Europeanizing European foreign policies by forging European diplomats?

The European External Action Service (EEAS) beyond the institutional question: The human resources challenge to the Europeanization of foreign, security and defence policy

WORKING PAPER BY BASTIEN NIVET / ASSOCIATE RESEARCH FELLOW, IRIS

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ABSTRACT:

Most of the literature on the new European External Action Service (EEAS) of the European Union (EU) concentrates on its institutional and legal basis. This contribution aims at going beyond this institutional debate, by analysing how the composition of the EEAS in terms of human resources – people nominated, recruitment policy, positions and strategies of the EU institutions and member states – may help understand the expectations and the potential impact of the EEAS on the Europeanization of European diplomatic cultures, instruments and actors. Our ultimate ambition is to contribute to the study of the role of individuals and recruitment in the process of Europeanization of European foreign, security and defence policies.

KEYWORDS:

Common foreign and security policy (CFSP), Common security and defence policy (CSDP), European external action service (EEAS), Europeanization, European Union (EU)
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INTRODUCTION

Searching for rational and theoretical interpretations of the “literature frenzy” surrounding any European institutional reform or innovation would be a very interesting subject in itself. The creation of the European External Actions Service (EEAS), and the flourishing amount of analysis it has inspired before, during and since its conception as a new European Union (EU) structure is no exception. Long before the final decision was reached by the Council of the European Union to create this service², tens of seminars had been organised, tens of working papers or policy notes published. These usually revealed a high level of expectations towards this institutional adaptation of the EU’s existing bureaucratic structures and instruments of external action. It is hoped, among others, that the EEAS will help bringing together instruments from various institutional backgrounds and thus partly resolve an obsolete division between the Community and intergovernmental dimensions of the EU’s external relations, making these more efficient, coherent and visible.

While these expectations point towards the ultimate question of the identity of the European Union in international relations, most of this budding literature on the subject concentrates on the institutional and legal basis of the new service. The hope that the pre-building of an institutional and legal basis for cooperation in the field of foreign and security policy can be the prerequisite for a future common foreign policy to emerge is not new and is somehow at the very basis of the Common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and Common security and defence policy (CSDP)³ themselves. This strategy may prove right in the end, since any attempt to secure agreement on a grand strategy for the EU’s foreign, security and defence policy before deciding on the appropriate tools required to implement it would only ensure that neither the first nor the latter ever come to existence.

Limiting the question of identity to institutional and legal adaptations is nevertheless very restricting. It omits in particular that, if institutions matter, the people working within them matter too.

The composition of the Service in terms of human resources might say a lot on the expectations of EU institutions and member states towards the EEAS, and the chances for this new institution to achieve these expectations. The Europeanization of European diplomacies and diplomatic cultures, understood both as the capacity of European co-operations to facilitate the emergence of common norms, values or policies (Smith, 1996), if not changes of attitudes and preferences in member states (Tonra, 2001), and as the impact of European realities on national actors of foreign security and defence policies (Smith, 2000 and for a different point of view Güssgen, 2002), will also depend on the Europeanization of European diplomats.

This paper therefore aims at studying how the composition of the new service in terms of human resources – people nominated by member states, recruitment policy, positions and strategies of the

¹ This paper is based on a communication presented at the 12th biennial congress of the European Union Studies Association (EUSA), held in Boston on 3-5 March 2011 (to view the different conference papers, see : http://eue.org/eusa/2011/browse.php?sort=author).
² On 20th July 2010.
³ For practical reasons, the acronym CSDP in use since the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty will be used even when referring to institutions, events or actors operating before, when the acronym ESDP (European security and defence policy) was being used.
EU institutions and member states on the subject – may help understand the expectations and the potential impact of the EEAS on the Europeanization of European diplomacies and diplomats.

After clarifying the different approaches that have been used or may be used for the study of the EEAS, this paper turns to question the capacity of the ongoing institutional process to square the circle between its diplomatic ambitions, institutional arrangements and human resources imperatives and rules. Identifying potential contradictions in that respect, our paper tests the possibility of an “identity-driven” human construction of the EEAS, and finally builds upon a national test case – France – to question the previous hypothesis.

