **8. The EU Intelligence Analysis Centre: INTCEN**

The main weakness of the EU Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN), as a Commission official highlights, is that it depends on the willingness of member state intelligence services to provide it with information, mainly because it lacks agents in third countries.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, according to a member state diplomat and former EEAS official, in order to increase the willingness of Member States to share their intelligence, it is essential to create and reinforce trust among them.<sup>52</sup> The EU intelligence analysis centre is quite different from a regular intelligence service,<sup>53</sup> as it provides briefings to the HR/VP based on information shared by the intelligence services of Member States.<sup>54</sup>

Therefore, the EU needs to encourage Member States to proactively share intelligence. However, as a member state diplomat and former EEAS official stresses, this willingness is not entirely there yet. Some Member States are ready to share their intelligence in likeminded groups but not with the full 27 Member States.<sup>55</sup> As a former Council official points out, the main area of work would be to promote a sense of common trust among different Member States on issues of key relevance for their national interest.<sup>56</sup> Finally, another weakness of INTCEN, in words of a Commission official, is the fact that it is situated in a different building to the EEAS.<sup>57</sup>

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51 Interviewee 3: Commission official

52 Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

53 Interviewee 3: Commission official

54 Interviewee 6: Commission official 2 & Interviewee 1: EEAS official

55 Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

56 Interviewee 4: Former Council official

57 Interviewee 3: Commission official

## II

# Towards a True EU Common Diplomacy

## 1. EEAS efficiency under debate

The reconfiguration of EU External Action architecture brought about by the Lisbon Treaty has been subject of scholarly attention. The creation of the first suprastate diplomatic body in the world raises the question of how it would be coordinated and how it would interact with member state diplomatic services, and if it could contribute to the configuration of a suprastate diplomatic culture (Guinea Llorente, 2010, p. 778). Since the inception of the EEAS and the HR/VP, there have been several publications that have explored whether and how Lisbon Treaty institutional changes would contribute to develop a more coherent and visible EU External Action, and often, the focal point of this research was the EEAS, the new institutional body introduced by the Lisbon Treaty.

The first wave of studies on the EEAS focused primarily on how it should be set up and on how it should work, in addition to the consequences of its creation. Research also examined the advantages of EU delegations and the different challenges arising from EEAS implementation. The second wave of analysis, published around 2013, the year of the first EEAS review, critically examined the two first years of how the service functioned. The last wave of



the EEAS research assessed the fulfilment of established conditions in terms of staff, coordination, and the possible creation of an EEAS *esprit de corps*.

The EEAS functions as a political instrument to promote and implement the CFSP, which is common and dependent, as it must coexist with Member States' foreign policy (Guinea Llorente, 2010). In this regard, Duke (2012) stressed that a major challenge for the EEAS was to set a medium and long-term strategy, simultaneously ensuring that the main actors of EU external action, particularly Member States and the Commission, offer political and diplomatic support, as well as the necessary resources. For Member States to positively engage with the EEAS, they must see it is providing them with a clear added value. As Pierre Vimont has argued, if the EEAS is unable to develop a clear purpose, it will remain adrift (Blockmans and Wessel, 2021).

Therefore, the EEAS should make progress in providing Member States with better reporting systems, more information sharing, and greater capabilities for strategic analysis. This would certainly help in facilitating a better understanding of international issues while it promotes the power of EU institutions as well as the credibility of its initiatives, and as a consequence, create a proactive approach towards policymaking (Lehne, 2017). However, after ten years, this continues to be a demanding task for the EEAS.

As Duke (2009) stressed, before the actual set up of the EEAS, Member States should include as part of their foreign policy strategy, one that can be put in action at the EU level, building an "integrated diplomacy". In this regard, and taking into account the heterogeneous character of EEAS staff composition, Spence (2012) argues that the success of the EEAS will ultimately depend on what extent EEAS officials understand it as an integrated diplomatic service. This means that Member States must understand EU diplomacy as part of their national diplomacy.

Furness (2013) has underlined that the only way for the EEAS to build on its autonomy from Member States is to closely work with the Commission in the areas in which it has the competence. However, for this to be an effective strategy, a certain rivalry between the Commission

and the EEAS must be overcome. In addition to the mistrust among some Member States, one of the main weaknesses of the EEAS and the subsequent development of a true EU common diplomacy, is the constant battle for power and influence among EU institutions and Member States. This presents a significant challenge to the ability of the EEAS to fulfil its goals and expectations. In order to overcome this obstacle, it is essential to promote a cooperative relationship between the HR/VP, the EEAS and the President of the European Council, which would result in enhancing the trust between Member States, the HR/VP and the EEAS under his authority (Blockmans and Wessel, 2021).

