

Information Guide



Common Foreign and Security Policy

**A guide to the European Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP),
with hyperlinks to sources of information within European Sources Online
and on external websites**

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Introduction

I am proud of what we have achieved so far. 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. Although much remains to be done, we can see the benefits of the comprehensive approach in the Balkans, the Middle East and North Africa, the crises in Africa, in support of the transition in Myanmar/Burma and in many other parts of the world.

Europe's role in the world is one of the major challenges of the 21st century. The EEAS is but one component of Europe's response to this global challenge. We seek to co-operate with, but not replace, the important work done by Member States. The EEAS seeks to add value by being more than a foreign ministry – combining elements of a development and of a defence ministry. The EEAS can be a catalyst to bring together the foreign policies of Member States and strengthen the position of the EU in the world.

From: [EEAS Review 2013](#).

Background

After two attempts to establish a European Political Community (EPC) failed in the 1950s and 1960s, a more modest approach towards foreign policy coordination among Member States was established under the 1970 European political co-operation initiative. The Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) was introduced by the 1993 Treaty on European Union (TEU), under which it formed the second of the Union's [pillar](#) structure.

The pillar structure was removed by the Treaty of Lisbon, but at the time both CFSP and Justice and Home Affairs issues (which formed the third pillar) were subject to intergovernmental decision-making, with decisions being made outside the standard decision-making process or 'Community method'. As explained below, CFSP issues are still decided outside the normal legislative framework.

Although the CFSP provides a framework for the Union's external relations, it is just one aspect of the Union's external actions, with its special legal nature and structures distinguishing it from other fields, including:

- external trade policy (or Common Commercial Policy; see the ESO Information Guide [Trade Policy](#))
- development and humanitarian aid policies (see the ESO Information Guide [ACP-EU relations](#))
- enlargement policy (see the ESO Information Guide [Enlargement of the EU](#))
- European Neighbourhood Policy.

The December 2003 European Council adopted the first European Security Strategy (ESS), [A Secure Europe in a Better World](#), identifying the Union as 'a global player [which] should be ready to share in the responsibility for global security and in building a better world' (see also the ESO Information Guide [Security and Defence](#)).

Legal basis

The Preamble to the [Treaty on European Union](#) includes the statement that the Union is:

Resolved to implement a common foreign and security policy including the progressive framing of a common defence policy, which might lead to a common defence ... thereby reinforcing the European identity and its independence in order to promote peace, security and progress in Europe and in the world.

Title V of the TEU (Articles 21-46) concerns 'General provisions on the Union's external action and specific provisions on the Common Foreign and Security Policy'. Within that Title, Articles 23-41 deal specifically with the CFSP. The aims of the Union's external actions are set out in Article 21 (2), which states that it:

shall define and pursue common policies and actions, and shall work for a high degree of cooperation in all fields of international relations, in order to:

(a) safeguard its values, fundamental interests, security, independence and integrity;

(b) consolidate and support democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the principles of international law;

(c) preserve peace, prevent conflicts and strengthen international security, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, with the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and with the aims of the Charter of Paris, including those relating to external borders;

(d) foster the sustainable economic, social and environmental development of developing countries, with the primary aim of eradicating poverty;

(e) encourage the integration of all countries into the world economy, including through the progressive abolition of restrictions on international trade;

(f) help develop international measures to preserve and improve the quality of the environment and the sustainable management of global natural resources, in order to ensure sustainable development;

(g) assist populations, countries and regions confronting natural or man-made disasters; and

(h) promote an international system based on stronger multilateral cooperation and good global governance.

The extent of the Union's wide-ranging activities under Article 21 (2) of the [TEU](#) can be gauged from Council press releases on [Foreign Affairs](#) and from [CFSP statements](#). In the 2012 [General Report on the activities of the European Union](#), CFSP issues are addressed in Chapter 5: 'A stronger EU in the world'.

Under the Treaty of Lisbon, the EU is granted its own legal personality ([TEU](#) Article 47). In response to that change, on 3 May 2011 the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution [A/65/276](#) upgrading the Union's status in the UN (see also Press Release [MEMO/11/272](#) and [EU voice at the UN General Assembly](#)). Welcoming the UN decision, Catherine Ashton said the Resolution will:

enable EU representatives to present and promote the EU's positions in the UN, as agreed by its Member States.

