

Information Guide



European External Action Service

A guide to the European External Action Service (EEAS), with hyperlinks to sources of information within European Sources Online and on external websites

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Introduction

It is important in this review not to lose sight of what the EEAS is for and what we mean by European foreign policy as distinct from the individual foreign policies of Member States. It is something new and unique that brings together all of the policies and levers at the EU's collective disposal and allows them to be focused on building influence and delivering results across the world to promote EU values and interests. The EEAS is not a European Ministry of Foreign Affairs designed to replace Member States' ministries. Nor is it a foreign policy department of the General Secretariat of the Council, or a revamped version of the former Directorate General for External Relations of the Commission with additional development and CFSP competences. Based on the central concept of the comprehensive approach, the main strengths of the EEAS are:

- a global coverage of all geographical and thematic issues, supported by an network of 139 EU delegations representing the EU in 163 third countries and international institutions. In more than 70 places where the EU has a Delegation there are fewer than 10 Member States represented and 50 countries where there are fewer than 5 Member States. The EU combined is the world's largest economy of over half a billion people. In today's world size and weight matter: collectively the EU can achieve things that no Member State individually is able to do;
- the capacity to engage strongly in support of key policy priorities, in particular in the neighbourhood to the south and to the east where the EU has influence and leverage to promote and to deliver change
- an increasingly close partnership with the national diplomatic services of Member States, both in Brussels and in third countries, which is vital to an effective division of labour and efficient use of resources.

From: [EEAS Review 2013](#), July 2013.

History

Following the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon on 1 December 2009, the European External Action Service (EEAS) was established under Article 27(3) of the [Treaty on European Union](#) (TEU).

The EEAS was created to support the work of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy - a post created by the Treaty of Lisbon. A similar post had been created by the 1999 Treaty of Amsterdam: the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). In that case, the post holder (Javier Solana, who held the post throughout its existence) assisted the Council in foreign policy matters, contributing to formulating, preparing and implementing policy decisions and conducting political dialogue with third parties on behalf of the Council. The rotating EU Presidency was responsible for chairing the External Relations Council, representing the Union in CFSP matters, implementing decisions taken and expressing the EU position internationally. In addition, the European Commission also had responsibilities for managing aspects of the Union's external relations policy.

Such division of responsibilities for foreign policy led to complaints that the EU lacked a single point of contact in foreign affairs, with US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger reportedly asking "Who do I call if I want to call Europe?" It was thought at one point that the Treaty of Lisbon would introduce an EU 'Foreign Minister' to fill that perceived gap and simplify relations with third countries, but that proved not to be the case.

Instead, the Treaty of Lisbon created a President of the European Council and a High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (who is also a Vice-President of the Commission). The idea is that the High Representative will help ensure consistency in the Union's external actions. According to [The EU in the world](#):

The Treaty of Lisbon helps the EU work more effectively and consistently around the world. Connecting different strands of EU external policy, such as diplomacy, security, trade, development, humanitarian aid and international negotiations, will give the EU a clearer voice in relations with our partner countries and organisations worldwide.

Speaking in December 2010, Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, said (see Press Release [IP/10/1769](#)) that the EEAS:

will mark a new beginning for European foreign and security policy as we bring together and streamline all of the Union's existing resources, staff and instruments. We will also receive a fresh injection of talent and skills as we incorporate Member States' diplomats into our team. This combination of staff and resources will be more than the sum of its parts: we will be able to find synergies and develop new ideas, which will enhance our ability to act more creatively and decisively in an increasingly challenging world.

However, the High Representative's 22 December 2011 [Report](#) described the creation of the EEAS as 'a long-term challenge that will take several years to reach maturity' and noted that:

The political and economic context for the launch of the EEAS has been particularly challenging. The global economic crisis and tensions within the euro zone, together with the Arab Spring, have dominated the international agenda. At the same time, public administrations across Europe are under acute budget pressure, with consequences for the diplomatic services of Member States. This is hardly the ideal backdrop for the launch of a new service for the external relations of the Union.