Regarding the functioning of EU delegations, scholars have identified several further weaknesses where there is still margin for improvement. The first is information sharing between EU delegations and the headquarters in Brussels, as well as better follow up in terms of strategic direction and feedback. There should also be more incentives for co-location of EU member state diplomats in EU delegations (Hillion, Blockmans and Vimont, 2021). In this regard, it is interesting to note that, at the same time that Member States have reduced the number of its diplomats, mainly due to technological innovations, Member States have not only maintained but even increased their diplomatic representation networks across the globe also through EU cooperation formulas. This vast network of EU delegations is a great asset for Member States, allowing for different forms of diplomatic cooperation at the EU level (Bicchi and Schade, 2021).

EU delegations would benefit from even more strategic direction from Brussels. In addition, many EU delegations must manage work overload without sufficient staff numbers or with staff that do not have the necessary expertise. Many EU delegations lack the proper resources to perform their duties. To resolve this issue, there have been proposals to expand EU delegation staff with the secondment of more member state diplomats, particularly in the area of security, as well as with Commission officials, specifically in the areas of development aid interest such as energy, climate and migration (Duke, Pomorska and Vanhoonacker, 2012).

The HR/VP also has a key role to play in contributing to the creation of a true EU diplomacy. The HR/VP should reinforce its leadership in order to enhance its capacity to bring more coherence to EU external action, closely working with representatives from EU institutions that play a leading role in EU external action: the President of the Commission and the President of the European Council. The major power of the HR/VP is its influence and, therefore, it should aim to augment it. The HR/VP must develop a close relationship based on mutual trust with both the President of the Commission and the President of the European Council. Only then, would the role enjoy a greater margin of manoeuvre in leading EU external action. A major obstacle to successfully achieving this is the constant travel that keeps the HR/VP outside Brussels.

In order for the HR/VP to have real influence in EU external action is to stay in Brussels and to focus attention on issues of relevance within the Council and within the Commission, as this is where the power actually is (Lamoso González, 2019), not to mention EU Parliament.<sup>58</sup> Another element that would empower the HR/VP to ensure a true common EU diplomacy would be to restructure the Commission to hierarchically recognise a reinforced power to the HR/VP as its Vice-President (Molina and Simón, 2019).

Another critical element that needs to be reinforced is the EU Intelligence Analysis Center (INTCEN), particularly when it comes to counter intelligence and counter terrorism. One proposal would make INTCEN the single point of contact at EU level in these areas. INTCEN, acting as an intelligence agency, would then gather information from the intelligence communities of Member States and would be able to provide independent analysis. While terrorist attacks that have occurred across the EU have caused the Commission to promote more intelligence sharing and cooperation among EU institutions and Member States (Nomikos, 2015), there remain trust deficits to overcome between Member States. These come from the different intelligence cultures

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<sup>58</sup> Interviewee 5: EEAS Official.

embodied by the more prominent role of INTCEN. Placing INTCEN within EEAS would reinforce its role as coordinator of the different member state intelligence services and contribute to the denaturalisation of security agencies (Sellier, 2018, p. 144).

The EU needs to count on high quality intelligence when responding to international crises, which is why INTCEN should be provided with the best and highest quality information from the intelligence services of Member States, to be as well informed as the best informed member state. To ensure EU international crisis management efficiency, there should be a smooth flow of information from the national intelligence services to INTCEN. In order to overcome mistrust among EU Member States, it is important to highlight that the only intelligence that would be gathered would relate to international crises and would be managed solely at the EU level: it would never be distributed between the intelligence services of Member States.

If Member States wish to truly develop a common EU diplomacy, they should consider a further step, look beyond the idea of complementarity in its relationship with the EEAS, and explore different lines of parallel functioning. Another key element to developing a true EU diplomacy would involve the EEAS and the HR/VP finding an area of expertise where they can prove their ability and where they have the capacity to bring added value to the CFSP (Sus, 2016). There are several elements that could achieve this goal, including a shift in EEAS organisational culture, even if a long-term aim.

One of the main tasks of the EEAS is to ensure better coordination of EU external action, where the hybrid composition of EEAS staff can be seen as an added value that contributes to better integrate the three main personnel groups: Commission, Council and Member States (Hillion, Blockmans and Vimont, 2021). The continuous mobility of staff combined with the introduction of smarter recruitment and collective training would enhance the coordination of EU diplomacy.

