

FROM SELF-DOUBT TO SELF-ASSURANCE

The European External Action Service as the
indispensable support for a geopolitical EU



Report by the
Task Force 'EEAS 2.0'

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Rapporteurs: Christophe Hillion
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At a time when the European Union needs to act as a cohesive force to avoid being outmanoeuvred by major powers, EU countries and institutions are still struggling to set aside their differences and focus on the common interest. Despite significant achievements, one crisis-decade and two High Representatives / Vice Presidents (HRVPs) on from the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, the European External Action Service (EEAS) still suffers from a lack of buy-in from member states and other parts of the EU administration.

The tenth anniversary of the Service is an opportune moment to take stock of the EEAS' contribution to forging a more active, coherent and visible EU foreign policy. The timing for such a debate is particularly apt due to the rapid global geopolitical contestation with which the EU is confronted, a challenge which the European Commission has already embraced, as have member states (for instance in the context of shaping up European defence policy directed by a new 'Strategic Compass').

Building on fruitful research cooperation between SIEPS and CEPS in 2012-13 (which led to the publication of a well-received and widely distributed legal commentary on Council Decision 2010/427/EU and a set of recommendations to amend it), our institutes joined forces with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) to consider how the role and functioning of the EEAS can better serve the common interests of the European Union and fulfil its objectives in external action.

Led by the EEAS' former Executive Secretary General Pierre Vimont, a high-level group of (former) diplomats, officials of EU institutions and member states, as well as NGO representatives, academics and think tankers have conducted an independent review of the first decade of the EEAS' operation. Considering defects in the Service's original design, learning from experience, and building upon the achievements of the past decade, this report formulates recommendations with a view to improving the EEAS' functioning and delivery and amplifying its clout, ultimately to (re)invigorate its significance in the development of future EU external action.

The first task at hand for the HRVP is to clarify and direct the Service's sense of purpose to forge a distinctly European brand of diplomacy around three core activities: coordination, policy initiation and representation. Such a distinct brand of diplomacy entails the EEAS' capacity to pioneer and infuse, in all EU policies, the strategic vision and (geo)political direction that will increase the EU's influence on global developments. The hitherto indeterminate nature of the EEAS' political mission may play to its advantage, by making it easier for it to adapt to, and deliver on new expectations.

Indeed, fast-evolving demands require innovative responses, which the Service could and should provide, given its specific features and the complex Union it serves. This is the added value the EEAS should strive to deliver. It should thus further reap the benefits of its core assets,

especially the integrated approach, its diverse in-house diplomatic expertise, a formidable network of delegations around the world, and a single intelligence analysis capacity, to name but a few. Combining those assets with the political legitimacy construed through or derived from the (European) Council and European Parliament would be a good starting point. This requires more initiative from the HRVP/EEAS, more trust from, and better cooperation with its key interlocutors, particularly the Commission and the member states, and a better use of the resources at the EEAS' – indeed the EU's – disposal. Its hybrid character and structural dependence on other protagonists, though a handicap in terms of forging its own identity and *esprit de corps*, indeed offer opportunities to exert thought leadership and build coherence across the whole EU foreign policy machinery. This, in turn, should bolster the Service's ability to support the HRVP in representing a 'whole-of-Europe' approach to the world.

The report reappraises the EEAS' actual and potential mission for the years to come, considering the dynamic ecosystem within which it functions. Distilling key lessons from the first decade of operation of the Service, the report spells out 30 recommendations (priority recommendations presented below) aimed at addressing the identified shortcomings, thereby assisting the EEAS in better fulfilling its mission and updating its *modus operandi*: more *flexibility* to think, propose and act, more *agility* to factor in a rapidly changing international landscape, and more *determination* to put the Union in a leading role.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. With EEAS support, the HRVP should:

- initiate policies covering the whole spectrum of EU external action with the support of, and in cooperation with Commission services;
- make more active use of his/her power of initiative and lead the process through the Council machinery;
- engineer requests by the European Council to submit initiatives, potentially leading to European Council decisions;
- secure member states' support for follow up of conclusions and decisions by the Foreign Affairs Council and by the European Council.

2. Deputising the HRVP should be more actively considered, for instance by involving senior EEAS and Commission officials and/or member states' foreign ministers. Flexible ways in EU representation should be considered by way of member states' core groups that involve the HRVP. EUSRs should be used sparingly and only when there is a demonstrable value-added relative to the EEAS services.

3. The EEAS should:

- produce its brand of non-papers to stimulate discussions, potentially leading to joint communications;
- provide more cognitive input and technical support to the European Council President;
- better pool the in-house expertise provided by different strands of the Service's officials (EU institutions, seconded national diplomats, SNEs) to help contextualise the different stakeholders' perspectives in shaping its own initiatives, thus cultivating their ownership over EU foreign policy in general, and the EEAS in particular, by all these stakeholders;
- expand smart mobility between the service and national foreign ministries; the time spent by national diplomats in the EEAS should be better valued by their home service;
- together with EU institutions and member states, secure compatible means to protect classified information, communications, policy consultation and decisions to encourage information-sharing across the EU external action system;
- strengthen its direction-setting role and boost information-sharing across the Service;
- ensure that EU ambassadors are part of all correspondence and meetings between EU officials and host state authorities, and play a more prominent role on policymaking at HQ level;
- further develop the European diplomatic academy programme for its new recruits and sitting staff.

4. The EEAS and the Commission should:

- strengthen an integrated approach between foreign policy per se and all other policies with an external dimension, notably through the work of a reinvigorated Group for External Coordination (EXCO);
- avoid duplication of their expertise, encourage inter-service mobility and more flexibility in allocation of tasks, particularly in EU delegations;
- collaborate more closely in the (re)allocation of external funding.

“With the support of Member States in the Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament, the EEAS has developed into a modern and operational foreign policy service, equipped to promote EU interests and values in our relations with the rest of the world”.

HRVP Catherine Ashton, *EEAS Review*, July 2013

1. INTRODUCTION

The Treaty of Lisbon expressed the member states’ determination to bolster the role of the European Union on the international scene, in particular by enhancing the coherence of its external action. Not only did the Treaty articulate the global ambitions they should collectively pursue, member states also agreed to establish a joint diplomatic arm to that effect, the European External Action Service (EEAS), to be headed by a newly endowed Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, acting simultaneously as Vice-President of the European Commission (HRVP). A core concern was to overcome some of the negative consequences of the institutional specificity of the Common Foreign and Security Policy in the EU’s external action as it has unfolded since the Maastricht Treaty.

The EEAS was officially launched one year after the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, following the adoption in July 2010 of the Council Decision establishing its organisation and functioning.¹ The process that led up to that point was acrimonious, sparking both interests and antipathy from established EU foreign policy protagonists, including (some of) the member states themselves. Initial ambitions collided with unpropitious circumstances, leaving the Service with several design flaws ultimately codified in the 2010 Decision, with lasting effects on its ability to develop and to meet expectations.

Despite internal reforms and adaptations, scepticism about the EEAS’ actual added value has crept in, while interest in its operation has partly subsided, particularly among big member states. Meanwhile, the international context in which the Service operates has profoundly changed, accelerated by the Covid pandemic. The nature of foreign policy has evolved, as has the role of its traditional actors, chiefly ministries of foreign affairs. The latter’s centrality in defining and conducting foreign policy has been questioned, notably by the proliferation of other players, domestically and worldwide, calling for innovative ways to act on the global level.

The (geo)political aspirations of the European Commission, the increased prominence of the European Council in charting the EU’s international course (overshadowing the significance of the Foreign Affairs Council), and ad hoc diplomatic initiatives from some member states without HRVP involvement, have hampered the development of a distinct role for the EEAS, which was meant to be the EU’s main diplomatic actor.

¹ Council Decision 2010/427/EU establishing the organisation and functioning of the European External Action Service, OJ 2010 L 201/30.

And yet, demands for a stronger and more active European global role have grown louder, both internally and externally. While member states' loyalties towards a common foreign policy have been wanting, and the temptation to renationalise external action has increased, the pandemic has nevertheless pressed them to seek more efficiency in working for collective goals and interests.

Proposals had been aired to alter the way EU 'does' foreign policy, starting with a full realisation of the Lisbon potential and active use of untapped resources, both in the area of CFSP (including further recourse to the constructive abstention mechanism, and use of qualified majority voting)² and beyond. Also, the initially confined conversation about Europe's strategic autonomy has become mainstreamed in EU parlance, calling for increased common action not only in traditional security and defence matters but equally in policy fields as diverse as "digital, space, oceans/maritime; energy; connectivity; economic and cooperation instruments; bio-tech",³ and even in the external use of the euro.

The present report does not intend to engage with those proposals. Rather, it focuses on the EEAS and takes stock of the first decade of its existence – which, admittedly is a short time for any organisation to find its feet in the world of diplomacy. Considering shortcomings in the Service's design and weaknesses that have appeared along the way, and building upon its achievements, the report formulates recommendations with a view to improving the EEAS' clout, functioning and delivery, ultimately to (re)invigorate its significance for future EU external action. The tenth anniversary of the EEAS indeed presents a unique opportunity to upgrade its *modus operandi* to the benefit of the Union and its member states as well as the Service itself: more *flexibility* to think, propose and act, more *agility* to factor in a rapidly changing international landscape, and more *determination* to put the Union in a leading role.