THE EEAS: AN INSTITUTIONAL, DIPLOMATIC, OR SOCIO-POLITICAL OBJECT?

Most of the literature on the EEAS published before or during its setting up, has consisted in applying pre-existing analytical tools and approaches to the institution. This provides opportunities to rethink previous commonly admitted analysis of the EU’S CFSP and CSDP in the light of the innovations of the EEAS, but may not fully explore the analytical potential offered by the new service.

The EEAS, an institutional object?

The inter-pillars question, and beyond it the question of inter-institutional coherence and cohesion, which had already served for years as a ready to use analytical tool to study some limits of the EU’s external role, has found a providential subject to rebound with the creation of the EEAS. Explaining the perceived lack of coherence and cohesion of the EU’s external action by the splitting of EU instruments into several institutions – the so called inter-pillars debate – had become a common and easy analytical tool. Although the Treaty of Lisbon has officially suppressed the pillars structure of the EU and the various EU institutions in charge of its external relations are allegedly brought together within a common service, this inter-pillars focus is still being mobilised. Some indeed see the EEAS as an opportunity to “break the pillars”, while some study the laborious negotiations precluding to its institutionalisation as confirming the permanent rivalry and balance of power hesitations among EU institutions. These analysis, looking at the EEAS through a legal and institutional lens, are of great help to understand some intra-EU challenges at stake. Looking primarily at the EEAS as an interacting point between the various Brussels institutions and between these and national institutions, they may be useful in studying their adaptations as far as issues of budget, responsibility, legal accountability, are concerned. They usually fail, however, to pose a critical look on the diplomatic and human dimension of the ongoing process.

The EEAS: a diplomatic object?

Beyond the inter-pillars question, debates on the future coherence and cohesion of the EU’s external action have also focused on the challenge of bringing together different levels or fields of intervention.

Debates on civil-military relations and the possibility to build a comprehensive approach to issues such as conflict management also found a new ground for debate, some seeing the emergence of the EEAS as a new demonstration of the EU’s claimed specificity to be an actor capable of bringing together a large palette of foreign intervention instruments.

Debates on the Europeanization of foreign and defence policy also found a new opportunity to develop, with those believing in the Europeanizing power of institutions insisting on the added value the EEAS might bring in forging a common culture and common reflexes on foreign policy among

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(4) The early stage of the ongoing recruitment process of course imposes limits on the empirical data yet available. This contribution therefore aims at presenting the agenda of a research that will be ongoing until the EEAS has reached full potential.

(5) The purpose of this research is to become also comparative, bringing into the picture other member states so as to be able to draw a comparative analysis.
member states.

These last two trends of debates have in common their tendency to look at the EEAS as a more diplomatic object, as a step towards the emergence of a common diplomatic ambition and culture thanks to the existence of an institution representing the European external, foreign, security and defence community at large. They usually fail to question how this will be done, and how and why, for instance, the usefulness of the EEAS should be higher than that of previous institutional innovations such as the creation of a High representative for the CFSP or the creation of a Policy Unit within the Council of the EU.

**The EEAS from below: a socio-political object?**

The main weakness of both institutional and diplomatic approaches lies in their tendency to study the EEAS *sui generis* machinery operating in a sort of diplomatic vacuum.

A third way to look at the EEAS, much less developed for objective and methodological reasons, is to look at it as a socio-political object. Without overlooking the previously mentioned approaches, this implies to double these top down approaches by a more bottom up look, consisting in looking not so much at how institutional arrangements will create a European diplomacy or European diplomats, but rather how diplomats and non-diplomats from EU institutions and member states are brought together to fulfil this institutional arrangements and its ambitions. As far as empirical data is concerned, the early stage of the selection and recruitment procedure for the EEAS of course means that complete data collection and part of the potential empirical research implied by this agenda is not yet available or possible. Yet, official documents and the first results of an ongoing interviews campaign already provide a useful preliminary material.