It is essential to increase transparency and effective coordination within the EEAS but also between the EEAS, Member States, and the

different parts of the Commission that deals with external relations, at all levels (Duke, Pomorska and Vanhoonacker, 2012). Seconding national diplomats for longer periods, or even permanently, within the EEAS raises the risk of too strong a connection between the EEAS and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Member States, a concern for smaller Member States that would be in a weaker position as they do not have not as many staff and resources (Hillion, Blockmans and Vimont, 2021).

Another element that could foster cooperation between Member States and the EEAS is to ensure a fairer geographical balance among Member States when filling posts of Heads of Delegation, and across all levels of the EEAS. Directly recruiting Heads of Delegation from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Member States puts the delegations led by these diplomats at a disadvantage, mainly because these national diplomats lack proper knowledge on how the EU works and, more importantly, they lack the network and connection with Brussels both at the EEAS headquarters and within the Commission, which can result in poor performance in the execution of duties (Hillion, Blockmans and Vimont, 2021, p. 14).

Lastly, there is a clear consensus among scholars that common training at the EU level is essential to develop an *esprit de corps* among EEAS staff and achieve a true EU common diplomacy (Rayner, 2005; Juncos and Pomorska, 2006; Hartstein, 2012; Duke, 2012; and Gstöhl, 2012). Nevertheless, strengthening the *esprit de corps* within the EEAS needs more than simply building an EU Diplomatic Academy; it requires better strategic direction in terms of providing clear leadership to the EEAS staff. It is therefore essential to provide an unambiguous message about what policy to follow and to offer feedback on different proposals and work achieved. In this regard, holding regular and structured meetings at management level with the HR/VP and his cabinet, the EEAS Secretary General and senior managers would increase this sense of direction (Hillion, Blockmans and Vimont, 2021, p. 10–11). One of the main challenges of the EEAS is to engage with EU Parliament where it provides strategic guidance on the cooperation programmes of EU external relations. This is because after the Treaty of Lisbon came into

force, the EU Parliament has increasingly played a more relevant role in the EU external relations (Hillion, Blockmans and Vimont, 2021, p. 14).

## **2. Fostering an EEAS ‘esprit the corps’ via a Diplomatic Academy**

As already noted, scholars agree that common training at the EU level would be an effective tool to build a true EU common diplomacy (Rayner, 2005; Juncos and Pomorska, 2006; Hartstein, 2012; Duke, 2012; and Gstöhl, 2012). In the addition to the added value of the knowledge it would provide, participants would also have the added benefit of the effects of socialisation and networking. A common training programme would help EU officials to build sensitivity towards different Member States’ national interests and political issues. As Spence (2012) has highlighted, “intense training, accompanied by retreats and other devices can reverse signs of regression into competing mind-sets”.

Common training would also help member state diplomats think more in European terms and interests, while those working in the EEAS would have an opportunity to familiarise themselves with EU management practices (Duke, 2012). Although EEAS staff must be able to understand EU policies and positions to effectively communicate and promote them abroad, it is important to bear in mind that promoting the development of common beliefs and values among member state diplomats together with EU officials does not imply a transfer of loyalties or identities from the national to the EU level (Juncos and Pomorska, 2013, p. 305).

Following requests presented by the EU Parliament with the aim of developing a EU common diplomatic *esprit de corps*, many academics have suggested the creation of an EU Diplomatic Academy. This academy would connect EU officials with member state diplomats over an extended period of time in order to provide them with the necessary skills to effectively represent the EU abroad. In short, as Monar (2000) has emphasised: “a physical academy, ideally located away from capitals to avoid distraction, would provide the necessary ‘innovative, coherent and intense training environment’” (Leandro Monar, 2000).

Although Juncos and Pomorska (2013) also stress that common training is essential to developing an *esprit de corps*, they note that for training to be effective in socialisation, it should be focused on the group rather than the individual. Collective training, together with the promotion of other elements such as leadership, communication, public image, and mutual trust would be the perfect recipe for developing an *esprit de corps* within the EEAS. For leadership building, it would be essential to provide the EEAS with a mission statement with strategic guidance, and to improve communication with EEAS staff, informing them about what is going on and about the future course of the EEAS would also be a significant help. To have a good reputation in terms of public image helps to develop a sense of pride for EEAS officials, which also contributes to the development of an EU diplomatic *esprit de corps*. Finally, Juncos and Pomorska (2013) also suggest that mutual trust is essential when building up an organisation. In the specific case of the EEAS, this is a vulnerable point due to the fact that EEAS staff come from different organisations and administrative cultures, posing a challenge in this regard.