As HRVP Josep Borrell has underlined: "this is not a moment to think or act small. But a moment for investing in an ambitious Europe".⁴ His appeal for a "whole of Europe" approach to managing vulnerabilities and dependencies, shoring up "collective discipline" and fostering a "real common strategic culture" requires major investment, politically but also financially. In that spirit, the EEAS could (and should) articulate and embody a "diplomacy 2.0"⁵ for the Union;

² Standing out among those proposals, see the Non-paper by Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden on strengthening the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy ahead of the informal lunch discussion at the Foreign Affairs Council on December 9, 2019; see the 2018 Meseberg Declaration of France and Germany "Renewing Europe's promises of security and prosperity"; and the 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.

³ "Reflection paper" to FAC on strategic autonomy, as reported in *Politico*, 2 December 2020.

⁴ Speech by HRVP Josep Borrell at the German Ambassadors Conference on 25 May 2020. The points were repeated in almost the exact words by Heiko Maas on the eve of the German Presidency of the EU Council.

⁵ EU ambassadors conference, 13 November 2020: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/89137/eu-ambassadors-conference-2020_en

a uniquely European brand of diplomacy that provides a common (geo)political perspective to the integrated use of the EU's and/or member states' assets across all policy areas.

The report is structured as follows: the second section reappraises the EEAS' actual and potential mission for the years to come, considering the evolving ecosystem within which it functions. The third section presents key lessons from the first decade of operation of the Service, covering both successes and key impediments, focusing on cooperation from other EU foreign policy protagonists and the resources at its disposal to operate. The fourth and last section spells out in more prescriptive detail a variety of recommendations aimed at addressing the established shortcomings, thereby assisting the EEAS to better fulfil its reappraised mission. If and when the Conference on the Future of Europe goes ahead, further consideration could indeed be given to more far-reaching proposals to overcome the persistent bipolarity in the EU's external action.

2. (RE)APPRAISING THE PURPOSE OF THE EEAS

This section recalls the rationale behind the creation of the EEAS and on that basis, appraises the key functions it should fulfil.

2.1 The rationale

The EEAS' assignment, its precise role in the general integration process, and position in the EU foreign policy system in particular, have never been clearly stated. Its purpose may only be deduced indirectly from the complex mandate assigned to the HRVP it is intended to assist. The Treaty of Lisbon that envisaged the creation of the Service refers to it only once, in a provision of an organisational and procedural nature. Similarly, the subsequent 2010 Council Decision was drafted as an administrative charter rather than as a mission statement for the EEAS. As prescribed by the Treaty, it sets out the details related to the "organisation and functioning" of the Service (i.e. composition, tasks, and budget) but stops short of articulating its *political mandate*. As this was not the purpose of this Council Decision, one could have expected it to be complemented by a mission statement. Indeed, despite a Treaty empowerment to that effect, no clear strategic guidance has been provided by the European Council to help the EEAS identify its mission: neither the 2016 EU Global Strategy nor the ensuing implementation reports address the question of the EEAS' role in pursuing EU strategic goals.

From the moment of conception, various options have been mooted based on different institutional (vested) interests and considerations, but with no appetite on the part of the stakeholders to make a definitive choice. Should the EEAS act as a kind of European Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with full functional and political autonomy, providing the sought-after unity in EU external action? Or should it be a mere Secretariat General in charge of coordinating the external actions of the respective players inside the EU system, while striving to maintain its overall coherence? Should it limit itself to being the voice of the Union's foreign policy, dedicated simply to expressing the common positions agreed by the EU actors, if any? Or could it claim to play a role akin to that of a policy planning unit, tasked with thinking out a more innovative diplomacy for the whole Union?

For want of a decision, the European diplomatic service ended up incorporating the EU's procedural intricacies that its establishment was meant partly to overcome. The EEAS has been hesitantly playing one or other of these different roles according to changing circumstances, and where other protagonists have allowed it to perform them. This institutional vagrancy has not gone without tension between the different players. In the absence of clarity in the EEAS' mission, mistrust has crept in. It has left the diplomatic body with no clear and firm institutional or professional identity and hampered on the EEAS' *esprit de corps* while perplexing the outside world.

After ten years of existence, the crippling question of the Service's *raison d'être* should therefore be addressed, considering both the initial ambitions behind its creation and the evolving mission of the EU in the global arena. What should the EEAS do in the next ten (plus) years, in light of its specific features and assets? How to make the Service fit for the EU (and its member states') evolving ambitions on the global stage?

2.2 Back to basics

The creation of the EEAS stemmed from the generally acknowledged need to cohere the multiple facets of EU external relations, and to combine the fragmented services in charge of the different policy strands. Establishing a single body to coalesce different policy and institutional frameworks was to help the Union pursue a more unified external agenda, and thus increase its global influence. In supporting the HRVP as permanent chair of the Foreign Affairs Council and replacing the rotating presidency, the EEAS was also conceived to foster continuity in EU foreign policy.

According to the Treaty on European Union and the 2010 Council Decision, the EEAS is indeed intended to play a supportive, though not servile, function in foreign policy making. Its name makes it plain: it has been created as a 'Service' whose purpose is to assist existing EU institutions, and to cooperate with member states' diplomatic services. While established as a 'functionally autonomous body', it is not destined to operate as a distinct 'institution' on a par, let alone in competition with the Commission and Council. It works *with*, as well as *for* them.

*The EEAS is called a service for a reason. It is a privilege to serve the EU and its citizens and help create a better world. To work for Europe, worldwide.*⁶

The Service first and foremost assists the HRVP, who in turn serves several masters, with different institutional identities and political allegiances. Through his/her various functions in the Commission, in the Council as well as in the European Council,⁷ and relying on the EEAS, s/he is expected to play a key role in initiating and implementing foreign policy, in conducting political dialogue with third parties, in expressing the Union's position in international organisations and negotiations, and in representing the EU abroad.

Assisting the interinstitutional and multitasking HRVP, and its threefold composition (former officials of the Commission, of the Council General Secretariat and member states' diplomats), the EEAS is structurally connected to key EU foreign policy actors, which it ultimately serves. The Service operates as the *trait d'union* between those players, including member states, and between policy frameworks, from the CFSP to other EU policy areas with an international dimension. Its hybrid nature, and specific bridging point in the EU foreign policy network allow it to perform three interrelated services: coordination (as *coherence builder*), policy initiation (as *factory of ideas*), and representation (as *face of the Union abroad*).

⁶ HRVP Borrell, "The EEAS at 10 – For Europe, worldwide", Blog, 2 December 2020.

⁷ Among his/her other functions the HRVP also heads the European Defence Agency.

Coordination: the EEAS as coherence-builder

A key task of the HRVP, assisted by the EEAS, is to coordinate the multiplicity of actors, interests, and procedural frameworks that characterise the EU's external action. The purpose of this coordination is to foster coherence in policy formulation and implementation (understood as the absence of contradictions and quest for synergies), continuity and in turn effectiveness in EU foreign policy. Building coherence constitutes an obligation of intent, which can be fulfilled in different ways, ranging from coordination (e.g. EEAS in a mere secretarial role) to integration (e.g. through leadership).

First, the HRVP *conducts* the Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy, and carries it out as mandated by the Council and European Council. His/her participation in the European Council and role as *primus inter pares* among foreign ministers allows him/her to be the link between the Council foreign policy machinery (including PSC and COREPER) and the highest EU political echelons.

In assisting the HRVP's coherence-building task, the remit of the EEAS is broader than that of a foreign ministry. With the support of the EEAS, the HRVP also carries out the Union's Common Security and Defence policy. The new military headquarters (MPCC) hosted by the Service thus oversees the deployment of missions and operations mandated by the Council. And under the authority of the Deputy SG for CSDP and crisis response, the EEAS monitors and guides the progress made by member states in the development of military capabilities (it does so in cooperation with the European Defence Agency) and controls arms exports with a view to international disarmament and non-proliferation.

Second, beyond foreign, security and defence policy, but also in other domains, such as development, trade, environment, energy and transport, the EEAS assists the HRVP in coordinating external actions initiated elsewhere (among others the Commission as regards the latter domains, and national administrations in particular as regards the former) and integrates these in a way that corresponds to broader political and strategic frameworks and the EU's global objectives.

The HRVP thus coordinates *both* the external dimensions of EU policies/instruments/budgets within the Commission (cf. EXCO), the latter's initiatives and the EU CFSP/CSDP which s/he otherwise helps to develop, and member states' positions, both in the context of the Council machinery (chairing of the Foreign Affairs Council and working groups), and in the field through the EU delegations.

Given its supportive function, and the limited assets at its disposal, the EEAS's coherence-building task presupposes the active cooperation and goodwill of other branches of the EU foreign policy system, be they the Commission, (European) Council and their respective presidents, or member states. The HRVP has a key responsibility to clarify the benefits for all stakeholders of this coordination. The EEAS' supportive role also depends on its trustworthiness. The confidentiality of negotiations and secrecy of cables and documents are critical to any genuine European diplomacy.

At the same time, the coordinating role of the HRVP within the European Commission hinges on the way in which that responsibility is defined by the President of the Commission, which in turn determines the actual remit of the EEAS. Similarly, cohering member states' positions in the Council and in its working groups depends on their willingness and interests to be coordinated. It is contingent more generally on member states' commitment to act through the Union on foreign policy matters, especially since the HR and the EEAS lack the (legal) teeth of the Commission to secure implementation and compliance in other areas of EU external relations.

Policy initiation: the EEAS as a factory of ideas

In substantive terms, the External Action Service acts as policy initiator in support of the HRVP. Having inherited the Council's services dealing with CFSP and CSDP, the EEAS covers topics customarily falling within the purview of both MFAs (ministries of foreign affairs) and ministries of defence.

