European External Action Service

Parliament paves way for better foreign policy despite governments' lack of ambition

Commenting on today's approval by the European Parliament of the European External Action Service (EEAS), Franziska Brantner, foreign affairs spokesperson of the Greens/EFA Group, said:

"Parliament's approval paves the way for a more coherent and effective European foreign policy that better meets citizen's expectations. A better service could have been possible, though. We regret that Ms Ashton, the Commission and a number of national governments didn't have the guts to embrace a more ambitious solution.

"We support the compromise because Parliament managed to considerable improve Ms Ashton's original proposal. A strong human rights structure, safeguards for development policy and against renationalisation of Community policies, strengthened democratic scrutiny, a more transparent foreign affairs budget and gender balance in recruitment are cases in point. The deal is not flawless, however. Its weak points include the unclearly defined crisis management structures, the lack of permanent deputies for Ms Ashton and the limited scope of the EEAS's consular services to citizens.

 "Regrettably, truly integrated and comprehensive EU crisis management and peacebuilding structures based on strengthened civilian capacities were resisted by an intransigent French government Paris wanted to make EU crisis management a mere tool of its national foreign policy, narrowly defined in military terms and constrained by purely intergovernmental decision-making.

"Much will now depend on how the compromise is implemented the ball is therefore back in the court of Ms Ashton, member states and the Commission. They must work together, create a common 'esprit de corps' and overcome divisive competition."

Focusing on two Green priorities during the negotiations, **Ulrike Lunacek**, co-spokesperson on foreign affairs of the Greens/EFA, added:

"Our group managed to add some genuine Green marks to the compromise agreement. The strong human rights structures in Brussels and at the EU delegations abroad were added to the service's blueprint only in response to our pressure Ms Ashton's original proposal didn't even mention human rights. Likewise, ensuring gender balance in the recruitment of new EU diplomats has been dear to my group, and I am delighted that we could substantially improve Ms Ashton's proposal in that respect. We will keep a close eye on implementation because that is where the written word will have to be put into practice."
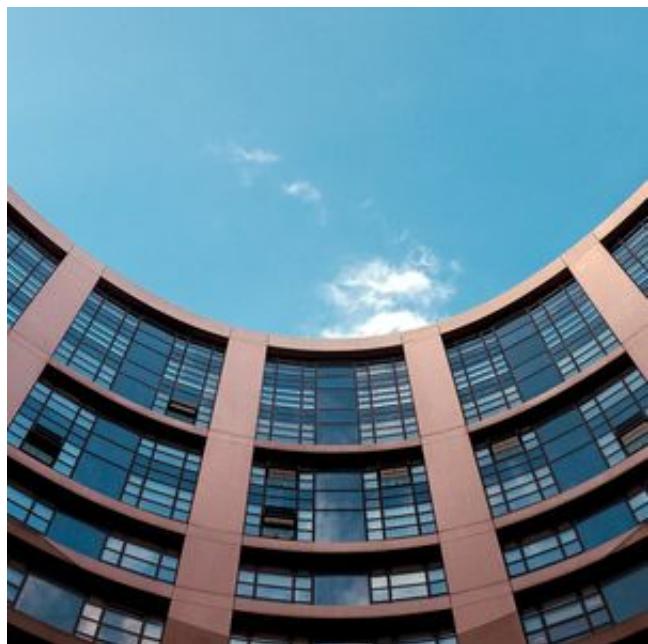
With regard to development policy, *Judith Sargentini*, member of the development committee, added:

"Continued pressure by the European Parliament led to an important change in the proposed structure for the EEAS. The overall responsibility for development cooperation does not shift to Ms Ashton, but stays with development commissioner Piebalgs. This way the risk that development funds would be used as tools for Europe's external policies has diminished. The Lisbon Treaty states that the overall aim of Europe's development policy, namely poverty eradication, should not be harmed by Europe's other foreign policies. We Greens will continue the work for a foreign service that has the well being of developing countries as one of its first priorities (Art. 208 TFEU)."

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