

Introduction

The European External Action Service (EEAS) is the EU's foreign policy arm. It functions as a diplomatic corps and foreign ministry, and has the responsibility for planning, implementing and overseeing the EU's relations with external bodies.

History

Established by the Lisbon Treaty, the EEAS was designed to assist the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, currently Federica Mogherini. The EEAS was created by merging a number of existing EU external relation departments with new ones, to construct a new foreign policy body.

Its design was left open by the Lisbon Treaty, and it became the subject of much heated-debate with the different EU institutions vying for power over the final creation. The European Commission was reluctant to relinquish its say over foreign policy through its Directorates General (DGs), for example DG External Relations and DG Development, and the European Parliament was determined to establish oversight powers.

There was also much speculation surrounding the slow progress of the EEAS. On a number of occasions it appeared that the EEAS would miss its target launch date of December 2010, one year after the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. This was due in large part to political wrangling over its design. However, the long drawn-out negotiations were finalised in June 2010, with 549 MEPs voting in favour of the service, and the EEAS was unveiled, on schedule, at a ceremony at its Brussels headquarters.

Operations

EEAS staff are drawn from three main sources: the relevant Commission and Council departments or seconded from the national diplomatic services of member states. In all its locations, those working for the Service include European Union civil servants, local employees and civil servants from EU Member States.

The EEAS is divided into 6 departments: Africa; Asia; Americas; the Middle East and Southern Neighbourhood; Russia, the Eastern Neighbourhood and the Western Balkans and Global and Multilateral Affairs.

Budget

The EEAS budget has been subject to much controversy. Initially the service was advertised as a budget neutral development. However, it was agreed that budget neutrality would hamper its ability to achieve real results. Before the unit was finalised, it became obvious that there was some shortfall in the budget and Catherine Ashton asked for an additional €34 million. This was approved by the EP in October 2010.

In 2013 Lady Ashton secured a £20 million increase taking the annual bill for European diplomats and embassies to over £437 million; this was controversial in the UK as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office was implementing budget cuts at the time.

Action so far

Since its launch on 1 December 2010 the EEAS has been intimately involved in the EU's foreign policy. The remit of the organisation's activities includes democracy support, international development, crisis response and humanitarian aid, nuclear safety and the environment.

Events in the **Arab Spring** were the first big test for the EEAS. In May 2011, the EEAS set up an EU office in Benghazi, Libya, to provide support to the Libyan people, and a further one in Tripoli in August. Dialogue was also facilitated by the European Union between Serbia and Kosovo, which led to a landmark deal in April 2013. The EU recently agreed a joint plan of action to ensure the exclusively peaceful nature of the country's nuclear programme.

Arguments about enlargement

For

- ❖ The EEAS gives the EU a united foreign policy presence on the world stage.
- ❖ It is not a usurpation of member states roles in foreign policies – indeed it can only act when member states have unanimously agreed to CFSP decisions taken in Brussels.

Against

- ❖ Its scope to act is too broad.
- ❖ The creation of the EEAS has removed a role from the member state holding the rotating Council Presidency, as EEAS delegations have taken on a coordination role in many third countries.
- ❖ The EEAS represents an encroachment into national decision-making.

Facts and figures

- ❖ The EEAS has 139 delegations covering 163 countries.
- ❖ There are 3,474 staff plus around 3,500 delegated European Commission staff.
- ❖ It has an administrative budget of £362 million out of around £6.55 billion in total for the EU's international programmes.
- ❖ In addition to its own budget, the EEAS receives contributions from the European Commission of €208 million and the European Development Fund of €56 million

“The EEAS needs to define its priorities and stick to them. If it tries to do everything it will fail.”

UK Europe Minister, David Lidington

Technical Terms

- ❖ **Budget neutral:** A policy that neither costs money nor saves money.
- ❖ **Arab Spring:** Series of revolutions sweeping through the Arab world, after the toppling of Tunisian leader Ben Ali.

Links

- ❖ <http://eeas.europa.eu/>
- ❖ <http://euractiv.com/en/security>