An EU diplomatic academy would help to develop a shared diplomatic culture through common training by combining lessons and best practices from national and European training institutions, as well as by accommodating the demands of different target groups. As Duke (2012) has highlighted, an EU diplomatic academy would facilitate coordination between different EU diplomatic actors, introduce better quality control and develop an innovative and stronger focus on the European dimensions of diplomacy. In addition, Cross (2011) has also emphasised that the creation of an EU diplomatic academy is necessary in order to maximise the cohesiveness and effectiveness of the new foreign service.

Duke (2012) also suggests that to be effective, an EU Diplomatic Academy should provide programmes of various lengths. The basic course would offer a common introductory intensive programme that should be followed by a bespoke course adjusted to consider the various backgrounds, experience and positions of EEAS staff. A certain amount of flexibility in training options would be useful for EEAS officials, as they could choose what courses to follow that would enhance their skills and competences

based on their experience and needs. An EU Diplomatic Academy should also offer seminars on horizontal topics that could bring together different target groups in order to develop an EEAS *esprit de corps*.

Training would be particularly useful if offered at the beginning of the careers of EU officials and member state diplomats, preferably before they start working at EEAS headquarters or in EU delegations. In addition to common courses, training should be tailored to the specific demands of the individual, directly linked to the role to be undertaken. Lehne (2011) highlights that “joining the EEAS requires significant adjustment. Some Commission officials used to implement technical programmes find it difficult to get used to diplomatic work and the more political approach of the EEAS, just as some diplomats experience difficulties coping with the technical and financial aspects of the work of EU delegations”. In this regard, strengthening pre-post training would offer significant added value for the Heads of Delegation, particularly when they are a national diplomat.

Collective introductory training is essential in providing the EEAS staff with the necessary skills and, even more importantly, in building an *esprit de corps*. This report cannot highlight enough the effects of training on socialisation: it enriches the networks of the EEAS staff and helps member state diplomats become more sensitive to EU issues. An EU diplomatic academy would also provide a better common understanding among EEAS staff about shared threats and interests.

The idea of creating an EU Diplomatic Academy has been welcomed by EU academic institutions. Fratini (2009) noted that the European Union Institute in Florence has already shown an interest in being the headquarters for any EU diplomatic academy, while the EU Parliament has also suggested the College of Europe (European Parliament, 2010).

### **3. Recommendations for further improvement**

After taking a critical look at the current institutional architecture of EU external action and conducting a thorough overview of the literature that has analysed EU diplomacy and highlighted the effectiveness of a common training programme at the EU level, as well as the benefits of



an EU Diplomatic Academy to building an *esprit the corps* within the EEAS, we conclude by sharing suggestions for achieving a true common diplomacy at the EU level.

It is essential that the EEAS works on providing itself with a sense of purpose. To reflect on what its mission is and to focus on its added value for both EU institutions and Member States.<sup>59</sup> As an official from the Commission emphasises, EU institutions and bodies need to understand that they were created to serve a role. Member States would never renounce developing their own foreign policy and diplomacy; of course they want to continue to promote their own interests. Nevertheless, Member States alone cannot have a real impact on the international stage, they need to work together within the framework of the EU. To successfully defend EU interests, it is crucial that all EU external action actors share a single coordinated message. It is not absolutely necessary that only one person speaks for the EU internationally, but it is essential is that all actors share the same message. While there may be room for improvement, the significant added value of the EEAS is to coordinate EU external action and make it more coherent.<sup>60</sup>

For further improvement, one element for consideration is to promote strong communication between the HR/VP and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Member States, particularly the largest ones. This is because the these Member States will always want to play a role in promoting their own international visibility. The biggest Member States have diplomatic services with similar resources as the EEAS, which is why it is essential that the HR/VP develops a particularly close relationship with their Ministers, in order to provide and exchange information and, more importantly, to coordinate the different actions and messages shared abroad.<sup>61</sup> The HR/VP is meant to play an essential role in coordinating EU External Action.

