

# **The European External Action Service (EEAS), the new kid on the block**

*Paper prepared for the ECPR General Conference at the University of Glasgow, 3-6  
September 2014*

Tannelie Blom  
Professor, Maastricht University

Sophie Vanhoonacker  
Professor, Maastricht University

## **Introduction**

With the creation in 2010 of the European External Action Service (EEAS), the EU now also has a fully-fledged European-level foreign policy administration. Compared to other policy fields, coordination of member states' foreign policy came rather late. It only emerged from the 1970s onwards in the form of the so-called European Political Cooperation (EPC). Being developed outside the Treaty framework, it was initially steered entirely from the national capitals. The exchange of views and formulation of joint declarations was coordinated by the rotating Presidency with a key role for the national ministries of foreign affairs. As the member states tried to move beyond a merely declaratory foreign policy, the need for more permanent bodies increased. The establishment in 1987 of a small foreign policy unit in the Council General Secretariat was the beginning of a slow but ever increasing Brusselisation of the European foreign policy machinery (Allen, 1998) culminating in the establishment of the EEAS.

Composed of a central administration in Brussels and more than 130 overseas delegations, the EEAS' main task consists in supporting the equally new High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in his/her daily work. Since the Treaty itself merely dedicates one paragraph to the new supporting body (TEU, Art. 27 (3)), policymakers have been investing much time and energy in developing the rules and procedures underpinning its day-to-day functioning. This process and the early functioning of the service has been covered extensively both in academia as well as in think tanks (see f.e. Spence, 2012; Juncos and Pomorska, 2013; Vanhoonacker and Pomorska, 2013; Murdoch, 2012; Murdoch, Trondal, Gänzle, 2013; Duke, forthcoming). Rather than echoing the questions already covered elsewhere, this contribution will study the EEAS from a distinct organisation theoretical perspective which perceives organizations as information processing systems geared to the generation of decisions (cf. March and Simon, [1958] 1993; Tushman and Nadler, 1978; Poole, 1978; Sproull and Larkey, 1984; Stinchcombe, 1990; Workman, Jones and Jochim, 2009; Jones and Baumgartner, 2012). As such it fits an analysis of the establishment and operations of the EEAS particularly well. Information/intelligence has, of course, always been a key resource for foreign policy-making. Yet, for a long time the EU member states have been very reluctant to delegate processes of information gathering and processing to the European level. The establishment of the EEAS whereby both the Brussels-based branch and the external delegations have autonomous capacities for information gathering and

processing is in that sense a watershed, the political aspects of which deserve special attention.

Seen the recent character of the EEAS, the main focus will be on the constitutive politics of information: i.e: the choices that have been made with regard to the way in which policy relevant information is accessed, distributed and processed. Following an introduction into the basic components of an information processing approach and a historical account of information streams prior to Lisbon, the main sections of this article examine the rules and routines that guide information processes in both the Brussels-based branch of the EEAS and the Union delegations.

## **Analytical Framework**

The idea to perceive organizations from an information processing perspective, instead of from a structure-oriented point of view – ‘for which the organizational chart is the ever-present tool’ (Shafritz *et al.*, 2005, 193) -, is certainly not new. Basic components of such an approach can be traced back (at least) to Herbert Simon’s doctoral dissertation, published in 1945 as *Administrative Behavior: A Study of Decision-Making Processes in Administrative Organization*. Already from this book, and then more articulate in March and Simon’s *Organizations* (1958), the image arises that organizations exist in the form of subsequent episodes of information processing with explicit decisions as transitional events that mark the end of one episode and the beginning of a new one (cf. March and Simon [1958] 1993, 152 *ff.*). We adhere to this ‘ontological’ assumption, yet refine it with the help of Niklas Luhmann’s concept of ‘reflexive mechanisms’ and his analytical decomposition of social structure into three dimensions: temporal, substantive and social (Luhmann, 1985; Luhmann, 2000). Next we seek to accommodate Terry Moe’s repeated plea for a genuine *political* theory of public bureaucracies - in contrast to a theory of organizations that has its origins in economics as e.g. provided by the currently popular ‘transaction costs’-based Principal/Agent models (cf. Moe, 1990; 1991) – by introducing the distinction between ‘constitutive politics of information’ and ‘operational politics of information (see below). Indeed, as Coulam and Smith complain: “what is generally missing is research that integrates the political and information processing perspective” (Coulam and Smith, 1985, 13).

Following Luhmann’s theory of self-referential systems the term ‘reflexive mechanism’ denotes the application of a process to that process itself - for example:

learning to learn, or teaching how to teach. In our context it refers to the fact that organizations inevitably decide on: deciding (including decisions not to decide). Reflexive or 'second order' decision-making is in fact *the* mechanism by which organizations establish their formal structure. Organizations use this second order level of decision making for example in an attempt to fix their *temporal* structure: organizations can and do decide *when* decisions have to be made and when information has to be accessed and made available.