As far as the theoretical and analytical framework is concerned, study “live” the creation of an institution such as the EEAS might provide new insights for previous analytical tools and hypothesis on the similar bottom-up, sociological approached the EU institutions, policies and bureaucracies. While limited in volume and visibility, previous research on who the actors of the CFSP and CSDP are and how they network (Maulny and Nivet, 2008), on the personal composing EU institutions on theses matters (Mérand 2008/a and Mérand 2008/b), or on broader debates on the sociologic-institutional nature of the EU (Mérand and Jenson, 2010, Favell 2007, Favell and Guiraudon 2010, Saurugger 2008) already constitute a relatively solid corpus on which to build upon.

They have already showed in particular that going beyond the diplomatic or institutional readings of the EU could be very promising for understanding the EU policies and polity, and thus provide incentive for the study of the EEAS through the innovative lens of its human resources challenges.

**FORGING A COHERENT EUROPEAN DIPLOMACY, CREATING AN EFFICIENT INSTITUTIONAL TOOL AND RECRUITING THE BEST EUROPEAN DIPLOMATS: CAN THE CIRCLE BE SQUARED?**

Debates on the conditions of emergence of a more coherent and efficient European foreign policy have often turned into a debate on the chicken and egg causality dilemma. While the existence of a minimum set of common views, ideas and interests are considered as the political basis that can lead to the creation of common institutions or policies responsible for implementing them, it is also true that the existence of common arenas for discussion, negotiation, decision-making and external representation might help the emergence of this common “identity” on foreign policy. Positive and negative

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(6) Interview of personal sent to the EEAS by member states, study of their professional and academic background, analysis of their personal and professional networking trends and habits, etc.
perceptions on the usefulness of the EEAS in forging a more coherent EU foreign policy largely depend on pre-established individual postures regarding this causality dilemma: those believing in the identity forging power of institutions have a positive view of the EEAS potential, while those looking for a pre-existing European political coherence dismiss it.

**An official acknowledgement of the Diplomatic-Institutional-Human complex**

Beyond these traditional debates lie possible contradictions between the diplomatic ambitions of the structure (a coherent European diplomacy), its institutional vocation and construction (being an efficient institutional tool at the service of the High representative for CFSP), and its human resources imperatives (recruiting good diplomats at the appropriate functions).

The conditions of institutionalisation of the EEAS and the compromise reached in July 2010 are fully representative of this. The diplomatic ambitions set up in the treaty of Lisbon were indeed to help forge a more coherent and efficient European diplomacy, and its ambitions within the broader spectrum of EU instruments and actors are in turn to grant the EU with such an appropriate institution to fulfil this ambition: “The EEAS shall support the High Representative in his mandate to conduct the Common Foreign and Security Policy (“CFSP”) of the European Union, including the Common Security and Defence Policy (“CSDP”), to contribute by his proposals to the development of that policy, which he shall carry out as mandated by the Council and to ensure the consistency of the Union’s external action; (...) in coordinating other aspects of the Union’s external action(...)”. Beyond this diplomatic-institutional prospect, the decision to create the EEAS also specifies of course that, regarding the recruitment, “(...) decision will be based on merit (...)”.

And the main actors concerned have pointed since that “(...) this combination of staff and sources will be more than the sum of its parts: we will be able to find synergies and develop new ideas, which will enhance our ability to act more actively and decisively in an increasingly challenging world”.

The circle is therefore allegedly squared, the EEAS answering a diplomatic ambition with an imaginative institutional machinery filled with talented and appropriate people to make it turn.

Enthusiastic and optimistic analysts point to this threefold advantage of the EEAS to give the impression that the long effort to solve the diplomatic-institutional-human dilemma of European diplomacy is finally going to bear fruits. Beyond the Brussels based bureaucracy, the long awaited granting of the EU’s external representations abroad with competencies in the field of CFSP and CSDP is probably one of the most concrete advantages the EEAS might indeed bring in this respect. Interviewed on the laborious attempts of the EC to deal with foreign and security issues without having the right and competences to do so at this stage, a member of an EC Delegation abroad for instance recently acknowledged that “When the new external action service is there, things should be easier. I hope that by bringing the expertise of people working on the security and military side of affairs it will be very, very helpful. Currently, no one is really responsible for security issues; we should have such a post at some point. As a Commission staff, I should not even be talking to you about that”.

