

# Inventors and Gatekeepers? The EU Member States and the European External Action Service<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** This project reflects on the ambivalence of the EU member states in their relationships with the new institutional arm of European diplomacy – the European External Action Service, headed by the High Representative. While trapped in rhetorical support for stronger and better-coordinated EU foreign policy, the member states show little willingness to equip the newcomer with political mandate and room for action, and provide a case in point for the post-Maastricht integration paradox. The main aim of this paper is to shed light on the reasons for this paradoxical behaviour. Taking into consideration the timeline 2009–2014, the article looks at patterns and dynamics of the mutual cooperation between the EEAS selected member states (Germany, Poland and the United Kingdom).

**Keywords:** European External Action Service, member states, power struggle, the new intergovernmentalism.

## Introduction

The emergence of Europe as a political actor on the international stage consistently attracts the interest of diverse groups of scholars. After the changes introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon regarding the further institutionalisation of the EU foreign policy, this trend has become even more intense. No wonder, since the challenges the EU is confronted with comprise a long list – the Ukraine crisis, a troubled relationship with Russia, the turmoil in the Middle East and North Africa, the rise of Islamic State and the refugee crisis, are just present-day examples. When the financial crisis was handled, foreign policy was elevated to the top of the European agenda. At this particularly inconvenient time, as renationalisation tendencies have reemerged across several member states<sup>2</sup>, the post-Lisbon foreign policy framework was put to the test.

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2 Balfour, Carta and Raik 2015, 194–196.

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For several decades, there has been broad agreement amongst the majority of scholars that the development of the European actorness, defined as a tried-and-tested capability to join forces against issues of the highest stakes, should be perceived as a longer-term project. However, there are different approaches as to how best to interpret the improvements of the last two decades in terms of increased resource availability and the growing numbers of instruments at the disposal of the EU, which have facilitated the deployment of over 30 civilian and military missions in different world regions. Some scholars still emphasise the continuous resistance of the member states to the development of a truly common foreign policy due to the lack of political will and divergent interests.<sup>3</sup> Whilst others draw particular attention to the move beyond intergovernmentalism as the execution of foreign policy no longer being a purely national affair and that European institutions foster a common voice on foreign matters.<sup>4</sup> Concurrently, an increased demand for common external action among the EU states can be expected in the future. Facing the most current foreign policy challenges (as in the EU's neighbourhood both in the East and in the South), individual member states are de facto powerless bystanders. This functional pressure, together with the support of 66 percent of European citizens for a more collective approach towards external challenges from the Union,<sup>5</sup> and the slow but consistent progression of the institutionalisation of this policy field, exert causal influence towards the further development of the EU's capabilities to act effectively in the international arena.

Considering such factors, this article focuses on the latest changes within the institutional framework of EU foreign policy that were introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon – the European External Action Service (EEAS) headed by the new-look High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR). The establishment of the new Service and its relevance to EU foreign and security policy-making has enjoyed growing scholarly attention in recent years. There is no straightforward method on how to set up a conceptual framework for interpreting the establishment of the new Service and its relevance to EU foreign and security policy-making. One strand of research focuses on the EEAS as a bureaucracy and treats it mainly as a tool for enhanced administrative cooperation.<sup>6</sup> Other scholars investigate the new diplomacy in terms of further expanding EU foreign capacities due to the leadership of the new Service and its impact on agenda setting within various foreign policy related areas.<sup>7</sup> There are also a remarkable number of publications that tend to downplay the role of both the new Service and the HR by highlighting their limited role and restrained power.<sup>8</sup> Despite the differing views on the latest institutional engineering, there is an agreement that, after amendments are brought in by the Treaty of Lisbon, capabilities and operational

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3 See i.e. Helwig 2013; Putter 2012; Toje 2008; Mayer 2013; Putter 2014.

4 See i.e. Howorth 2011; Sjursen 2011; Bicchi 2012; Adler-Nissen 2014.

5 Eurobarometer 2015, T71.

6 See: i.e. Erkelens and Blockmans 2012; Henökl and Trondal, 2013.

7 See: i.e. Hemra, Raines and Whitman, 2011; Balfour, Bailes and Kenna, 2012.

8 See: i.e. Edwards 2012, 63–67; Janning 2014.

background are no longer prime factors constraining the Union's foreign policy, but they have not yet turned it into a credible international actor.