There are only limited provisions on the CFSP in the [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#): Article 2 identifies defining and implementing 'a common foreign and security policy, including the progressive framing of a common defence policy' as a competence of the Union; Article 275 clarifies the limited jurisdiction of the Court of Justice.

CFSP actors

Responsibility for identifying the Union's strategic interests, determining the objectives of the CFSP and defining its general guidelines falls to the [European Council](#), with the [Council](#) framing the CFSP and taking the decisions necessary for defining and implementing it on the basis of the general guidelines and strategic lines defined by the European Council (the [European Council](#) defines the general political direction and priorities of the EU; with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon on 1 December 2009, it became an EU institution).

The 'unity, consistency and effectiveness of action by the Union' is to be ensured by the Council and the [High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy](#), with the CFSP being put into effect by the High Representative and by the Member States, using both national and EU resources (Article 26).

The role of the High Representative is elaborated in Article 27. Following the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, the European Council appointed Catherine Ashton to the post of [High Representative](#) (see [European Council Decision 2009/880/EU](#) of 1 December 2009). The High Representative effectively conducts the CFSP, chairing the Foreign Affairs Council and - in her dual role as a Vice-President of the European Commission - ensuring the consistency and coordination of the Union's external actions.

In June 2010, the [2009](#) Annual report from the High Representative to the European Parliament 'on the main aspects and basic choices of the CFSP' was published (latest available, as at December 2013).

Article 32 TEU aims to ensure that Member States consult each other on relevant issues 'in order to determine a common approach.'

Under Article 33, the Council may appoint EU Special Representatives (EUSRs), working under the authority of the High Representative, to address specific policy issues. There are currently 12 [Special Representatives](#), covering the following areas: Afghanistan, the African Union, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Central Asia, Horn of Africa, Kosovo, the Middle East peace process, the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia, the Southern Mediterranean region, Sudan, the Sahel and Human rights. (The [EEAS Review 2013](#) noted that 'The current status of EUSR is an anomaly post Lisbon. These positions were originally created by the Council linked to specific crises or situations in the era when there was no EEAS ...').

Article 34 TEU requires Member States to coordinate their action and uphold the Union's positions in international organisations and at international conferences. Member States represented in international organisations or international conferences where not all Member States participate are to keep the other Member States and the High Representative informed 'of any matter of common interest.' This applies also to Member States which are also members of the United Nations Security Council - who are also required to 'defend the positions and the interests of the Union, without prejudice to their responsibilities under the provisions of the United Nations Charter.'

Under Article 38, a [Political and Security Committee](#) is responsible for monitoring the international situation in the areas covered by the CFSP, for helping define policies and for monitoring the implementation of agreed policies.

The European Parliament and the European Commission have only limited roles in this area. Article 36 requires the High Representative to:

regularly consult the European Parliament on the main aspects and the basic choices of the common foreign and security policy and the common security and defence policy and inform it of how those policies evolve. He shall ensure that the views of the European Parliament are duly taken into consideration.

It also allows Parliament to 'ask questions of the Council or make recommendations to it and to the High Representative'; and twice a year, Parliament is required to hold a debate on progress in implementing the CFSP. Article 17 removes from the Commission responsibility for ensuring the Union's external representation with regard to the CFSP.

The Court of Justice of the European Union is largely excluded from the legal process (its jurisdiction being limited to monitoring compliance with Article 40 of the TEU and to reviewing the legality of certain decisions as provided for by the second paragraph of Article 275 of the TFEU).

European External Action Service

Article 27(3) [TEU](#) states:

In fulfilling his mandate, the High Representative shall be assisted by a European External Action Service. This service shall work in cooperation with the diplomatic services of the Member States and shall comprise officials from relevant departments of the General Secretariat of the Council and of the Commission as well as staff seconded from national diplomatic services of the Member States. The organisation and functioning of the European External Action Service shall be established by a decision of the Council. The Council shall act on a proposal from the High Representative after consulting the European Parliament and after obtaining the consent of the Commission.

