

TOWARDS A EU TRULY COMMON DIPLOMACY

This study has been commissioned by Nacho Sánchez Amor, Member of the European Parliament for the Socialist and Democrats (S&D Group)



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Preamble

Foreign policy agendas are inevitably conditioned to the continuous emergence of crisis of different nature worldwide, and the instinctive necessity to react to them. However, this embedded foreign policy reactivity leads to an everlasting bouncing from crisis to crisis restraining our capacities to reflect on its horizontal aspects and instruments, as occurs in the European Union, which is not that much different from the one of its Member States.

The careful analysis of the connections between the European Union's interest and objectives worldwide with the toolbox at its disposal is fundamental to avoid possible inconsistencies in its External Action, whilst at the same time essential to explore how to strengthen it.

Moreover, aside from the internal challenges the Union faces concerning its External Action internal dimension, our traditional soft power is ceasing to be functional. Authoritarian and illiberal systems attempts to jeopardize not only the EU's objectives and interests abroad but also multilateralism and the universality of human rights itself.

In this sense, the EU needs to count with own and permanent instruments in its External Action toolbox to strengthen its capacities and global actorness. The so-called "wishful thinking" is now to be left behind and move towards speaking the language of power, accounting all its elements: grammar, phonology and semantics.

In the words of the HR/VP, Josep Borrell, Europe "must learn quickly to speak the language of power". However, its exercise demands a clearer and strengthened structure of the EU's External Action institutional design. What is more, its architecture needs to make the most of its already existing instruments and develop new ones that can complement and fill the gaps of its toolbox. This is a complex endeavour, possibly even more nowadays, as there are "too many faces and too many egos in European foreign policy", leading again to Kissinger's dilemma: "who do I call, if I want to call Europe?".

Our current European Diplomacy architecture is defined by a hybrid nature, a mosaic of temporary personnel loans, which mainly big Member States can afford, and Commission clerks educated in 27 different cultures of external action -one for each Member State, plus the Commission's. Moreover, in EU Delegations seems to be certain geographical

preferences -Iberians in America, or French in Africa-, which, despite the experience national diplomats can bring to the EU delegations in these regions, do not seem to reflect a fully-fledged European blueprint.

The conducting of the forenamed reflection has been one of my main objectives and responsibilities as Member of the European Parliament, specifically in the Foreign Affairs Committee, since the beginning of my term in 2019. Since, in my view, there seems to be little reflection on the EU External Action horizontal aspects, I seek to raise this issue for the European Parliament to address it.

Among the outcomes of this arduous endeavour, in a context of an EU Foreign Policy agenda that jumped from Syria to Nagorno-Karabakh, from Libya to Belarus or from Afghanistan to Ukraine, there are the recommendations of this study for a new European diplomacy from its inception, as well as my proposal to create a European Diplomatic Academy and a stronger EU Cultural Diplomacy.

The creation of the European Diplomatic Academy, which is just a thread of this reflection, found its way through my proposal for a Pilot Project of the European Parliament to be implemented by the EEAS in 2021, given the need for our European Diplomacy to have its own diplomats trained, since the very beginning, in a European perspective. This proposal started its implementation in January 2022, and is going along the right road.

Another two obvious challenges when acting as a global player is the absence of a common European cultural diplomacy and the EU's blindfold in crisis such as in Ukraine and Afghanistan. For the first, the EU needs an image of its own, distinguishable from national pictures, which vehicles our common identity and "European way of life". For the second, we need an automatic mechanism of flow of intelligence from each Member State to the EU concerning foreign and security issues occurring outside the Union. The EU needs to be as well informed as the best informed of the Member States.

To carry this reflection forward for its realization can be harder than we imagine. However, we are aware of the EU's capacities and needs to become a fully-fledged global actor. This study paves the way in this direction, and none of this would have been possible without the authors of this thorough study, as well as my colleagues in the European Parliament Committee for Foreign Affairs, particularly its Chair, David McAllister, and my esteemed colleague Tonino Picula. Moreover, my deepest gratitude

to the colleagues of the EEAS, especially for their receptiveness and willingness to receive new ideas.

Nacho Sánchez Amor

Executive Summary

Twenty years ago, the EU Member states together with the EU institutions, under the framework of the Convention on the Future of Europe, decided to reconfigure the institutional architecture of the EU external action in order to reinforce its role in the international scenario. As a result, they created the post of HR/VP and the European External Action Service (EEAS), the only supra diplomatic body in the world. However, ten years after its creation, the EU still lacks a truly EU common diplomacy.

The post of HR/VP plays a double role: intergovernmental, linked to the CFSP and supranational, linked to the EU external relations. In so doing, it has assigned a broad range of tasks. Nevertheless, its real power is the influence that he/she has over the EU external action actors: the President of the EU Commission, the President of the European Council, the different commissioners whose area of action has an external dimension and the EU Member states. Nevertheless, one of the major challenges that the HR/VP faces regarding CFSP is to reach consensus among the different Member states in order to achieve unanimity. Even though Member states have a fairly common perception of what our threats are, what they lack is agreeing on what is the best way to respond to them, a key element that is clearly complicating the achievement of a truly EU common diplomacy. On the other hand, in its role of Vice-president of the Commission, the major challenge of the HR/VP consists in having real power/influence of direct coordination over the commissioners whose area has an external relations dimension.

The EEAS is the administrative body that was created in order to assist the HR/VP in performing its job. It is an autonomous body that has its headquarters in Brussels and counts with more than 140 delegations all around the world. One of its main strengths, and, at the same time, one of its main weaknesses is the hybrid character of its staff: EU officials and Member states diplomats. In addition to the fact that Member states' diplomats have to constantly rotate, they can only stay in Brussels for four, eight or, exceptionally, ten years. This temporal limit for Member states' diplomats working at the EEAS is clearly undermining the development of a truly EU common diplomacy. The EEAS would clearly benefit from recruiting directly its own permanent diplomatic staff. Particularly those with good skills in areas such as cybersecurity or climate change, where

they lack expertise. Besides, the EEAS has many resources at its disposal but it has to use them more strategically, providing the EU Member states with a sense of purpose.

The EEAS lacks an *esprit de corps*, which would clearly help in better developing the EU external action goals. Providing common training for both EU officials and Member states' diplomats would be the perfect recipe to overcome these weaknesses and essential in achieving a truly EU common diplomacy. In so doing, creating an EU Diplomatic Academy would be the necessary step forward, which, at the same time, would contribute to develop an integrated diplomacy. This would consist on national diplomats constantly moving between their diplomatic services and the EEAS in order to achieve a common purpose. This EU Diplomatic Academy should provide in person common and medium term training on management and politics for EU Member states diplomats, EU officials and for those people interested in becoming EU diplomats; thus, building a strong network. Member states' diplomats should also have to spend a period of time in the EEAS at the beginning of their career. This would very much help in developing a better coordination between the different diplomatic services of the Member states and the EEAS. At the same time, this EU Diplomatic Academy would also be essential for providing the necessary training to the diplomatic staff that the EEAS would eventually recruit directly, its permanent diplomatic personnel.

At the same time, the EEAS should make more evident what its contribution is, particularly concerning its headquarters in Brussels. In so doing, empowering the EEAS heads of unit in order to make their officials provide a real contribution with the reports they work on, would be of great help. Simultaneously, the HR/VP and the EEAS should also enhance their role as bridge builders between the CFSP and the EU external relations, as the strategic planners of the EU external action.

EU delegations, on the other hand, are an asset for Member states as they clearly can witness their added value in fostering relations with third countries and in managing EU developing aid. Nevertheless, the institutional division between Commission officials and EEAS officials within the EU delegations should be revisited in order to make them all do the best job possible under the leadership of the Head of Delegation. The exchange of information between headquarters in Brussels and EU delegations abroad should be enhanced, while at the same time having the EEAS and the Commission cooperating more when designing development policies.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
I. A critical assessment of the new institutional architecture for the EU External Action after Lisbon	3
1. The HR/VP	3
a) Double character: intergovernmental and supranational	4
b) The HR/VP relations with the different actors involved in the EU External Action	9
2. The European External Action Service (EEAS).....	10
3. The EU Delegations	23
4. The President of the European Council	27
5. The President of the European Commission	27
6. The European Parliament	28
7. Member States	29
8. The EU Intelligence Analysis Center: INTCEN	33
II. Towards a truly EU Common Diplomacy	34
1. The EEAS efficiency under debate	34
2. Fostering a EEAS's <i>esprit the corps</i> through a Diplomatic Academy	39
3. Recommendations for further improvement	42
Bibliography	54

List of Interviewees

Interviewee 1: EEAS official

Interviewee 2: EU Delegation official

Interviewee 3: Commission official

Interviewee 4: Former Council official

Interviewee 5: EEAS official 2

Interviewee 6: Commission official 2

Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

Interviewee 8: Member state diplomat

“This is not a moment to think or act small.
But a moment for investing in an ambitious Europe”¹
Josep Borrell (HR/VP)

Introduction

The European External Action Service (EEAS) is the only supra diplomatic body in the world. The fact that Member states have decided to create a diplomatic body at supra level questions the traditional forms of diplomacy where member states were the single protagonists. The nature of foreign policy has changed during the last decades, mainly because of the process of globalization that led to an unprecedented interdependence among the different countries and regions all around the world. Moreover, it also led to a much more blurred division between domestic and international politics, taking into account that, nowadays, every single internal policy has an external dimension. This is also affecting the inter-institutional political dynamics within the EU.

Meanwhile, the global forces have also radically changed from a multipolar world where the EU felt fairly comfortable, to a multipolar one characterized by the confrontation between the US and China and the questioning of the EU core values based on democracy and rule of law. In addition, the European Union (EU) is losing its power in the international scenario at the same speed as it loses population. By 2050 the EU will lose 50 million of inhabitants between 20 and 64 age and the total of population will stagnate at 500 million, including the UK (Boussemart, J. M. & Godet, M., 2018).

The current Russian war in Ukraine is again altering the international scenario whilst also putting the EU foreign policy to the test. Russia is challenging the core values of the EU at the same time that it is threatening the EU project. The EU is giving a common response but we need to take a step forward. In words of the HR/VP: “one of the lessons that we have to learn is that, now more than ever, Europe must think strategically about itself, its

¹ Speech by HRVP Josep Borrell at the German Ambassadors Conference on 25 May 2020.

environment and the world.” Furthermore, he emphasized that this is the moment in which the geopolitical EU is born (Brzozowski, 2022).

Twenty years ago, through the Convention on the Future of Europe (2002-2004) that led to the *non nata* Constitution for Europe, and finally, to the Lisbon Treaty; which came into force in December 2009, Member states and EU institutions understood the necessity of strengthening the EU external action (the sum of CFSP and EU External Relations). In this regard, they decided, first, to merge the post of High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy / Secretary General of the Council and that of External Relations Commissioner under the same double hatted post: High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the Commission (HR/VP). In addition, they also decided to create a supra diplomatic service, the EEAS. The reconfiguration of the institutional architecture of the EU external action aimed to improve the coherence, consistency and visibility of the EU external action, all while increasing the synergies between all different actors that represent the EU internationally, as well as between the external policies and the external dimension of the internal policies that are of competence of the EU (Balfour, R.; 2013, 63).

Nevertheless, the hybrid character of the EEAS is complicating its development as a strong diplomatic administrative body. This, at the same time, fosters inter-institutional battles, particularly with the Commission, as the latter feels that Member states with the setting up of the EEAS have stolen part of its powers. Before the Treaty of Lisbon came into force, the Commission was the one fully in charge of the External Relations of the EU. After the setting up of the EEAS, the Commission lost part of its structure and personnel (DG RELEX); now in the hands of the new diplomatic service.

On the other hand, nationalistic and anti-European forces are growing in the Member states, which particularly affects EU External Action. Notwithstanding, the pandemic has led Member states to realize that they need to look for formulas of cooperation in order to be more efficient in achieving collective goals (Hillion, Blockmans, & Vimont, 2021, p. 2). Single Member states are unable to respond to the global challenges alone. The current Russian war in Ukraine has put at the top of the EU agenda the necessity of furthering the Europeanization of the EU Member states’ diplomatic action, in order to develop an autonomous EU in the international scenario.

Overall, ten years after the HR/VP was nominated and that the EEAS started working, there is still great room for improving the EU coordination in the external action field in order to develop an EU common diplomacy. This report aims to reflect on the current institutional architecture of the EU external action by pointing out what its major strengths and weaknesses are. It concludes by providing different proposals for developing a truly common diplomacy at EU level.

I. A critical assessment of the new institutional architecture for the EU External Action after Lisbon

The Lisbon Treaty brought about a revolution in the architecture of the EU external action. As it has already been pointed out, the two major changes were the creation of the post of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-president of the Commission (HR/VP) and, on the other hand, the creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS), the diplomatic service of the EU. The main purpose behind these changes was to provide the European Union's (EU) external action with more coherence, continuity and visibility in order to spread a common voice at the international scenario.

However, the current EU external action institutional design has a lot of strengths but also major weaknesses that limit the EU's impact on the international scenario. The creation of the EEAS was controversial for the two major actors in the EU External Action: the Commission on one hand, and the Member states on the other. The Commission worried about the intergovernmentalisation of the EU external relations whereas Member states feared the supranationalisation of the CFSP. Consequently, this caused a sense of mistrust, particularly towards the EEAS, but also towards the HR/VP, which limits their success in the international scenario (Hillion, Blockmans, & Vimont, 2021, p. 10).