Moreover, to increase its added value, the HR/VP should use the EEAS to provide more reports to the Foreign Affairs Council. The HR/VP should

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59 Interviewee 4: Former Council official, and Interviewee 3: Commission official

60 Interviewee 3: Commission official

61 Interviewee 6: Commission official 2

lead the CFSP by promoting debates on ongoing global issues and crises and by providing innovative proposals for action.<sup>62</sup>

To clarify what its added value is, the HR/VP and the EEAS should embody the two political visions of the EU in order to work as a bridge builder between the Commission, which is responsible for external relations and administers the EU budget, and the Council, which is responsible for the CFSP. By promoting its own diplomatic blend is where the EU can be of added value in achieving member state goals on the international stage. The EU must provide its own diplomatic tools for the principles and values it defends and the interests it promotes.<sup>63</sup>

The HR/VP together with the EEAS should think more strategically and reinforce their role as EU External Action strategic planners.<sup>64</sup> A clear advantage of the EEAS in this regard, in comparison with member state diplomatic services, is the number of resources it enjoys. However, as a Commission official highlights, in order to make the most of these resources, the different heads of unit inside the EEAS must be empowered to hold people responsible for the work that they do. Within the Commission, heads of unit have much more power and responsibility than within the EEAS. In order to provide real added value to the reports that they send to the HR/VP, EEAS officials should reflect more on the issues they work on, particularly those that will be used to advance EU external action strategy and policies.<sup>65</sup> In words of a member state diplomat and former EEAS official, the goal of reinforcing the strategic perspective of the EEAS is not an easy task, it takes time, but the EEAS must give it more attention and put in more effort.<sup>66</sup>

As a former Council official emphasises, to provide major added value for Member States and EU institutions, the EEAS should work on procuring excellent reporting, writing strong briefs, and supplying

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62 Interviewee 6: Commission official 2

63 Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

64 Interviewee 4: Former Council official

65 Interviewee 6: Commission official 2

66 Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

the Commission and the Council with brilliant interventions. The EEAS must demonstrate to Member States that it is filled with good diplomats led by a strong leadership that produces excellent results for the EU, offering an invaluable service complemented by civil servants from the Commission and the Council who clearly understand how the EU works.<sup>67</sup>

The HR/VP, together with the EEAS, has an enormous influence as permanent president of the Foreign Affairs Council, which also provides it with the power to develop its own agenda. However, as a member state diplomat notes, what Member States would like from the HR/VP is not to act like a 28th member state nor to always give attention to the largest Member States. They expect the HR/VP to listen to every single member state and develop a common and consensual position, which would bring significant added value to the HR/VP, as its leadership would be seen as being able to find common agreement among the different Member States.<sup>68</sup>

The HR/VP, in its role of President of the Political and Security Committee, is responsible for the preparation of third country Summits. However, the CFSP typically only represents a relatively small part of the agenda, while the focus is on Commission competences: trade, internal market, digital, climate change, etc. A former Council official notes that, contrary to this bottom-up procedure where the HR/VP, together with the Political and Security Committee, designs the EU approach to a third country Summit, there should be a reconfiguration that reinforces a more top-down procedure, where the President of the European Council with the President of the European Commission and the help of the High Representative give a mandate to the EEAS to operate.<sup>69</sup>

Another great challenge for the EU in playing a relevant role on the international stage is the process of decision making in CFSP, which remains one of unanimity. Although reform of the CFSP decision making process is an endless debate within the EU, and both options, unanimity and qualified majority voting, have their advantages and disadvantages,

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67 Interviewee 4: Former Council official

68 Interviewee 8: Member state diplomat

69 Interviewee 4: Former Council official

the main issue is that the EU has become cumbersome and is losing too much time in taking decisions. While Member States cannot be disregarded, they must understand that they have the obligation to arrive to a conclusion. In words of a member state diplomat and former EEAS official, Member States must force themselves to come to an agreement as quickly as possible. More agility decision making within the European Council is an absolute necessity.<sup>70</sup>

It is also important that the EU become geopolitically or strategically autonomous, as it needs to be able to quickly respond to a given international crisis. This would not weaken but reinforce the multilateral approach of the EU to global politics. EU strategy should move towards engaging with third countries, particularly like-minded democracies, which would help it to fulfil its interests, and to have the capacity to choose when and with whom to work together, depending on its needs. This advantage is even more valuable in times of crisis. For this to happen, the EU must develop a strategic shared culture via a truly common diplomacy. Only then would the EU be a “shaping power”.

When the EU must respond to and manage an ongoing crisis, there always is strong resistance from some Member States towards EU involvement. This is why some claim that the best solution would be to explore a CFSP that would move at different speeds. In short, it would consist of smaller groups of likeminded Member States working together within the CFSP and always including the HR/VP, who would act as a bridge between these groups and other Member States, similar to some sort of Iranian nuclear deal formula, or the 5+1 Process. In order to overcome the challenges faced when some Member States try to prevent the EU from moving ahead, there would be configured and more flexible groups that could move forward, that would introduce a certain flexibility in the CFSP while always giving other Member States the possibility to come aboard.

