

## The European External Action Services – Creation and Challenges

**To an outside observer, the European Union has always been a complex entity and difficult to comprehend, subject to institutional crises and constantly changing processes. There is no doubt that the process of European integration is the result of confidence and the daily efforts of thousands of European citizens. It is certain that, despite difficulties, there are already 27 member states (with Croatia set to become the 28th in July of 2013) in more than 50 years of existence in peace and prosperity, an effort acknowledged with the European Union being named the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize.**

In the past twenty years, the common market only existed on paper and it wasn't fathomed that we could have a strong, stable common currency, much less oversight mechanisms, such as those that have just been created to confront the economic and financial crises and preserve the EURO. Twenty years ago we were very far from the creation of a European External Action Service or a crisis management structure.

In reality, we could say that the European Union developed "contrary" to states. The central power wants to control questions regarding defense, sovereignty, foreign policy, and economic and fiscal policy. However, the Union was created as a species of "inverted federalism." We begin with what is imminently practical, for the "possible immediate" – coal and steel, agriculture and fisheries, standardization, customs tariffs. Gradually we added elements each time closer to the central power of the state – justice, internal affairs, foreign

policy and fiscal policy. Elements that were already being considered by "founding fathers" and that became necessary as narrowed economic ties, a process that the current economic and financial crisis has forced to accelerate.

The Union has grown profoundly at the same time. Growing increasingly integrated with each crisis it faces. We have learned by doing, "the path is made by walking." The European Union is a unique reality, constructed through compromises and subtleties that are sometimes difficult to understand for third parties (but at the same time also for citizens...), but the idea is excellent, and the initial format extremely intelligent. This allowed for its evolution. "United in diversity," we live in a complex reality, but we know that those complex systems have more capacity to adapt to changes and, because of this, are better equipped to deal with diversity and uncertainty, possessing a greater capacity for adaptation and survival.

We all remember the events of the first decade in this millennium that shook the foundations of the global order: the tragedy of September 11, 2001 and in 2008, also in September, the fall of Lehman Brothers, which precipitated one of the greatest financial crises in history. The tectonic plates of international politics moved – the supremacy of the American superpower became less evident and new centers of power and actors emerged onto the international scene. The economic and financial crisis that hit the US and Europe augmented perceptions of fragility regarding the "old world," further aggravated by the growth and at-

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traction of Asia, transformed into the engine of global economic growth.

In an environment that is increasingly competitive and uncertain, Europe runs the risk of losing its influence and its place in the world if it doesn't act in a collectively coordinated manner. The new political landscape, characterized by changes in power and global realignment, has driven a complex process of political and institutional adaptation in Europe, that was cemented in the Treaty of Lisbon in conjunction with political measures and institutions intended to face the EuroZone crisis.

The Treaty of Lisbon spearheads the basis of a new institutional structure for the European Union and clears the way for the establishment of a foreign and security policy that is more coherent and effective, that will allow the union of forces on common positions and redefine the forms of interaction between member states, other countries, and international organizations. It attempts to find pragmatic solutions that, in a contemporary context, permit Europe to cooperate with other global actors, and simultaneously, defend its interests, maintaining its place on the first line with efficient and economically viable solutions. It also addresses exercising leadership in the defense of a set of fundamental values that define its identity – Democracy, human rights, rule of law and social cohesion.

The only way that Europe will maintain its influence in a shifting global panorama will be working together, representing common messages and articulating proposals with added value that our partners appreciate and allow us to cope with global challenges. To secure consistency, focus, and efficacy in formulating and conducting foreign and security policy in Europe, the Treaty of Lisbon creates the post of High Representative for the Union in Foreign and Security Policy, with parallel responsibilities to the Vice-President of the European Commission, and a European External Action Service (EEAS) to support it. Ms. Catherine Ashton commenced her duties December 1, 2009 and the Service had its official beginning on January 1, 2011. Thus begins the great

challenge! Structuring a diplomatic service that functions in support of the High Representation from the first day of its foundation.

The idea approved by the Treaty of Lisbon was the creation of a Service that defends the interests of the Union in the world, making European Foreign Policy more consistent and providing continuity in its external representation, replacing the previous six-month rotating presidency. The Service must therefore support the High Representative in the management and development of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the EU and the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) to support the work of the President of the European Council of Foreign Affairs (CFA) and also aid in the implementation of the external dimension of internal policies of the Union. The basic structure of the Service is composed of equal parts of officials from the European Commission, officials transferred from the Council Secretariat, and diplomats from member states. It was not easy to integrate people with different qualifications and belonging to different institutional cultures, but, two years later, the Service is based in a new building, has autonomy, structure and a budget. It is responsible for financial management and human resources, has legal service, communication service, and mechanisms for crisis management, and ensures the coordination of 141 accredited delegations in third countries and in international organizations. The EEAS now has about 1,600 employees at its headquarters in Brussels close to 2,000 delegations. In conformity with numbers circulated in June 2012, the EEAS has around 901 diplomatic staff, of which 249 are from member states.