This statement constitutes the point of departure for this paper. The analysis targets the observation that, notwithstanding the clearly difficult circumstances of the EEAS inception (i.e. immediate challenges in the European Neighbourhood right after the establishment of the Service, the on-going financial crisis, the turf wars with the European Commission and other foreign policy stakeholders over the division of responsibilities), the essential influence on the performance of the new Service is wielded by national capitals. The member states will, for the foreseeable future, remain in the driver's seat of the policymaking process within the field of European foreign and security. Thus, the success of the newcomer is only possible with the active backing of its creators. The EEAS depends on recognition by national governments, since it draws upon and combines their resources. We face a dilemma: the national leaders were the ones who decided to establish the diplomatic arm of the EU, yet they are also the gatekeepers who approach it with anxiety and try to limit its functionality. The rhetorical support for a stronger, better coordinated European foreign policy, declared by a great majority of the member states, is not backed up with a willingness to accept the risks and costs that this would entail. This phenomenon corresponds with the post-Maastricht integration paradox defined by Uwe Puetter in the context of the EU economic governance. While policy interdependencies have grown, member states have resisted the further transfer of formal competences to the EU level, and are aiming for greater policy coherence by intensified intergovernmental coordination through the European Central Bank and the new European Stability Mechanism.<sup>9</sup> In the case of EU foreign policy, member states, instead of transferring further competences to the European Commission, have decided to establish the EEAS as a body that, to a great extent, represents their interests and therefore differs from traditional supranational institutions.

Considering the timeframe between 2009 and 2014, this article follows the question-driven approach and focuses on the relationships between the member states and the EEAS by investigating the reasons for the limited willingness of national capitals to give the new actor a space in which to perform. It looks at both the attitudes of the member states towards the newcomer, and the policy content, i.e. the counter-strategies adopted by the national capitals to hinder the diplomatic innovation of the Treaty of Lisbon, and the cooperation patterns between national diplomacies and the EEAS over high stake political issues. The article is founded on empirical research, including a series of interviews with foreign policy elites from Germany, Poland, the United Kingdom, and proven experts in this field,<sup>10</sup> as well as on the analysis of official documents of the three

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<sup>9</sup> Puetter 2012,161.

<sup>10</sup> In order to maintain the anonymity of the interviewer, the author presents only the positions of the interlocutors and the data of the interview. The full list of interviewers is in the possession of the author.

governments towards the cooperation with the new Service and their ideas on the role of the EEAS and existing literature.

Following an introductory section on the general background and challenges for the relationship between the member states and the EEAS, this paper successively examines particular case studies and dynamics of the mutual cooperation between the United Kingdom, Germany and Poland, and the newcomer. The conclusion summarises the empirical findings from the three countries, and comes up with a few general remarks about the obstacles for the cooperation between the EEAS and the member states, and the resulting consequences for EU foreign and security policies.

### **Methodological dilemma of studying the relationship between the EEAS and the member states**

The investigation of the relationship between the new European diplomacy and the member states is a challenging exercise. Not only is the framework of European external relations unique, with its attempt to bring coherence into the still predominant intergovernmental decision-making process and supranational elements of the policies, but the *sui generis* nature of the EEAS brings another challenge. The newcomer, who was initially supposed to be the European Ministry of Foreign Affairs when first discussed during the Convention on the Future of Europe 2001–2003, became, after many years of power struggle and inter-institutional bargaining, a body of its own kind. The Treaty does not formally recognise the new Service as an institution, even though it *de facto* possesses the required criteria of an institution, such as structure, legal address, staff, budget and objectives, which is why several scholars treat it as one, regardless of the Treaty's stance.<sup>11</sup> Yet, despite all the difficulties with the establishment of the new Service, the "organisational merger of the lower levels of day-to-day administrative work in EU external action"<sup>12</sup> was claimed to have a "high potential for creating synergetic effects."<sup>13</sup> Catherine Ashton, the first HR after the Treaty of Lisbon, called it "a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build something that finally brings together all the instruments of our engagement in support of a single political strategy."<sup>14</sup> After almost five years since the Service started, European foreign policy is still far away from being truly common and coherent and there is a blame-game going on over who is responsible— the member states or the External Action Service, or other foreign policy stakeholders at EU level.

The idea of this paper is to go beyond the blame-game and to focus on the relationship between the EEAS and the member states. Despite the fact that they were the crucial part of the agency behind the creation of the new Service, they "found themselves with a new

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11 See: Batora 2010, 2; Batora 2011, 6; Barton and Quinn 2011, 5.

