



EPC breakfast

The European External Action Service one year on

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Wednesday 25 January 2012, 8.00-9.30

1. Intro and summary: setting up the EEAS one year on

- Thank you for invitation. Glad to be present at the launch of your new EPC report and grateful for a chance to discuss EEAS one year on. The EPC report is a particularly welcome contribution and I am also grateful for other contributions that have presented assessments of the first year of our work. Grateful for the effort that went into it; I note that there is a huge amount of goodwill and lots of good ideas in these reports that we will examine carefully.
- Last December the HRVP presented her report evaluating the first year of the EEAS. It is quite a comprehensive paper that covers all aspects of the functioning of the EEAS and assesses them against a particular political and institutional context. I will not review it item by item in my speech. Rather, I will recap the main steps we took to establish the organisation, both what we got right and what worked less well, and pointing out the way forward for 2012 and beyond.
- First, let me recall the aims of those who framed the EEAS in the Lisbon Treaty. They aimed to build up a service to pursue Europe's interests in the world, to help making EU foreign policy more coherent, and to provide continuity in external representation, going beyond the six-monthly rotation.
- The new Treaty provided for the legal basis but there was still a lot to sort out. Catherine Ashton identified the setting up of the EEAS as one of her core priorities and set to work on the EEAS decision as soon as she was appointed; by Brussels' standards agreement was reached between the Commission, Council, and Parliament on her proposal in record time – still the decision only came in July. The Decision provided the basic parameters of the new service, but gaps remained to be filled.
- The basic structure was set up in 2011 in terms of the merger of different constituent parts – parts of the European Commission, the Council Secretariat and MS diplomats - and in terms of taking up Presidency functions. The priority was business continuity; at headquarters with the creation of a new integrated structure for the new service, and around the world with the roughly 140 Delegations as well as the support to the ongoing (13) crisis management missions and operations.
- Some technical glitches (i.e. encoding of personnel files, IT systems, payment) did happen as we merged separate information systems, but were solved by end of H1

2011. The EEAS is now autonomous as required by the Decision, still it has a relatively lean administrative team, so in a way the real news was how smooth the merger took place. In particular the move to a single building this year will be hugely positive.

- In addition, we faced the challenge of recruiting new staff and preparing our own budget. The EEAS received 8830 applications for 181 posts and conducted 1300 interviews! As regards the budget, we were able to secure an increase which enables us to maintain existing staff levels and to recruit 20 new posts for Delegations.
- On balance, 2011 was a challenging year in which to launch the EEAS. (Like fixing an engine while it's running). It was marked by the eruption of the *Arab Spring* and the *eurozone crisis*, which frankly used up most of the political bandwidth available at leaders' level. Yet we have persevered in our basic aims: to increase the coherence of the EU's foreign policy, to better serve the EU institutions in the area of external relations and to provide continuity with our relations with non-EU countries.

2. Coherence, partnerships and continuity

- Let me focus on these three aspects of our work, to assess the extent to which the EEAS is adding value in the field of CFSP and external relations. After all, adding value is probably the best gauge for evaluating the relative success of the EEAS.
- First, on **Coherence**, the HR has taken over the chairmanship of the FAC from the rotating presidency, she represents the EU externally and is also the VP of the Commission. The EEAS supports her in all these tasks. Part of this is that the EEAS chairs the PSC and 20 other Council working groups. The EEAS prepares and conducts political dialogue meetings with third states at all levels. EU Heads of Delegations chair meetings of EU MS Embassies and represent the EU locally. At the same time the EEAS ensures coherence with the activities of the Commission through the programming of EU assistance as well as in the inter-service consultations that precede COM decisions. The EEAS aims to:
 - foster **conflict prevention, security and stability**. The EU has long had an aspiration to bring together all EU instruments, political, economic and crisis management to better help prevent and resolve conflict.
 - lead the EU's efforts in building **effective multilateralism**, promoting **human rights** and championing the rule of law. We have also been given new opportunities in areas such as EU led mediation and mediation support (new Mediation facility budget line given by EP)
 - integrate **CSDP** under the EEAS was an important decision, serving the goal of coherence. There are currently 13 missions ongoing and the EU is aiming at a possible regional maritime capacity building mission for Somalia.
 - Provide technical expertise on **Development/Programming**, together with the Commission (EEAS has the lead on country programmes and the Commission on thematic ones). EEAS services work for the relevant Commissioners.
- Ensuring coherence was always the key rationale behind the creation of the EEAS as a body supporting the HRVP. I think there are encouraging signs that we can be a facilitating vehicle for the EU institutions and MS by weaving together our

knowledge of foreign policy with the different instruments at our disposal. Two examples:

- The revamped ENP - giving more incentives for those who undertake political and economic reform by granting more money, easier mobility and better market access- has shown that we can do this. What we need to do now is implement it (in this context, the appointment of an EUSR for the Southern Mediterranean aims at ensuring good cooperation with local authorities and other international partners).
- The creation of a Crisis Management Board and ad hoc Crisis Platforms, which bring together all relevant players from the EEAS and the Commission, are tools allowing the EEAS to respond swiftly to political crises as they arise.
- Yet there is still more that we can do in order to narrow the gap between the CFSP elements of our work and the external aspects of the Commission's work such as trade, energy, migration, climate change and other policies.
- Our constraints, however, are partly structural: Lisbon did not give guidelines on handling the different legal approaches to CFSP and community policies. Our objective is to improve our coherence within the constraints of our system (we are not a nation-state!) – I will revert to this point later – in a way that we can better link security with economics, internal with external policies and values with interests, as your report recommends.
- To do all of this, a key interface for the EEAS is the Commission and its services; over the year we had to learn on both sides to adapt to the new institutional roles.
 - We continue to be part of the inter-service work of the Commission
 - We have agreed working arrangements to spell out procedures for our joint work in Delegations, on programming, on communication, and on crisis management.
 - We work closely together with Commission services on the preparation of major meetings with third countries, starting with the Summits with strategic partners.
 - A particularly good illustration of the way in which EEAS/Com can work together seamlessly is the preparations for the external instruments part of the MFF
- Second, on **partnerships**, we have also paved the way for future action. This is about the EEAS as a service provider to the EU institutions and Member States, as well as with the European Parliament.
 - We are a service provider for EC and COM Presidents, providing briefings and analysis and preparing their participation in Summits. We also provide briefings for Commissioners (particularly Füle with around 235 last year, Piebalgs with 51, Georgieva and others), and draft joint papers on (e.g. ENP).
 - We have also established an ongoing dialogue with MS through the Secretaries-General of the Foreign Ministries focused on how to better implement cooperation in, and around, Delegations. We have clarified the scope of diplomatic demarches, encouraged Delegation-Embassy teamwork, created a technology platform to facilitate information sharing between the Delegations and Member States and clarified the parameters for carrying out consular cooperation on the ground.

- It is also possible for those Member States who request it to extend the “pooling and sharing” concept to other aspects, such as sharing of infrastructure, communications and security. We will be looking at ways of hosting Member States “laptop diplomats” in our Delegations, as a way of maintaining a diplomatic presence, while cutting back on overheads.
- The existence of the EEAS does not in any way obviate the continued need for national diplomatic structures. The two must be complementary. However the existence of an extensive network of EU delegations provides the EU Member States a much wider menu of options for structuring their diplomatic presence in a 3rd country.
- Good cooperation with Parliament, also through the implementation of HR Ashton’s declaration on political accountability: The HR/VP herself participated in six plenary sessions this year, AFET and at conference of Presidents. Delegations support MEPs when they are travelling abroad. Heads of Delegation address the EP during their visits to Brussels. EUSRs, heads of CSDP Missions and senior EEAS officials have been regularly present at parliamentary committees, subcommittees and delegations for relations with third countries.
- However, there is room for improvement in our institutional partnerships and as we go forward, we will have an opportunity to address some of the shortcomings. For example, there is room for improving cooperation between the EEAS, the Commission and Member States in the field of crisis management. We can build on the good work already done in the context of evacuation of European citizens in 3rd countries.
- Third, on **continuity**, it is worth highlighting two qualitative changes relative to the rotating Presidency system: continuity within the EU with HR Ashton as the permanent Chair of the FAC and externally when it comes to dealing with third countries and most importantly with the strategic partners. Internally, the presidencies priorities, which inevitably changed every six months, are now replaced by long-term actions translating overall European objectives. So, for example, the EEAS can therefore focus on Southern (response to Arab Spring) and Eastern neighbourhood (Eastern Partnership Summit) simultaneously. Externally, we have now the capacity to build long-term relationships with foreign interlocutors. Continuity, predictability and effectiveness are a fundamental pre-condition for achieving results, for example in our Strategic Partnerships. The EEAS is becoming a more reliable partner precisely by ensuring continuity of interlocutors and policies. Some examples:
 - US: Close cooperation with the State Department. The US State Department and State Secretary Hillary Clinton are hugely supportive.
 - India: Dialogue with National Security Advisor Menon and Krishna at Cathy’s level and Foreign Policy Consultations at my level. Concrete progress on counter-terrorism, cyber security, counter-piracy.
 - China: Launching of the Strategic Dialogue with State Counsellor Dai Bingguo. Concrete cooperation with China on counter-piracy. Regular visits by HRVP Ashton and Presidents Barroso and Van Rompuy.
 - Brazil: Establishment of strategic trilateral action on development cooperation in Africa.

- We are also in the process of negotiating, or actively planning to negotiate PCAs and possible FTAs with a wide range of partners including Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and ASEAN countries. And of course Africa remains a major focus of our attention in terms of development assistance but also in terms of wider political and security developments taking place there.
- Having said that, what we have gained in continuity we have somewhat lost in energy and diplomatic manpower. In the old system, a Presidency usually doubled its staff for the period of one year in order to cope with the challenges and devoted extra political attention to obtaining deliverables in a specific area. We can't replicate this, but have to find ways of injecting a sense of purpose and direction through our chairmanship of the different Council working parties.