The Service assists the High Representative in promoting and defending EU positions, values, interests and strategies, both internally (by coordinating 27 member states' actions notably in the Council), and externally by ensuring effective use of EU/common financial and political instruments available, through, for example, *démarches*, statements, visits, international negotiations, and in providing support for EU citizens, through EUDs (EU delegations). Such interlocutions are perhaps nowhere as acutely important as in peace mediation. The Service equally prepares the EU's sanctions policy and to that end, assists economic operators and administrations of governments of both member states and third countries with guidance on notifications and reporting questions.

As mentioned above, the Service also assists the HR as VP in relation to all external policies initiated by the Commission (trade, climate, digital, for example). Beyond coordination, the EEAS builds on and *embeds* different policy considerations and interests in a broader strategic and political context, framed by EU objectives and principles. These are potentially drawn up by the European Council, and fed by its own intelligence and situational awareness, both from within (cf. the geographic and thematic managing directorates supported by EU.INTCEN and EUMS.INT acting as the Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity/SIAC), and through the EU delegations in the field. The EEAS' role is thus to articulate the (geo)politics of EU policies. The strategic policy planning division is the Service's in-house think tank that is tasked with engaging in innovative foresight analysis to prepare the EU for longer-term policy action. Taken together, the EEAS is expected to articulate a distinct European approach, complementing and adding value to the member states' own positions, as a basis for initiatives floated by the High Representative.

Access to specific and complementary intelligence held by other protagonists, and therefore their support and cooperation, is essential for the EEAS to perform this task too. Rather than attempting to duplicate them, the EEAS is in a position to tap into all the resources available to the EU system of external action: both across the institutional framework (for instance through its umbilical links with the Commission and the Council), and at the level of the member states

(in Council formations, working groups and agencies such as EU SATCEN, for example). The Commission's unique expertise is an obvious point of reference in this regard.

Another key asset at the disposal of the EEAS is the extraordinary pool of expertise that seconded national diplomats provide. Beyond the information gleaned from PSC discussions, these diplomats offer insights into what each member state thinks in terms of foreign policy. They have an ability to explain underlying trends and historical legacies, and thus to assist the EEAS into engineering policy initiatives that take different national concerns and perspectives on board. This is a resource the EEAS needs to tap, also to increase member state buy-in down the line. In the same vein, Seconded National Experts (SNEs) constitute an extra cognitive resource on an ad hoc basis. For the EU.INTCEN and EUMS.INT, analysts and experts seconded from member states' intelligence and security services build the core capacity of those specific EEAS' directorates which produce intelligence supported civil and military situational awareness to EU decision making.

In short, based on the expertise it can gather from within and across the EU family, the EEAS has the potential to operate as a factory of ideas, exerting thought-leadership on the politics of global issues, and generating innovative ways of conducting European diplomacy to position the EU more strategically. The EEAS can be a point of reference for all stakeholders who should have a genuine interest in using the distinctly European analysis that the Service has the capacity, and key task, to develop and provide. It can also articulate the cognitive input to stimulate a more audacious use of the High Representative's right of initiative.

Representation: the EEAS as the face of the Union in the field

The Treaty of Lisbon transformed the Commission's delegations around the world into EU delegations (EUDs). Administratively belonging to the EEAS, the more than 140 delegations and offices represent the EU as a whole to the rest of the world: in third countries, international conferences and at international organisations. They (and the EU's Special Representatives – 'EURs') act in close cooperation with member states' diplomatic and consular missions to contribute to the formulation and implementation of the common positions and external actions of the Union, thus fostering the sense of a common European diplomatic community to which all European (EU and member states) diplomats on the ground belong.

This novel 'whole-of-Europe' approach by the EEAS to representing the EU is derived from the hybrid nature of the HRVP's position whose office holder has, as said, the power to represent the EU across the whole spectrum of the Union's competences: as HR on CFSP matters and as VP of the Commission in areas where the Commission enjoys representation prerogatives. This allows the delegations to be the face (eyes, ears and mouth) of the whole Union abroad.

The network of EUDs is a formidable asset at the disposal of the EU foreign policy machinery, a critical element of the EEAS' added value and legitimacy. It practically and conspicuously contributes to all the core EEAS functions. The wide geographical coverage of the EUDs network allows a global visibility for the Union. All the more so as, like the EEAS headquarters and the HRVP they serve, delegations cover the whole spectrum of EU activities. They thereby embody

and operationalise the integrated approach that the EEAS purports to articulate and promote, bolstering the sense of a unified EU stance on the global stage. Such presence on the ground is particularly valuable for member states that do not have the same diplomatic coverage. It not only allows them a broader representation, though indirectly; it is also a cognitive resource on third countries that they would not directly access otherwise. EUDs thus contribute to developing the EEAS function as an information and situational awareness hub. EUDs also provide support for EEAS coordination and implementation tasks in the field, particularly in international fora, and the protection of and support for EU citizens abroad.

The EEAS' representative function on the ground is, at that level too, highly dependent on the goodwill of other key protagonists it serves, be they member states or EU institutions and particularly the Commission, from whom the network has been inherited and whose staff remains a critical component of EUDs. The EEAS is expected to represent the Union in the world and to be the first port of call for both domestic interlocutors and other international representatives in the field. Permitting EU delegations effectively to perform their duties depends on the Union's foreign policy protagonists' trust and assets.

In sum

As noted by HRVP Federica Mogherini:

“All these goals can only be achieved by a truly united and committed Europe. Joining all our cultures together to achieve our shared goals and serve our common interests is a daily challenge, but it is also our greatest strength: diversity is what makes us strong” (Foreword, EU Global Strategy, 2016).

The EEAS' focal task is to add value by relying on its core assets, especially the integrated approach, the involvement of national diplomats, a formidable network of delegations around the world, and a single intelligence analysis capacity. Fast-evolving demands require innovative diplomatic ways, which the Service can provide, given its specific features. Now is time to clarify the EEAS' role to help the Union become the (geo)political actor that it is increasingly expected to be. The hitherto indeterminate nature of the Service's mission may indeed play to its advantage by making it easier for it to adapt to and deliver on new expectations, and ultimately to craft its own brand of diplomacy.

Similarly, its hybrid character and structural dependence on other protagonists, though a handicap in terms of forging its own identity and *esprit de corps*, offer opportunities to exert thought leadership and build coherence across the whole EU foreign policy machinery. This, in turn, should bolster the EEAS' ability to support the HRVP in representing a 'whole-of-Europe' approach to the world. Fulfilling this potential requires addressing the lessons learned over the past ten years.

3. LESSONS LEARNT

The ability of the EEAS to fulfil its mission depends not only on the clarity and shared articulation of its purpose within the EU external action machinery (section 2), but also on the ensuing *trust and cooperation* from the other protagonists it is supposed to serve and support (3.1), as well as the appropriate allocation and deployment of *resources* to that effect (3.2). The very conception of the EEAS triggered fears of both the re-intergovernmentalisation (or even the re-nationalisation) of communitarised external action, and the supranationalisation of CFSP/CSDP, generating suspicion and curbing appetite to provide it with the appropriate means to thrive. Looking back at the first ten years of its existence, the report identifies trust- and asset-related weaknesses and sheds light on possible ways for the EEAS ultimately to deliver (better) on its threefold tasks (section 3.3).

3.1 Strengthen trust and cooperation

Within the EEAS

The blending of cultures that the merger of Commission and Council external relations services into one Service was meant to generate, ultimately leading to a European (geo)political mindset, has not yet fully materialised.

Prior to the Lisbon Treaty, High Representative Javier Solana had already tried to overcome the civil/military partitions by creating a single intelligence analysis capacity, which is essential for decision-making. Since the creation of the Service, successive HRVPs have regularly tweaked the organigramme to try and adapt the EEAS to changing realities, and to foster an *esprit de corps*. Yet, partly as a result of the 2010 Council decision on the EEAS, the distinct institutional cultures have remained and even ossified.

The EEAS is in effect caught between an aspiration to build an *esprit de corps*, which requires a certain autonomy, and the constitutional reality within which it has to operate. Indeed, some of the internal entrenchment is due to the lingering Treaty-based specificity of the security and defence component, which remains separated from the political and global goods sections and risk (like MFAs and MoDs at the national level) leading their own lives. The successive adjustments to the organisation and functioning of the EEAS, while commendable, have sometimes been at the expense of the Commission's and/or member states' willingness to engage with the Service (cf. the choice of location for the office of the HRVP in the EEAS).

Within the complex structure of the EEAS nevertheless lies an opportunity that should not be wasted: to better 'integrate' the (three) main building blocks of the architecture (Commission, Council, member states). Efforts to break down (cultural) barriers and silos, mix and move staff around should thus be redoubled.

For instance, moving EEAS personnel between CSDP parts of the house and the geographical managing directorates is a practice worth developing further. Also, the proliferation of functional groupings, both at HQ and in the field (e.g. *WhatsApp* groups for crisis managers, meetings for heads of political sections) has been appreciated as conducive to generating trust within the Service.

More generally, the continuing mobility of staff, smarter recruitment, and collective training ought to be considered. The Service needs to develop career paths for its staff, and give prospects to all to develop within the hybrid system of the EEAS and national foreign services. The idea of seconding national diplomats for longer periods or even permanently raises the risk of severing the ties with MFAs, a matter of concern for smaller member states that might be more sceptical about a freer recruitment in the EEAS. The continued mobility between member states and the Service requires the recognition from MFAs that serving in the EEAS is an important career step.