1. The HR/VP

Since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in December 2009, the HR/VP is the voice of the EU External Action in the global arena, and the representative of the EU in every single aspect of its External Action. During the Convention on the Future of Europe (2002 - 2003), Member states and EU institutions decided to merge the post of High Representative / Secretary General of the Council and the one of the External Relations Commissioner under the same double-hatted figure, the HR/VP, who is also the permanent chair of the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC). However, the merger of these two functions in one person was contested, given that many understood that it would be too much work for just one person as this double-hatted post is, in practice, triple. At the same time, one of this post's weaknesses is that it is not the only one allowed to represent the EU abroad, according to the Treaties. The HR/VP shares this prerogative with the

President of the European Council, with regards to the CFSP, and with the President of the Commission, when it comes to the external relations.

a) Double character: intergovernmental and supranational

The HR/VP being more intergovernmental or supranational was the object of long discussions during the Convention on the Future of Europe, predecessor of the *non nata* Constitution for Europe, reframed as the current Lisbon Treaty. The main purpose behind this reconfiguration was to minimize the fragmentation of the EU external action, all while ensuring the equilibrium between the intergovernmental dimension of the CFSP, part of the Council, and the EU external relations of the Community Pillar, part of the Commission (Gianfrancesco, 2013, p. 740). The creation of this double-hatted figure (HR/VP) also contributes to the inter-institutional balance whilst guaranteeing the coherence of the EU external action. Moreover, it also would allow the EU to take advantage of its economic power in the world to better develop its political influence. In short, as has been strongly emphasized, what was essential was to ensure that the EU could send a common message to the international scenario.

The HR/VP has been assigned a broad range of different tasks that can be summarized in five: initiative and agenda setting, coordinator and consensus builder, representative and negotiating power, and power of execution and crisis management (Paul, J., 2008). Overall, these different tasks can be divided in two different groups, the ones that are linked to the CFSP and the ones under the external relations framework. The Lisbon Treaty in its Art. 27.2 stresses that “ The High Representative shall represent the Union for matters relating to the common foreign and security policy. He shall conduct political dialogue with third parties on the Union's behalf and shall express the Union's position in international organizations and at international conferences.”

In the area of CFSP, the HR/VP has been assigned four main competences. First, the HR/VP has the power of initiative. This means that he shall contribute by his proposals to the development of this policy (Art. 18.2 TEU). This prerogative is particularly relevant as it allows him to have the power of agenda setting in CFSP. Nevertheless, the HR/VP, as it is stressed in the Art. 24.1 TEU, shares this power with the Member states. More importantly, the HR/VP initiatives will only be successful in case Member states decide to support them.

Notwithstanding, it enjoys a privilege position as President of the Foreign Affairs Council (Art. 18.3 TEU) as it allows him to guide the discussions and the work of this Council configuration to achieve own goals. This is a clear strength in the hands of the HR/VP as a permanent presidency gives him so much power. However, Member states understood it as a weakness as it inevitably causes the HR/VP, together with the EEAS, to develop their own agenda regarding these Council meetings. In a sense, as a Member state diplomat stresses, the EEAS has become a 28th Member state, and that creates a sense of mistrust.²

In addition, the HR/VP also has the prerogative of convening extraordinary Council meetings, on its own motion or under the request of a Member state, within 48 hours, or if it is an emergency, even within a shorter period (Art. 30.2 TEU). The Art. 15.2 TEU allows the HR/VP to take part in the European Council works, which lets him/her shape the EU international agenda (Paul, 2008, p. 17).

On the other hand, the HR/VP is also in charge of the management and the implementation of the CFSP (Art. 18.2 TEU). In addition, when Member states have to take a decision for qualified majority voting, in case a Member state rejects to follow this procedure declaring vital and stated reasons of national policy, the HR/VP should talk to this specific Member state in order to find a solution. If he/she does not succeed, the Council should decide by qualified majority voting that the process of decision-making will be by unanimity on this matter (Art. 30.1 TEU).

The HR/VP has also executive powers. The Art. 26.3 TEU stresses that “The common foreign and security policy shall be put into effect by the High Representative and by the Member States, using national and Union resources.” Nevertheless, as the Art. 32 TEU underlines:

“Member States shall consult one another within the European Council and the Council on any matter of foreign and security policy of general interest in order to determine a common approach. Before undertaking any action on the international scene or entering into any commitment, which could affect the Union's interests, each member state shall consult the others within the European Council or the Council. Member states shall ensure, through the convergence of their actions, that the Union is able to assert its interests and values on the international scene. Member states shall show mutual

² Interviewee 8: Member state diplomat

solidarity. When the European Council or the Council has defined a common approach of the Union within the meaning of the first paragraph, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Member states shall coordinate their activities within the Council. The diplomatic missions of the Member states and the European delegations in third countries and at international organizations shall cooperate and shall contribute to formulating and implementing the common approach.”

The TEU in its art. 34.2 makes a particular reference to the United Nations Security Council pointing out that “When the Union has defined a position on a subject which is on the United Nations Security Council agenda, those Member states which sit on the Security Council shall request that the High Representative be invited to present the Union's position.”

The HR/VP has also the capacity to propose the special representatives of the EU, which will be appointed by the Council following the qualified majority voting process of decision making. Moreover, he/she has also has right of initiative in concluding international treaties, which in the area of CFSP can only be initiated by the HR/VP or, by the Commission when it refers to a supranational policy. The HR/VP is particularly powerful regarding its task of coordinator and consensus builder, particularly in its role of Head of the Foreign Affairs Council. One of the main tasks of the HR/VP in the area of CFSP is to forge consensus among the Member states. Regarding his coordinating role, the HR/VP “shall regularly consult the European Parliament on the main aspects and the basic choices of the common foreign and security policy and the common security and defense policy and inform it of how those policies evolve. He shall ensure that the views of the European Parliament are duly taken into consideration. Special representatives may be involved in briefing the European Parliament” (Art. 36 TEU) (Paul, 2008, p. 18).

In short, the Lisbon Treaty designates to the HR/VP the tasks of managing, completing and executing the CFSP whilst ensuring the implementation of the Council and the European Council decisions. The HR/VP is meant to be the cornerstone of the EU foreign policy. Nevertheless, its margin of maneuver will mainly depend on the will of the Member states as the Treaty specifies that the HR/VP “shall contribute by his proposals to the development of that policy, which he shall carry out as mandated by the Council” (Art. 18.2 TEU). This means that, in practice, the CFSP remains within the Council, and therefore in the hands of the Member states. The HR/VP is therefore in charge of

implementing the decisions taken by the Council, for which it has several instruments at its disposal: the EEAS, the EU delegations and the EU special representatives (Paul, 2008, p. 19).

Following the Art. 42 TEU, the Common Defense and Security Policy (CDSP) shall be an integral part of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), providing the EU with the operational capacity “drawing of civilian and military assets”. In this political area, the HR/VP shares its power of initiative with the Member states and the decision-making process is by unanimity. Likewise, the HR/VP can also suggest the use of national or EU instruments. The HR/VP will also be responsible for crisis management. In this regard, the HR/VP shares the responsibility with the Council in ensuring that the Political and Security Committee (COPS) carries out its duty of exercising political control and the strategic direction of the crisis management operations (Art. 38 TEU).

As the art. 42.1 TEU points out the CDSP will be an integral part of the CFSP. The different tasks related to civilian and military means will include “joint disarmament operations, humanitarian and rescue tasks, military advice and assistance tasks, conflict prevention and peace-keeping tasks, tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peace-making and post-conflict stabilization.” (Art. 43.1 TEU). In this regard, it will be the Council the one that should adopt the decisions in order to establish their objectives and scope, as well as the general conditions for their implementation. On the other hand, the HR/VP would be the one who, acting under the authority of the Council and in close and constant contact with the Political and Security Committee, will ensure the coordination of the civilian and military aspects of the already mentioned tasks (Art. 43 TEU). The fact that the HR/VP places itself in a central position in crisis management is perceived as a great step further in the improvement of both the horizontal efficiency and consistency (Paul, 2008, p. 20).

Regarding external relations, the Commission will be the one that enjoys the exclusive right of initiative (Art. 17.2 TEU). Therefore, the HR/VP in its role of Vice-president of the Commission will be the one that enjoys this privilege. The HR/VP is also in charge of ensuring the consistence of the EU external action. At the same time, it has been attributed the responsibilities derived from the EU external relations and is in charge of coordinating the other aspects of the EU external action (Art. 18.4 TEU). Therefore, one of the main tasks of the HR/VP will be to help the President of the Commission in

coordinating the external dimension of the work of every single EU Commissioner (Von der Leyen, 2019).

Under the Juncker Commission, the meetings with the other Commissioners did not enjoy a proper relevance. However, President Juncker, together with the Vice-president in charge of external relations, Federica Mogherini, introduced a coordinated approach between the EU external relations and the CFSP (Commission-EEAS). In order to continue with this objective of ensuring the coordination and the coherence between the CFSP and the external action of the EU, the current President of the Commission, Ursula von der Leyen (2019-2024), created a permanent group within the Commission called EXCO in order to provide better coordination of the EU external relations. In short, the aim of this group is preparing the Commissioners college meetings on a weekly basis by coordinating themselves in the area of external relations. This group is co-chaired by the diplomatic council of the President of the Commission and the Chief of Cabinet of the HR/VP (European Commission, 2019). This coordinating group is crucial in achieving a more coherent EU external action considering that different Commission DGs, which work with internal policies, implement initiatives that have a profound impact in the EU external action.³ Nonetheless, it can be considered at the same time as a strength and a weakness for the post of HR/VP due to the protagonism of the President of the Commission's Cabinet in leading the discussions. Moreover, it can also be understood as a clear example of the current President of the Commission's major interest in actively controlling the external agenda of the Commission (Helwig, 2019, p. 6).

In short, the HR/VP has to perform all the tasks attached to the three big positions that the Lisbon Treaty has assigned to him. First, as President of the Foreign Affairs Council it has been attributed the task of conducting the strategic agenda and the different works of the CFSP. Moreover, as High Representative of the Council, it has the power of presenting proposals and initiatives for the Member states to discuss, all the while representing the EU abroad by coordinating the position of the different Member states, with the previous consultation to the different committees of the Council and the Political and Security Committee.

Finally, as Vice-president of the Commission, the HR/VP has the power of initiative in the external relations field, and at the same time that it has to coordinate, inside the

³ Interviewee 3: Commission official

Commission, the external dimension of the supranational policies (Calleja Marazuela, 2014, p. 21). Finally yet importantly, for the HR/VP to be able to successfully accomplish all the tasks attributed by the Lisbon Treaty to this post, he/she relies on the EEAS, the EU delegations abroad and the EU especial representatives (Paul, 2008).

b) The HR/VP relations with the different actors involved in the EU External Action

The HR/VP has to work with a broad range of different actors that have a say in EU external action, particularly with the President of the Commission and with the President of the European Council. Moreover, the HR/VP has to also work with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Heads of State or Government of the Member states. In the meantime, he/she also needs to be in close cooperation with the college of commissioners in order to coordinate the external dimension of the EU internal policies. The literature has designated its role as “bridge-builder” (Gianfrancesco, 2013), given that the HR/VP has to build bridges between the Council and the Commission while also having to play the exact same role regarding the college of commissioners.

The main power that the HR/VP possesses is the ability to influence the other major actors in the EU External Action. Therefore, its leadership role is the major strength for the person in charge of this post, if he/she has the political appetite to explore all possibilities. However, the fact that it has to rely on his/her political instinct, in order to be able to effectively conduct the EU external action, can also be understood as a weakness of the EU external action system. In this regard, it is essential to clarify that the margin of maneuver of the HR/VP mainly depends on the interest that the President of the European Council and the President of the EU Commission would have in playing an active role in the EU external action.

The President of the European Council has among its duties to represent the EU on the international scenario in the area of CFSP, at the level of Heads of State or Government. However, if it decides to be active in this area there can be overlaps with the HR/VP. The same would happen if the President of the Commission wants to play a role in the area of external relations. This is precisely what is currently happening, as the President of the European Council Charles Michel and the President of the Commission Ursula von der Leyen have great interest in the EU external action. Consequently, the job of the HR/VP is becoming much more difficult. The HR/VP will also have to be in close cooperation

with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Country in charge of the rotating presidency of the Council (Bilancia, 2010).

2. The European External Action Service (EEAS)

The EEAS is the *administrative body* created to be at the service of the HR/VP to help him/her to achieve his/her duties. It is directly linked to the HR/VP to the point that it even shares its responsibility and political dependence from the Member states (the Council) in CFSP and to the Commission and the European Parliament in the area of external relations. Therefore, the EEAS will be politically controlled by the Member states as they appoint their diplomats to fulfill the EEAS highest positions but also by the Commission and by the EU Parliament through its co-decision power on the EU budget. As Murdoch & Geys (2014) underline, as it happens in the case of the HR/VP, for the EEAS to provide major coherence to the EU external action it has to closely work with the traditional EU external actors, particularly, the Commission and the Member states. This is because its success very much depends on the willingness of these actors to work with it as the final decision-making falls on them (Merket, 2012, p. 647).

