

EPLO Roundtable on the European External Action Service

Monday 8 February 2010

Instituto Cervantes, Brussels

Background

The creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS) is set out in the Lisbon Treaty¹ which was signed by the 27 EU heads of state and government in December 2007 and entered into force on the 1st of December 2009.

Baroness Catherine Ashton, High Representative for the Common and Security Policy/Vice President of the European Commission is currently working on her proposal on the EEAS. In carrying out this task, she is supported by a team of 14 people from the European Commission, Members States and the Council Secretariat and the European Parliament. Her proposal is expected to be adopted by the Council at the latest by the end of April 2010.²

EPLO believes that all interested stakeholders should have an opportunity to provide input into the plans for its development for reasons of legitimacy and accountability, and for overall effectiveness of the new institutional structure. Because of the sensitiveness of the ratification process and because of the interests at stake, limited information has been publicly available and there has been little consultation of European civil society.

On 8 February, EPLO convened a roundtable to provide a framework for an open debate on the EEAS bringing together experts from civil society, EU institutions and Member States to discuss the EEAS. The roundtable was a follow up to EPLO's first roundtable on the EEAS, which took place in September, hosted by the Permanent Representation of Spain. The roundtables are part of EPLO's efforts to facilitate an open debate on the EEAS among all stakeholders.³

Objectives

The roundtable meeting has the following objectives:

- To exchange ideas on the structure of the EEAS
- To discuss how the Service will help the EU meet its commitments on conflict prevention and peacebuilding
- To provide expert analysis and recommendations on the Service.

Participants

¹ Article 27(3) of the consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union (TEU)

² Council of the European Union, Presidency report on the European External Action Service, 22 October 2009, 14739/09, para 34

³ EPLO also published a policy paper entitled *The EU as Global Force for Good: Peace at the Heart of the EEAS* in November 2009 and a Statement entitled *Putting Peace at the Heart of the European External Action Service* in January 2010. These documents focus on a set of issues of importance to the peacebuilding sector, including the need for a Peacebuilding Directorate in the service, possibly in within a Directorate General for Crisis Management and Peacebuilding, the extent to which the Service will embody EU values, and the relationship between the Service and civil society

The roundtable was attended by approximately 60 representatives from the EU institutions, EU Member States, UN organisations, think tanks, academia and peacebuilding, development and human rights NGOs.

Introduction

Mr **Francisco Ferrero**, Director of Instituto Cervantes welcomed the participants.

His Excellency Ambassador **Emilio Cassinello Aubán**, President of EPLO and Director-General of Toledo CITpax (Toledo International Centre for Peace) made opening remarks.

Dr **Antje Herrberg**, Director at the Crisis Management Initiative and member of EPLO's Steering Committee, who was moderating the meeting, reminded participants of the purpose of the meeting and briefly introduced the two panels.

Panel 1

The first panel consisted of Graham Avery, Senior Adviser at the European Policy Centre; Alain Déléroz, Vice-President (Europe) of the International Crisis Group; Mika-Markus Leinonen from the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU; and Prof. Dr Eva Gross, Senior Research Fellow for European Foreign and Security Policy at the Institute for European Studies, Vrije Universiteit Brussels. Catriona Gourlay, Project Manager and Marie Curie Fellow at the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research; and Nicolas Rougy, Director of the Brussels Office of the Club of Madrid, responded to the speakers' introductory remarks.

The first panel addressed the theme of **Peacebuilding and conflict prevention in the EEAS**.

The speakers and discussants raised the following points (which are not necessarily the views of EPLO)

- The EEAS should bring together as many as possible of the Directorates General with responsibilities for the EU's external policies in order to meet the Lisbon Treaty's ambitions of increasing coherence between EU institutions and Member States and within the various services of the Commission and of enhancing consistency between pillar one and pillar two policies.
- The new service should follow neither the communitarian nor the intergovernmental method. It should apply an "integrated" method bringing together European Commission, Council and European Parliament. This implies that national diplomats should be effectively integrated into the new service; geographical desks competent for both pillar one and pillar two policies should be part of the service; a serious relationship between the service and the EP should be built for the legitimacy of the service.
- The EEAS should include all the existing units and departments dealing with external policies across the EU institutions and should be designed in a way to enable the EU to have a common strategy and show leadership in its external relations.
- Peacebuilding needs to have adequate status within the Service for it to guide the EU's strategy in external policies. A Director General for peacebuilding and conflict prevention reporting to the High Representative should be established with the EEAS.
- Debates on the EEAS are mainly focused on how the service will work in Brussels without paying adequate attention to the role of EU's delegations. EU's delegations should be used as an early warning tool. EU delegations should be staffed by people with expertise on security and foreign policy including in the areas of peacebuilding and conflict prevention. Experts on mediation should also be part of the EU's delegations and of the service in Brussels.