To further improve loyalty in and operation of the system, it is important to strike a geographical balance among member states in Head of Delegation (HoD) representation, and across the Service more generally. Experience suggests though that recruitment of HoDs straight from MFAs may put these national diplomats and the EU Delegations which they are supposed to lead at a disadvantage. This is because they often lack the necessary knowledge about the functioning of the EU, the contacts and trust from headquarters and the Commission to perform their duties satisfactorily.

Collective introductory (skills and policy) training for national diplomats is important to generate a European *esprit de corps* and it should be applied to EEAS staff too. This builds personal networks and heightens sensitivity to EU issues. More could be done, building on this experience. An idea being entertained is to create a new 'European Diplomatic Academy' which could train new recruits, including national diplomats, and thus help generate a European diplomatic culture. To avoid additional structures or costs, and to draw on the experiences of existing academies in member states, which it should not duplicate, pilot projects are being developed around the idea of an EU diplomatic academy *programme* involving joint (hybrid, i.e. in-person and virtual) training.

Ultimately though, strengthening the *esprit de corps* internally requires a better strategic steer from the top. This is neither simply a question of transferring values through, for example, in-service training, nor is it so much about the style of leadership by the HRVP, which is always open to criticism for either doing too much or too little. It is not about the specificity of the post either; all EU jobs are heavily scrutinised. The stumbling block is about a lack of investment in showing leadership to staff: there is no clear and continuous message about policy to follow, feedback to proposals or appraisal of work. Regular, structured management meetings with the HRVP and his/her cabinet, and with the Secretary General and senior managers (inter alia through the introduction of '*jours fixes*') would therefore be welcome.

In interactions with institutions

The consequences of establishing the EEAS as a ‘functional autonomous body’ have been twofold. On the one hand, the EEAS is treated as an institution with its own personnel, which led to a loss of flexible arrangements, in particular with the Commission but also with the General Secretariat of the Council. On the other hand, the Service was deprived of operational funding: the Commission keeps its hands on the till, including the management of a small budget for the administration of CFSP. While the co-location of the Commission’s Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI) service with the EEAS has helped to facilitate cooperation, trust-building efforts at headquarters level have not been successful across the board: the Service is still caught in a zero sum game between the Commission and the member states, which each want to keep their prerogatives. The EEAS should have been the catalyst for a more integrated approach; this exists on paper, in particular to prevent and respond to external conflicts (for which the EEAS has created a designated directorate), but it is still missing for EU external action writ large.

More cooperation needed with the Commission

Cooperation between the Service and the Commission has been tangible in the fields of environment and climate change; even in migration, where the EEAS took the initiative of organising the Valletta summit and brought relevant stakeholders around the table (DGs HOME, INTPA, NEAR, as well as external partners like Australia). The EEAS also contributes to the understanding of the ‘politics’ of energy and fisheries (e.g. with Norway and the UK), which will remain essential, especially considering the importance of the single market in those relations. Raising the profile of HoDs has helped in discussing trade and other Commission-managed policies in third countries. The implementation of those policies should, however, be left to the line DGs of the Commission. Indeed, the EEAS should support the Commission.

In spite of the efforts of the Commissioners’ Group on External Action (2014-19), its successor under the current administration (Commissioners’ Group for a Stronger Europe in the World), and the weekly meetings of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO),⁸ which all aim to better align the internal and external aspects of the Commission’s work and to coordinate positions to be taken in international fora, among others, in practice it has proved hard to bridge the two sides of the *rue de la Loi* and match instruments with the political capital raised in the Council to realise the EU’s foreign policy and security objectives. These efforts, to tie together the different strands of external action, are hampered by a multitude of (f)actors, including a reluctance by the HRVP to intrude on (i.e. coordinate) files managed by (fellow) Commissioners (e.g. trade).

⁸ EXCO is co-chaired by President Ursula von der Leyen’s diplomatic advisor and the HRVP Borrell’s deputy head of cabinet. See European Commission – “The Working Methods of the von der Leyen Commission: Striving for more at home and in the world”, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_19_6657.

As regards the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the limitations of a technical and process-led approach to both the Eastern Partnership and the southern Mediterranean countries are obvious. While the implementation of Commission-managed (association) agreements and assistance programmes remain the backbone of the policy, the EEAS' obvious value-added lies in providing the contextual (geo)political analysis thereof.

As for development cooperation, the initial attempts at moving all of DG DEV (including the development policy directorate) to the EEAS failed, but despite initial hiccups a *modus operandi* has been found and there has been significant progress in cohering the political side (strategising, etc.). Indeed, development assistance cannot be separated from other strands of EU foreign policy. Although the influence of the EEAS is not significant in development policy, it has been greater here than in other areas. There are multiple reasons for this, but chiefly what the EEAS brings to the table is the programming of aid, the definition of country strategies, and the rethink about how development (writ large) is done, with a greater focus on tackling conflicts. The improved management of the political side of cooperation budgets (leaving intact DG INTPA's prerogative to turn programmes into projects) is expected to inspire a good dynamic regarding the new consolidated instrument for neighbourhood and international cooperation (NDICI).⁹

It is true that the EU's policies in trade, neighbourhood relations and humanitarian assistance, to name just a few examples, would not necessarily be better served if the EEAS, with its limited resources were to be more involved. The EEAS should not try to replicate the specific policy competence of the European Commission. Rather, like MFAs vis-à-vis line ministries at national level, the EEAS should provide the Commission with situational awareness and political understanding of the environment in which the EU works, and to partners' understanding of the strategic positioning of the EU. Here, the role played by the geographic and thematic managing directorates, EU.INTCEN and EUMS.INT (through their structured cooperation SIAC) and the EUDs is of immense value. Usefulness of the EEAS leads to trust in the body. All services should therefore double down in making existing coordination platforms a success. The better they work, the more the EEAS can benefit from the Commission instead of trying to develop its own expertise and play a bigger role in implementation. Conversely, the Commission would be well-advised to take on board the EEAS (geo)political understanding in pursuing more sectoral policies, viz. trade, or fisheries. Incidentally, the political recognition that the EEAS' Deputy SGs have a responsibility of a magnitude similar to Commission DGs would help a great deal in this respect.

Cultivating parliamentary support

All parliaments appreciate foreign policy discussions, despite their limited influence on this terrain. The European Parliament (EP) is no different. Yet its clout has significantly increased in the EU's external action, both in principle and in practice. Engagement with the EP is important

⁹ The risk does exist, however, that short-term security concerns pushed by internal affairs constituencies trump long-term external objectives of poverty alleviation.

to beef up the credibility and reliability of EEAS. The EP (not just the foreign affairs committee, but also those for development and trade, as well as special delegations) has been a critical but also the most loyal supporter of the EEAS. It can hold the Service's political leadership (HRVP) to account; and even if it cannot confirm their appointments the EP organises hearings of heads of delegation.

While formal accountability arrangements may be weak and the EP's value added beyond areas under its legislative control is limited in a formal sense, the influence of the Parliament over the EEAS through the budget process is significant. The challenge for the EEAS, therefore, is to engage with the EP in a manner which allows it to give its views on the strategic direction of the cooperation programmes without locking the management of these programmes into restrictive legal frameworks.

The EEAS can also link up to other agendas (e.g. climate, development, management of sanctions and counter sanctions, etc.), some of which might be equally of concern to national parliaments, with which the EEAS could interact, given their roles downstream in ratifying EU comprehensive agreements (e.g. DCFTAs), for example. Raising the level of understanding of national parliaments by allowing EEAS officials to participate in hearings could therefore be a good thing.

In interactions with member states

Many of the challenges faced by the EEAS are those that MFAs struggle with; a diffusion of (dis)information channels and the lightning speed of direct communication has led to a growing presence and influence of other actors (including Prime Ministers' offices, line ministries, intelligence services) in the realm of diplomacy. At the EU level, the impact of what Ministers of Foreign Affairs (or their CFSP Ambassadors in the PSC) can do to determine the EU's external course of action has been waning. While Foreign Ministries dealt with the MFF 20 years ago, they have since lost their position to chair the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) through the rotating presidency, and no longer participate in the European Council, where the hottest topics are decided. The EEAS is thus tethered to a partner (FAC) that has lost steam.

The High Representative's participation in summits of the European Council offers an opportunity, if the European Commission and the Council General Secretariat cooperate, to (re)mobilise the entire column of foreign policymaking (including FAC and PSC) and for the EEAS to frame both up- and downstream dynamics.

Ambivalent ministries of foreign affairs

In practice, the EEAS is not 'at the service of member states' (it takes directions from the HRVP) but works with the ministries of foreign affairs. Complementarity is the name of the game. The snag is that member states have different interests in what the EEAS should mean to them. Small and medium-sized member states, for instance, see HRVP/EEAS initiatives as conducive to forging much needed common EU positions that carry more weight than their individual positions or actions and serve collective interests. The EEAS can also provide representation in

third countries where smaller member states themselves are not present. By contrast, big member states rather see the HRVP, the EEAS and EUDs as vehicles that are sometimes needed but not always, to increase the leverage they already have.

On the side of policymaking, transparency has worked well in the PSC and COREPER when member states give talking space to the EEAS in an effort to be mutually supportive (on sanctions, for example). Member states' intelligence services are supposed to be key partners too, mainly by enabling EU.INTCEN and EUMS.INT to offer intelligence-based situational awareness. On the military side this appears to be coordinated in a stricter formal way than it is the case with civil external services while internal services follow yet their distinct procedures and policies.