The very first task assigned to the HR/VP was setting up the EEAS. The Lisbon Treaty did not include neither its organization nor its functioning. However, it only stressed that the nuts and dots of the EEAS will be pointed out through a Council decision following a proposal made by the HR/VP after presenting the queries to the European Parliament and prior approval by the Commission (art. 27.3 TEU). In short, the Lisbon Treaty defines the EEAS as a diplomatic service under the authority of the HR/VP. As it is in the case of the HR/VP, we can underline its hybrid character where its functions linked to the supranational policies (external relations) converge with the ones linked to the intergovernmental ones (CFSP).

This is precisely the first element that limits the effectiveness of the EEAS, its hybrid character: supranational and intergovernmental. This is even reflected in its physical location, in between of the Council and the Commission. Furthermore, as it has already been stressed, both the Council and the Commission were suspicious of the creation of the EEAS. The Commission had major reservations concerning the EEAS's function as an institution because, as it emphasized, the EEAS is not an institution but a service and it should behave like that. In the words of a Member state's diplomat, the Commission

would very much like to have the EEAS within its own structure.⁴ In short, the EEAS is a service at the service of the European Council, the Council, the Commission and the HR/VP. This is important because it reinforces the capacity of the EEAS to provide the global view of the EU External action and contributes to promote its role of coordinator.⁵ The EEAS is not a policy maker either. As a former Council official underlines, the EEAS is an instrument for the EU external action whose major added value are the EU delegations abroad, particularly if they are leaded by a good HR/VP who works together with the Member states and the Commission in the areas where they have real power.⁶

Not being part of the EU institutions, the EEAS is configured as an autonomous body, and therefore, independent from the Commission and from the Council. It is composed of its headquarters in Brussels and more than 140 delegations, representing the major diplomatic network around the world. Within the headquarters in Brussels, the EEAS is managed by a Secretary General, assisted by three Deputy Secretary Generals dealing with economic and global issues, political affairs and defence, and security and crisis management. In short, the EEAS is in charge of providing assistance to the General Secretariat of the Council, to the Commission and to the diplomatic services of the EU Member states with the aim of ensuring the coherence and consistence of the EU external action.

Another relevant task in the hands of the EEAS is to design and to implement the programs and the financial instruments linked to the EU external relations. The responsibility in the development assistance of the EU is therefore divided between the EEAS and the Commission. Whereas the EEAS is in charge of the programming and the implementation of the EU aid, the Commission administers the EU budget.

The Lisbon Treaty also establishes that the EEAS will be composed by personnel coming from the European institutions, particularly from the Commission and the Council, although after two years of functioning of the service, civil servants from the European Parliament can also be transferred to the EEAS and, last but not least, diplomats from the Member states. In this regard, one of the major weaknesses affecting the consolidation of a strong EU diplomatic service is the fact that Member states diplomats are only allowed to work in the EEAS for a maximum of eight, exceptionally, ten years. This mix of

⁴ Interviewee 8: Member state diplomat

⁵ Interviewee 6: Commission official 2

⁶ Interviewee 4: Former Council official

personnel leads to a lack of common administrative diplomatic culture that is restricting the development of a truly *esprit de corps* within the EEAS.

Notwithstanding, as a Commission official underlines, this lack of administrative diplomatic culture that today is understood as a handicap, if used well, can also be an added value. To have people within the service with distinct views and understandings that can provide different perspectives on an issue contributes to have a more global overview. At the same time, it allows to have a better comprehension of the issue at stake. However, and first of all, the EEAS staff needs to achieve a strong *esprit de corps*, a common understanding of what the EU external threats are, and where the EU external action main priorities lie. Another strength that comes from this mix of personnel relies on the EEAS' capacity to connect its two branches, supranational and intergovernmental. In short, the EEAS is an instrument led by the HR/VP whose main aim is to coordinate and to enhance the coherence of the EU external action.⁷

In this line, an additional advantage of having this mix of staff is the fact that whereas Member states bring the political knowledge to the EEAS, the EU officials bring the EU management expertise. As an EEAS official points out, the fact that these diplomats spend a period of time working in the EEAS provides them with a global perspective and a better understanding on how the EU works, as well as a different mindset of collaboration with the EEAS once they go back to their national diplomatic services.⁸

Overall, this cross-fertilization process is of a great added value that contributes to build the EU and, at the same time, also functions as an EU socializing process among young diplomats. Notwithstanding, as an EEAS official highlights, the fact that Member states' diplomats have to necessarily rotate, after a number of years working in the EEAS, weakens the service as it lacks permanent diplomatic staff. In addition, this continuous rotation of personnel results in the EEAS needing people dedicated to constantly recruit new personnel, which generates an immense workload for the EEAS human resources department. This EEAS official also underlines that a further weakness of this system, that is crucial to solve, is the fact that some Member states' diplomats have problems to find an interesting job once they go back to their national diplomatic services.⁹

⁷ Interviewee 3: Commission official

⁸ Interviewee 1: EEAS official

⁹ Interviewee 1: EEAS official

The rotation of staff also implies that EU Member states have to guarantee that when these national diplomats finish their period at the EEAS they have a post for them in their national diplomatic service. In short, that their reincorporation to the national diplomatic service is ensured. However, this is not the case for the EU officials, as the personnel that is transferred from the EU institutions to the EEAS do not have the possibility of returning to their post of origin. Even though it would not contribute to strengthening the EEAS *esprit the corps*, it represents a major weakness in furthering EU external action coordination. During the negotiations that led to the decision of creating the EEAS, the agreement in terms of personnel was that at least 60% would come from the EU institutions and 33% would come from the national diplomatic services of the Member states. Therefore, mobility between EU institutions is not encouraged but even discouraged, particularly when EU officials understand that they cannot properly have access to career development within the EEAS given the fact that Member States' diplomats fill the majority of management posts. In this regard, mainly due to this Member states' willingness to fill EEAS' management post, the EU diplomatic service has a surplus of these forenamed posts and a lack of base positions.¹⁰ Consequently, young EU officials do not want to work in the EEAS and its staff is becoming older and stagnated.¹¹ Moreover, in connection to the lack of a truly *esprit de corps* within the EEAS, there is the fact that the different parts of the EU external action are divided even physically as, for instance, INTCEN and Security and Defence operate in a different building.¹²

The EEAS staff is composed of 5 main categories: officials, temporary agents, contract agents, local agents and seconded national experts. In addition, there is external staff such as trainees and junior professionals. At the end of 2020 the numbers were the following: 1.647 officials and temporary agents, 1.091 local agents, 539 contract agents, 472 seconded national experts, 39 junior professionals in delegations and other 855 external staff and trainees. In total 2.286 (49.24%) were working at headquarters whereas 2.357 (50.76%) were working at EU delegations and offices all around the world.

In addition to the EEAS staff in delegations, we need to add the 3.771 Commission officials that were also deployed to EU delegations. Furthermore, another relevant

¹⁰ Interviewee 1: EEAS official

¹¹ Interviewee 8: Member state diplomat

¹² Interviewee 3: Commission official

number, that is important to stress, is the percentage of Member states' diplomats working at the EEAS (35.18%), which fairly meets what is required from the EEAS decision: one third of Member states' diplomats (EEAS, 2021). In 2019, the EU Member states' diplomats represented the 33.37% (EEAS, 2021). However, even though they respect the figures, as has already been stressed, Member states' diplomats mainly fill management positions. The one-third quota does not respect a fair distribution between all level posts.

When it comes to gender distribution, at the end of 2019 the EEAS women staff was close to equal, 48.65%. However, they held the majority of contract agent (59.37%) and local agent (54.5%) positions. In addition, the majority of women staff occupied the lower level categories, more than 65% of AST and AST/SC, whereas they were the minority in AD positions, less than 38%. Nevertheless, the representation of women in management positions increased from 17% in 2011 to 27.4% in 2020 (EEAS, 2021).

Another element that is closely monitored regarding EEAS staff, even though the recruitment is strictly based on merit, is the nationality (EEAS, 2021). In this regard, the EEAS pays particular attention to ensuring a balanced recruitment of personnel between the Member states that have joined the EEAS prior to 2004 and the Member states that have joined the EEAS in 2004 or later on. Thus, whereas in 2011 the percentage of EEAS personnel whose nationality was from Member states that joined the EU in 2004 or later was 15%, at the end of 2020 they amounted 23%. This represents a higher percentage than the share of the Member states post 2004 enlargement within the EU population, which is 20% (EEAS, 2021). However, attention needs to be paid to the positions that they occupy regarding the different levels within the EEAS hierarchy, as they are not well represented in the high levels. As an EEAS official stresses, Eastern countries are making big efforts in offering the EEAS good candidates, including women, in order to fill the management positions.¹³

Another feature of the EEAS that can be interpreted as a strength but also as a weakness is the amount of resources at its disposal. The EEAS enjoys many resources in terms of personnel and funding, much more than any Member state's foreign affairs service. Nevertheless, as a Commission official stresses, the EEAS is not making the most out of it. One of the main added values of the EEAS is to provide strategic papers with new and interesting ideas, and to introduce debates about different international issues within the

¹³ Interviewee 5: EEAS official 2

Council since Member states' diplomatic services do not have neither the capacity in terms of amount of staff nor the expertise. Nevertheless, only if Member states perceive the EEAS as a useful tool will they count on it. In addition, as a former Council official stresses, what the EEAS very much lacks is to have a strategic debate about what the EU external threats and interests are. CFSP is meant to be based on values, but it also has to be based on EU interests. A major weakness in this regard is the fact that there are quite significant divergences between member states regarding security issues.¹⁴

As one Commission official points out, currently, the EEAS has evolved into a briefing machine. The EEAS has entered into a dynamic of providing briefings but without any quality control. Officials do not reflect on the papers that they work on, they do not provide any added value. One of the reasons this is happening is because there is no clear distribution of responsibilities. The fact that no one has the ownership of the briefings causes the quality of the documents that the EEAS produces to drop.¹⁵

In addition, as this Commission official underlines, a further difference with a Member state diplomatic service that can be interpreted as a weakness and, at the same time, as a strength, is the amount of administrative procedures that a dossier needs to overcome in order to be approved. This is quite problematic, particularly when having to respond to an ongoing crisis. Nevertheless, the advantage lies in the fact that once you get a common position you have the support of 27 Member states and 450 million of citizens.¹⁶ This is directly linked to the process of decision-making, the unanimity requirement, and the difficulties that Member states have nowadays in taking decisions. In this regard, it is necessary to stress that CFSP is still a full competence of the Member states and therefore, in case of introducing qualified majority voting in this policy area, the risk would be that those Member states that do not agree with a final voting would not participate. This would mean that the decision is not fully embraced by the 27 Member states, and this is the message that will be spread to the entire world. As a result, instead of strengthening the system it could weaken it.¹⁷

Currently, Member states are more politically divided than they have ever been and this is making another weakness of the CFSP more extensive, as in for instance, the above

¹⁴ Interviewee 4: Former Council official

¹⁵ Interviewee 6: Commission official 2

¹⁶ Interviewee 6: Commission official 2

¹⁷ Interviewee 4: Former Council official

mentioned unanimity requirement. If the EU has to always wait for the 27 to agree on everything it risks entering in a sort of motionless situation where Member states are unable to decide. Besides, as a Member state diplomat and former EEAS official points out, they have entered in a dynamic of cumbersome organization that is making the EU waste too much time in taking a decision. In order to overcome this situation, it would be essential to reintroduce a sort of obligation of result. In other words, Member states should not leave the room until they take a decision on the specific issue under discussion. Otherwise, the EU risks being perceived abroad as a sort of irrelevant body.¹⁸

In the words of a former Council official, here the major weakness is the difference in the perception of how the EU should respond to the international crisis. For instance, Eastern countries have more confidence in the US rather than on the EU for protecting them from Russia.¹⁹ This responds to the different strategic cultures that the EU Member states follow due to historical reasons and to the clear difference of threat perception among them; this is due to a different geographical placement but also to different historical perspectives. Here we can clearly distinguish the North and the East from the West and the South. Alternatively, countries like France are more likely to deploy defence forces from others like Germany or Sweden, which would be more reticent.

The fact that the EU External Action is divided between many different actors can be understood as a major weakness of the EU External Action in achieving and promoting a common EU voice to the international scenario. In order to overcome this difficulty, EU actors need to be absolutely coordinated, and at the forefront of this coordinating strategy are the HR/VP and the EEAS. In this regard, one of the major weaknesses of the HR/VP in properly performing its function is the necessity to have the trust and cooperation of the Member states and the EU institutions, particularly the President of the European Council and the President of the Commission. This is directly linked to its role of leader of the EU External Action.

After the Treaty of Lisbon came into force, the EU Parliament became a more relevant external action player. As Wisniewski (2013) stresses, the EU Parliament took advantage of the intra-institutional dynamics within the EU political system -during the EEAS process of configuration- in order to gain more external action institutional powers than

¹⁸ Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

¹⁹ Interviewee 4: Former Council official

the ones already established in the Lisbon Treaty. The EU Parliament was supposed to play a secondary role in the process of configuration of the EEAS but, through its power on EU budget, it ended up being one of the most influential actors to the point of even being able to veto the final decision (Raube, 2015; Morillas, 2014).