In a similar way organizations decide on their *substantive* structures. A first substantive order is already given by decisions on the (global and less global) goals of the organization and on what kind of information is relevant and should be accessed; next organizations can decide on the rules and routines which prescribe how relevant information should be processed with a view to specific objectives; finally organizations can and do decide on how decisions should be made, e.g. which voting rules have to be followed, but also which values/interests have priority or even have to be 'protected'<sup>1</sup> when choices are made.

Last but not least, organizations decide also on the *social* dimension of their formal structure. This social dimension is first of all presented by the membership rules of an organization – who is entitled to participate in and contribute to the organizational processes, – and next by the rules prescribing the distribution of information, who has the right to be informed, which members have a 'voice' or even a 'say' during which episode, etc.

Surely, formal structures are more often than not 'incomplete', are in need, that is, of further specification in view of the concrete situations in which they have to be enacted. Moreover, formal rules can be cumbersome and inefficient, provoking organizational members to circumvent them. All this will contribute to the emergence of informal structures, which in turn may be observed by the upper-stratum of the organization itself and eventually formalized. However, the overall point to be made, is that *the core structures of public organizations consist of the rules and routines that prescribe when, how and by whom information is accessed, processed, distributed, stored, etc. and decisions are made*, irrespective of these structures being formal or informal (cf. Stinchcombe, 1990, 2).

---

<sup>1</sup> 'Protected values', are "values that resist trade-offs with other values" (Baron and Spranca, 1997, 1; cf. Ritov and Baron, 1999; Tetlock, Kristel, Elson, Green and Lerner, 2000).

In sum, organizations are able to fix, at least partly, *when, how* and by *whom* information has to be processed and decisions have to be made. Yet, as Moe (1990; 1991) has pointed out convincingly, when it comes to *public* organizations the decisions that establish their formal structures are more often than not the compromise outcome of a political struggle between different legislators ('political principals'), all trying to secure the (material, political and/or ideational) interests of themselves and their constituencies. Put differently, the formal rules and operating procedures of public organizations, like e.g. the EEAS, reflect the configuration of interests and preferences that constituted the political context of their establishment. Against this background it makes sense to distinguish at least analytically between two types of 'politics', namely between the *constitutive* politics of informing and the *operational* politics of informing (Blom, 2014; Blom and Vanhoonacker, 2014). The constitutive politics of informing concerns first of all the formal institutionalization of the way in which policy relevant information is accessed, distributed and processed, possibly including the standardization of its provision and its statistical quantification. As such, the constitutive politics of information is about the choices that have to be made in the institutionalization of the provision of information and advice and about the contestability of these choices and the interests involved. The operational politics of information concerns the exploitation of opportunities for strategic and manipulative acts of 'informing' that present themselves during the 'daily' process of collecting, distributing, synthesizing, etc. information, thanks to or despite of the formal formats and procedures decided upon in the constitutive process. As such, it includes not only the *bureaucratic* politics of information, but also the interventions and tactics which political principals may infuse into daily information processing in order to curb bureaucratic politics.

### **Information-sharing and processing prior to Lisbon**

The European Union stands out as a case where the information exchange between countries is dense and highly institutionalised. Information sharing was as a matter of fact one of the key pillars underpinning European Political Cooperation. As noted by the Belgian Permanent Representative Philippe de Schoutheete, one of the erstwhile participants in EPC, it was an important instrument to gradually build the '*communauté de vues*' which was conditional for common foreign policy action (de Schoutheete, 1986).

One of the reasons for the success of information-sharing between member states was that this process was institutionalised from early onwards. In 1973, the nine countries participating in EPC established the so-called *Correspondance Européenne* (COREU) communication network, which allowed them and the European Commission to exchange enciphered messages (Smith, 2004). This did not only include logistical information such as agenda's and minutes but also substantive material feeding into joint declarations (Bicchi and Carta, 2012). In the absence of permanent bodies meeting on a continuous basis, COREU was the oil that allowed the EPC machinery to respond relatively swiftly to international developments.

In line with the overall character of EPC, the system operated on a largely intergovernmental basis. The member states were not only the principal source of information but also its ultimate gatekeeper. They were deciding about the quantity and quality of the information to be shared. Seen the wide-ranging difference in foreign policy capacities, the contribution of countries varied to an important extent with the bigger member states such as France, Germany and the UK being amongst the most active contributors (Bicchi, 2014). The processing and analysis of the information was entrusted to the rotating Presidency rather than to autonomous Brussels-based bodies (Dijkstra and Vanhoonacker, 2011).

It is only with the Amsterdam Treaty and the creation of a Policy Unit in the Council General Secretariat that the EU finally gets a small but permanent body of about 35 seconded diplomats and EU civil servants having the capacity for autonomous information gathering and processing. The development of an EU crisis management role furthermore led to the expansion of the Secretariat with new bodies such as an EU Military Staff, a Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability, and even a small intelligence unit known as SitCen (Situation Centre) (Ibid.). Jointly, they provided the EU with the nucleus of a capacity for independent analysis, planning and early warning. In parallel, also the European Commission tried to professionalise its information and analysis functions. The Commission delegations abroad received the formal task to become more active in reporting about the situation on the ground (Duke, 2002). Practices however continued to vary widely and the quality of the accounts differed.