On 25 March 2010, the High Representative issued a draft Council Decision establishing the [European External Action Service](#) (EEAS), which was approved on 26 April by the General Affairs Council (see Press Release [8967/10](#)). On 21 June, the European Parliament, the High Representative, the Council and the Commission confirmed that they had agreed on the proposal for a Council Decision establishing the organisation and functioning of the EEAS and also on the texts of two Declarations adopted by the High Representative (on political accountability and on the basic structure of the EEAS central administration). On 9 June 2010, the Commission set out its proposals on staffing for the EEAS, paving the way for setting up the basic framework of the Service's personnel policy (see Press Releases [IP/10/772](#) and [IP/10/705](#)).

The proposal was subsequently adopted as [Council Decision 2010/427/EU](#) of 26 July 2010 'establishing the organisation and functioning of the European External Action Service'.

Article 1 of the Decision sets out the nature and scope of the Brussels-based EEAS, which is established as a functionally autonomous body of the EU, separate from the General Secretariat of the Council and from the Commission, and with the legal capacity necessary to perform its tasks and to attain its objectives.

The EEAS operates under the authority of the High Representative, and comprises a central administration, plus the Union Delegations to third countries and to international organisations.

The tasks of the EEAS are set out in Article 2:

1. The EEAS shall support the High Representative in fulfilling his/her mandates as outlined, notably, in Articles 18 and 27 TEU:
 - in fulfilling his/her mandate to conduct the Common Foreign and Security Policy ('CFSP') of the European Union, including the Common Security and Defence Policy ('CSDP'), to contribute by his/her proposals to the development of that policy, which he/she shall carry out as mandated by the Council and to ensure the consistency of the Union's external action,
 - in his/her capacity as President of the Foreign Affairs Council, without prejudice to the normal tasks of the General Secretariat of the Council,
 - in his/her capacity as Vice-President of the Commission for fulfilling within the Commission the responsibilities incumbent on it in external relations, and in coordinating other aspects of the Union's external action, without prejudice to the normal tasks of the services of the Commission.
2. The EEAS shall assist the President of the European Council, the President of the Commission, and the Commission in the exercise of their respective functions in the area of external relations.

A list of Council and Commission departments to be transferred to the EEAS was annexed to the Decision; 1,643 staff from the two institutions were transferred to the EEAS on 1 January 2011 (see Press Release [IP/10/1769](#)).

The EEAS [Annual Activity Report 2011](#) stated:

The political and economic context for the launch of the EEAS could hardly have been more challenging. The Arab Spring and the global economic crisis, together with tensions within the euro zone, have dominated the international agenda. At the same time, the global scene continues to change with the ever more tangible emergence of new partners. While the establishment process of the EEAS is in many respects still ongoing, its first year of life has seen positive achievements despite these challenges.

The Report also confirmed that, at the start of her mandate, the High Representative set three priorities for EU external relations over 2011-2012:

- establishing a functioning EEAS
- fostering deeper relations with Europe's neighbours, with the aim of promoting democracy, stability and prosperity
- building strong strategic partnerships with existing and emerging global players.

The [Annual Activity Report 2011](#) also noted that:

the EU reaffirmed its support for an effective multilateral system with the United Nations at its centre; it enhanced its participation in the works of the UN; it intensified efforts aimed at turning non-proliferation policy into a cross-cutting priority; it renewed its commitment to the universal value of human rights, and presented a Joint Communication (Human rights and democracy at the heart of

EU external action – towards a more effective approach) setting out fresh ideas aimed at carrying forward EU activities in this field.

On 28 March 2012, the Commission and the High Representative adopted [Joint Decision JOIN\(2012\)8](#) 'on Cooperation Mechanisms concerning the Management of Delegations of the European Union'. The Decision aims to set up collaborative arrangements between the EEAS and the Commission Services for the management of Delegations.

The [Annual Activity Report 2012](#) focused on the management of budget and human resources and on control systems. In that context, it highlighted the major management challenge of 2012 as being 'to consolidate internal structures and systems and to promote the development of a coherent corporate culture.'

Recommendations for changes to the organisation and structure of the EEAS were given in the [EEAS Review 2013](#), together with details of staffing and recruitment issues, and information on relations with the EU institutions (see also European Parliament: DG External Policies Study [The organisation and functioning of the European External Action Service: Achievements, challenges and opportunities](#)).

CFSP instruments and decision-making

The means by which the CFSP is to be conducted are set out in Article 25 [TEU](#), with the Union:

- (a) defining the general guidelines;
- (b) adopting decisions defining:
 - (i) actions to be undertaken by the Union;
 - (ii) positions to be taken by the Union;
 - (iii) arrangements for the implementation of the decisions referred to in points (i) and (ii);

and by

- (c) strengthening systematic cooperation between Member States in the conduct of policy.