As it has already been very much highlighted, and underlined by a Commission official, the fact that the President of the European Council and the President of the Commission want to respond to international issues, by travelling to third countries and by having visibility abroad is very much affecting and limiting the political ground and the margin of maneuver of the HR/VP.²⁰ In this sense, problems of coordination might arise among them. What the President of the Commission, the President of the European Council and the Member states do, should be leaded and coordinated by the HR/VP together with the EEAS. Only in this case will the EU fulfill the purpose of spreading a single message to the global scenario.²¹

Another fact that is currently limiting the power of the HR/VP is that the current President of the Commission has undermined the power of the Vice-presidents of the Commission, not just the one of the External Action, but all of them. The current President of the Commission decides what is included in the college agenda in an autonomous way since she directly talks with the different Commissioners without having to pass the filter of the specific Vice-president who coordinates the area of action.²² All this, in addition to the biggest Member states' strong willingness of keeping performing their own foreign policy.

In this regard, the HR/VP and the EEAS need to solve another challenge, to get the support from all 27 Member states. As a Member state diplomat and former EEAS official stressed, for the HR/VP and the EEAS to be successful they need to have the support of the Member states, encouraging the EEAS to be more ambitious and to move ahead. Some of the Member states have lost the enthusiasm in seconding the EEAS, particularly the Eastern and Central Member states. This comes under the argument that they do not feel well represented among the staff of the EEAS.²³

²⁰ Interviewee 6: Commission official 2

²¹ Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

²² Interviewee 6: Commission official 2

²³ Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

The HR/VP together with the EEAS are the ones in charge of defining the strategic planning of the EEAS. The EEAS is the one responsible of this task, namely to design the programming on development cooperation for all regions worldwide. However, the one that administers the budget and manages its implementation is the Commission, as it is the one accountable to the EU Parliament. Therefore, in practice, the Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development is the one who has authority over the entire programming process. Obviously, the ones that administer the budget have an influence upon this budget even though the big decisions are taken at the Council level and the HR/VP has a foot in both branches.²⁴ In this regard, it is relevant to stress the willingness of the Commission to keep inside its structure senior staff that can very much influence the overall programming cycle.

Development aid is one of the most important areas of the EU External Action. The influence that the EU has in the world very much depends on the money that it spends in helping third countries. However, the EU power in this area is divided between the Commission and the EEAS in terms of strategic planning and programming. The creation of the EEAS main goal in this area was to link the EU development aid with the objectives of the CFSP, making it more coherent and efficient. That is why the programming and management cycle was settled within the EEAS. However, as it has been just stressed, the budget administration had to remain within the Commission, which introduces a weakness within the whole process. Even though the HR/VP, as part of the Commission, plays a key role (Tannous, I.; 2013, 343-344).

Finally, another important weakness of the EEAS is the willingness of control by the Member states but also from the other institutions. The main concerns are about its autonomy and the control applied from the Member states (Kostanyan & Orbie, 2013; Furness, 2013; Kostanyan, 2016). Furness (2013) was the first to analyze the autonomy of the EEAS by stressing the control mechanism that Member states have designed to limit the margin for maneuvering of this new body as much as possible. He also asserts that Member states have kept some capabilities, which overlap the prerogatives of the EEAS and, therefore, limit its power, at least, in the short term.

However, Furness (2013) established that the EEAS will have the chance to gain more autonomy in the longer term. In this regard, Morillas (2020) has stressed the high level of

²⁴ Interviewee 4: Former Council official

autonomy enjoyed by the EEAS and the HR/VP regarding the policy making process of the EU Global Strategy. Kostanyan (2016) has also analyzed the EEAS through the lens of the principal agent, concluding that the EEAS enjoys very limited autonomy. Henökl & Trondal (2015) have also looked at the autonomy of the EEAS, but this time through the examination of the level of independence of its staff. The inclusion of large numbers of Member states' diplomats within the EEAS can also be understood as a major weakness if they do not develop a truly *esprit de corps*. It can be perceived that these national diplomats within the EEAS defend their national interest instead of the EU interest. This risk can be even bigger within the EU delegations where Member states would be more tempted to closely control their performance through the appointment in key posts of their national diplomats.

The control that Member states exercise over the EEAS can also be underlined as another weakness of the EU common diplomacy. Member states retain important decision-making powers within the Foreign Affairs Council and within the Political and Security Committee. In addition, they second national experts within the EEAS and they fill the EEAS highest positions with national diplomats both at headquarters and in delegations.²⁵ As a Member state diplomat stresses, Member states have the feeling that they are not equal, that the EEAS mainly listens to the two biggest Member states, France and Germany, as they always have a stronger position than the others do when it comes to foreign policy.²⁶

On the other hand, the Commission also wants to keep the EEAS under its control through the retention of competences, administration of budget, and the inclusion of Commission staff within the EU delegations. Finally, the EU Parliament also wants to apply some control mechanism through its budget co-decision power regarding the external relations budget and the EEAS staff regulations, as well as through the nomination of EU heads of delegations. Last but not least, the major weakness of the EEAS in getting the support from Member states, as a Member state diplomat and former EEAS official very much underlined is the fact that the EEAS has been unable to find what exactly its added value is.²⁷

²⁵ Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

²⁶ Interviewee 8: Member state diplomat

²⁷ Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

The HR/VP as head of the EEAS has also the responsibility of providing the necessary training to its staff related to the supranational and the national diplomatic practices. In this purpose, the creation of a Diplomatic Academy has been part of the discussions during the Convention on the Future of Europe, but finally it was not included within the Lisbon Treaty (Guinea Llorente, 2010).

During the Convention on the Future of Europe, the member of EU Parliament, Íñigo Méndez de Vigo very much stressed the necessity of creating an EU Diplomatic Academy, as he understood that training would function as a very effective tool in building personal relations between the different EU External Action actors. At the same time, this would promote a better understanding between the different national backgrounds and interests, which is essential in creating “a common European strategic and administrative culture and a “spécificité du métier diplomatique européen” (Méndez de Vigo; 2002, p. 6).

Before the Lisbon Treaty came into force, the EU Parliament also asked for the creation of an EU Diplomatic Academy in order to provide the EU Member states diplomats and the EU officials working in external action with a harmonized curriculum (European Parliament, 2009; 14). Again, in May 2010 the ‘Reflection Group on the Future of Europe 2030’ in its final report to the European Council called for an EU Diplomatic Academy in order to help develop a common diplomatic culture. However, the Council Decision of July 2011 on the establishment of the EEAS only mentions in its article 6 that “steps shall be taken in order to provide EEAS staff with adequate common training, building in particular on existing practices and structures at national and Union level” (Council Decision, 2010).

In 2020, the EEAS made two major changes on training. First, the EEAS had to readapt its trainings to the COVID situation and, secondly, it launched four training maps: assistants to the Head of Delegation; budget, contract and finance Assistants; political Officers / Diplomats and newly Appointed Managers. It was in 2019 when the EEAS launched its first training maps, which are implemented with the idea of easing the career planning for EEAS staff. They consist of a set of minimum skills and knowledge that all EEAS staff has to obtain immediately before or soon after moving to another job profile. Moreover, they also contribute to creating an *esprit de corps* within the EEAS, at the same time that they contribute to fostering career development and mobility.

Nevertheless, to be efficient, the EEAS has to clearly align its training with the current diplomatic affairs.

The EEAS also has to put in action other training programs such as, for instance: the diplomatic training secondment program with the objective of providing junior diplomats with a better understanding of the CFSP and the EEAS working methods plus EU decision making process. Another program that was recently launched is the “Toolkit 4 Programming”. This last one aims to provide the EEAS diplomats with the political dimension over the external programs. The EEAS has also organized other series of courses together with the Commission.

On the other hand, there are also some programs for making exchanges of personnel, such as, for instance, the diplomatic exchange and secondment program. This exchange program takes place between EEAS officials and the diplomats from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Member states. It usually lasts for two, exceptionally three, years and the exchanges should be simultaneous, reciprocal and involving officials of equivalent level.

Training is one of the key elements when trying to develop an *esprit de corps* within an organization, and in this sense, the EEAS has several weaknesses. Even though the EEAS has been working on providing different training options to EEAS officials, as an EU delegation official underlines, there is a lack of continuous and more systematic formative programs within the EEAS. Particularly, when it comes to in person team meetings in Brussels.²⁸ As a Member state diplomat and former EEAS official points out, these trainings would be particularly essential for the Member states diplomats who are seconded to the EEAS, mainly because they have very little knowledge about how the EU works.²⁹ In words of an EEAS official, EU diplomats have almost no training in management, thus they are very interested in following those courses when they are in the EEAS.³⁰ Notwithstanding, they should follow some management introductory trainings before they start working in the EEAS.

In this regard, Henökl (2015) followed a behavioral analysis of the EEAS decision-making. He stressed that the origin of the EEAS has affected its administrative decisional

²⁸ Interviewee 2: EU Delegation official

²⁹ Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

³⁰ Interviewee 1: EEAS official

behavior since the national diplomats were introduced in the EEAS too quickly and without being properly trained, mainly with regards to management. As an EU delegation official underlines, even if there is a training program that EEAS staff has to follow before being deployed in an EU delegation, it only lasts for one week. Therefore, these training programs are not enough neither in terms of duration nor in terms of content. The major weakness in this regard is the lack of a permanent training program designed specifically for the post that they will perform, whether it is political section, communication official etc. In addition, there should be an introduction about what the delegation does, how they do it, as well as to prepare the EU delegation staff for some tactical situations.³¹

However, of even more relevance would be to be able to spend time talking to the people who are going to do the same job in other delegations, getting to know each other. This would also be of major relevance for those nominated as Head of Delegation. In addition, the EU delegations are quite different one from the other depending on what specific Commission policies are of special relevance in the country where they are settled. Those EU policies are essential, as they are what makes the EU's presence stronger abroad. Therefore, a specific training on these EU core policies would be of particular added value, especially for Member states' diplomats.³² Finally, as a Commission official points out, another EU diplomatic weakness is the fact that EEAS staff deployed in EU delegations do not have proper knowledge of the language of the country where they are working.³³

In any event, whereas the decision on the creation of the EEAS clearly defines the composition, tasks and budget of the EEAS, it leaves open the political mandate. The European Council has not provided the EEAS with any clear strategy to determine what its mission is. Neither the 2016 EU Global Strategy nor the following implementation reports mention at all the EEAS' role in pursuing EU strategic objectives (Hillion, Blockmans, & Vimont, 2021, p. 4).

³¹ Interviewee 2: EU Delegation official

³² Interviewee 2: EU Delegation official

³³ Interviewee 3: Commission official

3. The EU Delegations

As we have already highlighted, besides its headquarters in Brussels, the EEAS is also composed by more than 140 EU delegations based in third countries and in different international organizations. The EU delegations are directed by a Head of Delegation who works under the authority of the HR/VP and, therefore, of the EEAS. The EU delegations are part of the EEAS, them being the external administration of the EU, and the ones that represent the EU abroad. They are also the ones who implement the EU External Action policies.

As the Art. 221.2 TFEU stresses, “[the European] 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”. The Head of the Delegation is, therefore, the representative of the EU in the third country or in the international organization where the EU delegation is based. The main task of the EU delegations is to provide information and to coordinate the diplomatic services of the EU countries. The EU delegations respond directly to the Secretary-General of the EEAS, as (s)he is the responsible for its financial and administrative evaluation.

Following the Art. 5 of the Council decision for establishing the EEAS: *“Each Union Delegation shall be placed under the authority of a Head of Delegation. The Head of Delegation shall have authority over all staff in the delegation, whatever their status, and for all its activities. He/she shall be accountable to the High Representative for the overall management of the work of the delegation and for ensuring the coordination of all actions of the Union. Staff in delegations shall comprise EEAS staff and, where appropriate for the implementation of the Union budget and Union policies other than those under the remit of the EEAS, Commission staff. 3. The Head of Delegation shall receive instructions from the High Representative and the EEAS, and shall be responsible for their execution. In areas where the Commission exercises the powers conferred upon it by the Treaties, the Commission may, in accordance with Article 221(2) TFEU, also issue instructions to delegations, which shall be executed under the overall responsibility of the Head of Delegation. 4. The Head of Delegation shall implement operational credits in relation to the Union’s projects in the corresponding third country, where sub-delegated by the Commission, in accordance with the Financial Regulation.”*

The EU delegations are composed of staff coming from the EEAS to work on Foreign Policy. Moreover, in the countries where the EU delegations manage development aid or where they execute supranational policies, EU delegations will necessarily include staff coming from the Commission. In this case, it will be the Commission the one sending instructions to its staff, even though they have to follow the instructions from the Head of the delegation and operate under his responsibility. Therefore, the Head of Delegation has to ensure the good development of the EU delegation work and the effective coordination of all the EU actions on the ground. The head of the delegation is also the budgetary authority. At the same time, he/she also has the power of representing the EU before the state where the delegation is based, for instance, regarding the conclusions of contracts and the appearance in legal proceedings.

Another task assigned to EU delegations is to share information with the Member states' embassies. The EU delegations are also allowed, under the request of the Member states, to provide them support in their diplomatic relations and consular services.