The Report also identified a number of priority areas to be addressed in the coming years, including:

- consolidating the capacity to deliver policy substance, concentrating on the priority areas established by the High Representative. This requires sustained efforts in building a sense of collective ownership in the external agenda of the EU among Member States, the European Parliament, the Commission and other key stakeholders, on the basis of strategic policy papers and other proposals from the EEAS.
- increasing substantially the emphasis on the work of the EU delegations as the front-line presence of the EU's external action, including through strengthened co-operation with embassies of Member States. This should be accompanied by a progressive transfer of resources from headquarters to delegations. Today, more than 20 delegations have only one EEAS AD official.
- progress in building a shared organisational culture for the EEAS drawing on the strengths of its component parts, including getting the best from the three main sources of staffing (national diplomats, and permanent officials from the Commission and the Council). This should include fostering closer co-operation between different services within the EEAS, to bring together the crisis management structures with the geographical and thematic services.

- attention to resolving outstanding issues in the relationship with the Commission, including as regards upstream working on policy issues, management of staff in delegations, and reporting lines and financial responsibilities.

Legal basis

The post of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy was created by Article 9 E of the [Treaty of Lisbon](#). Catherine Ashton was appointed to the new post by [European Council Decision 2009/880/EU](#), for the period 1 December 2009 until the European Commission's current term of office ends.

The High Representative is assisted by, and responsible for, the European External Action Service (EEAS), established under Article 27(3) of the [Treaty on European Union](#).

On 21 June 2010, the European Parliament, the High Representative, the Council and the Commission issued a joint statement confirming that they had reached political agreement on the proposal for a Council Decision on the organisation and functioning of the EEAS and also on the texts of two Declarations by the High Representative, one on political accountability, the other on the basic structure of the EEAS central administration (see [statement text](#); the Declaration on political accountability is annexed to the texts adopted by the European Parliament on 8 July 2010 (see EP [procedure page](#)).

Following approval by the European Parliament on 8 July, the act establishing the organisation and functioning of the EEAS was published on 3 August 2010 as [Council Decision 2010/427/EU](#) (although MEPs were only formally consulted on certain elements of the EEAS proposal, it was claimed that Parliament 'negotiated substantial changes' to the original plans; see [EP news item](#) and Press Release [MEMO/10/311](#)).

Under Article 27(3) of the [Treaty on European Union](#), the EEAS is to comprise officials from relevant departments of the General Secretariat of the Council and of the Commission (plus staff seconded from national diplomatic services of the Member States). In order to ensure that EEAS staffing and personnel policy operates within the framework of the Staff Regulations of Officials of the European Communities and the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of those Communities, the Commission adopted a proposal for a Regulation to amend the Staff Regulations. Adopted on 9 June 2010 as [COM\(2010\)309](#), the proposal became law as [Regulation \(EU, Euratom\) 1080/2010](#) of 24 November 2010.

With the adoption of the EEAS Decision and the changes to the Staff Regulation, the transfer of 1,643 Council and Commission staff to the EEAS started on 1 January 2011 (see Press Release [IP/10/1769](#)).

Role

In the words of the [EEAS website](#):

The EU maintains diplomatic relations with nearly all countries in the world. It has strategic partnerships with key international players, is deeply engaged with emerging powers around the globe, and has signed bilateral Association Agreements with a number of states in its vicinity. Abroad, the Union is represented by a number of EU Delegations, which have a similar function to those of an embassy.

How the EEAS role fits into that overview is clarified in a Council [background note](#) on the High Representative and the EEAS:

The EEAS will help the High Representative ensure the consistency and coordination of the Union's external action as well as prepare policy proposals and implement them after their approval by Council. It will also assist the President of the European Council and the President as well as the Members of the Commission in their respective functions in the area of external relations and will ensure close cooperation with the Member States.

Note that responsibility for trade and development policy remains with the relevant Commissioners and Directorates-General of the Commission.

The February 2013 European Parliament Study [The organisation and functioning of the European External Action Service: Achievements, challenges and opportunities](#) found that:

In terms of its institutional set-up, the Service has been created as a functionally autonomous body, separate from the Council and the Commission. The study finds that this sui generis nature permeates almost all of the work of the EEAS. It renders the Service an indeterminate entity, at times functioning much like a Commission Directorate-General and at other times rather like the Council General Secretariat. There is no shared understanding among stakeholders outside or within the EEAS on the role, mandate and position of the Service within the EU external action architecture. Last but not least, under the current arrangements the office of the HR/VP evidently constitutes an impossible combination of tasks for one single person. The study therefore suggests that a system of deputisation needs to be developed.