Nevertheless, this multi-speed CFSP will only work if the High Representative, and perhaps the Commission or other groups such as

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70 Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

military staff, form part of that small core group that would move ahead. EU institutions would always need to be included, as this would be the only way for the whole system to function and for this new process to move ahead.<sup>71</sup> However, as member state diplomat notes, some Member States are cautious about introducing this flexibility, as they understand it would further reinforce the leadership of the largest Member States, particularly France and Germany.<sup>72</sup>

Another great challenge in reinforcing EU external action and its diplomacy service is to build an *esprit de corps* within the EEAS. As a former Council official emphasises, the continuous rotation of personnel poses a challenge, particularly among member state diplomats.<sup>73</sup> This does not mean, as another Commission official stresses, that the rotation of member state diplomats has to end, as this cross-fertilisation process can be quite positive. Rather, it is a good moment to explore the possibility of recruiting permanent EU diplomatic staff.<sup>74</sup>

In addition to the diplomats that come from the member state diplomatic services and must, after a certain period of time, return to their national diplomatic services, the EU must build its own permanent diplomatic staff. The EEAS should have the possibility of recruiting its own diplomatic staff or, at least, it should have the possibility of extending the period of time that these EU member state diplomats spend within the EEAS. As a Commission official highlights, the EEAS would benefit from recruiting diplomatic staff that already have specific skills in areas where the EEAS lacks expertise.<sup>75</sup> This is essential in achieving a true EU common diplomacy and to developing EU diplomatic and foreign policy own tools –both key to the EU becoming a strategic and autonomous actor on the international stage.

In order to attract the best diplomats from the member state diplomatic services, once these diplomats serve within the EEAS for a period of time,

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71 Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official & Interviewee 4: Former Council official

72 Interviewee 8: Member state diplomat

73 Interviewee 4: Former Council official

74 Interviewee 3: Commission official

75 Interviewee 3: Commission official

they should have an opportunity to return this added value to their national diplomatic services. In words of a member state diplomat and former EEAS official, and of a EU delegation official, EEAS service should be much better recognised at home and help national diplomats to progress in their careers at a national level. It is only under these circumstances that the best member state diplomats will serve in the EEAS. An added benefit for the EEAS is that it would have in its service the best member state diplomats.<sup>76</sup> To date, the EEAS experience has been much more valuable for smaller member state diplomats, as they do not have enough resources at home to improve their expertise. However, diplomats from both small and large Member States should be motivated to work within the EEAS and for this to happen, the EEAS experience must be more highly valued in all institutions of origin.<sup>77</sup>

Within their Foreign Ministries, Member States should introduce the requirement that their national diplomats must serve in the EEAS headquarters for a period of time, preferably at the beginning of their diplomatic career. Consequently, these diplomats would be in a better position to understand how the EU system work, while it would also contribute to creating a better understanding and a closer connection between the diplomatic services of the Member States and the EEAS. As a Commission official highlights, a period at the EEAS at the beginning of a diplomat's career could be seen as a learning process on EU issues that improves the skills of member state diplomats and forges a better understanding and coordination between the different national diplomatic services and the EEAS.<sup>78</sup>

Another weakness, as highlighted by a member state diplomat, is lack of gender balance at all levels within the EEAS, as currently, lower level positions are mainly filled by women. The EEAS must also increase the number of Eastern and Central European member state diplomats in management positions.<sup>79</sup> Although the EEAS recently launched its first

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<sup>76</sup> Interviewee 2: EU Delegation official & Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

<sup>77</sup> Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

<sup>78</sup> Interviewee 6: Commission official 2

<sup>79</sup> Interviewee 8: Member state diplomat

call to specifically recruit permanent EEAS officials,<sup>80</sup> as an EEAS official notes, it would be better if the EEAS could rely on its own permanent diplomatic staff.

To create a true *esprit de corps*, the EEAS should consider eliminating the requirement for member state diplomats to return to their national diplomatic services after a maximum of eight, or exceptionally, ten years. According to a Commission official, if EEAS diplomatic staff positions were permanent, it would increase their mobility and access across institutions. This would support the coordinating role of the EEAS by enhancing the coordination between the different institutions through the EEAS and making it the centre of coordination for EU external action.<sup>81</sup>

As this Commission official highlights, fostering mobility and opportunities for promotion would also remove concerns that serving in the EEAS could negatively affect career development. To do this, it would be necessary to develop a system for career development for EU officials within the EEAS, instead of having most management posts filled by national diplomats. Without opportunities for advancement, EU officials feel demotivated, which has a direct impact in the quality of their work.<sup>82</sup>