EEAS promoted regular consultative intergovernmental formats at coordinators' level should be considered in addition to already existing consultations with the different groups of services (civil, military, external internal) for policies concerning member states' support to INTCEN and EUMS.INT. These policy formats should help define the aims, scope and nature of intelligence support to EU situational awareness as well as the related burden-sharing between EU and member states in their contributions in staff, infrastructure and budget.¹⁰

And a reluctant Council Secretariat General

The EEAS' cooperation with the General Secretariat of the Council (GSC) still has its fair share of difficulties. For instance, attempts have been made by distrustful member states, through the GSC, to rein in some processes that were simplified after the creation of the Service. A case in point relates to the procedure of signing up to joint statements and other legally non-binding texts, which now involves several stages of approval before a text is issued. Procedures in the preparation of summits have also become more complicated, with more hands-on involvement by member states.

There is a similar mistrust in the EEAS' role as chair of thematic and geographical working groups of the Council. Here, the EEAS is in an unenviable position: to speak up against its own proposal as a conciliator of member states' interests is an impossible task. The same applies to the High Representative's dual but irreconcilable role of initiating policy action and chairing the Foreign Affairs Council. Of course, the High Representative could be expected to use his/her political mandate more to propose action, beyond the valuable publication of op-eds and blog posts to move the doctrinal debate. But when interests collide, the way the FAC works is not conducive to arriving at common positions, which leaves all stakeholders frustrated and as a consequence EU leverage is diminished.

In general, the FAC has lost the dynamic of working with rotating presidencies: there is still some expectation that the EEAS should come up with new ideas every six months. This is

¹⁰ Capacities of INTCEN and EUMS.INT should also be augmented with a multiannual development plan in terms of staff, building-, IT and communication infrastructure thereby enhancing volume and timeliness of advice to the PSC/COSI and Commission services.

aggravated by fraying trust among member states and the difficulty of rallying all of them behind one position. While the FAC has lost a biannual injection of energy from the rotating presidency, the continuity provided by a permanent chair is important and elevates the role of foreign affairs. Calls for a return to the pre-Lisbon system should be resisted, but smart use of the rotating presidency should nevertheless be considered. The delegation of the HR's prerogative to the Finnish foreign minister over the crisis in Sudan in 2019 is a case in point.

Member states' involvement in the preparation of FAC meetings and important policymaking could assist decision-making in other ways as well, for instance through the provision of expertise (e.g. Belgium on the Democratic Republic of Congo; Denmark on Mali) or working groups on particular agenda points (cf. Venezuela).¹¹ These are interesting models to spearhead 'common' foreign and security policymaking, and offset the temptation of bi- or mini-lateral models of member states that do not involve the HRVP.

In interactions with partners

Recent research has found that external images of the EU have closely followed the EU's actual performance over the past (poly-)crisis decade, albeit filtered through the powerful lenses of local and regional concerns and sensibilities.¹² While some traditional perceptions have proved resilient – as in the case of the EU as an economic powerhouse (one that bounced back from the eurozone sovereign debt crisis), a global leader for combating climate change and 'greening' the economy or, conversely, a frequently divided community, others have been severely diminished by the EU's crisis responses – such as the EU as a bastion of human rights (an illusion lost during the so-called migration crisis of 2015) or a self-proclaimed geopolitical power that is unable to stabilise its own neighbourhood. This has resulted in a wider 'external images v. self-representation' gap and presents a challenge for EU public diplomacy around the world. The EEAS has an important role to play in shaping positive images of the EU worldwide and boosting the credibility of the Union as an international actor.

To that end, it should first promote empathetic listening of its EUDs to local constituencies and stakeholders, so as to assess the local net impact and perceptions of EU policies. It is only by incorporating the findings generated from such feedback loops that it will be able to effectively fine-tune the Union's external communications, targeting future generations and opinion-influencers from different sectors and using digital diplomacy, with an eye to the actual

¹¹ See also the Non-paper by Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden on strengthening the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy ahead of the informal lunch discussion at the Foreign Affairs Council on 9 December 2019.

¹² See N. Chaban and S. Lucarelli, "Reassessing external images of the EU: Evolving narratives in times of crisis", *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. 26, Issue 1, forthcoming. See also European Commission, "Flash Eurobarometer 450: Future of Europe – views from outside the EU" (2017), <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/download/DocumentKy/79589>; and PPMI, NCRE & NFG, "Analysis of the perception of the EU and EU's policies abroad" (2015), http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/fpi/showcases/eu_perceptions_study_en.htm.

contexts and avoiding conveying abstract and distant messages that do not resonate with local sensitivities.

Partners of the EU have greater trust in the EU than in individual member states, because the Union is perceived to be more transparent about its objectives and to offer more solid checks and balances to keep it from pushing single/narrow-minded interests. The EU also displays a greater sense of awareness that the needs of externals must be better taken into account. The UN Secretary General and many other international partners are on record as saying that their organisations and countries need a united EU and a strong partnership with the Union for them to thrive.¹³ But because of the internal challenges to cobble together a ‘common’ foreign policy, external action outputs are often seen by EU actors as outcomes. Partners show less appreciation for the notion that the EU has been successful for simply agreeing on a position.

To that end too, the EU needs to be more pragmatic in bringing together its different dimensions for external use, to be more approachable and understandable for the wider world. Seen from the outside, it is easy to get the impression that the role of the EEAS is to be a political secretary for the HRVP and the member states, but just a messenger service for the line DGs of the Commission. It would be more helpful if external actors did not have to deal with several institutions (for example that FPI is directed by the Commission). Those outside of the EU do not see and do not want to see the Union’s internal cuisine. Rather, a single EU voice and coherence is sought by partners.

In the field, the upgrade from Commission to fully fledged EU delegations has been welcomed because they provide a common sense of purpose between all services of the EU, with a geographical focus and a physical meeting point. As a first port of call for the host authorities and other in-country actors, the EUDs’ increased ability to join up the different EU players, policies and instruments has allowed for better coordinated action and for a more integral vision to mature, which is greatly appreciated by local partners and interlocutors.¹⁴

Civil society organisations (both within the EU and around the world) continue to see the EEAS as a standard bearer of EU values. Indeed, the promotion of values is still a core interest of the EU, and the last hope for many outsiders. Civil society (widely writ, as in including academia and business associations) and more reformist elements in the administrations of third countries believe the EU is more likely to pursue a value-driven agenda than individual European nations, seen as more purely interest-driven. Hence, in many African countries there is a preference on the part of civil society for EU engagement on behalf of Europe rather than the lead role being played by former – sometimes competing – colonial power(s).

¹³ “A ‘strong and united Europe’ has never been more needed, declares UN chief Guterres”, UN News, 30 May 2019.

¹⁴ EU delegations’ knowledge of the political situation on the ground has also given the EEAS at headquarters an edge and helped to engender a more common understanding at EU level.

3.2 Re-evaluate EEAS resources

Staff

The decision to elevate the EEAS to the status of a separate ‘institution’ for staff purposes not only entailed the separation of its personnel from Commission and Council staff but also, as indicated earlier, inheriting rigid procedures from each of these institutions. As a result, bad ‘everyone for themselves’ habits became ingrained, most poignantly at EU delegations, with lingering negative consequences for the management of EEAS staff, both in rotation and appointment policies. Typifying this rigidity, Commission staff ‘leaving’ for the EEAS were denied the right of return to the Commission.

The decision of the first HRVP to sign up to the Council objective of reducing EU staff and administrative costs by 5% meant that from the very start, the EEAS could not build up its capacity but instead had to draw it down. This reduction did not concern security matters but, for instance, geographical services and representation in the field, thereby opening up gaps that still need to be plugged. Ways have been found to correct the faults in the weave, some more successful than others. The EEAS thus acquired more budget for security, CSDP development at HQ, in-field security of EUDs and missions, and communications (e.g. the creation of STRATCOM to counter disinformation), though not for the further development of SIAC-capabilities. Building on recent staff increases, further investment should be made in countering disinformation and in cooperation with member states in this regard and supported by an adequately enhanced capability of EU.INTCEN.

Another way to address shortfalls was to maintain EUSR operations. EU Special Representatives have undeniable advantages: they are valuable in addressing specific thematic or regional issues, particularly for highly political conflict management. Placed outside of the EEAS, the appointment of EUSRs has increased the buy-in from member states in EU foreign policy. But if not deployed properly they can also cause confusion for the EU external representation on the ground. The EUSRs system should indeed be reviewed. They have not always been used in the right location; they should be mostly considered to handle the regional dimension of conflicts or thematic issues, with a time-limited mandate of three years (renewal only under strict conditions) that should not impede, duplicate or overshadow the role of the HoDs (cf. Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina) and be better embedded inside EEAS, notably in terms of reporting lines.

If the EEAS is to raise its credibility as a specialist organisation and leader on global issues, its composition must reflect and be consistent with the Union’s image and the principles it helps project. The work already carried out to ensure a gender-balanced Service at all echelons of its organisation should be increased, as the EEAS is lagging compared to many member states and other organisations. Indeed, the ambition of the EEAS is to be staffed by ‘the best and brightest’. This means that the quality of analysis at desk officer level, junior and mid-level, needs to be strengthened. Borrowing external human resources is valuable, including by

bringing in people who know the right languages. For instance, the appointment of military attachés has been improving (EUD Moscow, for example).

