

It's time to strengthen the EEAS

2013 will be a crucial year for strengthening the EEAS and its capacity to provide value added to MS. In mid-2013, HR Ashton is due to present Review of the first two and a half years of the EEAS. The review process needs to involve MS and COM, EP, and be used as an opportunity to enhance the commitment of MS to the service and strengthen EU's ability to make better use of its foreign policy resources and tools. Finland should prepare for making an active contribution to the review.

The EU has been playing an important role in global governance on issues such as human rights, multilateral trade liberalization and climate change. Its unique policy toolbox, size and experience should be used to develop multi-dimensional approaches to complex global challenges e.g. crisis management, energy, migration. In EU institutional structures, responsibilities in these areas fall partly under the EEAS, partly under Commission. One of the big challenges of the review is to improve the relationship and strengthen coordination between the EEAS and COM, which has been bad enough to be characterized by insiders as a new Berlin wall. HR is vice-president of COM and responsible for coordinating the Commission share of EU external relations, but in practice she has had little time for this part of her extensive tasks. However, the EEAS needs to be able to draw on the whole range of EU external relations resources in defining EU positions and actions on global affairs.

Especially for smaller MS (but also the largest ones), the EU remains an indispensable power multiplier, if only the MS choose to act together – which they often do not. Europe's global decline makes the need for political unity all the more pertinent. However, the economic crisis has had contradictory effects on common foreign policy. The crisis and the ensuing rise of nationalism and confrontations inside the EU has undermined trust among the member states. Furthermore, the crisis has raised questions over Europe's global role and agenda by eroding the attraction and normative ground of the EU as an international actor.

On the other hand, by accelerating the decline of Europe's weight in global politics, the crisis accentuates the need for common action. The economic crisis is also forcing majority of member states' MFAs to make savings and rationalize their activity, which pushes them to burden-sharing and greater synergies with partner countries and with the EEAS.

In this context, the network of 140 EU delegations across the globe, which is part of the EEAS structure, is starting to prove a major value added to the member states. The delegations have already enhanced the importance of EU framework for member states' diplomats on the ground. They have taken on a new role to coordinate MS activities and represent the whole range of EU policies vis a vis third countries. There is growing demand among MS for reporting from EU delegations and much room to increase burden-sharing: MS could in future rely more on general reporting from EU delegations and focus national diplomatic reports on selected national priorities and sensitivities. There is also much potential for co-locations and for MS use of EU delegations' help in locations where they lack national missions. Only the largest 5 MS have more embassies abroad than EU. Finland should systematically explore ways to make use of EU delegations and figure in the EEAS into planning national diplomatic network.

One of the major challenges for the EEAS is to increase trust and a sense of ownership towards EAS among MS. Many smaller MS have criticized the EEAS and HR for lack of transparency and for being too receptive to influence by the big 3. The EAS has yet to prove that it is there to serve

European interest rather than the interests of the most influential MS. One way to involve MS in the EEAS: one third of staff is national diplomats. EAS is now close to reaching this goal and has succeeded to recruit the best and brightest of European diplomats. Where more effort is needed is regular consultation and information-sharing between EAS and MFAs.

Another challenge is to become a true policy entrepreneur and to start actively using its right of initiative. Lack of leadership has been a major problem of EU foreign policy over the past years. MS have been reluctant to allow the EEAS to take leadership, but on the other hand the EEAS and HR has shown little initiative and has often preferred to limit its activity to non-controversial issues. The EEAS should take the lead in strategic planning for EU external relations, pull together inputs from MS and other institutions and turn them into common policy.