With the Amsterdam Treaty, the principle of independent information-gathering and processing at the EU-level became generally accepted and was increasingly seen as a necessity for the development of an effective European foreign policy. The real

milestone however is the entering into force of the Lisbon Treaty (December 2009). The establishment of the EEAS and the transformation of the Commission delegations into EU delegations create for the first time a potential information surplus at the EU level.

## **The Constitutive Politics of Information behind the EEAS**

The creation of the new position of a High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR), supported by a fully-fledged European external action service is the EU's institutional response to its ambition to increase its international actorness in a globalising and multipolar world (Laeken Declaration, December 2001). The dual (and even triple-) hatted HR combines the positions of the Commissioner of External Relations, the HR (formerly based at the Council General Secretariat) and the chair of the Foreign Affairs Council (formerly a task of the rotating Presidency (Helwig, 2013; Morgenstern, 2012)). The existing foreign policy administrations, previously scattered over the Commission (DG Relex) and the Council Secretariat (Policy Unit, DG E) were merged into a new service, which was to also encompass seconded national diplomats. Secondly, it was decided to transform the Commission delegations abroad into Union delegations and to place them under the authority of the HR (Art. 221, Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, TFEU).<sup>2</sup>

The Lisbon Treaty is very succinct about the new service. Its Article 27 (3) confines itself to a reference to its supporting role and its composition, while leaving the further details to a later Council Decision.<sup>3</sup> In what follows we will examine the set-up of the service through the lenses of a politics of information approach, making a distinction between the emerging rules of the game in Brussels and in the delegations abroad. Although the main focus will be on the debates about the constitutive rules, we will also already include some first insights into the day-to-day practice. Starting from the

---

<sup>2</sup> Art. 221 TFEU stipulates that the 'Union delegations in third countries and at international organizations shall represent the Union' and that 'Union delegations shall be placed under the authority of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. They shall act in close cooperation with Member States' diplomatic and consular missions.'

<sup>3</sup> Article 27 (3), TEU stipulates that: '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.'

assumption that information is one of the key resources in foreign policy, we expect that our mapping exercise of information patterns will also help us to get a better understanding of the role and place of this newly emerging European foreign policy administration more broadly.

### *The Brussels-based branch of the EEAS*

The European External Action Service formally started to be operational in December 2010 following the adoption of the 'Council decision establishing the organisation and the function of the EEAS' in July 2010 (Council Decision, 2010). This founding document sets out the key principles and rules that are guiding the new body in its day-to-day functioning. The Council was acting on a proposal from the HR presented in March 2010, after consulting the European Parliament (EP) and with the consent of the Commission. The HR's proposal was in turn based on a Report on the European External Action Service produced by the Swedish Presidency of the EU (23 October 2009). A further key document with 'constitutive' implications is the Commission's *Working Arrangements between Commission Services and the European External Action Service in Relation to External Relations Issues* of 13 January 2012 (SEC (2012)48).

The struggle over the EEAS reached its pinnacle during the first half of 2010 when representatives from the EP, the Commission, the Spanish EU Presidency, and Ashton were negotiating the HR's proposal and amendments in the so-called 'quadrilogue'. Just before the adoption of the Swedish Presidency Report, the EP had already adopted Rapporteur Elmar Brok's *Report on the Institutional Aspects of Setting up the European External Action Service* (EP 2009). Brok's Report made clear that in order to "further developing the community model in the Union's external relations"(note 2) the EP wanted the EEAS to be closely related to, if not part of, the Commission. From the EP's point of view this would result in more transparency and accountability (cf. Wisniewski, 2013). In line with that, the EP claimed the right to 'hear' *nominees* for high staff positions in the EEAS. Moreover, it insisted on a formal obligation of the HR/VP to inform the EP on a regular basis, also about CFSP issues. Pointing out that "as a service that is *sui generis* from an organisational and budgetary point of view the EEAS must be incorporated into the Commission's administrative structure", the EP sought also to ensure budgetary oversight of the EEAS. It made quite clear that it would not hesitate to use its budgetary powers over the EU's external policy instruments, and



reminded the other institutional actors (note 8) of the need to find an agreement with the EP on the necessary future amendments of the Financial Regulation and Staff Regulations. The *Proposal for the Establishment of the EEAS* made public on 6 April 2010 by the EP rapporteurs Brok and Verhofstadt neatly sums up the EP's 'essential points': "These primarily concern budgetary prerogatives, political accountability, including the hearing of top EEAS staff by the European Parliament prior to taking up their posts, as well as the need for a strengthened consultation mechanisms regarding Council decision-making on the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)".