If we have to highlight a success from the institutional architecture of the new EU's external action brought about by the Lisbon Treaty, this is the EU delegations. As a Member state diplomat and former EEAS official points out, EU delegations have been very useful not only for the Member states in setting up meetings with the local authorities, getting information or passing political messages, particularly for the small Member states, but also for their third partners. Member states very much benefit from the added value that the EU delegations bring to them.³⁴

Notwithstanding, as this Member state diplomat and former EEAS official underlines, EU delegations could be of much more added value for Member states. Currently, they spend most of their time coordinating the different Member states positions and, therefore, they do not have enough time to do what their job is supposed to be. In short, providing better understanding of what is going on in the country where they are based, getting a better sense of the political reality of the country and sending reports back to Brussels to process this information.³⁵

³⁴ Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

³⁵ Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

As an EEAS official stresses, the main task of an EU delegation is to coordinate and, therefore, the main instruction that the heads of delegation have to follow is to come to an understanding among the different Member states.³⁶ Working with 27 different Member states is complicated, particularly nowadays, as they have to get on board countries such as Poland or Hungary who do not respect the basic core EU values. Nevertheless, Member states clearly understand and very much appreciate the added value of the EU delegations.³⁷ As an EEAS official underlines, another element that clearly distinguishes an EU delegation from a regular Member state embassy is the size in terms of both, staff and resources.³⁸

The coordinating role of the delegations, when functioning properly, has two positive consequences: it strengthens the standing of the delegations vis-a-vis the national embassies on one hand, and it gives them more authority in the third country in which they are posted on the other hand. This enables delegations to carry out more direct diplomacy with the governments of the third country, which contributes to raising the importance of the EU and the perception of its unity abroad. Of course, Member states continue to do their own bilateral business, but EU coordination gives continuity of engagement and policy implementation. At the same time, that reinforces the role of the head of the EU delegation (Balfour, R.; 2013, 64-65).

While setting up the EEAS, one of the main advantages that Member states found from its creation was to save some money from the national budget in co-locating national diplomats in the EU delegations abroad. This possibility would allow Member states to have their people in a third country without having to spend money on infrastructure, sharing the same building with the EU delegation. However, as a Member state diplomat and former EEAS official stresses, as a consequence of the sort of frustration or disinvestment from some Member states with regards to the EEAS, the perception is that these days some Member states are feeling less attracted by this option.³⁹ Notwithstanding, as a Member state diplomat stresses, this is not always the case. It is important to analyze case by case as it very much depends on the country which we refer to.⁴⁰

³⁶ Interviewee 1: EEAS official

³⁷ Interviewee 3: Commission official

³⁸ Interviewee 1: EEAS official

³⁹ Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

⁴⁰ Interviewee 8: Member state diplomat

Another advantage from EU delegations is the fact that they have managed more competently some of the problems that the EEAS still has in Brussels. For instance, the fragmentation of the EU external action between different actors. As a Commission official stresses, in EU delegations, everybody is together and work much better. This also contributes to affirm themselves as the contact point for all EU issues.⁴¹

In terms of weaknesses, as a EEAS official stresses, even though most of the EU delegations have enough personnel in terms of quantity, what they lack is some quality staff, but not because they have a bad profile but because they have not the appropriate one. This EEAS official also underlines that when a delegation has projects on development aid the budget includes a line for hiring personnel. The people that join the delegation enjoy contracts *ad vitam aeternam*. However, the development aid approach is constantly changing and this staff do not have the capacity to constantly readapt their profiles to the new circumstances. It would be essential to be able to provide the necessary skills to these people regarding the different EU external action lines of action.⁴²

Other weaknesses inside the EU delegations, as an EU delegation official highlight, would be the fact that Commission staff working with the development or neighbor policies do not always serve the EU head of delegation. This is particularly due to the fact that, for the people from the Commission, the one who decides about their future promotion is not the head of the delegation but the Commission. Therefore, there is a major difference inside EU delegations between the EEAS staff and the Commission staff. For the EEAS officials their future career development is linked to the head of the delegation but this is not the case for the Commission officials whose long-term career is defined in the Commission. Commission officials also have their own extra budget, for instance, for traveling purposes, among others, over which the head of delegation has any power. They have something similar to an autonomous position within the delegation, which is not very helpful towards clearly attaining the EU delegations objectives.⁴³

⁴¹ Interviewee 3: Commission official

⁴² Interviewee 1: EEAS official

⁴³ Interviewee 2: EU Delegation official

4. The President of the European Council

Among the tasks that the President of the European Council has been assigned to, we can stress the following: to manage and promote the works of the Council and to represent the EU in the international at the level of Heads of State and Government (Art. 15.6 TEU). The decision on creating the post of President of the European Council reflects the will of the Member states and the EU institutions to provide the EU with more visibility and continuity into the international scenario, the same objective behind the creation of the post of HR/VP. Therefore, it would be problematic if there were differences of criteria among both. If so, this would enormously affect the reputation, the power and the influence of the EU worldwide. Nevertheless, the probability of being in such situation is quite low, as the last word would always be in the hands of the European Council.

If there were any problem in this regard, it would be due to the personality or the interests of the person in charge of the post of President of the European Council. Neither Herman Van Rompuy nor Donald Tusk, the two permanent Presidents of the European Council after Lisbon, had great interests in this political area, which is why, so far, there has not been any “fight” with the HR/VP. Notwithstanding, as it has been already mentioned, this is not the case of the current President of the EU Council, Charles Michel, who has major interests in being involved in the external representation of the EU. Either case, if there is any discrepancy, his position as President of the European Council would prevail over the one of the HR/VP as the latter is only allowed to implement the political decisions that the Heads of State or Government have already taken in the European Council (Art. 18.2 TEU). While, it is true, that the HR/VP has been assigned the task of crisis management, he/she always has to follow the mandate given by the Council and the European Council (art. 43 TEU).

5. The President of the European Commission

The Commission is the body that has the competences in external relations. Besides, all the internal policies, which are competence of the Commission, have also an external dimension.

When it comes to the relationship between the HR/VP and the President of the Commission, their tasks are clearly defined by the Treaty (Art. 17.6 TEU). Precisely, the

President of the Commission's main task is to be the leader of the Supranational Executive, thus defining the general guidelines under which the Commission will execute its functions. The Commission's President will also determine the Commission's internal organization in the aim of ensuring the coherence, efficacy and collegiality of its actions, and the nomination of its Vice-presidents, except for the HR/VP. The President of the Commission also takes part in the meetings of the European Council. In addition, he/she requests to the Vice-president in charge of the EU's external relations the coordination of the external action of the commissioners' college, while at the same time he/she is part of its deliberations. Lastly, the President of the Commission represents the EU in the G7.⁴⁴

As it has been already highlighted, the current President of the Commission has great interest in being involved in the EU external action, as it is the case of the President of the European Council, which is causing a problem of EU cacophony into the international scenario. They even have started some sort of competition about who responds to an international crisis first, which makes the job of the HR/VP much more difficult. During this Commission term, the role of all Vice-Presidents has even been undermined, as it has already been mentioned.⁴⁵

6. The European Parliament

The European Parliament has limited powers when it comes to CFSP as it is a purely intergovernmental area. Therefore, the European Parliament has not the capacity to veto any decision in the area of neither of CFSP nor CSDP. However, after the Treaty of Lisbon came into force, the co-legislative role of the European Parliament next to the Council was extended to the EU budget, which means that the European Parliament has *de facto* power over the CFSP budget. Therefore, in practice, it has a great power on what the EU does in this political area. Concerning the HR/VP, the European Parliament has the power of approving the College of Commissioners and the capacity of passing a non-confidence motion. In addition, each commissioner designated has to pass a hearing before the responsible/s EU Parliament committees after responding to a written questionnaire and presenting his/her declaration of interest. The EU Parliament has the power to reject any designated commissioner if they deem it appropriated. Consequently,

⁴⁴ Europa.eu: https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/presidents_es1

⁴⁵ Interviewee 6: Commission official 2

the Member state of which the rejected commissioner is national should replace the commissioner designated if it does not want the European Parliament to vote down the whole Commission as a collegiate body.

One of the main powers of the European Parliament in the area of CFSP is the control over the HR/VP, as he/she has to consult the European Parliament on any matter related to CFSP and CSDP. At the same time, the HR/VP has the duty of providing information on the evolution of the decisions adopted in these areas. The HR/VP has to ensure that the opinions of the European Parliament are duly taken into consideration. In addition, the European Parliament enjoys the possibility of asking questions to both the Council and the HR/VP. Lastly, there are two yearly debates within the European Parliament on the progress of the implementation of the CFSP and the CSDP (Art. 36 TEU).

7. Member States

Foreign policy is the single EU policy area that remains fully intergovernmental. This means that even though Member states work together to achieve a CFSP, they can pursue their own national foreign policy. Member states are the ones that have power of initiative together with the HR/VP. As a Commission official points out, the main weakness here is the fact that Member states have differences in the perception of the external threats. Although they have more and more the same interest in the international scenario, instruments like the “Strategic Compass” are very helpful in developing a common understanding in how to respond to the external challenges and, particularly, in getting to see things through the same lenses.⁴⁶ Member states are also the ones having the absolute power in taking a decision in this area at EU level, as the process of decision-making requires in most cases unanimity.

Foreign policy remains the single EU intergovernmental policy within the EU where the process of decision-making requires unanimity. The fact that the 27 Member states have to reach a consensus before taking any decision difficult and slows down providing a quick response at the EU level. That is why there is a constant debate about the reconfiguration of the process of decision-making in this policy area, even though both unanimity and qualified majority voting have positive and negative consequences. In

⁴⁶ Interviewee 3: Commission official

addition, whereas EU institutions are more in favor of extending qualified majority voting to CFSP, Member states, particularly the smaller ones, prefer to keep the unanimity.

Going from unanimity to qualified majority voting would contribute in giving the impression that the CFSP is much more than the sum of its parts. Supporters of qualified majority voting claim that, in practice, decisions at EU level are, in the vast majority of cases, taken *de facto* by consensus. Besides “the prospect of a vote by qualified majority is a powerful catalyst to engage all actors in finding compromises, an outcome acceptable to all through building effective consensus, and to achieve unity. The pursuit of agreement means greater ownership of the decisions taken, which should be implemented in a spirit of loyalty and mutual solidarity”.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, if in the case of CFSP decisions are mostly taken by unanimity, in the area of external relations the rule is qualified majority voting; which sometimes causes conflicts among institutions. In this regard, the Council decides together with the EU Parliament by qualified majority voting on the priorities of EU development funds regarding candidate countries, neighboring countries, development partners and other non-member countries. Whereas Member states decide by unanimity on other issues related to these countries within the framework of CFSP such as, for instance, security requirements. This fact can weaken the EU’s influence in the international scenario as third countries take advantage of these inter-institutional conflicts to advance their own interests, which can be contrary to the ones of the EU. Introducing qualified majority voting in CFSP would allow furthering its coherence and cohesion by making it stronger before third countries.⁴⁸

However, of even more relevance is the discussion regarding a possible reform of the CFSP, which is fluctuating between two approaches. On one hand, there is the proposal of keeping CFSP outside the EU structures of policy action giving much more margin of

⁴⁷ Communication from the Commission to the European Council, the European Parliament and the Council. A stronger global actor: a more efficient decision-making for EU Common Foreign and Security Policy. COM (2018) 647 final. Brussels. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0647&from=EN>, pp, 3.

⁴⁸ Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik. *The EU Common Foreign and Security Policy*. <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/topics/dossiers/the-eu-common-foreign-and-security-policy>

maneuver to the Member states. On the other hand, there is the proposal of including CFSP into the supranational architecture of the EU. This would mean that the Commission would be the one having the right of initiative, and the Council and the European Parliament would take the decisions by qualified majority voting. These two proposals are a bit too radical. A middle one would be to go for introducing qualified majority voting within the Council, without the Commission or the EU Parliament being involved. Another middle ground proposal would be to introduce more flexibility formulas in CFSP or even opt for *ad-hoc* groups of like-minded Member states built around specific interests and who would like to act together or a permanent European Security Council.⁴⁹

Overall, the main weakness of the EU when having to respond to a crisis is the lack of unity among Member states as some of them would prefer acting on their own, showing a strong resistance in getting the EU involved. In this regard, they might be open to go for a group of Member states together with the HR/VP, but not the EU as such.⁵⁰

Even though the HR/VP enjoys the power of initiative, (s)he would never promote a major initiative without previously having the support of the Member states, particularly the big ones. When Member states work together with the HR/VP, the EU is able to influence the international arena, as it happened in the case of Iran's nuclear deal. However, to have a strong support from the Member states is not easy. This means that, for the EU to develop a truly EU common diplomacy, Member states have to politically support it. Nevertheless, there are only some few Member states that would surrender their sovereignty to the EU in CFSP or even subordinate it to the EU by modifying the process of decision-making from unanimity to qualified majority voting (Lehne, S., 2017). The trust among different Member states would only be achievable by working together and improving a major common understanding.

Member states have also committed to create a strong diplomatic service, working together with the EU institutions. However, we can find a contradiction among Member states in their willingness to build and achieve a stronger and better coordinated CFSP by the creation of both a common diplomatic service and the HR/VP but, at the same time, preferring to keep them under their control. Member states do not provide these new

⁴⁹ Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik. *The EU Common Foreign and Security Policy*. <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/topics/dossiers/the-eu-common-foreign-and-security-policy>

⁵⁰ Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

instruments with the political mandate and the necessary autonomy and room of maneuver to actually achieve a truly EU common diplomacy and a stronger EU voice on the international scenario (Sus, 2016). Here we cannot find major differences among the big or the small member states. Even though the smaller Member states need the EU to be more able to have a say in the international scenario, they want to keep the veto power, as it is the only prerogative that they have that allows them to condition the EU's CFSP. On the other hand, bigger Member states are in a better position to influence CFSP, finding the EU common diplomacy as a great supplement to their national foreign policy (Sus, 2016).