Currently, neither the military structures nor the INTCEN are located in EEAS headquarters, but in a different building, physically manifesting the division between policy and military structures. To bring the different branches together in the same building would not only help build an *esprit de corps* but would also facilitate the internal coordination of the EEAS.<sup>83</sup>

A key element defined by academic scholars as essential to developing a true *esprit de corps* within the EEAS is the creation of an EU diplomatic academy. This diplomatic academy would provide training for EU officials and member state diplomats while simultaneously offering an opportunity

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80 Interviewee 1: EEAS official

81 Interviewee 3: Commission official

82 Interviewee 3: Commission official

83 Interviewee 3: Commission official

to spend time together, debating, discussing, and learning while building a shared *esprit de corps*. It would be essential for this diplomatic academy to include Europeans with a completed higher education also interested in becoming EU diplomats. As a Commission official highlights, combining training with time together is incredibly helpful in developing a common understanding and assessment of how we, as Europeans, see the world.<sup>84</sup>

The programme should also provide member state diplomats and EU officials with training in management and politics. According to a former Council official, the EEAS needs staff that understands how the EU works and how its political dimension, diplomacy, functions.<sup>85</sup> In words of a member state diplomat and former EEAS official, member state diplomats would benefit from this training before they start working in the EEAS, at the same time, that this diplomatic academy would be of very much added value for EU officials in providing permanent training and also in developing a better political sense.<sup>86</sup> This diplomatic academy would bring much added value to diplomatic personnel directly recruited by the EEAS. These staff members would be essential in fulfilling more fair geographical and gender balance within the EEAS. Otherwise, the largest Member States would always be overrepresented, as they have more personnel and therefore are better placed to dispense staff to work in the EEAS, and ultimately, to fill its high-level positions.

Another positive aspect is that directly recruited diplomatic staff would be not so tied to the international interests of their Member States of origin, which could help in a more fair representation of diplomats from different countries around the world, and avoiding for example, the deployment of Dutch diplomats in Indonesia, French diplomats in Africa or Spanish diplomats in Latin America. The EEAS should be able to directly recruit any young European who has recently completed higher education. In this way, the EU diplomatic staff would be free from national and EU institutional

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84 Interviewee 3: Commission official

85 Interviewee 4: Former Council official

86 Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official



constraints. The recruitment of these diplomats could be done through the development of the current “quota” that the EEAS enjoys within EPSO.

According to an EEAS official, the EEAS is already working on a pilot project in order to set up an EU Diplomatic Academy. An initiative of the Member of the European Parliament, Nacho Sánchez Amor, the EU Diplomatic Academy is expected to begin operation on 1 September 2022. This official also emphasises that both the EEAS Secretary General and the HR/VP are very supportive of the idea.<sup>87</sup> In this initiative, two diplomats from each member state, one man and one woman, as well as officials from EU institutions will spend one year training together on a programme that would focus on EU priorities and policies. They would even live in the same building, so as to spend as much time as possible together in order to get to know one other and build a strong network.<sup>88</sup>

This EEAS official also notes that, following this period of training at the EU Diplomatic Academy, they would work within the EEAS for three months. After this idea was proposed, many other academic institutions have shown interest in doing this training, for instance the European Union Institute in Florence (Italy), the College of Europe (Bruges, Belgium/Natolin, Poland), the European Institute of Public Administration (Maastricht, The Netherlands), Sciences Po (Paris/Strasbourg, France), and the IE School of Global and Public Affairs (Madrid, Spain). It would be invaluable for the training of future EEAS staff that these prestigious institutions work together to provide the best academic programme possible.

This EEAS official also stresses that the purpose behind such training would be to encourage movement between member state diplomatic services and the EEAS and create an integrated diplomacy where the staff can continuously move from one service to the other over the course of their career. An EU diplomatic academy would ideally provide training to EEAS staff at all different stages in their career,<sup>89</sup> forging an EU diplomatic service where national foreign services together with the

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87 Interviewee 5: EEAS official 2

88 Interviewee 5: EEAS official 2

89 Interviewee 5: EEAS official 2

EEAS achieve common EU aims. The mobility of member state diplomats between EU capitals should also be encouraged, in order to further a better common understanding among them.