The Commission was not very eager to give up its competences in external policy areas outside the domain of CFSP/CDSP, like Trade, Development, Neighbourhood or Humanitarian Aid. Especially development policy was vehemently defended, with the support of the EP, as a competence of the Commission. More in general the Commission held that if the EEAS was not to be part of the Commission then it certainly should not have much autonomy. Non-CFSP policies and operations should remain under the supervision of the relevant Commissioners and their DGs.

Precluding an EEAS with strong autonomy was also the aim of the Member States, but already the Swedish Presidency report on the EEAS, stipulating that it "should be a service of a *sui generis* nature"(point 16), made clear that the national capitals were certainly not willing to strengthen the Commission's external policy competences. Especially for Member States with extensive networks of external representations and embassies, like France, Germany, and the UK, the central dilemma was how to reconcile the wish for a common, unitary European foreign policy with their own diplomatic interests (cf. Furness, 2013; van Vooren, 2011).

Ashton, appointed as HR/VP at the end of 2009, of course also played a key role in the negotiations, backed by her High Level Group. For her the most urgent task was to set up the EEAS as a coherent, smoothly operating organization that also had to include the Union Delegations. Giving the multitude of tasks the HR/VP was foreseen to execute and manage (cf. Missiroli, 2010), it was important for Ashton to put in place an efficient system of delegation and personal representation in the different forums the HR/VP formally has to attend. Here she clashed with the EP which criticized, inter alia, that the proposed organization was too hierarchical with a too strong position for the Secretary General. Moreover, the EP found it hard to swallow that the HR/VP and therewith the EEAS could be represented, if need be, by non-political actors, like General or Deputy

Secretaries. In its view, this should either be the role of the HR/VP, a relevant Commissioner, or a Minister of foreign affairs from the Council. Another point that bothered Ashton, but was not solved, was the 'anomalous status' of EU Special Representatives in relation to the system of Union Delegations (EEAS, 2013).

One of the key debates in the set-up of the EEAS concerned its *substantive* structures. At the core was the question whether the service would be covering all aspects of external action, including CFSP, CSDP, trade, and development or whether it would primarily deal with foreign policy in the narrow sense of the word (Grevi and Cameron, 2005; Duke, 2008; Vanhoonacker and Reslow, 2010). The final decision was in line with the position presented in the Swedish Presidency report adopted by the European Council in October 2009 (Swedish Presidency, 2009). It includes a transfer from the Council General Secretariat of all civilian and military crisis management structures<sup>4</sup> as well as the Situation Centre (the EU's Intelligence unit), but leaves DG Trade and part of DG Development<sup>5</sup> in the European Commission (Annex, Council Decision 2010).

From an informational point of view, this set-up has important consequences. It perpetuates the existence of an autonomous information gathering and processing unit in the field of crisis management and equips the HR with a (small) intelligence analysis centre, since 2012 renamed as INTCEN. Although Ashton has adopted a rather minimalist view with regard to the EU role as a crisis manager (Vanhoonacker and Pomorska, 2013), from a long-term perspective it is a significant choice. It reaffirms the recognition by the member states that even in the sensitive field of security, a further pooling of information resources in Brussels is indispensable. Seen the importance of seconded national diplomats, military staff and policemen in crisis management, the national capitals remain a key information provider. This is also the case with INTCEN, where the seconded officials of national intelligence services represent up to 70% of the staff (Duke, 2014).

For information and expertise in the area of trade and to some extent also development, the HR and the EEAS remain dependent on the European Commission. The fact that the staff dealing with these policy fields is spread between two different

---

<sup>4</sup> This includes the Crisis Management and Planning Directorate (CMPD), the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC) and the EU Military Staff (EUMS).

<sup>5</sup> It concerns the players dealing with the first three stages of the programme cycle (programming, identification and formulation).

institutions has led to new coordination challenges. The 'Vademecum on Working Relations with the European External Action Service' (European Commission, 2011) and its 'complement', the 'Working Arrangements between Commission and the EEAS in Relation to External Relations Issues' of 2012, foresee that when trade and development issues are involved, initiatives have to go through CISnet, the Commission inter-service consultation tool (Marangoni, 2013). The EEAS also occasionally acts as a supporting service to different DGs in the Commission, for instance to the Commissioner responsible for the European Neighbourhood Policy regarding policy matters or to DG DEVCO for the strategic and multi-annual programming cycle (European Commission, 2011: 11-12). The sensitivity and complexity of the relationship is exemplified by the fact that it took one year to negotiate the practical guide on their mutual interaction (European Commission, 2012).

Lisbon and the creation of the EEAS have also affected the *social* structures of foreign policy coordination. For a long time, the six-monthly rotating Presidency was at the centre of the system. As chair of the meetings at all levels, and face of the EU towards third countries, it was a key hub both for incoming as well as outgoing information. The data collected by Bicchi and Carta (2012) on outgoing messages of the COREU system are very revealing in this respect. They show that prior to Lisbon the rotating chair was responsible for about 10% of the messages sent. This did not only concern logistical information about agenda's and minutes, mostly sent by the Council Secretariat but also content-related information. The privileged position of the Presidency was also reflected by the fact that it is the only member state which could also exchange bilateral messages, either with the Council Secretariat or with another member state (via the CGS) (Bicchi and Carta, 2012).