- The EEAS faces an enormous challenge in changing the EU culture, and in creating a “new EU diplomatic culture”. One way to do this is through an EU Diplomatic Academy – although this could be virtual rather than concrete.
- There is potential for the EU to become more visible in third countries and towards other international actors, particularly NATO and the US. In this context, improving communication between Brussels and Delegations becomes crucial.
- Cooperation with civil society should be built in the Service.
- Human rights should be integrated into the Service.
- Attention should also be paid to the risks of too much integration. Looking at the UN’s experience, a top-down integrated approach has shown mixed results and there is currently no consensus on the most effective way of doing peacebuilding. It is important to find creative and innovative ways to ensure coherence and flexibility of EU external policies in third countries.
- As far as possible, the EU’s actions should be decided on in-country and/or at regional level, which would require stronger in-country leadership teams, transferring policy-making and implementation to the local level where the EU is operating.

An open discussion with the audience followed. Participants raised the following points:

- There is a “vision deficit” in EU’s external policies and actions that needs to be addressed.
- The EEAS needs to be defined by a culture of risk taking, initiative, and creativity. Ways of achieving this could be including a position of Change Manager, a person who will be a full member of Baroness Ashton’s cabinet, and involved in all discussions and decisions, evaluating them for their change management potential. In addition, paying attention to details of job descriptions, processes, etc, to ensure that the carrots and sticks – including the implicit or hidden ones – are marshaled to encourage the kinds of behavior that should be rewarded.
- The EEAS and EU’s delegations should be properly staffed with people who have expertise on human rights, democracy, development, conflict, and gender. This will favor coherence of EU’s external policies in practice.
- Development policy should not be within the remit of the service to prevent development objectives being made subservient to foreign policy objectives.
- It should be ensured that Member States existing expertise is embedded within the Service.
- Trade should also be included into the remit of the Service and be used as a tool for building peace.
- In building up the new service the EU should also look at other countries/organisations experiences in designing new institutions and being less inward looking.

In response, the panellists concluded with the following points:

- The EEAS should be “equiproximate” to the Council and to the Commission rather than equidistant.
- The EEAS in Brussels should give clear instructions to the EU’s Delegations and reporting from the Delegations should inform policy decision-making in Brussels.
- EEAS staff should rotate between the EU’s Delegations and Brussels.
- The development of a European diplomatic culture is a key challenge for the functioning of the EEAS; the creation of a virtual EU Diplomatic Academy could be a way to respond to this challenge. Nonetheless, the establishment of a new institution should be avoided by all means.
- The High Representative should have responsibility and exercise leadership over all the directorates that are involved in external policies, and development, neighborhood, and humanitarian aid, at the very least. Development should be within the service. Leaving it

outside will reduce development policy to a technical exercise, and will jeopardise not only the EU's coherence but also the achievement of development objectives. Development should be used as a tool to build peace.

- The High Representative should have other Commissioners as deputies to better ensure coherence and consistency in the EU's external policies.

Panel 2

The second panel consisted of Ambassador Ann-Marie Bolin Pennegard, Sweden's representative to the Council of the EU's Committee for the Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management; Dr Mary Martin, Research Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Global Governance, London School of Economics; and Martina Weitsch, Joint Representative of the Quaker Council for European Affairs and EPLO Vice-President.

Dr Eleanor O' Gorman, Research Associate at the Centre for International Studies, University of Cambridge; Dr Natalia Mirimanova, independent peacebuilding consultant; Dr Nicholas Whyte, Head of the Brussels Office of Independent Diplomat; and Emmanuel Vivet, Researcher at ESSEC Iréné and former chair of the Council of the EU's Asia-Oceania Working Party, all responded to the introductory comments.