12 Gebhard 2011, 123.

13 Ibid.

14 Ashton 2010.

European External Action Service and did not know what to do with it”.<sup>15</sup> The rationale behind the idea for European diplomacy was the notion that it is high time to move beyond existing Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) machinery without losing the intergovernmental character of the EU foreign and security policies. Furthermore, the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty was supposed to push the member states, irrespective of their different interests, towards a more integrated and coherent approach in regard to external action, and towards division of labour and burden-sharing between them and the other stakeholders of EU’s foreign policy. Yet, the national leaders failed to define the exact role and scope of the new diplomacy in the Treaty of Lisbon, leaving much room for further inter-institutional negotiations over the its political role, staffing, positioning amongst other European institutions and, most importantly, over the division of competences between the new body and the other foreign policy stakeholders.<sup>16</sup> A compromise between national interests over the new Brussels diplomacy (providing leadership and overall coordination without stepping on the toes of national Foreign Ministries) as well as over the preferences of the European Commission (staying away from crucial external portfolios such as neighbourhood policy and the budgetary control over the whole external action) and the European Parliament (being a channel of enhanced influence over EU foreign policy for the Parliament) has to be found.<sup>17</sup> The Council decision of 26 July 2010,<sup>18</sup> which established the organisation and functioning role of the EEAS, underlines its supportive character towards, not only the HR in all its triple-hatted mandate (conducting the CFSP, chairing the Foreign Affairs Council and acting as a Vice-President of the Commission), but also the President of the Commission and of the Council – all together, “mission impossible”.<sup>19</sup>

On the whole, the relevance of the EEAS, perceived by key stakeholders such as the EU member states, should not be taken for granted. While all member states have endorsed the Lisbon Treaty, some governments (for example the British Conservative-Liberal government) have a hard time understanding (or accepting) the implications of what the member states, including Great Britain, have ratified.<sup>20</sup> Emerson and his team go even further in the judgement of the situation by claiming that “some EU member states seem to have been conducting a reargued action to minimize the innovations of the Lisbon Treaty.”<sup>21</sup>

So far there are no recognized models in the area of foreign relations which could have been used to study the dynamics between the member states and the European Diplomatic

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15 Balfour, Raik 2013, 11.

16 For more on how the logic of diversity between the member states left a strong mark on the negotiation process, see: Lequesne 2015, 6.

17 For a comprehensive analysis of the interests of each stakeholder towards the EEAS see: Lequesne 2015, 3–6.

18 Council Decision 2010.

19 Balfour and Raik 2013, 13.

20 Jörgenson 2015, 40.

21 Emerson et al. 2011, 2.

Service. However, there are two strands of research which might constitute a point of departure for this paper. On the one hand, so far there is only one comprehensive analysis of the relationship between the EEAS and the national diplomacies edited by Balfour, Carta and Raik.<sup>22</sup> Their underlying assumptions that the new European diplomacy can be examined as a cause of change in national foreign services, alongside national, regional and global dynamics. Thus, their analytical framework is based on the Europeanisation approach and its three mechanisms – downloading (national adaptation to rules from the EU level), uploading (projection of national preferences) and cross loading (the process of socialisation). The country case studies within the volume primarily focus on changes in national structures, resources and priorities of the national diplomacies, and investigates the links between these processes and the EEAS. In contrast with the examination of the adjustment of the national foreign policy structures, this paper focuses more on the mutual interplay between the European and national diplomacies and its limitations and, therefore, the Europeanisation approach does not seem suitable in this instance.

The second, theoretical approach for studying the relationship between the member states and the EEAS is offered by new intergovernmentalism framework.<sup>23</sup> Drawing on the integration paradox – EU countries pursue more integration but stubbornly resist further supranationalism,<sup>24</sup> the new intergovernmentalism implies the post-Maastricht tendency to delegate power to *de novo* bodies rather than traditional supranational institutions. The European External Action Service is an example of such a *de novo* body. However the operationalisation of this approach (six hypotheses outlined by the authors of this theory) enables one to prove the arrival of the new intergovernmentalism in the current state of the European integration by looking at recent developments in various policy areas.<sup>25</sup> Since this paper takes the existing institutional framework in EU foreign policy as a starting point and goes beyond it by investigating the dynamics of the interplay between the *de novo* institution – the EEAS and the member states, this approach is not directly applicable here.