With Lisbon this picture radically changes. Through the transfer of several General Secretariat units to the EEAS, through the responsibility of the HR/VP for coordinating all external policies, through the EEAS' responsibility for chairing the Political and Security Committee (PSC) and the CFSP working groups, and through the upgrading of the Community Delegations to Union Delegations, the EEAS "has become the pivotal actor of communications via COREU" (Bicchi, 2014). In only two years the EEAS has become the sender of around 30% of the messages circulating through COREU (Ibid.).

From a social perspective – who has to inform whom and who has the right to be informed - it is not unimportant to note that the establishment of the EEAS also was an opportunity for the EP, traditionally kept out of COREU, to secure access to classified information. Whereas nothing of that was in the HR’s proposal of March 2010, Recital 6 of the Council Decision stipulates: “Specific arrangements should be made with regard to access for Members of the European Parliament to classified documents and information in the area of CFSP.

Apart from the stipulations in Article 13, that the HR shall submit a report on the functioning of the EEAS by the end of 2011 (Art. 13.2) and that “by mid-2013 the HR shall provide a review of the organisation and functioning of the EEAS” (Art 13.3), the Council Decision establishing the EEAS is not very explicit about the *temporal* dimension of the service’s operations. Yet, the suggestions of Article 9 concerning the role of the EEAS in the programming and management cycle of the various external action instruments do form the basis of the much more detailed elaboration of the temporal dimensions of the EEAS’s contributions to the programming of these instruments in the 2011 ‘Vademecum’ and the 2012 ‘Working Arrangements’.

As to be expected, these temporal specifications mirror and confirm the social structures of the EU’s set-up of a common foreign policy. For example, the Working Arrangement identifies 10 subsequent steps in the preparation of the multi-annual programs of the Development Cooperation Instrument, the European Development Fund, and the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument. Typically, the EEAS is mainly involved in the first steps, “setting out the main objectives and principles to be followed for the programming process” (European Commission, 2012, 18). It could be argued that by preparing these guidelines on behalf of the relevant Commissioners, the EEAS has the strategic lead, determining the priorities of the multi-annual programs for these external action instruments. The Commission, however, takes the decisive tenth step, when it decides on the adoption of the program. Moreover, the Commission is also in charge of the annual action programs and their implementation, including financial oversight.

### *The Union delegations*

The second branch of the European External Action Service are its external delegations. These so-called Union delegations are the successors of the Commission delegations and

operate under the direct authority of the HR (Art. 221, TEU). Their composition reflects that of the Brussels-based branch of the EEAS: a mixture of staff from the Commission, the Council Secretariat and the member states. In the light of the general objective of continuity and coherence of EU external action, the delegations have taken over from the rotating Presidency as main body of coordinating EU action abroad (Drieskens, 2012; Maurer, 2013). When it comes to rules on information sharing and processing, it is important to distinguish between the interaction of the Union delegations with the Brussels-based institutions and the cooperation with the diplomatic mission of the member states. Especially the latter has proven to be an extremely sensitive matter.

A key document on the interaction between the *Union delegations and Brussels* is again the 2012 'Working Arrangements between Commission Services and the EEAS in relation to External Relations Issues'. The section on working arrangements with EU delegations deals primarily with the *social* dimension of who should receive what. It stipulates that the delegations, -who since Lisbon not only deal with trade and development (if applicable) but also CFSP-, have to report to both the HR/VP, the President of the European Commission, the relevant Commissioners(s), the EEAS and the Commission services. The Commission DGs may request for reporting in the area of their competence but have to do so through the Head of the Union delegation who falls under the direct authority of the HR. This stipulation clearly puts the HR and the EEAS (Head of delegation) at the top of the information hierarchy, above the Commission, and reflects the broader mandate of the HR to guard the coherence of EU external action. This is also reflected in the requirement that the geographical desks of the EEAS should be copied into all reports relative to their country, also those related to trade and development or other policy dimensions where the Commission has key competencies.

The Working Arrangements furthermore specify that information flows between Brussels (EEAS/ Commission) and the delegations should have a two-way character. The Brussels desks are not merely at the receiving end but are also supposed to be responsive to the possible information needs of the delegations about relevant developments or policy orientations. The warning in the letter of 12 foreign ministers to the HR in December 2011 that Union delegations can only function properly 'if the Head of delegation receives all necessary information in good time' indicates that this has been challenging (Non-paper Foreign Ministers, 2011).