On a general basis, Member states support the achievement of a stronger CFSP as a way of being in a better position to achieve their own national foreign policy objectives. However, they are also aware that by actively promoting the EU to act internationally on their behalf, Member states' national foreign policy might be undermined, limiting their room of maneuver. Member states would prefer the EEAS and the HR/VP to act as a complement to their national foreign policies and national diplomatic services, so they can control and use them to promote their national objectives. However, as Duke (2012) has stressed, the reluctance of some Member states to let the EEAS to become a strategic actor makes it more difficult to develop any possible strategic direction.

Therefore, concurrent to Member states' complaints that the EEAS is not providing a real added value in terms of ensuring coherence over the different foreign policy instruments and coordination of the EU external action, they do not want to share more competences with the EU. The current HR/VP underlined that even though foreign ministers lament the various crisis going on all around the world, they are incapable to take a decision on collective action. Member states still think that their foreign policy comes first. This situation is more particular among EU Member states which have experienced a rise in their nationalist and anti-system parties, which puts the achievement of a truly collective CFSP at risk (Denninson, 2019).

Last but not least, Member states are continuously playing a more relevant role in the EU's external relations, which is a competence of the Commission. This is because most of the internal policies have an external dimension and when having relations with a third country there are several topics to discuss, the majority of which are competence of the Commission. In addition, CFSP is becoming progressively more economic, and therefore,

the ones that have the broader picture are the Heads of State and Government, which are increasingly taking more and more the decisions in External Action.

8. The EU Intelligence Analysis Center: INTCEN

The EU intelligence analysis center's (INTCEN) main weakness, as a Commission official highlight, is that the Center very much depends on the willingness of the intelligence services of the Member states in providing it with information. This is mainly because it lacks agents in third countries.⁵¹ Therefore, according to a Member state diplomat and former EEAS official, in order to enhance the willingness of Member states in sharing their intelligence, it would be essential to create and to reinforce trust among them.⁵² The EU intelligence analysis center is quite different from a regular intelligence service.⁵³ In words of both a Commission and an EEAS official, what the INTCEN does is to provide briefings to the HR/VP based on the information shared by the intelligence services of the Member states.⁵⁴

Therefore, the EU needs to encourage Member states to have real willingness to share their intelligence. However, as a Member state diplomat and former EEAS official stresses, this willingness is not entirely there yet. In this case, once again, some Member states are at present already ready to share their intelligence in likeminded groups but not as 27.⁵⁵ As a former Council official points out, the main area of work would consist in promoting the common trust among the different Member states on issues of key relevance for their national interest.⁵⁶ Finally, another weakness of the INTCEN, in words of a Commission official, is the fact that, as it has already been stressed, the Center is even placed in a different building than the EEAS.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Interviewee 3: Commission official

⁵² Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

⁵³ Interviewee 3: Commission official

⁵⁴ Interviewee 6: Commission official 2 & Interviewee 1: EEAS official

⁵⁵ Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

⁵⁶ Interviewee 4: Former Council official

⁵⁷ Interviewee 3: Commission official

II. Towards a truly EU common diplomacy

1. The EEAS efficiency under debate

The reconfiguration of the EU's External Action architecture brought about by the Lisbon Treaty has been object of particular attention by scholars. The creation of this first suprastate diplomatic body in the world opens the question of how it would be coordinated and how it would interact with the Member states' diplomatic services, and even more importantly, if it would contribute to configure a suprastate diplomatic culture (Guinea Llorente, 2010, p. 778). Since the EEAS and the HR/VP inception there have been several publications looking at whether and how the Lisbon Treaty institutional changes would contribute to develop a more coherent and visible EU External Action in the world. However, the majority of these inquiries' focal point was the EEAS, the new institutional body introduced by the Lisbon Treaty.

The first wave of studies on the EEAS focused, particularly, on how it should be set up and on how it should work, in addition to the consequences of its creation. Furthermore, they also focused on the advantages of the EU delegations and the different challenges from the EEAS implementation. The second wave of analysis, the ones that were published around 2013, the year of the first revision of the EEAS, looked at critically examining the first two years of functioning of the service. Finally, the last wave of the EEAS analyses' main purpose was to assess the fulfilment of the conditions established in terms of staff, coordination and the possible creation of an EEAS *esprit de corps*.

The EEAS functions as the political instrument to promote and implement the CFSP, which is common and not single, as it has to coexist with the Member states foreign policy (Guinea Llorente, 2010). In this regard, Duke (2012) stressed that the major challenge for the EEAS is to set a medium and long-term strategy whilst making sure that the main actors of EU external action, particularly Member states and the Commission, back it politically, diplomatically and provide it with the necessary resources. In this regard, for Member states to clearly engage with the EEAS, they have to understand that it is providing them with a clear added value. As Pierre Vimont has argued, if the EEAS is unable to develop a clear purpose, it will remain adrift (Blockmans, & Wessel, 2021).

Therefore, the EEAS should make progress in providing Member states with better reporting systems, more information sharing and greater capabilities for strategic analysis. This would certainly help in providing a better understanding of the international issues while also contributing to promote the power of the EU institutions as well as the credibility of their initiatives, and consequently, notably facilitate a proactive approach towards policymaking (Lehne, 2017). However, ten years after the EEAS functioning this continues being a demanding task.

As Duke (2009) stressed before the actual setting up of the EEAS, Member states should have included as part of their foreign policy strategy the one that can be put in action at the EU level, building an “integrated diplomacy”. In this regard, and taking into account the heterogeneous character of the composition of the EEAS staff, Spence (2012) argues that the success of the EEAS will ultimately depend to what extent the EEAS officials understand it as an integrated diplomatic service. This means that Member states should consider the EU’s diplomacy as part of their national diplomacy.

Furness (2013) has underlined that the only way for the EEAS to build its autonomy from the Member states is by closely working with the Commission in the areas in which it has the competence. However, there is a certain rivalry between the Commission and the EEAS that needs to be overcome. One of the main weaknesses of the EEAS and the subsequent development of a truly EU common diplomacy are the constant battles for power and influence among EU institutions and Member states. In addition to the mistrust among some Member states, these facts have damaged the EEAS chances and ability to fulfil its goals and expectations. In order to overcome these obstacles, it would be essential to promote a cooperative relationship between the HR/VP and the EEAS and the President of the European Council, which would result in enhancing the trust between Member states, the HR/VP and the EEAS under his authority (Blockmans, & Wessel, 2021).

Regarding the functioning of EU delegations, scholars have identified some weaknesses that are worth noticing. One of the elements where there is still margin of improvement concerning the information sharing between EU delegations and the headquarters in Brussels as well as a better follow up in terms of strategic direction and feedback. On the other hand, there should also be more incentives for co-location of EU

Member states' diplomats in the EU delegations (Hillion, Blockmans, & Vimont, 2021). In this regard, it is interesting to note that, although Member states have reduced their numbers of diplomats, mainly due to technological innovations, Member states have not only maintained but also even increased their networks of diplomatic representations across the globe. This has also been made possible via EU cooperation through different formulas as the aforementioned co-location. Therefore, this vast network of EU delegations is a great asset for Member states, allowing for different forms of diplomatic cooperation at EU level (Bicchi, & Schade, 2021).

EU delegations would very much benefit from more strategic direction from Brussels. In addition, many of the EU delegations have to manage work overload without being able to count with the enough number of staff. Meanwhile, their staff do not have the necessary expertise and many EU delegations lack the proper resources to perform their duties. In this regard, it has been proposed to expand the EU delegation staff by the secondment of more Member states diplomats, particularly in the areas of security, and with Commission officials, particularly in specific areas of development aid interest such as energy, climate or even migration (Duke, Pomorska, & Vanhoonacker, 2012).

The HR/VP has also a key role to play in contributing to the creation of a truly EU diplomacy. In this regard, the HR/VP should reinforce its leadership in order to enhance its capacity of bringing more coherence into the EU external action. Thus, the HR/VP should closely work with the maximum of EU institutions' representatives that play a role in EU external action: the President of the Commission and the President of the European Council. The major power of the HR/VP is its influence and, therefore, its aim is to multiply it. The HR/VP has to develop a close relationship based on mutual trust with both the President of the Commission and the President of the European Council. Only in this case would the HR/VP enjoy a greater margin of maneuver in leading the EU external action. In successfully performing its job, the constant traveling that keeps the HR/VP outside Brussels is a major obstacle to ensuring his influence.

The way the post of HR/VP was designed would require him/her to stay in Brussels and to focus the attention on the issues of great relevance within the Council and within the Commission in order to have real influence in EU external action. At the same time that identifies where the power actually is (Lamoso González, 2019), without forgetting the

European Parliament.⁵⁸ Besides, another element that would clearly contribute to the empowerment of the HR/VP in ensuring a truly common EU diplomacy would be a restructuration of the Commission to hierarchically recognize a reinforced power to the HR/VP as its Vice-president (Molina & Simón, 2019).

Another critical element that needs to be strengthened is the EU intelligence analyses center (INTCEN), particularly when it comes to its tasks on counterintelligence and counter-terrorism. A proposal in this regard would be to make INTCEN the single point of contact at EU level in these areas. This means, to make INTCEN an intelligence agency, which gathers information from the Member states' intelligence communities and is able to provide independent analysis. In this regard, the terrorist attacks that have occurred all around the EU made the Commission to promote much more intelligence-sharing and cooperation both among EU institutions and the Member states (Nomikos, 2015). Notwithstanding, there still are trust deficits to overcome between Member states that come from different intelligence cultures embodied by the more prominent role of INTCEN. To place INTCEN within the EEAS would reinforce its role of coordinator of the different Member states' intelligence services, which would contribute to the denaturalization of the security agencies (Sellier, 2018, p. 144).

Notwithstanding, the EU needs to count with good quality intelligence information when having to respond to an international crisis. That is why INTCEN should be provided with the best quality of information from the Intelligence services of the Member states, being as well informed as the best informed of the Member states. To ensure the EU international crisis management efficiency there should be a smooth flow of information from the national intelligence services towards INTCEN. In order to overcome this mistrust scenario among EU Member states, it is important to underline that this intelligence information should only be gathered regarding international crisis and managed at EU level, it would never be distributed between the intelligence services of the Member states.

If Member states truly want to develop a common EU diplomacy, they should take a step further and go over and above this approach of the CFSP as a complement to their national foreign policies. In this regard, Member states have to go beyond the idea of complementarity in their relationship with the EEAS and consider looking for different

⁵⁸ Interviewee 5: EEAS Official.

channels of parallel functioning. Another key element in developing a truly EU diplomacy would consist in the EEAS and the HR/VP working on finding an area of expertise where they can be able to prove their ability and where they have the capacity to bring added value to the CFSP (Sus, 2016). Several elements might contribute to achieving this goal as, for instance, gradually changing the EEAS' organizational culture, even though this is a long-term goal.

One of the main tasks of the EEAS is to ensure a better coordination of the EU external action. In this regard, the hybrid composition of the EEAS staff could be perceived as an added value that contributes to better integrate the three main different groups of personnel: Commission, Council and Member states (Hillion, Blockmans, & Vimont, 2021). The continuous mobility of staff along with the introduction of a smarter recruitment together with collective training would very much contribute to enhance the coordination of the EU diplomacy.

It would be essential to work towards increasing the transparency and the effective coordination within the EEAS but also between the EEAS, the Member states and the different parts of the Commission dealing with external relations, both at higher and at the lower levels (Duke, Pomorska, & Vanhoonacker, 2012). On the other hand, seconding national diplomats for longer periods, or even permanently, within the EEAS raises the risk of tying too much the EEAS to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Member states. This forenamed situation is a constant concern for the smaller Member states who have not as much personnel and resources as the big ones, and therefore they would be in a weaker position (Hillion, Blockmans, & Vimont, 2021).

Another element that would help in fostering the cooperation between Member states and the EEAS would consist in ensuring a fairer geographical balance among Member states, big and small, in filling, in particular, the posts of heads of delegation, and more generally, across the entire EEAS. In addition, directly recruiting the heads of delegation from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Member states puts the delegations led by these diplomats at a disadvantage. This is mainly because these national diplomats lack the proper knowledge on how the EU works and, more importantly, they lack the network and the connection with Brussels both at the EEAS headquarters and within the Commission. Therefore, this results in a poor performance of their duties (Hillion, Blockmans, & Vimont, 2021, p. 14).

Last but not least, there is a clear consensus among scholars about the fact that common training at EU level is essential in order to further develop a *esprit de corps* among the EEAS staff and, therefore, to achieve a truly EU common diplomacy (Rayner (2005), Juncos & Pomorska (2006), Hartstein (2012), Duke (2012) & Gstöhl (2012)). Nevertheless, strengthening the *esprit de corps* within the EEAS requires much more effort than simply building an EU Diplomatic Academy. In short, it requires a better strategic direction in terms of providing a clear leadership to the EEAS staff. Therefore, it would be essential to provide a clear and continuous message about what policy to follow, to provide feedback on the different proposals and on the work done. In this regard, celebrating regular and structured meetings at management level with the HR/VP and his cabinet plus the Secretary General of the EEAS and senior managers would very much help in providing this sense of direction (Hillion, Blockmans, & Vimont, 2021, p. 10-11). One of the main challenges of the EEAS in this regard would be to engage with the European Parliament in a way that it is also able to provide strategic guidance regarding the cooperation programs of the EU external relations. This is because, after the Treaty of Lisbon came into force, the European Parliament is increasingly playing a much more relevant role in the EU external relations (Hillion, Blockmans, & Vimont, 2021, p. 14).