Having the predominant aim of the paper in mind, which is to contribute to shedding light on the under-explored relationships between the EEAS and the selected member states, and not to follow a particular theory or to formulate a systematic methodological framework (which could be seen as the next step to the analysis), it will follow a question-oriented approach. By applying this approach, the article is able to reveal a more complex picture of the relationship between the newcomer and the national foreign offices.<sup>26</sup> It also brings a more detailed focus on to the existing and potential areas of cooperation, as well as the limitations and obstacles in the relationship. Rather than focusing on a

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22 Balfour, Carta and Raik, eds. 2015.

23 Bickerton, Hodson and Puetter 2015.

24 Puetter 2012, 168.

25 Bickerton, Hodson and Puetter 2015a.

26 Fierke and Jorgensen 2015; Griffiths 2007.

narrow theoretical framework or method, question-driven research more generally allows scholars to uncover complex and multifaceted puzzles.

### **Germany, Poland, Great Britain towards the EEAS**

In the following section the patterns of cooperation and the bilateral dynamic between Germany, Poland as well as Great Britain and the European External Action Service will be examined. There are several reasons for the selection of the three particular countries. All three have heavy-duty objectives in terms of their external interests and influence on the European agenda, therefore it could be assumed that they all display a level of resistance against yielding competences to Brussels. Obviously, while the aspirations, scope and capabilities of British and German diplomacy clearly outweigh the Polish one, Warsaw still remains an ambitious foreign policy player, in particular towards Eastern Europe. However, at the same time, they have different approaches to European integration and its external dimension. The UK credits superiority to its own national policy and understands the EU as one of many international organisations, which can be leveraged as a tool to pursue British foreign policy interests. This attitude combined with weak support for European integration in general, makes London a rival to any strong role of new policy actors at EU level. In contrast, Germany, mainly for historical reasons, identifies to a high degree with the idea of Europe and with a common foreign policy and, as examples from the past have shown, it would more likely transfer further competences in this area to the EU level.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the financial crisis embraced the position of Berlin in Europe which, combined with the role of 'reluctant hegemon', makes it a thought-provoking case study. Poland, as a thus far been a constantly Euro-enthusiastic new member state, has strong national interests in the development of the common foreign and security position of the EU, also because of its exposed geographical position to, and historically motivated fear of, Russia. Having no independent foreign policy of its own - being a state within the Soviet sphere of influence - Poland has spent the past thirty years creating national foreign policy from scratch. Therefore, there are political groups who oppose the transfer of the recently gained accession to European level. This choice of countries allows the presentation of the multidimensional aspects of the relationship between the External Action Service and the national capitals.

Here is it worth mentioning a related point. One important aspect of the relationship between the EEAS and the member states is reflected in the role of the EU Council rotating presidency which used to be an important channel for national capitals to influence the European foreign policy. The launch of the redefined role of the HR and the EEAS resulted in major limitations to the competences of the rotating presidency with regard to the management of the administrative procedures and to the agenda-setting both in Brussels and in third countries.<sup>28</sup> The previous European Commission's delegations outside Europe,

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27 Möller and Rappold, 2012.

28 For more see i.e. Emerson 2011, 37–52; Sus 2015, 99–117.

which overnight became the EU delegations under the auspices of the EEAS, took over the role of coordination and representation of the EU position vis-à-vis the third country. The experiences of the post-Lisbon presidencies indicate that, after a transition period, the cooperation between the rotating presidencies and the EEAS both in Brussels and on the ground works fairly well. Since the examination of the performance of the successive Council presidencies enjoys attention of scholars, it will not be elaborated on further within this paper.<sup>29</sup>

Drawing on existing literature regarding the EEAS's relations with other stakeholders of EU foreign policy and following the problem-driven approach, the paper puts forward an analysis of the relationship between the national diplomacy and the diplomacy at the EU level respectively, which lies on three issues:

- patterns of cooperation and potential functions that the country credits to the EEAS,
- channels that the national foreign services use in order to upload their foreign policy preferences
- obstacles and limitations in their mutual relationships.

These three aspects shall bring some light to the relations between the new European diplomacy and the member states, and may contribute to a more systematic examination of the interplay.

## Germany

For Germany, being the strongest European economy and a country with one of the biggest diplomatic networks in the world, the EEAS plays a supplementary role. Having said that, it is not surprising that Berlin is perceived as one of the biggest supporters of the new foreign policy actor in Brussels.<sup>30</sup> In particular, in comparison to the defiant United Kingdom and an ambiguous France, experts perceive Germany as willing to transfer further competences in foreign policy to the European level.<sup>31</sup> The motivation of Berlin to support the Service is twofold. First of all, Germany endorses the External Action Service for upgrading its external power where it was limited i.e. as representation of the EU in a number of multilateral forums such as the General Assembly of the United Nations, and negotiations with Iran. Secondly, European diplomacy is a suitable channel through which Berlin can enhance the legitimisation of its national foreign policy without being accused of dominating the EU agenda. Since the unification of Germany in 1990, German politicians from different parties have often repeated the same statement: "We

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29 See i.e. The JCMS Annual Review of the European Union, in which the assessments of the EU Council presidencies are published on regular basis.