Like most diplomatic services, the EEAS has a Secretary-General and its central administration is organized into general directions dedicated to geographic or thematic areas, covering all countries and regions of the world, as well as administrative management, the security of communication and information systems, budget management and human resources. The Service also has a department directed to crisis management and planning,

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that belongs to the EU Military Staff and Situation Center (Sitcen) to direct the CFSP. The EEAS is not formally an institution under the Lisbon Treaty, but is considered an institution for the purposes of regulation of individuals and finance. The challenges to installation are further aggravated by the fact that the Service was established during a full economic crisis and during the Arab Spring, which required the priority attention of the HR/VP. Its operation involved the preparation of various agreements between departments to clarify important aspects regarding institutional relationships, to avoid duplication and allow the construction of interoperable communication systems.

As a logical consequence of the fact that Ms. Ashton serves the double function as High Representative for Common Foreign and Defense Policy, and Vice-President of the European Commission, ensures the overall coherence and effectiveness of EU external action, also the Heads of Delegation are responsible for all aspects of the EU's relations with third countries. Although they depend directly on the High Representative they are equally as responsible to the President and other members of the Commission and to the President of the European Council. Much of his time is dedicated to follow the work of the European Commission and the different commissions and services of the implementation of the external aspects of the varying sectoral policies of the Union, in matters as diverse and relevant as climate change and the environment, energy, transport, information technology and communication, combating drug trafficking, immigration, intellectual property, industrial policy, agriculture and phytosanitary issues, etc. The EEAS and the Commission have reinforced cooperation between different geographic and thematic departments, coordinating them with delegations and also with the action undertaken by Special Representatives, appointed to give visibility and focus to key areas in European politics.

The Service also has responsibility to the European Parliament and in the monitoring its missions to third countries and international organizations. The European Parliament has an

important role in the approval status of personnel and budgetary matters, as well as democratic political control.

The EEAS and their delegations, with functions similar to those of embassies, provide a collective service, of analysis and dissemination of information, advice and support to all members of the European family, including member states, thus becoming the "eyes, ears, and word of the European Union in third countries." However, the relevance of an institution is measured by its ability to produce results. If we think that diplomatic services of most countries have existed at least a century, it is still interesting to see what the European External Action Service has achieved in just two years, although it did not start from scratch. There is much that the European Commission has coordinated external action, and community institutions, since the early fifties, they have always had a diplomatic component and a nascent foreign policy one, but the Service allowed for the reinforcement of efforts to reach important objectives in terms of future significance, in a short time.

Thanks to the structured work between the President of the European Council, the President of the Commission, the European Parliament, and the High Representative, appointed by EEAS, the Union has given a more efficient response to the great global challenges, supporting multilateralism, a neighborhood policy that ensures the stability and prosperity of our neighbors, respect for democracy, the rule of law, and human rights, sustainable development, international crisis management, conflict prevention and a closer relationship with strategic partners. With this impetus, the European Union has achieved a new status in the United Nations given its "sui generis," characteristic of a supra-national organization, which has allowed it to play a greater and more active role through the formal presentation of their positions and participation in general debate of the United Nations.

The capacity for coordinated action in our region was clearly reinforced, especially in view of the answer given to the enormous

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challenges created by the "Arab Spring." The Union was able to quickly and effectively, using an integrated and coordinated vision with all of its member states, to support democracy and economic and social development for its neighbors in the south, involving civil society and international financial organizations, and the private sector, adding value to the efforts of local governments and the international community. It created "Task Forces" that were named special representatives, with the objective of adapting and responding strategically to each situation, whether in Libya, Tunisia, Algeria or Egypt.

They intensified EU mediation efforts in resolving the peace process in the Middle East, with a committed involvement of the High Representative in the "Diplomatic Quartet," alongside the UN, the United States and the Russian Federation, and in direct contacts at the highest level in the region, aiming to make progress leading to a negotiated comprehensive settlement to the Arab-Israel conflict. The same thing occurred in relation to the search for a diplomatic solution for the nuclear Iran question, where the High Representative has participated and actively led negotiations under the process called E3+3 (EU, Germany, France, UK, USA, Russia and China).