This kind of optimism has left ground to more nuanced analysis once the concrete negotiations and discussions on the recruitment and organisation of the EEAS have started.

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(10) Interview with a member of the Delegation of the EC in Gaborone (Botswana) on 25th November 2010.
From intentions to practice: back to business as usual?

The perspective of nationals being sent by the capital cities of member states to represent one third of the EEAS staff by 2013 has in particular spread fears of some kind of “catapulting” of nationals with no specific competences or European credentials into the Brussels based directorates of the EEAS or foreign representations of the EU abroad.

Conscious of these fears, EU officials have since deployed much energy in arguing that the candidates sent by member states would have to pass some kind of screening and complete recruitment procedure so as to guarantee that they actually are the right persons at the right posts and might therefore constitute a good first generation of “eurodipomats”\(^{11}\). Maros Sefcovic, the Commissioner responsible for inter-institutional relations and administration pleaded for instance that “I’m sure that the best practices that we have in the Commission, and what we do for all EU institutions, will also be applied to the External Action Service, where we really need to screen the qualities of the people and check whether they are up to the job (...). Cathy is repeating everywhere that she wants to have the best and the brightest in the External Action Service, so of course they’re going to have to pass the recruitment procedure”\(^{12}\).

These reassurances have not managed to silent criticisms and doubts on the meritocratic nature of recruitment within the EEAS. Classic European debates concerning the balance of power between various EU institutions and member states have for instance resurfaced.

The multi-centric nature of the EEAS: solving the inter-institutional power debate or bringing it in?

They first of all point to a “multi-centric” game, whereas several centres of power or sources of institutional legitimacy interact within or in connection with the EEAS. This institution is supposed to be composed of personal from EU institutions and member states: “The EEAS shall comprise officials and other servants of the European Union, including personnel from the diplomatic services of the Member States appointed as temporary agents”\(^{13}\).

These debates on the conditions of creation of the EEAS shed a new light on what is currently and, to our opinion, somehow hastily called the Europeanization of foreign, security, and defence policies in Europe. They illustrate the permanence of power and identity challenges that determine in the end the content and form of the policies and actions qualified as “European”.

The multinational game: quantitative and qualitative national investments of a Europeanizing instrument

Beyond these inter-institutional discussions, debates raging on the composition, recruitment and bureaucratic structure of the EEAS since the appointment of Lady Catherine Ashton give a clear indicator of the intensity of the multinational game

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\(^{11}\) In practice, recruiting panels have been set up, which include members of the European Commission and personals from some member states.


taking place. These had been foreseen by the negotiators, who had agreed that “Recruitment should be based on merit whilst ensuring adequate geographical and gender balance. The staff of the EEAS should comprise a meaningful presence of nationals from all the Member States. The review foreseen for 2013 should also cover this issue, including, as appropriate, suggestions for additional specific measures to correct possible imbalances”15.

In a classic European squabble on who gets the most and the best positions, most of the debates on the composition of the EEAS has since focused on the representative nature or not of its ongoing recruitment. The possibility to rely on a system of quotas per country, promoted by some member states, has been rejected, in the name of a merit-based approach and in promise that the recruitment will “look for as wide a geographical balance as possible”16. The refusal to use national quotas and the verbal and written promise17 to strike a geographically representative recruitment has not silenced the debates on the national origins of individuals being sent to compose the EEAS. These debates mainly oppose those who consider that their country or group of country is under-represented, and those who consider that this is not true, pointing to a rather appropriate balance among member states or to the fact that personal are not recruited according to their nationality but to other, more rational criteria such as competencies or experiences. In strictly quantitative terms, it has for instance been written that the most recent member states of the EU (having joined since 2004) are under-represented18 or over-represented, or that the Northern countries of the EU (UK, Ireland, Scandinavia) were over-represented. The contradictions between these assessments should be enough to nuance their pertinence for the evaluation of the potential respective influence of member states within the EEAS.