Speakers and discussants analysed the role of civil society in promoting peace and ensuring the impact and accountability of the EEAS. They raised the following points (which are not necessarily the views of EPLO):

- The EEAS can and should be the vehicle for an "ethical EU foreign policy", focusing not so much on the interests of the EU and its members, but on values and on the needs and rights of people living outside the EU.
- The EEAS should have a distinct ethos and branding which reflects the EU's unique role as an international actor.
- In designing the EEAS, there is a need to re-emphasise EU's values and principles. The CFSP needs to have a human security focus and to be based on a set of values, including human rights, democracy, gender equality and the rule of law.
- The civil society element should be built in the service at both Brussels and EU's delegations level. Foreign policy is not an elite domain anymore, civil society and non-state actors play a key role in the international system which should be taken into account.
- Effective civil society is a key component of building peace. Peace has to be built from the bottom up, based on the effective, critical and committed engagement of people who have an interest in making peace work.
- The EEAS should engage with civil society including through regular dialogue; through regular exchanges of views; and through bringing in the expertise of NGOs (international, European, and local) to inform its own processes. The purpose of this dialogue would be both to keep civil society informed of what the EEAS is doing but also for the EEAS to hear feedback from civil society to make sure that the views of civil society feed into forward planning. It will also assist in providing early warning of impending conflicts.
- A structured dialogue between the EEAS and civil society should be ensured. Nonetheless, the importance of unstructured dialogue between the EU and civil society should not be forgotten and take out of the picture.
- The EEAS should have an open and transparent access to information policy which allows citizens to understand what is happening to foster well-informed debate.
- The EEAS should be seen as a means to establish new channels of communications with third countries. The EEAS should welcome critical voices from diverse backgrounds.
- The EEAS should have a public diplomacy remit (e.g. promotion of freedom of information and movement and responsibility for a student exchange programme).

- The EEAS should be designed in a way to favour EU partnership with other international actors, including civil society
- Civil society has a role to play in advancing the debate on the EEAS and in communicating about foreign policy and peacebuilding at Brussels and Member states levels.
- Civil society is a tool for peacebuilding but it is also a partner in making peace.
- Trade Unions, journalists and academia should also be included in the dialogue between civil society and the EU.

The panel was followed by another question and answer session. Participants raised the following points:

- There is a lack of clarity about what the EU wants to achieve in its external policies. There is no vision. Civil society's role is about vocalising the various and different components of civil society suggesting what objectives the EU should have in its external policies and how it could achieve them thereby proposing a vision for the EU.
- Supporting civil society in conflict-affected areas should be a goal in itself and should be part of the EU's peacebuilding activities.
- More work should be done to support unstructured dialogue between civil society and the EU, including establishing expert working groups within the Service.

In response, the panellists concluded with the following points:

- Structured and unstructured dialogue are both important. Structured dialogue helps build up trust and confidence between civil society and officials which may allow unstructured forms of dialogue to happen.
- Civil society should not be narrowed down to NGOs. Mechanisms should be created to reach out to marginalised people. Engaging with civil society in a broader sense is crucial for ensuring the accountability of the EEAS and thus its effectiveness.

Conclusions

Ms Catherine Woollard, Executive Director of EPLO, summarised the morning's proceedings and highlighted the following themes from the discussions:

An opportunity to be seized

The establishment of the EEAS is an opportunity to put conflict prevention and peacebuilding at the heart of the EU's foreign policy. We should not consider that this is a "now or never" opportunity, however. Baroness Ashton's report in April should be the beginning of the process of establishment of the EEAS and there should be scope for adaptation of the Service, as well as for ongoing evaluation against the objectives it is supposed to meet, including prevention of conflict and promotion peace.

The organisational culture of the Service is crucially important and that could include building in mechanisms for adaptation from the beginning – in addition to the formal reviews that are envisaged by the Council Conclusions of October 2009. Baroness Ashton should consider having an organisational change expert in her team.

An ethical foreign policy for the EU

The establishment of the EEAS is an opportunity for the EU to develop a new type of *ethical* foreign policy. The Service is not going to be a supra-diplomatic service above member states' own diplomatic services because key member states do not want this. Rather than being a pale replica of an out-moded model of diplomacy, it should be something different, a normative foreign

policy actor. When EU member states try to agree on European interests, conflicts develop. There is more agreement on European values.