Diversity of staff is a richness for the EEAS. The presence of staff from member states helps the EEAS keep tabs on developments at the national level. Incorporating that knowledge into EU level policy initiatives is key to increasing member state buy-in. A special case in that regard are the SIAC-directorates which by definition have to build widely on intelligence analysts and other specialists seconded by member states' intelligence and security services in order to receive, handle and analyse properly finished secret intelligence and the wider range of open source, social media and imagery intelligence. In that sense too, mobility is an important factor. National diplomats and SNEs should remain temporary, rolling, and separate from the career path for officials to make their way into EU institutions. Junior diplomats should thus be encouraged to serve for four years at the EEAS and then move back to the national foreign service. National diplomats could then come back to the EEAS as Head of Delegation, perhaps for a ten-year *fin de carrière*.

In the field, staff appraisal systems are siloed, inefficient and costly in terms of recruiting the best of people on the ground. HoDs are consulted on AD level but are not responsible for the career development and promotion prospects of Commission personnel, with the inevitable consequence that the loyalty of the latter is not always to the HoD. This in turn makes it difficult to get people to work together within the EUD environment.

Financial resources

The EEAS is a chronically underfinanced body. Starting with a massive deficit of funding both in terms of staffing, infrastructure and communications, the EEAS has always operated on a shoestring. It is torn between growing expectations in terms of delivery and constant requests to make savings. This 'do more for less' approach is problematic. Unless it can plug the deficit, the EEAS will carry this burden with it.

This is the result of the 'original sin', i.e. the choice in 2010 by member states and the Commission, with the approval of the European Parliament, to set the Service up as a 'functionally autonomous body' and, in doing so, to consider it as an 'institution' bound to rules relating to budget and staffing.¹⁵ As a result, the Commission manages the operational budget of the European External Action Service, while the EEAS only administers a very limited part of the budget allocated for foreign policy, i.e. to cover the administrative costs of CFSP/CSDP.

¹⁵ As per the Staff Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1080/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 November 2010 amending the Staff Regulations of Officials of the European Communities and the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of those Communities, OJ 2010 L311/1) and the Financial Regulation (EU, EURATOM) No 1081/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 November 2010 amending Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities, as regards the European External Action Service, OJ 2010 L 311/9.

The co-location of its Foreign Policy Instruments service with the EEAS has helped to paper over some of the cracks,¹⁶ but legal and institutional dichotomies remain.¹⁷ If, as suggested by the German Bundestag, the FPI were to be fully integrated into the EEAS, in itself an attractive idea to enhance cohesion and generate synergies between financial instruments to deliver on the EU's strategic ambitions, then the Service could no longer be considered as a 'functionally autonomous body'. Such an integration would also require an amendment of the 2010 Council Decision on the EEAS, the Financial Regulation and possibly the EU Treaties themselves.

To be sure, country and regional programmes are – and should continue to be – developed jointly by the EEAS and DG INTPA. This division of labour is in accordance with the 2010 Council Decision. Yet, the role of too many officials is to manage funding and deal with all aspects of project management and operational questions. With split budget and financial reporting lines, a shortage of human resources and lack of engagement on the part of previous HRVPs, the management of more than 30 artificially divided budget lines puts heavy bureaucratic pressures on the EU delegations, a concern that NDICI could help address. Of course, budget allocation through annual work programmes is a real source of (internal) power, but it ends up defining the EU's international role as that of being a payer and not a player. Without proper programming based on solid political and economic analysis, the disbursement of EU external funds (e.g. by DGs INTPA and NEAR) will go wrong. If the EEAS and the Commission were to find a better balance between (geo)political priorities and spending pressures in external affairs, the EU could be as much a player as it is a payer.

Indeed, as noted before, there can be no proper development policy without weighing the political context. There is thus a need to revisit the planning and programming arrangements for development cooperation funding as foreseen in the 2010 Council Decision, and more generally the relationship between the Commission and the EEAS. DG INTPA is the EEAS' main ally in the financing of foreign policy in the next seven years. But member states have a very different view. The concern that too-close administrative links with the Commission would undermine the EEAS' association with member states is a false one, comparable to saying that denying the EEAS to allocate funding under the Athena mechanism to military missions renders it too dependent on the Council.

In this context, the opportunities under the new MFF are worth highlighting: the instrument for the neighbourhood, development and international cooperation (NDICI) was developed in

¹⁶ From the start and in a slightly contradictory way, FPI saw its role in supporting the EEAS rather than the other way around. Also, external partners were able to work with the EEAS to launch initiatives by using the Stability Instrument, which has some in-built flexibility under Art. 3 of the Regulation to launch rapid response projects in one month with limited administrative burdens.

¹⁷ An unfortunate counter-example to co-location and integration is the decision by Commission President von der Leyen to move the sanctions management from FPI to DG FISMA, without consultation of the HRVP. Sanctions used to be managed by DG Relex, pre-EEAS. Since it involves legislation, and potentially funding, it was placed in the FPI at the time of EEAS' creation in 2010. The arrangement worked well, with a 'political' sanctions division in the EEAS working hand in hand with the FPI and reaching out to other Commission services (Trade, FISMA, TAXUS, etc) as appropriate. The new regime has created an unnecessary split that does not make sanctions policy more effective.

very close cooperation between DG DEVCO and the EEAS and envisages more space for the Service to (have some) control (over) the money. Funding for the neighbourhood may, however, prove to be more challenging than with the rest of the world in the next few years. DG NEAR is unlikely to relinquish its own role under its current top leadership, which seems to fiercely resist the integration that is implicit in the jumbo instrument. The watchword, therefore, is ‘flexibility’: as resources and commitment will still be finite, one would expect the HRVP to lead political discussions about the allocation of funding. Another element of flexibility would for instance be to allow staff in EUDs to devote time to issues beyond their main tasks. The EEAS and Commission could consider applying the ‘20% rule’ more flexibly across their services, thus breaking the current silo approach and generating the aspired agility in the way in which work is allocated in EUDs.

Other assets

One feature of member states’ interest in setting up the EEAS was the cost-saving aspect to maintaining their own embassies. Co-location is an opportunity, especially for smaller diplomatic services: the EU can offer support to their activities, and it fosters integration on the ground. It also provides a platform for deeper cooperation between national and European diplomats that can contribute to forging a distinctly European brand of diplomacy. The impression is that co-location worked well in the first decade of the EEAS’ existence,¹⁸ even if there has been no significant reduction in the number of member state embassies since the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. This is partly because the financial crisis parameters at the time of the creation of the EEAS have changed, and partly due to complexities in negotiating co-location, especially in conflict zones, which has led member states to turn to each other rather than to EU delegations. Also, the general assessment in several member states is that the EEAS does not lessen the importance of national diplomacy, or the need to have national embassies, for instance for the purpose of trade promotion.

In budgetary terms, the main items are security and the rental of buildings. With 70-80% of offices and residences rented, the EEAS probably holds a world record. Change is happening at a glacial rate and further savings can be made (cf. €30 million over five years with the purchase of an office and residence in Washington DC). A professional property portfolio management structure would enable the EEAS to better plan ahead.

As an open organisation, security of staff, data, physical and IT infrastructures is not in the Union’s DNA, and certainly not equivalent to that of national diplomatic services. Alarmingly, there are too few resources allocated to the security of EEAS staff and a lack of security expertise at headquarters; it is difficult to persuade member states to allow EU delegations to hire their security staff. The reliance on contracts with private security firms is not ideal and has caused problems in the past.

¹⁸ According to the 2019 EEAS Human Resources report: “113 individual co-location arrangements were in force (40 with Member States and 73 with other EU partners) in 2019” (p. 32).

The need for reliable technical infrastructure is obvious and a good protection against cyber-attacks even more pertinent in a post-Covid digital world. Secure and reasonably user-friendly phones are now being rolled out but secure speech rooms are still scarce.

The security of communications has been an issue since long before the creation of the EEAS and remains a very serious weakness, one that is unfortunately shared with EU institutions. The EEAS inherited the dysfunctionality of both the Commission and the Council. The interoperability of their systems, in particular the encrypted ones, and those of member states, is low. Both a concerted interinstitutional effort and substantial investment are needed to address these dangerous shortfalls in earnest.

3.3 Improve delivery on the EEAS' tasks

Coordination: the EEAS as a coherence-builder?

While foreign policy coordination between member states works better than it did a decade ago (on energy and climate, for example), the integration of policies could still be improved (on migration and digital policies). The reasons for this can partly be traced back to the 'original sins': the dichotomy between the CFSP and all other EU policies in separate treaties, with different competence attributions, institutional arrangements and decision-making procedures; the impossible job profile of the HRVP; the establishment of the EEAS, which was "too far removed" from the Commission and bedevilled by a compartmentalisation approach, assembling building blocks (geographical MDs and CSDP bodies)¹⁹ without securing the proper plumbing between them. If protagonists do not want to be coordinated, then building coherence for the EEAS will require a stronger leadership role.

Josep Borrell's 'Team Europe' approach may be a promising way of 'nudging' the EU family members (including the member states) not only to join up the different strands of internal and external action, but also to ensure coherence between these and the CFSP/CSDP. This could be done by uniting, inter alia, Commission-managed policy instruments and budgets in a new strategic frame (e.g. gearing industrial policy toward complementing soft power with a harder power dimension), supplemented by resources from member states, the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. This may, however, lead to new tensions with the Commission in areas 'traditionally' and exclusively allocated to it, such as trade, or indeed to the EEAS (cf. discussions about the European Defence Fund since the advent of DG for Defence Industry and Space). In such cases, efforts to overcome coherence obstacles should be undertaken in EXCO and the Commissioners' Group for a Stronger Europe in the World. Positive examples of co-leadership (e.g. HRVP Borrell with Commissioner Breton enhancing the European industrial autonomy including in the area of defence) could be replicated, both horizontally and vertically.