The upgrading of the Commission delegations to Union delegations has also affected the *substantive* and *temporal aspects* of the political reporting process. The *ad hoc* approach of the pre-Lisbon period has given place to a more systematic and professional way of reporting according to certain guidelines in terms of content, presentation and frequency. The reports, drafted by the political counsellors of the delegations, give an account and analysis of the political situation on the ground, preferably accompanied by policy recommendations. Important sources of information include the press and other open sources, local governmental and non-governmental players as well as the delegations from the member states. Since in many delegations the number of political counsellors is limited to one, the information provided by the national embassies is very welcome. At the same time however the EEAS has made it clear that the political reports are non-negotiable. In other words, they only express the view of the delegation, which may or may not coincide with that of the member states (Bicchi, 2014). This is an important step since it establishes the autonomous character of the EEAS as information processor. It also implies that the member states are losing control over the message that is being transmitted to Brussels and which will be fed into the policymaking process. Furthermore the frequency of the reporting has increased from a monthly (or less) to a weekly basis (Bicchi, 2014).

The second series of rules relates to the interaction of the *Union delegations with the member states*. Article 35 of the Lisbon Treaty specifies that the new delegations and the national embassies have to closely cooperate and it explicitly identifies the exchange of information as a way to realise this goal (Art. 35, TEU). The draft Council decision establishing the EEAS prepared by the HR (March 2010) is more specific. It stipulates that the Union delegations and the national diplomatic services 'shall, on a reciprocal basis, provide all relevant information' (Draft Council Decision, Art.5, par.9). Interestingly enough, the reciprocal character of the cooperation has been deleted in the final text ultimately adopted in July (Council Decision, July 2010). Paragraph 9 of Article 5 on the Union delegations simply states that 'The Union delegations shall work in close cooperation and share information with the diplomatic services of the Member States'.

This omission is reflective of the desire of the member states to keep control over the information they share. While in some cases states may indeed be keen to disclose particular material and data to influence the policy process, in others they may find it more advantageous to keep their cards close to their chest and decide to strategically

use their informational surplus at a later stage or not at all. The reluctance may have been further reinforced by the initial lack of a secure communications network (Non-paper Foreign Ministers, 2011).

Despite their continuing dependence on the national embassies for part of their material, the information position of the delegations has nevertheless strengthened since Lisbon. First of all, they are the ones who determine the content of the reports sent to Brussels, not the member states who may have provided part of the input. The delegations have made it clear that they are not willing to negotiate over the substance and their analysis of the facts. Secondly, the sharing of these reports with the member states is no longer standard practice as it used to be in the past. Under pressure of the EEAS in Brussels, the delegations no longer automatically share their reports with the national embassies on the ground (Bicchi, 2014). It reflects a desire to exploit the informational advantage resulting from their central position as chairs of coordination meetings between heads of mission and at lower levels. This new practice has led to criticism on the side of the member states, especially the smaller and medium-sized ones. In a time of budgetary restraints, increased reliance on EU political reports are seen as a way to deal with the reduced human and material resources. From the point of view of the HR, the position is understandable. As chair of the Foreign Affairs Council, it further strengthens her position if there is a situation of informational asymmetry between her and the member states.

## **Conclusion**

In its final form the EEAS is the outcome of a struggle not only between intergovernmental versus supranational orientations but also between an interest in a unitary European foreign policy and diplomacy versus the specific foreign policy interests of different Member States (cf. van Vooren, 2011). Since none of these forces got the definite upper hand, the EEAS that came into existence is a rather hybrid body, indeed *sui generis* in the Union's overall institutional landscape and also when compared to national states and their Foreign Ministries. It is not an EU institution in the sense of Article 13 of the TEU, nor has it been granted explicitly the legal personality that EU agencies enjoy (cf. Erkelens and Blockmans, 2012). Except in the area of CFSP it is strongly entwined with the different Commission DGs which are dealing with external action, the Commission being moreover the budget authority for all its operations. Yet

also in the field of CFSP the EEAS has no autonomous decision competences; it *supports* the HR/VP in this field who in turn has to follow the general guidelines and priorities as formulated by the General Affairs Council and adopted by the European Council.

From a formal, institutional perspective the EEAS may thus seem a weak body, an inter-institutional service with (too) many tasks but hardly any autonomous competences. Yet from a politics of information perspective things look rather different. Apart from its Brussels based administration, comprising almost 540 AD posts, it has another ace that in the future may rend the EEAS an impressive and, from an operational politics of information perspective, highly relevant informational surplus: the network of Union Delegations. As pointed out above, once operational the EEAS has consciously attempted to secure an informational advantage by fencing its political field reports off from the Member States and their delegations. This operational politics of the EEAS may be partly an act of counter-balancing the hesitations of Member States to share with the EEAS all information available to them. Yet, in combination with its chairing functions in the Political and Security Committee and in CFSP working groups, its own channelling of information may well give the EEAS an edge over Member State representatives, especially in policy areas that, if not crisis driven, are confronting an at least highly volatile environment. It could moreover be hypothesised that given the HR/VP's co-right of initiative in CFSP/CSDP, and given the EEAS' task to support the HR/VP in this policy area, informational asymmetries resulting from the interplay between the Brussels branch and its external delegation will lend the EEAS opportunities for informal, yet substantial policy influence. Only time will learn whether such opportunities will indeed present themselves, and whether the EEAS will be able to seize them in order to strengthen its interdependent standing and expand its own turf.