The training that is currently provided in the EEAS is mainly online (partly but not entirely due to the pandemic). In words of an EEAS official, online training is not helpful in the development of an *esprit de corps*, even if it does help bring EU delegations and Brussels headquarters closer.<sup>90</sup> As an EEAS official highlights, online training has advantages, as it is accessible and easy to follow by staff, who can do it when they have the time. Staff from EU delegations also can take part in more training, as the EEAS does not have to pay a mission to bring staff back to Brussels. Nevertheless, this EEAS official has no doubt that in-person training has many more advantages and considers it important to reintroduce it as soon as possible.<sup>91</sup> EEAS staff must have an opportunity to spend time together, talking to each other, and building a common understanding. It is only under these circumstances that they can develop a true *esprit de corps*.<sup>92</sup>

If Member States had to highlight one added value from the reform of the institutional architecture of the EU external action brought about by the Lisbon Treaty, they would certainly point to EU delegations abroad, however, there is still an opportunity to improve their efficiency: for instance, the information exchange between the delegations and headquarters in Brussels. It is essential that EU delegations clearly understand the wider context and EU external action strategic direction. Enhancing information exchanges, receiving updates and meeting briefings, being included in strategic organisations, these all help to create close links between the EU delegations and Brussels.<sup>93</sup> As an EU delegation official notes, when it comes to developing countries, the power of the EU mainly relies on the money that it spends there. It is

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90 Interviewee 1: EEAS official

91 Interviewee 5: EEAS official 2

92 Interviewee 1: EEAS official

93 Interviewee 2: EU Delegation official

absolutely critical that Commission policies are closely aligned with the EEAS. External relations are not only about the connection between delegations and the EEAS but also between the Commission and the EEAS,<sup>94</sup> and the connection between the Council and the EEAS when it comes to the CFSP.

EU delegations function as a small representation of the EU administration in a third country. The staff of an EU delegation is composed by EEAS officials and by Commission officials who work for the different DGs dealing with development policy, for instance: DG Trade, DG Connect, DG INPA, DG NEAR. Although they respond to the Head of the Delegation, they do not have an independent position within the delegation – however, as one EU delegation official stresses, this is not the case for every delegation. This is because the EU institutional architecture design has led to a situation where the ambassador can take a decision about the promotion of EEAS officials, but he does not decide about the promotion of Commission officials, which is decided by the Commission. Commission officials have an extra budget for their travel. Future formats should review the institutional design, as it does not encourage EU delegation staff to focus their full energy in performing the best job possible under the leadership of the Head of Delegation.<sup>95</sup>

Another element that would contribute to the influence that the EU has abroad would be to further build on EU cultural diplomacy, as culture plays such a decisive role in soft power. Developing a network of “EU cultural embassies” around the world in order to promote the EU way of life, for instance through supporting artistic projects could contribute to the development of a positive image worldwide. To do so, the EU must go beyond the current intergovernmental cultural cooperation between Member States through the European Union Nationals Institutes for Culture (EUNIC) and develop and promote its own cultural diplomacy tools.

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94 Interviewee 2: EU Delegation official

95 Interviewee 2: EU Delegation official

Finally, as a member state diplomat and former EEAS official notes, the EU should work with a more enhanced INTCEN inside the EEAS. One of the options could be a more flexible approach, promoting further action among the Member States that want to cooperate and always leaving the door open for the others to come on board.<sup>96</sup> It's important to note that in the case of crisis management, this may be welcomed by all of the 27 Member States, due to the power dynamic and a mistrust of the larger states. For Member States to agree on further developing an EU intelligence service, as stressed by a former Council official, it is vital to prove that it would bring added value, generate innovative ideas and provide excellent analysis.<sup>97</sup> For this to happen, it would be essential to develop a mechanism that eases the flow of information on foreign and security issues taking place outside the European Union, from the intelligence services of Member States to the INTCEN. In short, INTCEN should count with the best intel, reports and knowledge; it must be as well informed as the best informed Member States, particularly in times of international crisis.

Last but not least, in words of a member state diplomat, where INTCEN can truly provide an added value for the Member States is by developing and reinforcing EU counterintelligence capabilities, and provide Member States with this counterintelligence service at the EU level. In short, to be able to detect the presence and interference of, for instance, Russia or China.<sup>98</sup>

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96 Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

97 Interviewee 4: Former Council official

98 Interviewee 8: Member state diplomat



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## TOWARDS A EU TRULY COMMON DIPLOMACY

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Ten years after the High Representative Vice-President was nominated and the European External Action Service began its work, there is still considerable room for improving EU coordination in its external actions in order to develop a true EU common diplomacy. This report, commissioned by Nacho Sánchez Amor, Member of the European Parliament, aims to reflect on the current institutional architecture of the EU external action by pinpointing its major strengths and weaknesses. It concludes by providing different proposals for developing a true common diplomacy at the EU level.

*“This is not a moment to think or act small.  
But a moment for investing in an ambitious Europe”*  
Josep Borrell (HR/VP)