The EU does not need a grand strategy or a new vision. The values are there and the vision is there – in the EU's commitments to peace, human rights and democracy. The EU itself has been the institutional embodiment of taking innovative approaches to international relations. Now, it should take a new approach to international diplomacy.

An integrated, whole-of-EU approach

The Service should be a model of integration not coordination. It should bring together all relevant institutions and agencies to work together towards one set of objectives (at the very least, this should happen in response to situations of fragility). Coordination, on the other hand, is the existing model, whereby different institutions work separately towards meeting their own objectives but “co-ordinate” – that is, share information about what they are separately doing. It can be inefficient and leads to competition among institutions and exploitation by third parties.

Development policy should also be part of the Service. Safeguards can be put in place to ensure that development assistance is not misused, for instance by applying the OECD DAC guidelines on the use of development aid. The argument was put forward that aid could be politicised. But aid is political – provision of large amounts of money to conflict-affected countries has an impact on power relations and conflict dynamics there.

The Service should deal with the whole of the conflict cycle and bring together all relevant policy areas. EPLO recommends the establishment of a Directorate General for Peacebuilding and Crisis Management. If there are geographical units, then it is essential to have high-level human rights and conflict advisors in each unit, along with training for all staff on these issues.

Continuation of “deconcentration” – decentralisation of power and resources – is also important. In particular, Delegations need to have sufficient autonomy and resources.

Conflict prevention and Peacebuilding need to have adequate status within the Service. Without structures for conflict prevention and peacebuilding – and if they don't appear in the job titles and descriptions of senior officials – they will remain marginalised.

Balanced civilian-military integration

EPLO has been raising its concerns about the civil-military integration plans for a year. The Crisis Management Planning Directorate (CMPD) will be absorbed into the EEAS. The CMPD does not represent a balance between civilian and military dimensions. The Director and Deputy Director do not have experience of the areas of civilian crisis management covered by CSDP Missions; more than 70 % of the staff members have military backgrounds. EPLO is concerned that the EU will not have the expertise to plan and manage civilian CSDP missions. This constitutes a significant risk to the EU given that it has very ambitious commitments in this area.

Accountability

The EEAS need to have appropriate accountability mechanisms in place. Accountability covers transparency (e.g. a functioning access to information regime; voluntary disclosure of information); public complaints mechanisms (and means of redress); participation (including consultation of civil society, involvement of civil society in delivery of activities, and establishment of working groups bringing together officials and civil society experts); evaluation (ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the EEAS, with mechanisms for adaptation as necessary).

EPLO MEMBERS

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Conciliation Resources
Crisis Management Initiative—CMI
European Network for Civil Peace
Services—EN.CPS
European Centre for Conflict
Prevention—ECCP
ESSEC Iréné
Fundación para las Relaciones
Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior—
FRIDE
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International Alert
International Center for Transitional
Justice—ICTJ
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International—PDCI
Pax Christi International
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QCEA
Saferworld
Search for Common Ground
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Toledo International Centre for Peace—
CITpax
World Vision

THE EUROPEAN PEACEBUILDING LIAISON OFFICE EPLO

EPLO is the platform of European NGOs, networks of NGOs and think tanks active in the field of peacebuilding, who share an interest in promoting sustainable peacebuilding policies among decision-makers in the European Union.

EPLO aims to influence the EU so it promotes and implements measures that lead to sustainable peace between states and within states and peoples, and that transform and resolve conflicts non-violently. EPLO wants the EU to recognise the crucial connection between peacebuilding, the eradication of poverty, and sustainable development world wide and the crucial role NGOs have to play in sustainable EU efforts for peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and crisis management.

EPLO advances the interests of its members through common policy positions and consequently advocating for those common positions. EPLO disseminates information and promotes understanding of EU policies of concern to its Members. The Office builds also solidarity and cooperation amongst its members and with other relevant NGO networks. Finally, EPLO raises awareness about the contribution the EU should make to peacebuilding and the need to hold the EU accountable to its own political commitments of helping secure peace within and outside its borders.

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