## REFERENCES

- Allen, D. (1998) 'Who Speaks for Europe? The Search for an Effective and Coherent Foreign Policy' in Peterson, J. and Sjursen, H. (eds) *A Common Foreign Policy for Europe? Competing Visions of the CFSP* (London: Routledge), 41–58.
- Baron, J. and Spranca, M. (1997) 'Protected Values', *Organizational Behavior and Decision Processes*, 70(1), 1–16.
- Bicchi, F. and Carta, C. (2012) 'The COREU Network and the Circulation of Information Within EU Foreign Policy', *Journal of European Integration*, 34(5), 465–84.
- Bicchi, F. (2014) 'EU Foreign Policy and the Politics of Information' in Blom, T. and Vanhoonacker, S. (eds) *The Politics of Information. The Case of the EU* (Basingstoke: Palgrave).
- Blom, T. (2014) 'The Politics of Information: An Organization Theoretical Perspective' in Blom, T. and Vanhoonacker, S. (eds) *The Politics of Information. The Case of the EU* (Basingstoke: Palgrave).
- Blom, T. and Vanhoonacker, S. (2014) 'The Politics of Information: A New Research Agenda' in Blom, T. and Vanhoonacker, S. (eds) *The Politics of Information. The Case of the EU* (Basingstoke: Palgrave).
- Coulam, R. F. and Smith, R. A. (1985) 'Introduction' in Sproul, L. and Larkey, P. (eds) *Advances in Information Processing in Organizations*, 2, (London: JAI Press INC.), 1–19.
- Council of the European Union (2010) 'Council Decision of 26 July 2010 Establishing the Organization and Functioning of the European External Action Service', 2010/427/EU, OJ L201/30-40.
- Council of the European Union (2005) 'Progress Report on the European External Action Service', 9956/05 (Brussels).

Dijkstra, H. and Vanhoonacker, S. (2011) 'The Changing Politics of Information in European Foreign Policy', *Journal of European Integration*, 33(5), 541–58.

Drieskens, E. (2012) 'What's in a Name? Challenges to the Creation of EU Delegations', *The Hague Journal for Diplomacy*, 7(1), 51–64.

Duke, S. (2002) 'Preparing for European diplomacy?', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40(5), 849–70.

Duke, S. (2008), 'The Lisbon Treaty and External Relations', *Eipascope*, 1, 13-18.

Duke, S. (2014) 'Intelligence and EU External Relations: Operational to Constitutive politics' in Blom, T. and Vanhoonacker, S. (eds) *The Politics of Information. The Case of the EU* (Basingstoke: Palgrave).

Duke, S. (forthcoming 2015) 'The Practices and Principles of Post-Lisbon Diplomacy' in Smith, M., Keukeleire, S. and Vanhoonacker, S. (eds) *The Diplomatic System of the European Union: Evolution, Change and Challenges* (London: Routledge).

EEAS (2013), *EEAS Review*. Available at:

[http://eeas.europa.eu/top\\_stories/2013/29072013\\_eeas\\_review\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/top_stories/2013/29072013_eeas_review_en.htm)

Erkelens, L. and Blockmans, S. (2012) 'Setting up the European External Action Service: an Act of Institutional Balance', *European Constitutional Law Review*, 8(2), 246-79.

European Commission (2012) 'Working Arrangements Between Commission and the European External Action Service (EEAS) in Relation to External Relations Issues', SEC (2012)48.

European Commission (2011) 'Vademecum on Working Relations with the European External Action Service (EEAS)', SEC (2011)1636.

European Parliament (2009), *Report on the Institutional Aspects of Setting up the European External Action Service*, TA (2009)0057.

Furness, M. (2013) 'Who Controls the European External Action Service? Agent Autonomy in the EU External Policy', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 18(1), 103-26.

Grevi, G. and Cameron, F. (2005) 'Towards an EU Foreign Service', *Issue Paper 29* (Brussels: European Policy Centre).

Helwig, N. (2013) 'EU Foreign Policy and the High Representative's Capability-Expectations Gap: A Question of Political Will', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 18(2), 235-54.

Jones, B. D. and Baumgartner, F. R. (2012) 'From There to Here: Punctuated Equilibrium to the General Punctuation Thesis to a Theory of Government Information Processing', *Policy Studies Journal*, 40(1), 1-19.

Juncos, A. and Pomorska, K. (2013) "In the Face of Adversity": Explaining the Attitudes of EEAS Officials vis-à-vis the New Service', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 20(9), 1332-49.

Laeken Declaration on the Future of the European Union (2001), available online at: <http://european-convention.eu.int/pdf/lknen.pdf>.