Questioned on these facts, some observers or officials answer that the composition of the EEAS should not be considered in strictly quantitative terms. As a French official explains, “we have a more global approach than a purely quantitative one limited to see how many nationals we manage to send into the EEAS. We have an inter-institutional approach (…), we are trying to identify interesting positions”19. Level and types of positions held, are in that respect most of the time mentioned as another criteria to evaluate the national presence and influence in the EEAS, with then again tense debates raging on the alleged winners and losers of the ongoing recruitment process. Others go further, arguing that the question lies not so much on how many nationals will represent their country and at what hierarchical level, but on what they will have to say, if anything.

Last but not least, the number and quality of nationals sent to the EEAS might also be decisive in ensuring the respect and influence of the EEAS on national bureaucracies. To some, if “the national diplomacies must have a strong feeling of cooperation, coordination and synergy creation in the External Action Service”, this “need the capitals to have a very solid feeling of fair treatment regarding the composition of the External Action Service, because what we’d like to see in the future is that European delegations are on the best possible terms with the embassies of the member states (…). We want to do things together and speak with one voice, with a strong synergy and a good working relationship going on. For that, you need to have the feeling in national foreign ministries that the process is transparent and fair, and that member states are fairly represented”20. In other words, the EEAS will be entrusted and entitled to play its role by member states only if the latter appropriate the

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17 As enshrined in the above quoted Council decision regarding the creation of the EEAS.
19 Interview with a French official on 25th February 2011.
service themselves, and the satisfaction of member states and national administrations’ demands are “very important if one wants to insufflate a common diplomatic culture to countries of great diplomatic traditions, to more modest countries and to personal emanating from the Commission (...)”21. This conditional support and identification towards the new European institution interestingly signals that an institution must pass the test of appropriation and ownership by member states and other EU institutions before it can pretend to become a tool of Europeanization. This highlights a link between the “power” challenges and analysis of the composition of the EEAS and those based on “identity construction”, indicating that Europeanization, largely perceived as the influence of Brussels-forged norms, values and policies, is itself preceded by a complex multidimensional22 investment and appropriation of the Brussels structures and networks then supposed to act as europeanizers.

**Multinational investment of the EEAS vs Europeanization of national diplomacies?**

There is indeed much more to the multinational and international games taking place than just a number of posts to be held. The role of individuals as identity promoters (from the national to the European level) identity builders (at the European level) and identity diffusers (from the European level to the capital cities or third actors) in the future of EU’s external action and identity must be raised.

Nationals integrated in the EU system obviously are at the forefront of the interaction between the national and the European spheres. There are however several strategies available for the national administrations of member states in managing this human dimension of Europeanization. The integration of the stay in the EEAS as a very temporary part of the career23, or on the contrary the long term commitment of a limited number of personal to the service24 could lead to different scenarios of Europeanization of European diplomacies. While it might be envisaged that nationals returning to their national administration after a stay in the EEAS might help Europeanise their mother administration, this in-and-out career functioning could also limit the Europeanization of these officials by meaning that they remain devoted primarily to their administration of origin and not to an institution they have simply been detached or seconded to25. Conversely, nationals spending much time or indeed most of their career in the EU system, might gain a better understanding of EU affairs and develop strong international and European networks, but see their allegiance to their mother administration and their networks and influence at home being eroded.

These conflicting human resources strategies, as well as the previously mentioned multi-centric and multi-national games, indicate that the EEAS may at least for some years be composed of personal acting upon a “you and I” feeling, rather than under a “we” feeling. Members of the EEAS may for some years not quite be a first generation of supranational diplomats (Cross, 2011), but be better defined, for the time being, as transgovernmental diplomats. In that respect, the added value of the EEAS in comparison with pre-existing, non-institutionalised forms of coherence and cohesion building in the elaborating the CFSP and CSDP remains to be seen. Concepts and ideas such as a Jolyon Howorth’s supranational intergovernmentalism (Howorth, 2000) or David Allen and Simon Nuttall’s brusselisation (Allen 1998 and Nuttal 2000), that have already highlighted various possibilities, forms and conditions of interaction and consensus building among a various set of actors from various institutional or national background (Mérand, Hofman and Irondelle, 2010), could be useful in studying…

