Executive Summary

A Diplomatic Entrepreneur

Making the Most of the European External Action Service

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A Chatham House Report

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Executive Summary

The creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS) was one of the principal foreign policy innovations of the Treaty of Lisbon, intended to bring greater coherence and impact to the EU’s international relations. During its first year, much of the EEAS’ energy has been consumed in establishing the foundations of the service. Concurrently, the EEAS and its appointed head, Baroness Ashton, the EU’s High Representative (HR) for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, have had to respond to dramatic events in Europe’s neighbourhood, most notably the uprisings in the Arab world.

In order to make the most of its role and its capabilities, the EEAS needs to cultivate the virtues of entrepreneurship: being ahead of the market by emphasizing intellectual leadership and innovative policy development; using a clear strategy to guide the allocation of its resources; seeking new opportunities to advance the EU’s common agenda and being prepared to take calculated risks for that purpose; and building the confidence of its ‘shareholders’ – the EU’s 27 member governments and the EU institutions – by taking advantage of the leverage that comes with the EU’s unity while exploring the opportunities that lie in its diversity.

The EU faces three challenges if it is to make the most of the EEAS’ potential: a strategy challenge, a leadership challenge and a delivery challenge. This report makes recommendations for addressing each of these in turn.

All 27 governments have something to gain from supporting and investing in the EEAS. With a capable and efficient service, the EU stands a better chance of supporting the aspirations of its member governments. Without it, important diplomatic resources will be wasted and the external actions of EU member states and EU institutions may increasingly be at cross-purposes with one another.

Recommendations

Strategy

The single biggest challenge for the EEAS’ next phase is to set a clear and coherent course for the medium to long term. The High Representative should:

- Use the first anniversary of the EEAS as an occasion to communicate a vision for the service, explaining its role in promoting the interests and values of the European Union, its member states and its citizens.
- Seek a mandate to update the EU Security Strategy to identify where the medium- and long-term interests of EU countries overlap and where these can be advanced through concerted, collective action.
• Launch and lead a strategic review of the EEAS to articulate its distinctive role, set its priorities, and match resources to these aims. The goal should be to finalize a strategic plan before the end of the High Representative’s current term in 2014 and coinciding with the CFSP budget discussion.

Leadership

The implementation of strategy is about leadership and delivery. The High Representative should:

• Emphasize diplomatic entrepreneurship through:
  • intellectual leadership, feeding the EU with well-informed proposals that expand the boundaries and ambition of EU foreign policy;
  • calculated risk-taking, as the best of the previous EU presidencies did;
  • creative foreign policy execution through smaller constellations of EU member states and developing further the role of EU envoys.

• Take advantage of the EU’s diversity by:
  • drawing on individual foreign ministers to act as senior envoys;
  • encouraging member states to take the lead on issues where they have particular competencies;
  • using the long-established bilateral channels of various EU member states for the purpose of advancing the common EU agenda.

• Improve coordination by:
  • sharing policy-relevant information and experience through personnel exchanges;
  • securing a place for the EU in informal international contact groups;

• enhancing the EU’s effectiveness as a negotiator by focusing less on speaking with one voice and more on delivering one message.

Delivery

The EEAS’ third challenge is to invest in its capacity to deliver its strategy. To this end, the High Representative should:

• Initiate, as part of the EEAS Strategic Review proposed in this report, an assessment of the EEAS overseas presence, focusing on four priority areas:
  • the capitals of the EU’s strategic partners;
  • regional or sub-regional hubs, such as Addis Ababa, Doha and Abu Dhabi;
  • fragile states; and
  • the EU’s eastern and southern neighbourhood.

• Use the upcoming rotations of diplomatic posts to address imbalances in the service’s international presence, strengthening diplomatic missions in major emerging economies and the Arab Gulf.

• Establish informal Inter-Agency Task Forces (IATFs) on cross-cutting issues to provide advice and develop proposals for future EU policies, bringing together experts from relevant parts of the EU system.

• Review the crisis management organization to streamline reporting and coordination structures.

• Initiate an ‘EU Diplomatic Excellence Programme’ to invest in critical skills such as political analysis, economics, negotiation skills, ‘hard’ languages and knowledge of key regions, countries and cultures.

• Devote a small team to innovation, focusing on ways to use modern global communications as a tool in EU diplomacy.