Structure and composition

The High Representative's 22 December 2011 [Report](#) highlighted the unique composition of EEAS staffing, which is:

drawn from permanent officials from the Commission and the Council Secretariat as well as diplomats on secondment from the Foreign Ministries of the Member States.

The guidelines adopted by the European Council in October 2009 (see [Presidency report to the European Council on the European External Action Service](#)) see the EEAS as a single service under the authority of the High Representative, with an organisational status 'reflecting and supporting its unique role and functions in the EU system.'

Following a proposal for a Council Decision on the structure of the EEAS submitted by the High Representative, political agreement was reached in April 2010 at the General Affairs Council (see Press Release [8967/10](#)). In the European Parliament, the Brok report on the draft Decision, which included provisions on the EEAS budget, was adopted on 8 July 2010 (see [A7-0228/2010](#)).

Subsequently, on 13 September 2010, the General Affairs Council adopted its position on proposed changes to the EU budget, allowing for the funding of the EEAS (see Press Release [13420/1/10](#)). The cost associated with creating new posts and transferring others was €9.52 million.

In 2011, the EEAS budget was €464m, with €184m allocated to headquarters and €280m to support delegations. In addition, the EEAS also managed €253m on behalf of the Commission for the administrative expenses linked to having Commission staff working in delegations.

The EEAS was said to have entered a new phase on 1 January 2011, when 1,643 staff were transferred from the Council and Commission (see Press Release [IP/10/1769](#)). Those transferred from the Commission were from DG External Relations (RELEX; which ceased to exist), and DG Development (DEV). Those taken from the Council Secretariat worked in DG External and Politico-Military Affairs.

Further information on staffing issues was given in the High Representative's [Report](#) of 22 December 2011, which noted that on 1 January 2011 the EEAS had 2,805 people transferred from the Commission and 675 from the Council Secretariat. With the addition of a further 118 additional posts, the total at the end of 2011 was 3,611 staff (1,551 in Brussels and 2,060 in delegations).

Details of the EEAs structure and senior management can be found in the [EU Whoiswho](#) directory. There is also an organisation chart and other materials on the EEAS [Structure and organisation page](#). The External Action Service is organised into the following main sections:

- Crisis Response and Operational Coordination
- Asia and the Pacific
- Africa
- Europe and Central Asia
- North Africa, Middle East, Arabian Peninsula, Iran and Iraq
- Americas
- Global and Multilateral Issues

Comments on the structure and functioning of the Service can also be found in the [EEAS Review 2013](#) and the European Parliament Study [Achieving geographical and gender balance in the European External Action Service](#), January 2013.

Outside the EU, the EEAS manages a network of 139 [EU Delegations and Offices](#). A Council [background note](#) stated that:

The Commission's delegations will become Union delegations under the authority of the High Representative and will be part of the EEAS structure. Delegations will contain both regular EEAS staff (including Heads of Delegation) and staff from relevant Commission services. All staff should work under the authority of the Head of Delegation. EU delegations will work in close cooperation with diplomatic services of the Member States. They should play a supporting role as regards diplomatic and consular protection of Union citizens in third countries.

In addition, the advent of the External Action Service saw the EU split its Delegation in Geneva in order to establish a Delegation to the United Nations. Background to the decision was given in the 26 May 2010 Communication [COM\(2010\)287](#).

In the 22 December 2011 [Report](#) from the High Representative, delegations were said to be:

increasingly the focus of the action of the EEAS, not only through their growing contribution to political, diplomatic and policy work, but also in the support they provide to Member States including through shared reporting and with the future prospect of joint programming of development assistance. As national diplomatic services are scaling back their resources to concentrate on national priorities, the value added of the delegations is ensuring the EU is properly represented throughout the world. This is not about replacing national diplomatic services, but in making a more effective and cost efficient use of resources.