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(21) Audition of Pierre Lellouche, op. cit.
(22) i.e.: pluri-institutional and multi-national.
(23) So as to allow the sending of a high number of nationals in the European structures through a turnover approach.
(24) An approach that may impede a large distribution of European experience among national diplomats due to the limited turnover.
(25) Current status provides for nationals to be recruited for fixed terms of four years, with the possibility for member states to also send national detached experts (NDA) that remain attached and paid by their national administration.
this added value of the EEAS in the coming years. Relatively little research has been undertaken so far on the level of Europeanization of diplomats or military having worked within the permanent structures of the Council of the EU in charge of the CFSP/CSDP in Brussels on such issues of identity building and “we feeling” among them. Knowing if these personal of the Policy Unit or DG E of the Council, now that they have been absorbed into the broader scheme of the EEAS, feel EU diplomats (“we”) or national diplomats operating in Brussels (“you and I”) could provide a useful comparative basis for current and future studies on the role of the EEAS as an identity forger through individuals.

Studying in a comprehensive way – i.e. in the twenty-seven member states – this phenomenon remains difficult. It might however prove useful to start with studying how one or a selected number of countries approach this human resources challenge of the EEAS and what this may tell us on the future Europeanization of foreign, security and defence policy in Europe.

The nomination of the highly regarded diplomat Pierre Vimont as “number two” of Lady Ashton at the head of the EEAS had been celebrated in France as a proof of Paris’s present and future influence within the structures of EU foreign policy. Months later, revelations on the composition and appointments at the lower stratum of the hierarchy, in an article published by French Journalist Jean Quatremer on his well-informed and largely read blog “Les coulisses de Bruxelles” provoked an intense debate on an alleged domination of the structure by the British and a perceived under-representation of France.

Both events revealed the attachment of Paris for top jobs in the hierarchy of international organisations and institutions it is part of. They also revealed a classical French self-flagellation on issues such as national decline and loss of influence. Surprisingly enough, little has been said, written or researched in the meantime on who were going to be the tens of French civil servants joining the EEAS, as if the attribution (or not) of the top positions was enough to secure (or lose) the battle of national influence in the European structure. The issue of qualitative (i.e. influence producing) versus quantitative (presence producing) presence within the EU and CFSP/CSDP structures had nevertheless al-


(27) This contribution is part of a broader ongoing research intending to provide a comparative analysis of the issues covered here in several member states.

(28) Pierre Vimont’s official function is that of Executive secretary general of the EEAS.


(30) Which could be translated by “Backstage Brussels”. This blog may be consulted on: http://bruxelles.blogs.liberation.fr/coulisses/

(31) With a French (Dominique Strauss-Kahn) at the head of the IMF, another one (Pascal Lamy) at the head of the WTO, and, more related to our subject, a French diplomat (Claude-France Arnoult) at the head of the European Defence Agency.
ready been a well developed research and political object over the past few years. Studies usually insisted on the need for France to adapt a more qualititative approach and place less emphasis on top jobs and more on mid-level yet influential positions (Maulny and Nivet, 2008, Charillon and Ramel, 2010), not least in view of a necessary rebalancing towards the new member states. An assessment largely shared among academics and practitioners, but that is yet to be turned into practice by national leaders.

**An outdated intergovernmental vision of CFSP and CSDP institutions?**

Paris is not the only capital attaching importance to the holding of top level positions within EU structures by nationals. This largely shared trend says a lot on the political perception of the structures. It corresponds to a *top down* vision of identity construction and power games within the structure, whereas the forging of common visions is presumed to be imposed by the high level of the hierarchy (Secretary general of the EEAS and her Executive and Deputy secretary general, Head of Directorates and Delegations, etc.) and not the result of a constructivist and socializing process among agents at the lower level of the structure. A vision that was already visible in the institutional scheme suggested by Paris while the overall design of the EEAS was still being discussed in the months following Lady Ashton’s appointment. A very intergovernmental vision in nature and spirit that has received much critics, and may not take into account the new realities of the CFSP /CSDP as a complex policy making system with branches in Brussels, the capital cities and third countries. While being far from a “community like” supranational polity, the CFSP/CSDP has already become in recent years much more than a strictly intergovernmental one. Thanks to the daily work, practice and networking habits of its agents, the CFSP and CSDP form a much more complex trans-European policy system (Nivet, 2009), much more Brussels based, open and fluid than its intergovernmental legal basis could have pre-determined it to be.