Luhmann, N. (1985) *Soziale Systeme* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp).

Luhmann, N. (2000) *Organisation und Entscheidung* (Wiesbaden: Westdeutsche Verl.).

Marangoni, A. (2013) 'Coordination of External Policies: Feudal Fiefdoms to Coordinate' in Boening, A., Kremer, J. F. and van Loon, A. (eds) *Global Power Europe* (Heidelberg: Springer), 27-54.

March, J. G. and Simon, H. A ([1958] 1993) *Organizations* (Cambridge (Mass.): Blackwell Publ.).

Maurer, H. (2013), 'Representing European interests in Washington: Post Lisbon patterns on European diplomacy'. Paper presented at the 8<sup>th</sup> Pan-European Conference on International Relations (SGIR), Warsaw, 18-21 September 2013.

Missiroli, A. (2010), 'The New EU 'Foreign Policy' System after Lisbon: A Work In Progress', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 15, 427-452.

Moe, T. M. (1990) 'Political Institutions: The Neglected Side of the Story', *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization*, 6(Special Issue), 213-53.

Moe, T. M. (1991) 'Politics and the Theory of Organization', *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization*, 7(Special Issue), 106-29.

Morgenstern, J. (2012) 'The Shape of Things to Come: Historical Institutionalism and the Origin of the European External Action Service', Paper prepared for the 43<sup>rd</sup> UACES Annual Conference, Leeds, 2-4 September 2012.

Murdoch, Z. (2012) 'Negotiating the European External Action Service (EEAS): Analysing the External Effects of Internal (Dis)agreement', *Journal of Common Market Studies* 50(6), 1011-27.

Murdoch, Z., Trondal, J. and Ganzle, S. (2013) 'Building Foreign Affairs Capacity in the EU: The Recruitment of Member State Officials to the EEAS', *Public Administration*, DOI: 10.1111/padm.12037.

'Non-Paper on the European External Action Service from the Foreign Ministries of Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland and Sweden to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission, Catherine Ashton', 8 December 2011, available online at:

<http://www.eurotradeunion.eu/documents/20111208Lettredes12.pdf> (retrieved 1 December 2013).

'Proposal for a Council Decision of (Date) Establishing the Organisation and Functioning of the European External Action Service', (25 March 2010), available online at: [http://eeas.europa.eu/docs/eeas\\_draft\\_decision\\_250310\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/docs/eeas_draft_decision_250310_en.pdf).

Poole, M. S. (1978) 'An Information Task Approach to Organizational Communication', *Academy of Management Review*, 3 (3), 493–504.

'Report. Working Group VII – External Action', CONV 459/02. Brussels, 16 December 2002.

Ritov, I. and Baron, J. (1999) 'Protected Values and Omission Bias', *Organizational Behavior and Decision Processes*, 79(2), 79–94.

Schoutete, de, Ph. (1986), *La coopération politique européenne* (Brussels: Labor).

Shafritz J. M., Ott J. S. and Yang Y. S. (eds) (2005) *Classics of Organization Theory* (Belmont: Wadsworth/Thomson).

Smith, M. E. (2004) *Europe's Foreign and Security Policy: The Institutionalization of Cooperation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Spence, D. (2012) 'The Early Days of the European External Action Service: A Practitioner's view', *Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, 7(1), 115–34.

Sproull, L. S. and Larkey, P. D. (1984) 'Introduction' in Sproull, L. S. and Larkey, P. D. (eds) *Advances in Information Processing in Organizations* (London: JAI Press INC.), 1–8.

Stinchcombe, A. L. (1990) *Information and Organizations* (Oxford: University of California Press).

Swedish Presidency of the EU Council (2009) *Presidency Report to the European Council on the European External Action Service*, 14930/09.

Tetlock, Ph. E., Kristel, O. V., Elson, S. B., Green, M. C and Lerner, J. S. (2000) 'The Psychology of the Unthinkable: Taboo Trade-Offs, Forbidden Base Rates, and Heretical Counterfactuals', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78(5), 853–70.

Tushman, M. L. and Nadler, D. A. (1978) 'Information Processing as an Integrating Concept in Organizational Design', *Academy of Management Review*, 3(3), 613–24.

Vanhoonacker, S. and Reslow, N. (2010) 'The European External Action Service: Living Forwards by Understanding Backwards', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 15(1), 1–18.

Vanhoonacker, S. and Pomorska, K. (2013) 'The European External Action Service (EEAS) and Agenda-Setting in European Foreign Policy', *Journal of European Public Policy*, 20(9), 1316–31.

Vooren, B. van (2011), 'A Legal-Institutional Perspective on the European External Action Service', *Common Market Law Review*, 48, 475-502.

Wisniewski, E. (2013), 'The Influence of the European Parliament on the European External Action Service', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 18(1), 81-102.

Workman, S., Jones, B. D. and Jochim, A. E. (2009) 'Information Processing and Policy Dynamics', *The Policy Studies Journal*, 37(1), 75–92.