

External Action Service

EEAS gets go-ahead but be more than just a 28th foreign ministry

The European Parliament approved today the last three legislative texts required to launch the European External Action Service (EEAS) on 1 December 2010 (Staff Regulation, Financial Regulation and the EEAS 2010 budget). After the vote in plenary, **Franziska Brantner**, foreign affairs co-spokesperson of the Greens/EFA group, said:

"It has been a bumpy ride but thanks to Parliament's efforts, the EU's External Action Service now has the potential to be the driving force for a more effective and more legitimate EU foreign policy. We welcome that key Green concerns - such as on gender balance and common training to create an 'esprit de corps' - have been largely addressed, and that the Parliament will have greater democratic scrutiny on the functioning of the EEAS, notably through the introduction of individual budget lines for the EU's major overseas operations. The EP also succeeded in safeguarding the Community method and, thanks to Green pressure, development priorities.

"Clearly, the jury is still out on whether the External Action Service will actually live up to its potential and provide real added-value. If it is to be of value, it must be more than just a 28th European foreign ministry. High representative Ashton must now act to ensure that the EEAS lives up to expectations, this includes creating strong coordination mechanisms in the EEAS to ensure policy coherence. The EEAS should also become a hub for crisis management and conflict prevention but this will only be possible if Ms Ashton delivers on her promise to create effective crisis management and peace-building structures [1] and allocates sufficient posts to this task [2].

"The announcement by Ms Ashton to create of dozens of new deputy-ambassadorial jobs gets the political and staffing priorities wrong. It reflects an outdated view on diplomacy, creating a 19th century-style diplomatic network when this diplomatic role could and should be fulfilled by the High Representative directly. What Europe needs are crisis management and mediation experts rather than an old-boys' club whose members hang out smoking cigars at glamorous receptions."

[1] In a statement to Parliament on 8 July 2010, Ms Ashton formally committed to the creation of an "appropriate structure" for crisis management and peace-building meeting certain conditions exacted by Parliament. See <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2010-0280+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN#BKMD-5>

[2] According to the draft 2010 and 2011 budgets, there will be 118 newly created posts in the EEAS, of which some 20 will be deputy ambassadorial posts. Moreover, Ms Ashton will be able to reallocate existing positions thanks to synergies resulting from the merger of Council and Commission departments.

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