

Non-paper

Strengthening the European External Action Service

Ministries of Foreign Affairs of

**Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg,
Netherlands, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden**

In the global competition, the countries of Europe will uphold their values and pursue their interests successfully only if we act in a concerted way. The High Representative/Vice-President (HR/VP) and the European External Action Service (EEAS) play a crucial role here.

Since the start of the EEAS in 2010, the High Representative and the leadership of the EEAS have succeeded in establishing the EEAS as an indispensable instrument for increasing the coherence of the EU's external action. The High Representative and the EEAS, together with the Commission and in cooperation with the Member States, have been able to shape and take forward a wide range of structural as well as specific regional foreign and security policy issues. We warmly welcome and support these important achievements of the EEAS.

Building on these achievements, we believe that in the framework of the upcoming review of the EEAS Decision, the EEAS should be further strengthened to ensure a coherent, comprehensive and integrated EU approach to external action and to be able to develop a long-term EU strategic framework in the area of external relations. Careful preparation of Foreign Affairs Council meetings to promote the strategic direction-setting of the EU's external action and an active involvement of Member States by the EEAS will continue to be of key importance.

We therefore propose that the following issues should be discussed in the framework of the review of the EEAS Decision, under the leadership of the HR/VP, among all EU Member States, also involving the Commission and the European Parliament. Our aim is to formulate ambitious proposals to improve the organisation and the functioning of the EEAS. Wherever possible these proposals should be implemented immediately. Other suggestions which might necessitate an amendment of the EEAS Decision or related legal texts should be implemented without delay once the next Commission has been appointed.

Ensuring close cooperation of the EEAS with the Commission as a pre-requisite for the coherence of the EU's external action.

- The HR/VP (and the EEAS) should be responsible for Neighbourhood Policy as this constitutes a central area of European foreign policy.
- The EEAS should develop capacities to be able to assist the HR/VP in facilitating the coordination of the external aspects of the EU's internal policies, without prejudice to the tasks of the services of the Commission.

- Strategic and multi-annual programming in the area of development cooperation should be conducted under the overall authority of the High Representative. In this respect, the role of the EEAS should be reinforced. The scope of financial instruments under the responsibility of the EEAS should include all parts of the Instrument for Stability. EU delegations should play a leading role in programming and implementation of the external financing instruments as part of a comprehensive approach at country level.
- A full integration of the Foreign Policy Instruments Service (FPI) into the work of the EEAS is fundamental for the effective management of operational expenditures. In this respect, ways to increase flexibility for the management of CFSP expenditures, in particular CSDP operations should be explored.
- Service level agreements with the Commission and the Council have to ensure the effective provision of administrative tasks and should take into account the specific requirements of the EEAS.
- Close coordination between the HR/VP and other members of the Commission is crucial to ensure coherence of external action within the Commission. In addition to close bilateral contacts, the RELEX Commissioners should meet at least once a month under the chairmanship of the HR/VP in order to allow for an efficient coordination in the field of external relations. These meetings should be jointly prepared at senior level by the EEAS and the Commission.

Reviewing some elements of the structure of the EEAS to ensure maximum efficiency of decision-making.

- Two years after the establishment of the EEAS, the processes and structure at senior management level should be reviewed with a view to ensuring clear reporting lines and division of tasks.
- The issue of who can represent the High Representative in the College of Commissioners, in the European Parliament and vis-à-vis third countries should be addressed.
- The geographical directorates shall have the lead for country/regional strategies as strategic framework for comprehensive action, including all policy aspects, as has been the case for the Horn of Africa strategy.
- The tasks and interaction of the EU crisis management structures should be clarified and streamlined at operational and strategic level, inter alia by enhancing civilian-military planning and by standardizing support for civilian missions. The objective should be greater effectiveness and a true civil-military approach in CSDP. In this respect, existing procedures should be more flexible in order to allow for a swifter reaction. An integrated lessons-learned mechanism for EU-led military operations and civilian missions should be implemented.
- EU Special Representatives (EUSRs) play a key role in outreach and the conduct of the EU's strategic policies and in crisis management in regional conflicts. A still closer coordination between EUSRs and EEAS should be achieved and their staff should be progressively integrated into the EEAS.

Unlocking the full potential of the network of EU delegations.

- To ensure the full flow of information and coherence within a delegation, all instructions to delegations should be transmitted via the Heads of Delegation.
- There should be one financial circuit within a delegation (and not a separate EEAS and Commission one) and administrative procedures should be simplified. The Head of Delegation must be able to delegate all administrative tasks to the Deputy Head of Mission.
- In order to ensure that the EEAS, the Commission and other EU institutions work coherently at country level and speak with one voice the Head of EU Delegation should be responsible for representing all aspects of the EU's external policy in a third country, while coordinating locally with Member States present.
- The EEAS has established close cooperation with Members States' embassies, e.g. through the November 2011 Guidelines. This cooperation should be fully implemented and further developed, e.g. with regard to an increased use of co-location, sharing of reporting, development of burden-sharing arrangements and possible joint initiatives in specific fields.
- The EEAS' capacity to support MS' consular activities should be reviewed, in line with the Treaties.

Enhancing the EU's position in international organizations and international negotiations.

- The EEAS, under the overall authority of the HR/VP and in line with the Treaties, should lead the negotiations for the EU in international negotiations covering a broad range of external and foreign policy issues, including Association, Framework and Partnership and Co-operation Agreements as well as relevant multilateral negotiations.
- EU statements covering a broad range of external and foreign policy issues should be delivered by the EU delegation for all the EU actors.

Member States diplomats should be actively integrated in the EEAS

- While the normal stay of a Member States' diplomat in the EEAS should be four years, the possibility to serve for eight years must remain. EEAS personnel from Member States must be treated on an equal basis with permanent staff while serving in the EEAS, also regarding promotion rules.
- Ways to ensure the necessary rotation of Member States diplomats into the EEAS, including after the attainment of the initial goal of one third of AD staff coming from Member States has been reached, should be defined; the "one third" threshold is a minimum level and not an upper ceiling. In addition, adequate long-term career perspectives in the EEAS should also be defined for Member States' personnel.
- Posts should be advertised at the functional level corresponding to the tasks required; advertising posts below Head of Unit at entry levels results in discrimination against Member States' candidates.
- Member States representatives should be involved in the selection procedures for all management posts, including Deputy Heads of Delegation where appropriate and Heads of Division.