¹⁹ The 'institutionalisation' of the integrated approach to security and peace in a designated directorate of the EEAS is a meritorious development.

Internally, the EEAS needs to improve its administrative culture, which is characterised by strict hierarchies, slow and cumbersome decision-making, and a 'culture' of retaining information. While there is deference for the geographical side of the house, this issue cannot simply be resolved by changing the organigramme. Information-sharing needs to be more organic. At the same time, more secure means of sharing information need to be installed. This applies in particular to communication within headquarters between SIAC- and geographical directorates as well as between headquarters and the EU delegations.

The further development of SIAC has been increasingly acknowledged by member states as a valuable element in building coherence in terms of situational awareness of risk, threats and opportunities for political and military decision-making, as well as operational processes in the wider realm of 'security' (e.g. terrorism, hybrid operations, and hostile espionage).

Policy initiation: the EEAS as a factory of ideas?

The Service's support for the HRVP's policy initiatives has in practice been limited to the CFSP and CSDP. The High Representative has hardly taken CFSP initiatives autonomously, acting mostly at the request of the Council and European Council, or in cooperation with member states with which s/he shares the right of (CFSP) initiative. Contrary to the innovative approach taken to draft the 2016 Global Strategy, the ongoing process to arrive at a 'Strategic Compass' for the implementation of CSDP is driven by the member states, even if the EEAS holds the pen. Though it does provide the HRVP/EEAS with an informal agenda-setting power, penholdership does not equate to policy initiative and thought-leadership.

In this respect, the 'Strategic outlook on China' of March 2019 provides an interesting prism in terms of the way in which it was conceived: quickly, in close hold between top Commission, EEAS and some member state officials, based on the ideas provided by the Service's Strategic Planning Division and on situational awareness inputs contributed by SIAC. Presented as a joint communication by the Commission and the High Representative to the European Council ahead of the EU-China Summit of April 2019, the paper focused the minds of the heads of state or government who were willing to adopt a more coherent and assertive stance toward Beijing. While the follow up may have exposed weaknesses of the strategy itself, lessons might be learned from the unorthodox production of this 'outlook' for other strategic documents in order to enhance the authority of foreign policy initiatives by the HRVP and, in turn, that of the EEAS in their formulation.

EU foreign policy risks being hampered by transactional approaches if it is eclipsed by other, narrower considerations such as trade liberalisation or domestic security priorities, for instance migration control. Vision should precede process. Both values and international law should play a critical role in rallying different stakeholders' engagement in, and support for HRVP initiatives.

In line with expectations of more policy entrepreneurship by the HRVP and the EEAS, more independently produced initiatives should be considered. EU delegations have a significant role to play by providing input (cf. on human rights).

Strengthening the EEAS contribution to EU foreign policy shaping may also involve additional use of legal and institutional tools made available by the Treaty of Lisbon. In particular, the High Representative's formal right of initiative could be exercised more significantly, both autonomously and on request by the European Council, thus potentially activating the use of qualified majority voting in Council when adopting EU actions or positions (as per Article 31(2) TEU). As suggested by the High Representative, an increased use of constructive abstention may be a first step to facilitate EU action.

Policymakers should see flexibility as a means to improve the EU's external action capacities, not as some sort of failure. Informal groupings of member states can be a commendable way of engaging Europe in high-intensity crises and of proposing worthwhile mediation. But such individual efforts of spearheading EU external action should not create fragmentation inside the Union. The presence of a High Representative within any one of such flexible formats should become an accepted principle, along the lines of the arrangements for the international nuclear talks with Iran, rather than those of the 'Normandy' talks for Ukraine, which do not include the HRVP. Such a *modus operandi* could help make flexibility more acceptable and overcome the pressure that the EU faces to achieve constant consensus among member states.

The lack of internal cohesion between member states is a handicap and tends not only to slow down the decision-making process in the Council, it also hampers HR initiatives such as issuing statements on behalf of the EU. As regards the latter, statements, speeches or blogposts by the High Representative or his/her spokesperson can help fill the void. Less formal communication tools such as tweets by EUDs in the field (in coordination with Headquarters) could also be used more extensively to secure the indispensable visibility of the Union.

Representation: the EEAS as the face of the Union in the field?

The transition from pre-Lisbon Commission delegations to fully fledged EU delegations is generally perceived to have been a success, allowing the EEAS to represent the EU in all its dimensions. This has helped the Service to become a genuine diplomatic actor and enhance the status of the EU in both bilateral and multilateral settings (including at the level of the UN). Member states, particularly smaller ones, benefit from the substantive input and political, moral and logistical support provided by EUDs and Heads of Delegation.

Lessons should be learned from the experience acquired during the Covid-19 crisis, notably in offering assistance to member states in the civil protection and repatriation of European citizens. In theory, the EEAS could provide further assistance to member states' consular services, notably by providing appropriate background information on migration issues to national officers on the ground. To be sure, such an additional task would be labour intensive and require a major allocation of member state officials to the EUDs. The pitfall, after all, is that member states would expect the EEAS to do more with less.

Heads of Delegation often complain that member states ask EU delegations to be the coordinating hub on the ground, to the detriment of doing other parts of the job: in-country travel, reporting on domestic developments, and playing a traditional ambassadorial role. A

greater sense of solidarity could, however, be garnered: EUDs could get more in return from member states. Even if they report back to their capitals in their own language, member states' embassies could for instance show more willingness to share the information they hold, or the analysis they produce. Regular informal exchanges should be complemented by better functioning formal ones. Member states, both embassy staff as well as visiting MFA officials, should empower EU ambassadors, in particular by involving them when meeting officials of the host states and key international stakeholders. Bigger member states have a particular role to play in this respect.

By the same token, the EEAS has a responsibility to build up the role of EU ambassadors, and to demonstrate that they speak on behalf of the EU as a whole. Headquarters must empower and take them into their confidence. EU ambassadors (both at large and Heads of Delegation) should be part of all correspondence and meetings between EU officials (and officials of the member state exercising the rotating presidency of the Council) and the host state's authorities, and be allowed to play a more prominent role in policymaking at HQ level (esp. in the Political and Security Committee), and in shaping the agenda regarding the host country in particular. There is great value in the feedback loops from the field. Instructions regarding reporting lines and chains of command should be loyally followed so that the HoD is not bypassed. Clear guidelines on how to operate with member states' representatives on the ground, on how to share information, for example, should also be provided to EUDs. Transparency with member states is indeed vital to build their trust and obtain their support.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS: FITTING THE EEAS FOR PURPOSE

This section presents a list of recommendations intended to help the EEAS address the dilemmas and plug the gaps exposed above, and better fulfil its desired mission and manifold roles articulated in section 2. The prescriptions, which are a distillation of points raised in section 3, capitalise on the Service's strengths/assets, and attempt to turn some of its weaknesses into opportunities.

It is up to the HRVP to infuse the EEAS with a clearer sense of purpose and focus it on forging a distinctly European brand of diplomacy. The latter entails the EEAS' capacity to pioneer and imbue, in all EU policies, the strategic vision and geopolitical direction that will gradually lead the EU to perform as an influential global actor. By providing unique cognitive and institutional support to other protagonists of EU external action, in particular the Commission and the member states, the EEAS will generate recognition of its added value, and in turn garner the trust and loyal cooperation needed for a 'whole of Europe' approach to foreign policy.

Without questioning the legal status of the EEAS, and the different cultures of the institutions it is tasked to cooperate with, any change calls for some degree of flexibility. The European diplomatic service must be given the capacity to define a tailor-made working process better suited to its needs. Advantage should thus be taken of the EEAS' weak sense of purpose to promote its adaptability. Likewise, the EEAS should foster agility to curb its relative institutional weaknesses. And it should cut through the EU's complex external action architecture by enhancing the Service's thought-leadership in situational awareness, planning and policies.

The Task Force's recommendations below should be seen as complementary rather than mutually exclusive. The list identifies some priority actions (*) to signal the political importance that ought to be attached to their swift implementation, paving the way for further action in a joined-up and balanced manner by the member states, Commission and European Parliament.

In the short- to mid-term, inter-service arrangements could be strengthened between the EEAS, the Council and the European Council. In the longer term, however, the structural dichotomies between the CFSP and non-CFSP parts of EU external action will only be overcome if the 2010 Council Decision and the Treaties are changed. This is an issue that could be considered in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

The EEAS as coherence-builder

1. The EEAS leadership should strengthen its direction-setting role through in-house communication, structured cooperation from the HRVP down to director level, and the introduction of '*jours fixes*' for staff to meet with the High Representative.(*)
2. Boost information-sharing across the EEAS and secure continuity in direction and feedback (in particular between HQ and EUDs).
3. Increase the mobility of officials across the organisation, both between HQ and EUDs across HQ, including between planning units and other directorates, thus fostering better connections between situational awareness, planning and practical diplomacy.