The traditional intergovernmental approach to posts within CFSP and CSDP institutions therefore ignores the possibility for the EEAS to produce similar effects to those produced by the pre-existing institutions of CFSP and CSDP such as the Policy Unit and the relevant Directorates of the permanent structures of the Council of the EU. These have already proved that ideas, interests and principles were not only circulating in a Capital city-Brussels way (in a multi-nationalisation process preceding Europeanization), but also on a Brussels-Brussels way and in a Brussels-Paris way (through a classical Europeanization process), actors of the CFSP and CSDP in Paris being connected and influenced through their daily contact with their Brussels colleagues and interlocutors, be they fellow-nationals or not.

This European way of diplomacy making is starting to be taken into account in the broader detection and selection strategy of would be French EEAS members.

**Sending the bests... in the dark**

Due to the delay in the recruitment process, it is not yet possible to gather massive empirical data, evidence and account of personals sent or proposed to the EEAS by member states. At the level of diplomats, one of them recently admitted “I do not know of any colleague about to leave to the EEAS. Maybe everyone remains discreet as long as no affectations have been confirmed”. At the level of

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(32) The proposal made by Lady Ashton on 25th March 2010, structuring the EEAS around its Head (Lady Ashton), a Secretary General with broad transversal competencies, and two deputy secretary general, was perceived by some, not least in the European Parliament, as an institutional organisation locking the entire EEAS structure under the control of the member states.

(33) See for instance the statement issued by the leaders of the four main political groups of the European parliament on 25th March 2010, reading among other that “The proposed structure with an omnipotent secretary-general and deputy secretary-general does not provide the politically legitimised deputies that the High Rep needs in order to do her job properly”.


people in charge of the recruitment procedure, a certain feeling of uncertainty remains too.

To the discharge of the French authorities, the recruitment process has raised questions in other countries, and remains confused and confusing. As a diplomat involved in the selection process of would-be French EEAS members puts its, “We are being very pragmatic. Since there is a selection process that is very strict and serious on paper, we are trying to identify candidates that stand the best chances to pass all the steps and requirements of the EEAS successfully (...). We are adapting our strategy in view of the feedback we get from the EEAS. The latter’s panels have criteria that are being imposed on us, that are sometimes shifting and uneasy to grasp...” This pretention to play the game fairly and make the effort to propose highly skilled and patiently selected personals for the new institution is not just declaratory. In their will to see interesting posts occupied by nationals, member states are actually suggesting high level people for the top jobs and proceeding to serious detection and selection procedures for mid-level functions. While this may be just a normal and traditional habit of giving credential to EU institutions in some member states, this is somewhat a revolution in France where a stay in Brussels was sometimes more an obstacle and a punishment than an advantage or a promotion for those diplomats or military working on foreign and security issues in the past. And the will of those in charge of the process to be able to proceed to a serious selection of would-be French candidates may be satisfied thanks to the high number of national applicants so far. To the very surprise of those in charge of the recruitment process, “the recruitment of the EEAS is getting late, partly because it is overwhelmed by the number of applicants (...). As far as we are concerned, we have troops to send...” This interest for the EEAS highlights a broader evolution whereas an appointment in Brussels for a few years is more and more considered as a career and network booster rather than a bracket in a career, especially among the younger generation of diplomats. Financial considerations, while dismissed by those in charge of the recruitment process, should also be taken into account as a rational for this interest for EEAS departure.

Paris’s selection strategy for would be EEAS candidates is of course induced by a search for maximum national presence and influence in the multi-centric and power games taking place in the setting up of the EEAS. Yet, this interest of French officials for EEAS appointments more than any other things sends a positive signal that some kind of Europeanization of diplomats and diplomacies is taking place even before these diplomats get a chance to act and think as European diplomats with their European counterparts of the EEAS. This trend tends to confirm that the appropriation of the institution by national administrations and agents, which we perceive as a pre-condition for its future Europeanizing potential, is emerging.