2. Fostering a EEAS's *esprit the corps* through a Diplomatic Academy

As it has been already pointed out, scholars agree that common training at EU level is a clearly effective tool in order to achieve a truly EU common diplomacy (Rayner (2005), Juncos & Pomorska (2006), Hartstein (2012), Duke (2012) & Gstöhl (2012)). Particularly, the main added value of this common training, besides the knowledge that they can get, is the socialization effects. Certainly, this common training would help in making the EU officials more sensitive towards the different Member states national interests and political issues. As Spence (2012) has highlighted, “intense training, accompanied by retreats and other devices can reverse signs of regression into competing mind-sets”.

On the other hand, common training would also contribute to reset Member states diplomats in order to make them think more in European terms and European interests

while at the same time, particularly concerning Member states diplomats working in the EEAS, get familiar with EU management practices (Duke, 2012). EEAS staff must be able to understand EU policies and positions and to effectively communicate and promote them abroad. It is important to bear in mind that promoting the development of common beliefs and values among Member states diplomats together with EU officials does not imply a transfer of loyalties or identities from the national to the EU level. (Juncos & Pomorska, 2013, p. 305)

With the aim of developing an EU common diplomatic *esprit de corps*, many academics, also following the requests presented by the EU Parliament, have suggested the creation of an EU Diplomatic Academy. This EU diplomatic academy would allow connecting EU officials with Member states' diplomats through a long period of time in order to provide them with the necessary skills to represent the EU abroad. In short, as Monar (2000) has underlined: "a physical academy, ideally located away from capitals to avoid distraction, would provide the necessary "innovative, coherent and intense training environment" (Leandro Monar, 2000).

Juncos & Pomorska (2013) also stress that common training would be essential in developing an *esprit de corps*. However, they highlight that for training to be effective in this socialization effect, it should be focused on the group rather than on the individual. Collective training together with the promotion of other elements such as leadership, communication, public image and mutual trust would be the perfect recipe for developing an *esprit de corps* within the EEAS.

Regarding leadership, it would be essential to provide the EEAS with a mission statement of some sort of strategic guidance. To improve the communication with the EEAS staff in terms of giving them information about what is going on and about the future steps of the EEAS would also be of major help. Moreover, having a good reputation in terms of public image also helps in order to develop some sort of pride among EEAS officials, contributing also to the development of an EU diplomatic *esprit de corps*. Finally, Juncos & Pomorska (2013) also stress that mutual trust is essential when building up an organization. In the specific case of the EEAS, this is a vulnerable point due to, and as mentioned earlier, the challenging nature of EEAS staff coming from different organizations and administrative cultures.

An EU diplomatic academy would help in developing a common diplomatic culture through common training. This would be endeavoured by combining lessons and best practices from national and European training institutions as well as by accommodating the demands of different target groups. As Duke (2012) has underlined, an EU diplomatic academy would contribute to facilitate the coordination between the different EU diplomatic actors, to introduce better quality control and, finally, to develop a more innovative and stronger focus on the European dimensions of diplomacy. In addition, Cross (2011) has also underlined that the creation of an EU diplomatic academy is necessary in order to maximize the cohesiveness and effectiveness of the new Foreign Service.

Duke (2012) has also emphasized that for an EU Diplomatic Academy to be effective, programs of various lengths should be provided. The basic idea would be a common introductory intensive course that should be followed by a tailor-made program regarding the EEAS staff background, experience and position. Flexibility in providing different training options would be very useful for EEAS officials as they could choose what training to follow in order to enhance their skills and competences depending on their experience and needs. This EU Diplomatic Academy should also offer seminars on horizontal topics that could bring together different target groups in order to better develop a truly EEAS *esprit de corps*.

In addition, training would be particularly useful if it is done at the beginning of the EU officials or Member states diplomats' careers and, notably, before they start working at the EEAS headquarters or in EU delegations. In addition, and besides some common courses, the training should be tailored to the specific demands of the individual, directly linked to the post that is going to be performed. Lehne (2011) underlines that "joining the EEAS requires significant adjustment. Some Commission officials used to implement technical programs find it difficult to get used to diplomatic work and the more political approach of the EEAS, just as some diplomat's experience difficulties coping with the technical and financial aspects of the work of EU delegations". In this regard, strengthening pre-posting training would be of major added value with regards to the Heads of delegation, particularly when they are a national diplomat.

Collective introductory training is essential in providing the EEAS staff with the necessary skills and, even more importantly, in building an EEAS *esprit de corps*.

This report very much stresses the socializations effects of training as they contribute to enrich the networks of the EEAS staff and to make Member states diplomats more sensitive to EU issues. At the same time, it provides a better common understanding among EEAS staff about what the common threats and interests are. Once again, the creation of an EU Diplomatic Academy would be of major help to achieve this purpose.

The idea of creating an EU Diplomatic Academy has been very much welcomed by the EU academic institutions. Fratini (2009) has stressed that the European Union Institute in Florence has already showed interest in being the headquarters of this EU diplomatic academy. Meanwhile, the European Parliament has also suggested the College of Europe (European Parliament, 2010).

3. Recommendations for further improvement

After having critically looked at the current institutional architecture of the EU external action and having done an overview about how the literature analyzed the EU diplomacy underlining the effectiveness of common training at EU level, as well as the benefits of the creation of an EU Diplomatic Academy in order to develop a truly EU *esprit the corps* within the EEAS, we conclude by pointing out different suggestions that would contribute to achieve a truly common diplomacy at EU level.

To begin with, it would be essential for the EEAS to work on providing itself with a sense of purpose, to reflect on what its mission is and to focus on its added value for both EU institutions and Member states.⁵⁹ As an official from the Commission underlines, EU institutions and bodies need to acknowledge that they were configured to serve a role. Member states would not renounce to develop their own foreign policy and diplomacy; they want to keep promoting their own interests. Nevertheless, Member states alone cannot have a real impact on the international scenario; they need to work together, under the framework of the EU. Therefore, in order to be successful in defending EU interests, it is crucial that all EU external action actors spread one and coordinated single message. It is not of the utmost necessity to have that only one person who speaks for the EU abroad, but what is essential is that all actors send the same message. The major added

⁵⁹ Interviewee 4: Former Council official & Interviewee 3: Commission official

value of the EEAS, where there is still room for improvement, would be to coordinate the EU external action and to make it more coherent.⁶⁰

In this regard, another element, which could be further improved, would be the promotion of the communication between the HR/VP and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the Member states, particularly the biggest ones. This because the biggest Member states will always want to play a role in the international scenario, to have their own visibility abroad. The biggest Member states have diplomatic services with similar resources as the EEAS. This is why it would be essential for the HR/VP to develop a particular close relationship with its Ministers in order to provide and exchange information as well as, and more importantly, to coordinate the different actions and messages spread abroad.⁶¹ The HR/VP is meant to play an essential role in coordinating the EU External Action.

Moreover, in order to increase its added value, the HR/VP should use the EEAS to provide more reports to the Foreign Affairs Council table. The HR/VP should be the one clearly leading the CFSP by promoting debates on the ongoing global issues and crisis and also by providing innovative proposals for action.⁶²

To clarify what its added value is, the HR/VP and the EEAS should embody the two political visions of the EU in order to work more as bridge builders between the Commission, the one which holds the competences of external relations and who administers the EU budget, and the Council, the one who holds the competence on CFSP. By promoting its own diplomatic blend is how the EU can be of added value for Member states to achieve their goals on the international scenario. The EU has to promote its own diplomatic tools for the principles and values that it has to defend and the interests that it wants to promote.⁶³

The HR/VP together with the EEAS should think more in terms of strategy. They have to reinforce their role of strategic planners of the EU External Action.⁶⁴ A clear advantage of the EEAS in this regard, in comparison with the Member states' diplomatic services, is the amount of resources that it enjoys. However, as a Commission official highlights, in order to make the most out of these resources it would be mandatory to empower the

⁶⁰ Interviewee 3: Commission official

⁶¹ Interviewee 6: Commission official 2

⁶² Interviewee 6: Commission official 2

⁶³ Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

⁶⁴ Interviewee 4: Former Council official

different heads of unit inside the EEAS to make people responsible of their work. Within the Commission, the heads of unit have much more power and responsibility than within the EEAS. EEAS officials should think and reflect more on the issues that they are working on in order to be able to provide real added value to the different reports that they send to the HR/VP. Particularly, over the ones that it will use for the betterment of the EU external action strategy and policies.⁶⁵ In the words of a Member state diplomat and former EEAS official, the goal of reinforcing the strategic perspective of the EEAS is not an easy task, it takes time, but the EEAS should pay more attention and put more effort on it.⁶⁶

As a former Council official stresses, in order to provide major added value to Member states and EU institutions, the EEAS should work on procuring excellent reporting, writing good briefs and helping the Commission and the Council with brilliant interventions. In addition, the EEAS should demonstrate to Member states that it is filled with good diplomats who are under the right leadership in order to work on fruitful results for the EU, but also with civil servants from the Commission and the Council who clearly understand how the EU works.⁶⁷

The HR/VP, together with the EEAS, has an enormous influence as permanent president of the Foreign Affairs Council, which also provides him/her with the power of developing an own agenda. However, as a Member state diplomat underlines, what Member states would like from the HR/VP is to not act like a 28th Member state, which I have already stressed is their perception, or to always listen to the biggest Member states. What they expect is the HR/VP to listen to every single Member state and afterwards try to develop a common and consensual position. The major added value of the HR/VP in this regard would be to promote its leadership in finding common agreements among the different Member states.⁶⁸

On the other hand, the HR/VP in its role of President of the political and security committee is the one in charge of preparing Summits with third countries. However, CFSP usually represents a fairly small percentage of the agenda, the rest are Commission competences: trade, internal market, digital, climate change... A former Council official

⁶⁵ Interviewee 6: Commission official 2

⁶⁶ Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

⁶⁷ Interviewee 4: Former Council official

⁶⁸ Interviewee 8: Member state diplomat

underlines that, contrary to this bottom-up procedure where the HR/VP is the one, together with the political and security committee, that designs the EU approach to a third country Summit, there should be a reconfiguration towards reinforcing a more top-down procedure. In this reconfigured procedure, both the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission, with the help of the High Representative, are the ones who give the mandate to the EEAS to operate.⁶⁹

Another great challenge for the EU in order to play a relevant role in the international scenario is the process of decision-making in CFSP, which remains unanimity. The reform of the CFSP decision-making process is an endless debate within the EU and both options, unanimity on one side, and qualified majority voting on the other, have their advantages and disadvantages. Besides, the main problem in this regard, as it has been already stressed, is the fact that the EU has become a very much cumbersome organization in the sense that it is wasting too much time in taking decisions. Member states cannot be set aside, but they should understand that they have the obligation to arrive to a conclusion. In words of a Member state diplomat and former EEAS official, they need to force themselves to come to an agreement as quickly as possible. Introducing more agility in taking decisions within the European Council is of absolute necessity.⁷⁰

It would also be particularly decisive for the EU to become geopolitically or strategically autonomous, as it needs to be able to swiftly respond to a given international crisis. This would not weaken but, contrarily, it would reinforce the multilateral approach of the EU to global politics. In this regard, the EU strategy should be towards engaging with third countries, particularly likeminded democracies, which would help the Union to fulfil its interests. To have the capacity to choose when and with whom to work with, depending on what our necessities are. This advantage is even more valuable in times of crisis. Notwithstanding, for this to happen we need to develop a strategic common culture through a truly EU common diplomacy. Only in this case would the EU be able to become a “shaping power”.

In any case, when the EU needs to respond to and manage an ongoing crisis there always is strong resistance from some Member states in getting the EU involved. That is why some voices start to claim that the best solution would be to go for some sort of CFSP at

⁶⁹ Interviewee 4: Former Council official

⁷⁰ Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

different speeds. In short, this consists of smaller groups of likeminded Member states working together in CFSP but always including the HR/VP, who would act as a bridge between them and the other Member states. Some sort of Iranian nuclear deal formula, the 5+1 Process, for example. Therefore, in order to overcome the difficulties derived from some Member states that try to prevent the EU from moving ahead, there should be a configuration of more flexible groups accepting to move forward. To introduce certain flexibility in CFSP while always giving the other Member states the possibility to come onboard.

Nevertheless, this multi-speed CFSP will only work if the High Representative, and maybe even sometimes the Commission or other groups like the military staff, are part of that small core group that will move ahead. The EU institutions would always need to be onboard as this would be the only way for the whole system to work and for this new process to move ahead.⁷¹ Notwithstanding, as a Member state diplomat highlights, some Member states are reticent to introduce this flexibility as they understand it would reinforce even more the leadership of the biggest member states, particularly France and Germany.⁷²

Another great challenge in reinforcing the EU external action and, particularly, its diplomacy, consists in achieving a truly *esprit de corps* within the EEAS. As a former Council official points out, one of the facts that is not helping in this regard is the continuous rotation of personnel, particularly among Member states diplomats.⁷³ This does not mean, as a Commission official stresses, that the rotation of Member states diplomats has to necessarily stop. This cross-fertilization process is quite positive. However, it is time to introduce the possibility of recruiting permanent EU diplomatic staff.⁷⁴

In addition to the diplomats that come from the Member states' diplomatic services and who after a certain amount of time have to go back to their national diplomatic services, it is time for the EU to count on permanent diplomatic staff. The EEAS should have the possibility of recruiting its own diplomatic staff or, at least, it should have the possibility of extending the period of time that these EU Member states diplomats spend within the

⁷¹ Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official & Interviewee 4: Former Council official

⁷² Interviewee 8: Member state diplomat

⁷³ Interviewee 4: Former Council official

⁷⁴ Interviewee 3: Commission official

EEAS for more than four, eight or exceptionally ten years. Particularly, as the Commission official stresses, the EEAS would very much benefit from recruiting diplomatic staff that already have specific skills in areas where the EEAS very much lacks expertise.⁷⁵ This is essential in achieving a truly EU common diplomacy and contributing to the EU development of its own diplomatic and foreign policy instruments. This is key for becoming a strategic autonomous actor on the international scenario.