Article 24 (1) TEU sets out the Union's competence in the area, which 'shall cover all areas of foreign policy and all questions relating to the Union's security, including the progressive framing of a common defence policy that might lead to a common defence.'

It also makes clear that the CFSP 'is subject to specific rules and procedures', with decisions being taken by the European Council and the Council, and the policy being put into effect by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and by Member States.

Article 31 sets out provisions concerning decision-making on CFSP issues within both the European Council and the Council. Decisions are generally to be taken unanimously, with qualified majority voting (QMV) to be used in specific circumstances:

- when adopting a decision defining a Union action or position on the basis of a decision of the European Council relating to the Union's strategic interests and objectives, as referred to in Article 22(1),

- when adopting a decision defining a Union action or position, on a proposal which the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy has presented following a specific request from the European Council, made on its own initiative or that of the High Representative,
- when adopting any decision implementing a decision defining a Union action or position,
- when appointing a special representative in accordance with Article 33.

With regard to unanimous voting, any Member States abstaining are permitted to make a formal declaration, thereby exempting them from applying the relevant decision. However, they are required to accept that the decision commits the Union and must 'refrain from any action likely to conflict with or impede Union action based on that decision'. In the event that a third or more of the Member States (comprising at least one third of the EU population) make such a declaration, then the decision in question will not be adopted.

If a Member State declares that, 'for vital and stated reasons of national policy', it will oppose the adoption of a decision taken under QMV, a vote will not be taken and the High Representative must try to find a solution. QMV is not to be used for decisions having military or defence implications.

Article 24 (3) requires Member States to support the Union's external and security policy 'actively and unreservedly in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity', adding that they are to 'refrain from any action which is contrary to the interests of the Union or likely to impair its effectiveness as a cohesive force in international relations.'

Global Europe

On 7 December 2011, as part of the negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the European Commission and the High Representative adopted the Communication 'Global Europe: A New Approach to financing EU external action' ([COM\(2011\)865](#); see also Press Releases [IP/11/1510](#) and [MEMO/11/878](#) and the EuropeAid [MFF](#) page).

The overall objective for external action under the new MFF:

will be to ensure that, despite the economic crisis and its budgetary consequences, the EU is able to speak with one voice, to live up to its ambitions in promoting democracy, peace, solidarity, stability and prosperity and poverty reduction, both at global level and in our immediate neighbourhood, and to help safeguard global public goods.

The Communication established the following strategic objectives for the Union's external financial instruments:

- Promoting and defending EU values abroad, putting human rights, democracy and the rule of law at the core of EU external action
- Investing in the long-term prosperity and stability of the EU's neighbourhood and supporting the reform process in those countries preparing for EU membership
- Supporting EU interests abroad, such as protecting EU citizens, enhancing trade opportunities, promoting EU norms and standards, ensuring energy security, etc.

- Projecting EU policies to address major global challenges, such as combating climate change, reversing biodiversity loss, and protecting global public goods and resources
- Increasing the impact of EU development cooperation, with the primary aim of contributing to eradicate poverty
- Enhancing mechanisms of European solidarity following natural or man-made disasters
- Improving crisis prevention and resolution capabilities, preserving peace, preventing conflict and strengthening international security.

Individual proposals were also published for nine geographic and thematic instruments, with a total budget of €96,249.4 million over the period 2014-2020 (for details, see the EuropeAid [MFF](#) page).

On 2 December 2013, the Council adopted the MFF 2014-2020 (see Press Release [15259/13](#) and Commission's [MFF pages](#)). With regard to Global Europe, on 19 November 2013 - ahead of the formal decision - the Commission stated in Press Release [IP/13/1096](#):

As a responsible global player the EU will continue its engagement with the rest of the world. The relations with our immediate neighbourhood, East and South, and with our strategic partners will remain a top priority. As global interdependence grows our security and prosperity needs to be promoted beyond our borders. That is why the overall objective for external action under the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) will be to ensure that the EU remains an influential and effective partner that promotes democracy, peace, solidarity, stability, poverty reduction and prosperity, both in our immediate EU Neighbourhood and across the wider world. It remains fully committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. EU funding will focus even more on helping the poorest in the world by concentrating support on fewer countries (like Sub-Saharan Africa) and fewer sectors (like sustainable and inclusive growth and good governance). The EU will furthermore maintain its efforts in crisis prevention in order to preserve peace and strengthen international security. Our external assistance instruments will also strengthen the EU's engagement with third countries on issues that are of global concern, such as climate change, environmental protection and regional instabilities, and allow the EU to respond rapidly and effectively to natural and man-made disasters around the world.