4. The EEAS and foreign ministries should expand smart mobility between them, and the time spent by national diplomats in the EEAS should be better valued. Mid-term career planning is needed – both for individuals and services – to work out ways to improve the return to national capitals.(*)
5. Introduce more flexibility in the EEAS recruitment system through targeted employment of members states' officials (at HQ and in EUDs), and by bringing in external expertise (i.e. outside EU and national administrations) where appropriate (while acknowledging the specificities of certain services like INTCEN).
6. Improve selection criteria for the recruitment of HoDs: consider for example a three-month pre-posting tailor-made training and secondment at HQ and the Commission.
7. The EEAS should further develop the European diplomatic academy programme, for its new recruits and sitting staff.(*)
8. Enhance information-sharing across the EU external action system (including the member states) and refine inter-service arrangements between the EEAS, Commission and (European) Council to secure better coordination and cooperation.
9. EU institutions, member states and the EEAS should secure compatible means to protect classified information, communications, policy consultation and decisions to encourage information-sharing across the EU external action system.(*)
10. The HRVP should actively use the inter-service coordination platforms (e.g. 'Stronger EU in the World' Group, EXCO) to help mobilise Commission resources to initiate and/or implement Foreign Affairs Council decisions.
11. The EEAS and the Commission should avoid duplication of their expertise, encourage inter-service mobility.(*)
12. Allow staff in EUDs to devote time to issues beyond their main tasks. Consider applying the '20% rule' more flexibly across services, in both the both EEAS and Commission. Breaking the existing silo approach would also generate the desired agility in the way in which work is allocated in EUDs.
13. Consider modifications to staff and financial regulations (by EU legislative institutions) to enable more rational solutions for EUDs in managing their 'financial circuits' and in the 'delegated authority' (e.g. simplification of the financial reporting lines, and rationalise the amount of staff involved in such reporting).
14. The EEAS and the Commission should collaborate more closely in the (re)allocation of external funding. If the EEAS focuses on providing (geo)political context and understanding, a better balance can be found with the spending side in external affairs, taking full advantage of the flexibility in NDICI. This should be subject to a regular consistency-check (esp. with the use of funds directly relevant to foreign and security policy).(*)

The EEAS as a factory of ideas

15. In view of the broad definition of foreign policy in EU Treaties, the EEAS should help the HRVP to initiate policies covering the whole spectrum of EU external action with the support of, and in cooperation with Commission services (as done for instance in energy and climate change).(*)
16. Sitting in both the Foreign Affairs Council and the European Council, the HRVP should act as a bridge between the institutions. The EEAS should stimulate a more active use of the HRVP's power of initiative and lead the process through the Council machinery. To that end: increase the number and strengthen the authority of HRVP/EEAS proposals.(*)
17. In the same vein, the EEAS/HRVP should provide more cognitive input, and technical support to the European Council President, for the definition of clearer EU foreign policy priorities.(*)
18. With the support of the EEAS, the HRVP should engineer requests by the European Council to submit initiatives (cf. elaboration and follow up of 2016 EUGS, Strategic Compass), potentially leading to European Council *decisions* (opening the possibility to use QMV in the Council for implementing measures).(*)
19. Under the authority of the High Representative, the EEAS should produce its brand of non-papers that pose the right/difficult questions, call for reactions and inputs by Commission and member states, and possibly lead up to the drafting of fully fledged joint communications.(*)
20. The EEAS, in cooperation with the Council General Secretariat, should organise an annual meeting of intelligence coordinators of the member states to discuss support to INTCEN and EUMS.INT in substantive (scope and nature of intelligence support to EU situational awareness) and infrastructural (burden-sharing in staff and funding) terms.
21. EEAS management should better pool the in-house expertise provided by different strands of the Service's officials (EU institutions, seconded national diplomats, SNEs) to help contextualise those stakeholders' perspectives in shaping its own initiatives, thus cultivating their ownership over EU foreign policy in general, and the EEAS in particular. (*)
22. The HRVP, assisted by the EEAS, should secure member states' support for follow up of conclusions and decisions by the Foreign Affairs Council and by the European Council: e.g. through the operationalisation of FAC decisions and report-back, more active EEAS monitoring role to secure member states' fulfilment of commitments (cf. PESCO model, Community methods of monitoring).(*)

The EEAS as the face of the Union in the field

23. Member states' officials should empower EU ambassadors, in particular by involving them when meeting their counterparts. Bigger member states have a particular role to play in this respect. Visiting member states' foreign ministers should report on conversations with local authorities to EU HoDs instead of leaving this report to their own PSC ambassador.
24. EU ambassadors (especially HoDs) should be part of all correspondence and meetings between EU officials and host states' authorities, and be allowed to play a more prominent role in policymaking at HQ level (cf. PSC), and in shaping the agenda regarding the host country in particular.(*)
25. Raise awareness of the need for EU foreign policy through increased and better public diplomacy. EUDs could play a role similar to that of Commission Representations in the member states (i.e. an information centre, open for visitors, promoting knowledge about and of the EU). Expand investment in people-to-people measures, including the European Union visitors programme at HQ level.
26. Consider stronger capacities to support EU citizens abroad, working with local governments and partners. Such support, especially when concerning consular services would, however, require a substantial increase of resources and a relocation of national expert officials to EUDs.
27. Deputising the HRVP should be more actively considered, for instance by involving senior EEAS and Commission officials (e.g. the 'Barnier' formula), and/or member states' foreign ministers. Flexible approaches to EU representation should be considered by members state core groups that involve the HRVP.(*)
28. The terms and justification of EUSR appointments must be clarified: they should be fully embedded in the Service, used sparingly and only when there is a demonstrable added value relative to the EEAS.
29. Rethink the security of the physical location of buildings and staff. More resources are needed to professionalise the EEAS' ability to provide adequate security, especially if the Service is expected to become more active and effective in conflict zones.
30. The EEAS should involve a professional property portfolio management structure to rationalise the use of immovables, and the budget spent on rent of buildings. Incentives for member states' embassies to co-locate with EU delegations should be identified. Co-location with EUDs should continue to be an objective, also with the EU's own institutions. This would have a beneficial impact on the EEAS's search for coherence and efficiency in EU external action, and would contribute to developing a sense of European diplomatic community abroad and ultimately a distinctly European brand of diplomacy.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
COREPER	Committee of the Permanent Representatives of the Governments of the Member States to the European Union
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy of the EU
EEAS	European External Action Service
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EP	European Parliament
EU SATCEN	European Union Satellite Centre
EU INTCEN	European Union Intelligence and Situation Centre
EUD	EU Delegation
EUGS	EU Global Strategy
EUSRs	EU's Special Representatives
EXCO	Group for External Coordination
FAC	Foreign Affairs Council
FPI	Foreign Policy Instruments
GSC	General Secretariat of the Council
HoD	Head of Delegation
HRVP	High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission
INTCEN	EU Intelligence and Situation Centre
MD	Managing Directorate
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MPCC	Military Planning and Conduct Capability
NDICI	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
PSC	Political and Security Committee
SIAC	Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity
STRATCOM	Task Force set up to address disinformation campaigns
TEU	Treaty on European Union
UN	United Nations

COMPOSITION OF THE TASK FORCE

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PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES FOR THE TASK FORCE

The Task Force process is one of structured dialogue among experts, (former) politicians, diplomats, policy-makers, representatives from industry, NGOs, academia and/or think tanks who are brought together for several meetings. Task Force reports are the final output of the research carried out independently by SIEPS and CEPS in the context of the Task Force.

Participants in a Task Force

- The Chair is an expert who steers the dialogue during the meetings and advises SIEPS and CEPS as to the general conduct of the activities of the Task Force.
- Members provide input as independent experts.
- Rapporteurs are SIEPS and CEPS researchers who organise the Task Force, conduct the research independently and draft the final report.
- Observers are any policy-makers or stakeholders who are invited to attend the Task Force meetings and provide oral and/or written input.

Objectives of a Task Force report

- Task Force reports are meant to contribute to policy debates by presenting a balanced set of arguments, based on available data, literature and views.
- Reports seek to provide readers with a constructive basis for discussion. They do not seek to advance a single position or misrepresent the complexity of any subject matter.
- Task Force reports also fulfil an educational purpose and are drafted in a manner that is easy to understand, without jargon, and with any technical terminology fully defined.

Drafting of the report

- Task Force reports reflect members' views.
- For any element or recommendation to be featured in the report, there needs to be consensus or broad agreement among Task Force members.
- Where consensus on a recommendation coexists with a significant minority view, the report will feature this minority view next to the relevant recommendation.
- Task Force reports feature data that are considered both relevant and accurate by the rapporteurs. After consultation with other Task Force members, the rapporteurs may decide either to exclude data or to mention these concerns in the main body of the text.

The rivalry and contestation of today's world should be reason enough for the European Union to act as a cohesive force, if only to avoid being outmanoeuvred by major powers. Yet EU countries and institutions are still struggling to set aside their differences and focus on the common interest.

The 10th anniversary of the European External Action Service is an opportune moment to take stock of its contribution to creating a more active, coherent and visible EU foreign policy. Despite its significant achievements, the Service still suffers from a lack of buy-in from member states and other parts of the EU administration.

This study reappraises the EEAS' actual and potential mission in the coming years, considering the dynamic ecosystem within which it functions. Distilling key lessons from the first decade of the Service's operation, the report sets out 30 recommendations to address the identified shortcomings. It aims to assist the EEAS' purpose of forging a distinctly European brand of diplomacy, by upgrading its operation to allow it more flexibility to think, propose and act, more agility to factor in a rapidly changing international landscape, and more determination to play a leading role.

The Service could indeed make much more of its core assets, especially the integrated approach, the diversity of its in-house diplomatic expertise, a formidable network of delegations around the world, and a single intelligence analysis capacity, among others.

In doing so it would better serve the common interests of the European Union and truly fulfil its objectives in external action.

This report is the fruit of intense research cooperation between CEPS, SIEPS and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.