The advent of the EEAS required changes to the European Commission, as noted in the EEAS [2011 Annual Activity Report](#), 17 October 2012, which stated:

Following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the EEAS was created by the Council Decision 2010/427/EU of 26/10/2010. In parallel, a new Commission service (the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments) was set up in order to take over the responsibility of the former DG RELEX which ceased to exist while at the same time the former DG AIDCO and DG DEV merged and retained responsibility for implementation of development aid.

As the consequence of the fact that the Commission has the legal primacy over the management of operational expenditures, a division of responsibilities has been set up between the EEAS and the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments attached to the Commission.

- On one hand, the EEAS is responsible for the financial management of the administrative expenditure of its Headquarters and of the EU delegations. The EEAS is also responsible for preparing a number of Commission decisions regarding the programming cycle of external instruments (country allocations, country and regional strategic papers, as well as country and regional indicative programmes for the relevant financial instruments).
- The FPI, on the other hand, is responsible for managing the operational budgets for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), the Instrument for Stability (IfS) crisis response and peace-building, the Industrialised Countries Instrument (ICI), the Election Observation Missions (EOMs) and press and public diplomacy (PPD).

These cover actions whose primary aim is to promote EU interests and objectives, whereas other external instruments managed by DG DEVCO (development and neighbourhood) give assistance of direct benefit to partner countries. FPI instruments are intended to react to events and so are not subject to multiannual programming or to formal partnership / agreement with the third country as practiced under the other external instruments.

Location

The central contact point for the External Action Service is given as:

European External Action Service
1046 Brussels
Belgium

Since 1 December 2010 the EEAS has had its headquarters in the 'Triangle' building, Brussels (also known as the 'Axa' building and 'Capital' building).

Information sources in the ESO database

Find updated and further information sources in the ESO database:

[18.1.e External Service - External assistance](#)

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

Relevant material may also be found under:

[18.2 Common Foreign and Security Policy](#)

[2.5.c Council of the European Union: Personnel and organisational issues](#)

[2.6.c European Commission: Personnel and organisational issues](#)

Further information sources on the internet

- European External Action Service
 - [Homepage](#)
 - [Features](#)
 - [News](#)
 - [The High Representative C. Ashton](#)
 - [Information centre](#) (includes [Press and media](#), [Articles in the press](#))
 - [EU foreign affairs and you](#) (includes [Education](#), [Erasmus Mundus](#), [Grants](#), [Contracts](#))
 - [Key documents](#)
 - [Policies](#)
 - [Security and defence](#)
 - [Around the world](#)
 - [A to Z](#)
 - [Sitemap](#)
- Council
 - [Homepage](#)
 - [High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy](#)
- Europa
 - Policy areas: [External Relations](#)
 - Summaries of EU legislation
 - [External relations](#)
- European Commission: DG Communication
 - [RAPID](#) press releases database - [High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs](#), [Enlargement and neighbourhood policy](#), [International cooperation](#) [humanitarian aid and crisis response](#) (pre-set searches)
 - EU news: [External relations and foreign affairs](#)

- European Union: EUR-Lex
The text of proposed and adopted legislation relating to the Court of Auditors can be found via EUR-Lex:
 - [Proposed](#) - 01 General, financial and institutional matters - [01.40 Provisions governing the institutions](#); [18 Common Foreign and Security Policy](#)
 - [Adopted](#) (01 General, financial and institutional matters - 01.40 Provisions governing the institutions; 18 Common Foreign and Security Policy)
 - [Treaty on European Union](#) (Article 27(3))
- Court of Justice of the European Union: InfoCuria
[Homepage](#): at 'Subject-matter' box, click icon at far right to open list of subjects. Choose 'External relations' and/or 'Common foreign and security policy' and/or other appropriate headings, then 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](#) (in right-hand menu, expand 'Subject'; then expand 'External relations of the Union'; then expand the appropriate sub-section).
- European Commission: PreLex
[Homepage](#). In [standard search](#) use 'external action service' or other appropriate term
- European Parliament
 - [Committee on Foreign Affairs](#) (AFET)
- European Parliament: Fact Sheets
 - Section on [The EU's external relations](#) has sub-sections on: External relations policies; External trade relations; Development policy; Human rights and democracy; Enlargement and the Union's neighbourhood; Relations with countries outside the European neighbourhood

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