While developments in the southern area of our neighborhood have required further attention, the European External Action Service did not neglect their partners to the East. During the past few decades we helped our neighbors to the east with the process of democratic transition, but our political work undertaken by EEAS reinvigorated the partnership and our support to the region in promoting the necessary economic and political reforms. The strengthening of political dialogue at the highest level has led to greater involvement of the Union in an effort to mediate between Serbia and Kosovo, with the goal of peace consolidations and stability in the rest of the Balkans.

Within the framework of EEAS, the EU now has more skilled and efficient mechanisms to deal with crisis situations and also for international conflict prevention. The Union organi-

zed, in various countries in Europe, Africa, and Asia, 22 civil missions and/or military, that in a coordinated manner will support rule of law and security sector reform, including police and security forces training, support for border management, combating piracy, and humanitarian assistance in areas of conflict or crisis. This capability will be strengthened if other partners join us in this effort.

Moreover, about 50% of international relief efforts come from the European Union and its member countries. It is essential aid for the survival of populations in places such as the horn of Africa, where hunger affects entire populations. The Union is now better qualified to respond quickly and in a coordinated manner to any emergency situation internationally, or example, the earthquake in Haiti, the tsunami in Japan, or floods in Pakistan, situations that require the EU to combine all of the tools at its disposal. Similarly, the EEAS will support and reinforce the work of the Commission in the definition and implementation of European development aid. This is particularly important since the EU remains the biggest donor in the world, and in 2010, the total amount of development assistance provided by the entirety of the EU and its member states reached 53.8 billion Euros.

Another area where you can count the successes of the past two years is in regards to the policies promoting human rights and democracy, which today constitute the driver of all internal and external policies of the Union. The Declaration of Fundamental Rights became legally binding with the creation of the Lisbon Treaty and were provided about 1.1 billion Euros to finance the European instrument for democracy and human rights, which supports non-governmental organizations, particularly those promoting human rights, democracy, the abolition of the death penalty, combating torture, racism and other forms of discrimination.

Finally, the High Representative supported by the EEAS has intensified relations with our strategic partners whose support and cooperation is essential to address major glo-

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bal challenges on security, sustainable development and the fight against climate change. The Union currently has 10 strategic partners, the US, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, China, Russia, India, South Africa, Japan, and South Korea – and has intensified political dialogue at the highest level with all of them, through annual conferences, ministerial and high-ranking official meetings, where they discuss not only questions pertinent to bilateral relations, but also the political, economic and social situation at a global level, aiming to articulate joint responses to major global challenges.

Brazil, a strategic partner of the EU since 2007, has intensified its dialogue with the EU over the past two years. Today we have about 30 active dialogues in areas that reach from international security and the fight against narco-trafficking to environmental and energy questions, and including education, culture, science and technology, agriculture, and financial markets. WE seek to further discuss in a frank and open manner the important international questions, and whenever possible, coordinate positions of common interest, advancing the international agenda in the search for global solutions.

To conclude, I think we can say that despite its short existence, the EEAS was able to demonstrate resilience and adaptability, winning institutional space in a political environment that will enable the European Union to promote its foreign policy more coherently and effectively and to take coordinated action on different topics in international relations, such as climate change, energy, security, immigration, terrorism and non-proliferation.

The service will be subject to a review in 2013, following an analysis of the goals reached, both in terms of its structure and operation as well as level of performance and objectives realized. Ways to improve its effectiveness and options for future development and budgetary issues will also be discussed. The European External Action Service is an entity under construction, and much remains to be done. It is a long-term and far-reaching project that will continue to evolve in order to reach its

central objective – assist the EU to express and implement a common purpose and common policies adopted by member states, allowing the Union to speak with several voices but with a unified message.

The future of the European diplomatic service will depend largely on the will, vision, and resources that EU member states decide to assign. In turn, this will depend upon the credibility and quality of service provided by the EEAS and its capacity for dialogue – either internally, within the Commission, the European Parliament and member states; or externally with the international organizations and third countries where their delegations are headquartered. Besides dialogue, a cooperative spirit is required and proposals that deserve the respect and appreciation of our partners, proposals that create added value and that in addition to the defense of legitimate interests of the Union, also promote the values that underlie their construction – peace, democracy and prosperity.

<sup>1</sup> Ambassador Ana Paula Zacarias is currently Head of the European Union Delegation in Brasília.