CONCLUSION: THE EEAS, A PROMISING INSTITUTION OR A PROMISING RESEARCH OBJECT?

Studying the creation of the EEAS provides useful insights for the study of influence, power and identity games within the elaboration of the CFSP and CSDP or the EU’s external relations more broadly. Beyond the institutional and legal implications that have by large constituted the main approaches in this respect, the study of human resources challenges and of the individuals composing the EEAS

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(36) See for instance the previously mentioned works and comment on the representation of the most recent member states.

(37) Interview with a French diplomat involved in the detection and selection procedures of French candidates to the EEAS, on 24th February 2011.

(38) With a former Bulgarian Prime minister being for instance appointed at the head of the EU Representation in Georgia.

(39) Interview with a French diplomat involved in the detection and selection procedures of French candidates to the EEAS, 24th February 2011.

(40) As a French diplomat puts it: “Financial considerations are not really part of interviewees’ motivations. At least are they not really expressed by candidates” (interview with a French diplomat, 11 March 2011).

(41) Young French diplomats with children usually make it clear that the price of housing in Paris compared to Brussels and to most capitals where EU Delegations operate is one strong rational among other for being candidate for a Brussels or overseas post
Europeanizing European Foreign Policies by Forging European Diplomats?
Bastien Nivet - July 2011

Les Notes de l’IRIS

Deserves much attention. These future actors of the EU’s external relations will play a key part in the Europeanization – or not – of foreign, security and defence policy in Europe. First indications for instance show that member states are paying much attention to the representative nature – or not – of personal composing this new institution, indicating among other that its Europeanizing power and legitimacy might be only granted if and when it is perceived as a truly European institution and not one managed by a limited number of big member states. Ongoing recruitment strategies also indicate that member states are suggesting high level individuals to the recruiting panels so as obtain the highest quantitative and qualitative representation possible in the service, suggesting that, before the institution has had time to prove its usefulness or not, national diplomats and their mother administrations want to invest what is still “perceived as an adventure”\(^{(42)}\), in case it becomes indeed key to the future of European diplomacy and diplomacies.

Future data collection allowing a complete vision of the personal composing the EEAS, future gathering of feedback on the way these agents work, behave, network within and beyond the structure will help push forward a comprehensive socio-political analysis of the EEAS. Several hypotheses deserve to be studied and tested further in that respect: a contradiction between the diplomatic ambitions of the structures, its institutional organisation, and the recruitment strategies of actors (member states and the European Commission mainly); an attitude of member states to view the CFSP/CSDP as a purely intergovernmental policy, while its daily practice has already turned it into a more hybrid trans-governmental political system of multilevel and multidirectional influence and networking forces; a different level of Europeanization at different hierarchical levels, with a faster and deeper Europeanization at the level of individuals than at the governmental level.

In this respect, future studies on the EEAS when full data is available, should be able to provide new insights on several key issues to the study of CFSP, CSDP and to EU studies more broadly, such as: the role and nature of allegiances (national, institutional, social) in EU policy making and identity forging; the nature and function of multiform networking of officials within the EU system (in Brussels, the capital cities, and third countries); the renewal of the notion of Europeanization, not least as far as it applies to CFSP and CSDP; the ability of the agents/individuals to create, by their professional practice, a specific political and institutional order that escapes from the strict form initially conceived by the member states; the role of individuals in Europeanization; national resistances to Europeanization.

Before having a chance to prove its usefulness to the EU’s external action, the EEAS therefore provides a rare opportunity to study, live, the creation, institutionalisation and socializing process of a new European institution. Whether it becomes a promising diplomatic institution or not, the EEAS can already be grasped as a promising research object.

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\(^{(42)}\) Interview with a French diplomat, 11 March 2011.
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Europeanizing European foreign policies by forging European diplomats?
The European External Action Service (EEAS) beyond the institutional question: The human resources challenge to the Europeanization of foreign, security and defence policy

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