3. Challenges for improvement

- As I said in my introduction, we had a sort of baptism of fire, to quote your report. But every challenge throws up new opportunities. For example, the Arab crisis focused minds as to how Europe can contribute to the democratisation process in many Arab countries, by supporting the democratic aspirations of Arab people. The age of austerity may also provide new opportunities to explore new forms of cooperation between Member States and the EEAS in the area of foreign policy. Let me mention some areas where we are trying to consolidate our service:
- : With stronger perceived MS ownership in the past, rotating presidencies were allowed more leeway than the HR/VP and the EEAS. For example, finding agreement on declaration texts does take longer, with less tolerance for EEAS decisions on not taking something on board that what was accorded to presidencies. However, the EEAS has issued 502 declarations this year and 48 demarches.
- **Reinforce EEAS' legitimacy:** We need to work hand in hand with Member States, to ensure their ownership of Foreign Policy actions and, at same time, to provide leadership in forging it. Member States need to be part of this new entity and to feel a degree of ownership; progress towards achieving the 1/3 objective will help in this regard. But similarly, MS also need to give the EEAS room to grow.
- **Communication:** the first year of EEAS was filled by efforts to shape a team and to act and react to world events, less on explaining what was being done. Communication is already being improved, but the EEAS needs to do this better because we actually have a good story to tell.
- **Personnel:** the EEAS aims at creating a team of the best and brightest, but it was/is a challenge to build an esprit de corps among people from 27 nationalities coming from various bureaucratic cultures. In addition the staff have had to live with a huge amount of uncertainty and disruption over the past two years something they have borne with great fortitude. Our talented staff are our greatest asset and I am conscious that they need nurturing and help to adapt to the new environment and to be able to develop their potential to the full. The EEAS needs more manpower but this is difficult to do in the current budgetary context. The EEAS still faces some working conditions constraints: (no protocol service, no conference organisation team, nor own meeting rooms to accommodate more than 1000 yearly meetings). The EEAS needs to use better its limited resources; any legitimate request for reinforcements

would be impossible in the current budgetary context. In particular we need to look at training and close cooperation with MS training programmes.

- **Delegations:** we need a better balance between HQ and Delegations; all the new posts assigned to the EEAS have been put in Delegations; moreover we are starting a process, as part of the ongoing screening of human resources, to transfer a further 20 posts from HQ to delegations in 2012. The transition from Commission Delegations to EU Delegations has been one of the great success stories partly due to the skilful way that EEAS staff managed it, but also due to the extremely loyal cooperation that MS have shown on the ground. Whereas Commission Delegations were seen as a useful but non-core part of the Commission's work, the Copernican revolution brought about by Lisbon is that the Delegations are truly the "external action" part of the EEAS and need to be fully integrated into policy shaping, as well as policy implementation.
- **Budget:** EEAS suffers from a continuing structural deficit of staff and other resources following the transfers from the Commission and the Council which is unlikely to improve given the difficult economic context and pressure from Member States for budget neutrality. Council and Parliament agreed to increase EEAS budget for 2012 by €23.5 million, a +5.0% increase over our budget for 2011. This is an exceptional achievement given the freeze in administrative expenditure elsewhere in the EU. But this increase merely enables EEAS to secure 20 additional posts, and that in future the overall expenditure is likely to be capped.
- **Policy leadership:** Cathy Ashton has already set out her strategy and priorities –and as we consolidate our service and improve our internal and external coherence we will have an opportunity be more proactive, leading policy discussions with the EU institutions and MS, through policy proposals based on high-quality analysis. Our goal should be to help frame foreign policy discussions by leveraging our key assets: our ability to get quick and high-quality reports from Delegations, our ability to steer debates through the Council working parties, and continued engagement from Cathy Ashton in the College of Commissioners. The EEAS is in a unique position, being the only service which can draw on the EU institutions and MS to shape the future conduct of European diplomacy.
- **Strategy:** in order to lead policy discussions the EEAS can replicate some of its initiatives to provide intellectual input through regional and thematic strategies (Sahel, Horn of Africa Strategies). We can also build up on discussions at Gymnich to further develop out policy towards strategic partners.

4. Conclusions

- We had quite a good start in our first year even if much remains to be done. Of course the real test in all of this is the willingness of MS to agree to a more integrated European approach to CFSP. The Lisbon Treaty changed its institutional structures, the hardware so to speak, but the software, namely the decision making process, has remained largely intergovernmental and based on unanimity, at least in CFSP.
- The challenge for the EEAS will be, over the years, to persuade MS that it is much better to act collectively and effectively at European level than at national

level. I believe that the EEAS on its own cannot produce this outcome but I do believe that the existence of a professional and efficient diplomatic service at European level which has the confidence both of the European institutions and of the Member States can be the catalyst for such a “Europeanisation” of foreign and security policy.

- Coming from the trade world I am sometimes envious of the extent to which Europe speaks with one voice in the trade area compared to foreign policy. However it is also true that this was not something which happened overnight. It took the commission many years to build up the expertise and gain the trust of MS in order to arrive at the extremely strong position which the Commission now exerts in the field of trade policy. Of course the treaty context is quite different but I do believe that the EEAS can, over the coming years, play a similar role in helping to strengthen the development of a truly CFSP and that is what makes participating in the building up of the EEAS such an exciting adventure.