On the other hand, in order to attract the best diplomats of the Member states' diplomatic services, once these Member states' diplomats come to the EEAS for a period of time they should have the opportunity to return this added value to their national diplomatic services. In words of a Member states' diplomat and former EEAS official as well as of an EU delegation official, the period that Member states' diplomats spend in the EEAS should have to be much better recognized at home. For instance, this would have a clear added value in order to help those national diplomats in progressing in their careers at national level. Only under these circumstances, would the best diplomats of the Member states go and spend some time in the EEAS. Another consequence would be that the best Member states' diplomats would be the ones filling the positions in the EEAS.⁷⁶ So far, the experience within the EEAS is much more valuable to the small Member states' diplomats as they do not have enough resources at home for improving their expertise. However, diplomats from both small and big Member states should be motivated to work in the EEAS, which is why, for this to happen, the EEAS experience has to be valued to a greater degree in their institutions of origin.⁷⁷

Member states should introduce in their Foreign Ministries the requirement that their national diplomats have to work in the EEAS headquarters for a period of time, preferably at the beginning of their diplomatic career. Therefore, these diplomats would be in a better position to understand how the EU system work. At the same time, it would contribute to create a better understanding and a closer connection between the different diplomatic services of the Member states and the EEAS. As a Commission official highlights, this period at the EEAS, at the beginning of the Member states diplomats' careers, will be understood as a learning process on EU issues, contributing to improve the skills of the

⁷⁵ Interviewee 3: Commission official

⁷⁶ Interviewee 2: EU Delegation official & Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

⁷⁷ Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

Member states' diplomats and forging a better understanding and a better coordination between the different national diplomatic services together with the EEAS.⁷⁸

Other weaknesses in terms of personnel, as stressed by a Member state diplomat, are that the EEAS should work for achieving a better gender balance at all levels within the EEAS. Currently women mainly fill basement positions. On the other hand, the EEAS also has to increase the number of Eastern and Central Member states' diplomats in management positions.⁷⁹ As an EEAS official stresses, the EEAS has recently launched the first call for specifically recruiting permanent EEAS officials.⁸⁰ However, what would be essential would be for the EEAS to count with its own permanent diplomatic staff.

Besides, it would also be very helpful in creating this *esprit de corps* to eliminate the requirement for the Member states' diplomats to go back to their national diplomatic services after a maximum of eight, exceptionally ten years. In the words of a Commission official, if the requirement regarding the diplomatic staff of the EEAS would be to make it more permanent, when it comes to the case of EU officials working in the EEAS, what would be very positive is to promote their mobility across institutions. Even though this might not contribute to deepen the EEAS *esprit de corps*, it would very much contribute to promote the coordinating role of the EEAS. It would also enhance the coordination between the different institutions through the EEAS and make it the center of coordination of the EU external action.⁸¹

As this Commission official underlines, fostering the EU official's mobility would also help in not preventing them from working in the EEAS for a period of time fearing that their career development would stop. In addition, it would be necessary to develop a system for career development for the EU officials within the EEAS, instead of having pretty much all management posts filled with national diplomats. Otherwise, EU officials would feel unmotivated, having a direct impact in the quality of their work.⁸²

As we have already underlined, currently, the military structures or INTCEN are not located in the EEAS but in a different building. Therefore, the division of the policy and the military side is even physical. Thus, another fact that would contribute very much to

⁷⁸ Interviewee 6: Commission official 2

⁷⁹ Interviewee 8: Member state diplomat

⁸⁰ Interviewee 1: EEAS official

⁸¹ Interviewee 3: Commission official

⁸² Interviewee 3: Commission official

promote an *esprit de corps* within the EEAS, as pointed out by a Commission official, would be to have everyone in the same building. Therefore, bringing all different branches together would not only help developing the *esprit de corps* but the internal coordination of the EEAS as well.⁸³

Nevertheless, the key element that scholars have particularly highlighted as essential in order to develop a truly *esprit de corps* within the EEAS is the setting up of an EU diplomatic academy. This diplomatic academy should provide training for EU officials and for Member states' diplomats, during which they would spend a period of time together, discussing with each other and forming this common *esprit*. In addition, it would be essential for this Diplomatic Academy to also incorporate Europeans with a completed higher education interested in becoming EU Diplomats. As a Commission official highlights, to spend a period of time together in addition to the training being undertaken would be very helpful in developing a common understanding and assessment of how we, as Europeans, see the world.⁸⁴

Besides, it should also provide Member states' diplomats and EU officials with training in management and politics. As a former Council official stresses, what the EEAS very much needs is staff who understands how the EU works and how the political dimension, diplomacy, works.⁸⁵ In words of a Member state diplomat and former EEAS official, Member states' diplomats would very much benefit from this training before they start working in the EEAS, whilst at the same time, this diplomatic academy would be of very much added value for EU officials in providing permanent training and also in developing a better political sense.⁸⁶ Notwithstanding, this diplomatic academy would also be of much added value for the diplomatic personnel directly recruited by the EEAS. Counting on directly recruited diplomatic staff would be essential in fulfilling a fair geographical and gender balance within the EEAS. Otherwise, the biggest Member states would always be overrepresented as they are the ones with more personnel and, therefore, they are in a better position to dispense part of it to work in the EEAS. As a result, they would fill the highest positions within the EEAS.

⁸³ Interviewee 3: Commission official

⁸⁴ Interviewee 3: Commission official

⁸⁵ Interviewee 4: Former Council official

⁸⁶ Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

Besides, this directly recruited diplomatic staff would not be that tied to the international interests of their Member states of origin and therefore this could help in avoiding Dutch diplomats to be mostly deployed in Indonesia, French diplomats in Africa or Spaniards in Latin America, for instance. In so doing, the EEAS should be able to directly recruit any young European who has just completed his/her higher education. Only in this case would the EU diplomatic staff would be free from National or EU institutional constraints. The recruitment of those diplomats could be done through the development of the current “quota” that the EEAS enjoys within EPSO.

As an EEAS official points out, the EEAS is already working on a pilot project in order to set up an EU Diplomatic Academy. The Pilot project is an initiative from the Member of the European Parliament, Nacho Sánchez Amor, and it has been in implementation by the EEAS since January 2022. This EEAS official also stresses that both the EEAS Secretary General and the HR/VP are very supportive of this idea.⁸⁷ In short, two diplomats from each Member state, one man and one woman, plus officials from the EU institutions will spend one year training together. The idea would be that they could even live together, in the same building, so that they could spend as much time as possible together in order to get to know each other. In the meantime, they would be learning about EU priorities and policies in order to build a strong network.⁸⁸

This EEAS official added that after this period at the EU diplomatic academy they should also work within the EEAS for 3 months. Right after this idea was launched, many academic institutions showed interest in doing this training, for instance: the European Union Institute in Florence (Italy), the College of Europe (Bruges/Natolin), the European Institute of Public Administration (Maastricht), and Sciences Po (Paris/Strasbourg) or the IE School of Global and Public Affairs (Madrid). In this regard, it would be very valuable for the future EEAS staff’s traineeship to have these prestigious institutions work together to provide the best academic program possible.

This EEAS official also stressed that the purpose behind providing this training to Member states’ diplomats is to make them constantly move between Member states’ diplomatic services and the EEAS. In other words, to make them part of an, already mentioned, integrated diplomacy where the staff is constantly going from one service to

⁸⁷ Interviewee 5: EEAS official 2

⁸⁸ Interviewee 5: EEAS official 2

the other during their entire career. This EU diplomatic academy should provide training to the EEAS staff at all different stages in their career.⁸⁹ As a result, this would forge some sort of EU diplomacy where the national foreign services together with the EEAS are different instruments to achieve a common EU goal. The mobility of Member states' diplomats between EU capitals should also be encouraged in order to further a better common understanding among them.

The training that is currently provided in the EEAS is mainly online (because of the pandemic but not only). In words of an EEAS official, online training is not that helpful in developing an *esprit de corps*, although it is contributing to bringing EU delegations and the headquarters in Brussels closer to each other.⁹⁰ As an EEAS official stressed, online training also has advantages, as it can be more accessible and easier to follow by colleagues as they can do it whenever they have the time. Besides, staff from EU delegations could enjoy much more trainings since the EEAS did not have to pay a mission in order to bring them back to headquarters. Nevertheless, as this EEAS official points out, there is no doubt that in person trainings have many more advantages. Therefore, the purpose is to reintroduce them as soon as possible.⁹¹ EEAS staff needs to have the chance to spend time together, talking to each other and forging a common understanding. Only under these circumstances would they be able to develop a truly *esprit de corps*.⁹²

If Member states were to lay emphasis on one added value from the reform of the institutional architecture of the EU external action brought about by the Lisbon Treaty, they would certainly stress the EU delegations abroad. However, there is still margin of maneuver to improve their efficiency. For instance, the information exchange between them and headquarters in Brussels. It would be essential for EU delegations to clearly understand the bigger picture, what the EU external action strategic direction is. In this regard, enhancing the exchanges of information, getting the updates and the briefings of the meetings that their staff is unable to attend, being part of the strategical organizations... all in all, creating close links between the EU delegations and Brussels.⁹³ Besides, as an EU delegation official underlines, when it comes to the developing

⁸⁹ Interviewee 5: EEAS official 2

⁹⁰ Interviewee 1: EEAS official

⁹¹ Interviewee 5: EEAS official 2

⁹² Interviewee 1: EEAS official

⁹³ Interviewee 2: EU Delegation official

countries, the power of the EU mainly relies on the money that it spends there. It is critical that the Commission has its policies closely designed with the EEAS. Therefore, it is not only about the connection between delegations and the EEAS but also between the Commission and the EEAS when it comes to external relations⁹⁴ and the connection between the Council and the EEAS when it comes to CFSP.

EU delegations function as a small representation of the EU administration in a third country. The staff of an EU delegation is composed by EEAS officials and by Commission officials who work for the different DGs dealing with development policy, for instance: DG Trade, DG Connect, DG INPA, DG NEAR... and who have some sort of independent position within the delegation; even though they respond to the Head of the delegation. Notwithstanding, as an EU delegation official stresses, this is not the case in every single delegation. This is because the EU institutional architecture's design leads to a situation where the ambassador does decide about the promotion of the EEAS officials but he does not decide about the promotion of the Commission officials. Regarding the promotion of the latter, it is up to the Commission to decide. Commission officials even have an extra budget for their travelling. Future forms should look at this institutional design since it is not helpful in encouraging the EU delegation staff to put their full energy in performing the best job possible under the leadership of the Head of Delegation.⁹⁵

Another element that would positively contribute to the influence that the EU has abroad, and which is linked to the EU delegations in third countries, is to further develop an EU cultural diplomacy.

Culture is a decisive instrument in soft power. Therefore, to develop a network of "EU cultural embassies" around the world in order to promote the EU way of life through supporting artistic projects would very much contribute to its positive image development worldwide. In so doing, the EU must go beyond the current intergovernmental cultural cooperation between Member states through the European Union Nationals Institutes for Culture (EUNIC). The EU needs to develop and promote its own instruments of cultural diplomacy.

⁹⁴ Interviewee 2: EU Delegation official

⁹⁵ Interviewee 2: EU Delegation official

Finally, as a Member state's diplomat and former EEAS official stresses, the EU should work towards a more enhanced INTCEN inside the EEAS. Here again, one of the options would be to go for a flexible approach, promoting further action among the Member states that want to cooperate and always leaving the door open for the others to come on board, in case they want to.⁹⁶ However, as in the case of crisis management, this could be poorly welcomed from the 27 Member states, as they would be suspicious of the biggest ones. For Member states to agree on further developing an EU intelligence service, as stressed by a former Council official, it should prove them that it can bring an added value. In short, that it can generate innovative ideas and provide good analysis.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, for this to happen it would be essential to develop a mechanism that eases the flow of information - on foreign and security issues taking place outside the European Union - from the intelligence services of the Member states to the INTCEN. In short, INTCEN should count on the best knowledge of facts possible, as it must be as well informed as the best informed of the Member states, particularly in times of international crisis.

Finally yet importantly, in the words of a Member state's diplomat, where INTCEN can truly provide an added value to the Member states is in developing and reinforcing the EU counterintelligence capabilities. In other words, providing Member states with this counterintelligence service at EU level. To sum things up, to be able to detect the presence and interferences of, for instance, Russia or China.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Interviewee 7: Member state diplomat and former EEAS official

⁹⁷ Interviewee 4: Former Council official

⁹⁸ Interviewee 8: Member state diplomat

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