Information sources in the ESO database

Find updated and further information sources in the ESO database:

[18.2 Common Foreign and Security Policy](#)

- [Key Source](#)
- [Legislation](#)
- [Policy-making](#)
- [Report](#)
- [Statistics](#)
- [News source](#)
- [Periodical article](#)
- [Textbook, monograph or reference](#)
- [Background](#)

Further information sources on the internet

- European External Action Service (EEAS)
 - European Union External Action website
 - [European External Action Service](#)
 - [High Representative Catherine Ashton](#)
 - [EU around the globe](#)
 - [Foreign policy](#)
 - [Security and defence - CSDP](#)
 - [Press and media](#)
 - [EU and citizens](#)
 - European Union at the United Nations website (EU@UN)
 - [EU policies and declarations on UN-related issues](#)
 - [EU-UN publications and reports](#)
- European Commission: High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy
 - [Homepage](#)
- Europa
 - Policy areas: [Foreign and security policy](#), [External Relations](#)
 - Summaries of EU legislation
 - [Foreign and security policy](#) (subsections on: [Implementation of the CFSP and ESDP](#); [Conflict prevention](#))
- European Commission: DG Communication
 - [RAPID](#) press releases database - [High Representative of the Union for foreign affairs and security](#) (pre-set search)
 - EU news: [External relations and foreign affairs](#)
- Legislative and policy making information
 - [Treaty on the functioning of the European Union](#): Article 2, 275
 - EUR-Lex: Legislation: [Common foreign and security](#)
 - EUR-Lex: Preparatory legislation: [Common foreign and security](#)
 - EUR-Lex: Consolidated legislation: [Common foreign and security](#)
 - EUR-Lex: Case Law: [Common foreign and security](#)
 - EUR-Lex: Summaries of EU Legislation: [Common foreign and security](#)
- Court of Justice of the European Union: InfoCuria
[Homepage](#): at 'Subject-matter' box, click icon at far right to open list of subjects. Choose 'Common foreign and security policy' and/or 'External relations' and click 'Enter' to return to main search page. Select dates if required. Hit 'Search' at top or bottom of page.
- European Parliament: Legislative Observatory (OEIL)
[Homepage](#): Carry out a [Search](#): scroll down right-hand menu and expand 'Subject'; then expand 'External relations of the Union'; then expand 'Common foreign and security policy (CFSP)' and select appropriate sub-heading (if no menu is shown, click 'OK' at the search box to display it).
- European Commission: PreLex
[Homepage](#). In [Standard search](#), use the option 'Search on words from the title of the proposal' with 'foreign policy', 'security policy' or other appropriate keyword; or in an [Advanced search](#) choose 'field of activity' and select 'CFSP'.

- Council of the European Union
 - [Foreign Affairs Council](#)
 - [High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy](#)
 - [Common Foreign and Security Policy](#)
 - [Security and Defence](#)
 - [Agreements](#)
 - [Publications](#)
- European Council
 - [Homepage](#)
 - [The institution](#)
 - [The President](#)
 - [European Council meetings](#)
- European Parliament
 - [Committee on Foreign Affairs](#) (AFET)
 - [Security and Defence](#) (SEDE)
- European Parliament: Fact Sheets
 - Section on [The EU's external relations](#) has subsection on 'External relations policies' the CFSP, with Fact Sheets on [Foreign policy: aims, instruments and achievements](#) and [Common security and defence policy](#)
- Committee of the Regions
 - [Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional Affairs and External Affairs](#) (CIVEX)
- European Economic and Social Committee
 - [Section for External Relations](#) (REX)
- European Defence Agency
 - [Homepage](#)
- European Union Institute for Security Studies (ISS)
 - [Homepage](#)
- European Union Satellite Centre (EUSC)
 - [Homepage](#)

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