30 Lieb and Maurer 2008.

31 Lehne 2013.

want a European Germany, not a German Europe”.<sup>32</sup> Over 25 years later, after a huge transformation in terms of the enhancement of the European project and in changes in Germany itself, the sentence seems to still be valid to some extent. As the recent financial crisis has proven, there are still traces of fear of an overly strong Germany amongst some Europeans.<sup>33</sup> For this reason, Berlin pays close attention to the execution of its foreign policy aims through the European framework and with the support of European partners. As Frank-Walter Steinmeier said in 2015 “there can be no German foreign policy without European foreign policy”.<sup>34</sup> According to Wolfgang Ischinger, an experienced German diplomat, Berlin should put its full weight behind the Brussels based leadership in EU foreign policy, in order to achieve its two key objectives: a stronger and more capable EU and a more European Germany.<sup>35</sup> Thus as Berlin felt dissatisfied with the current role and performance of the newcomer, it has presented numerous proposals with suggestions for improvement. Along with other EU countries such as Poland, the German government did not rule out the possibility of equipping the High Representative and its Service with more power and competences. For instance, shortly before the Polish EU Council Presidency, the two countries, along with France, initiated the ‘Weimar letter’ on the enhancement of military cooperation. The process is to be run under the auspices of the EEAS.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, Berlin was one of the leaders of both letters from the national foreign ministers on how to improve the functioning of EU foreign policy – in December 2011<sup>37</sup> and in September 2012.<sup>38</sup> However, as Balfour and Raik noted “despite reassurances that these efforts are supposed to be constructive, in Brussels these initiatives are perceived to mine the ground on which the HR/VP and the EEAS are standing”.<sup>39</sup> Aside from the letters, German Foreign Ministry started before the EEAS review in 2013 consultations towards the strengthening of the Service by renegotiating its division of labour with the European Commission and by handing over the power of the European Neighbourhood Policy and external assistance.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, German officials claim there is a readiness to

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32 The sentence was originally said by Thomas Mann in 1947 and quoted in i.e. Genschler 2010.

33 Schäuble 2013; Blomeet al. 2015.

34 Steinmeier 2015. [http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/Infoservice/Presse/Reden/2015/150225-BM\\_Review\\_Abschlussveranstaltung.html?nn=699270](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/EN/Infoservice/Presse/Reden/2015/150225-BM_Review_Abschlussveranstaltung.html?nn=699270)

35 Ischinger 2015.

36 EU Council on CSDP, 2010.

37 Joint letter from the Foreign Ministers of Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland and Sweden to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Catherine Ashton, 8 December 2011.

38 Final Report of the Future of Europe Group of the Foreign Ministers of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Spain, 17 September 2012.

39 Balfour and Raik 2013, 21.

40 Interview with an official from the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs, July 2015.

support the majority voting in CFSP, which could make the coordination task for the HR and EEAS much easier.<sup>41</sup>

With regard to the channels of communication, German officials claimed that there are two main methods they use in order to promote certain foreign policy ideas to EU level. The quite obvious one is the agenda of the Foreign Affairs Council which should be consulted with the member states before every meeting. The second one is offered by German officials working for the EEAS headquarters in Brussels, or for the EU delegations on the ground. Berlin succeeded in promoting Helga Schmid, the former director of Policy Planning of the High Representative in the General Secretariat of the Council to the Deputy Secretary General for the EEAS, and continues to support its personnel in applying for the open positions in Brussels.<sup>42</sup>

Apart from the generally supportive attitude of Germany towards the EEAS, the Ukraine crisis clearly showed limitations in this respect. The negotiations of the Association Agreement with Kiev, as well as the preparations for the summit in Vilna in November 2013, were primarily coordinated by the HR and the Commissioner for the ENP, and supported by the EEAS. The national leaders had taken crucial decisions on the scope and preferred outcome of the negotiations process but had let EU officials take the lead. Yet, as soon as the situation got out of control and Russia came onto the stage as a part of the geopolitical conflict, leadership was taken over by member states representatives. It was Angela Merkel and Francois Hollande, and later on their foreign ministers Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Laurent Fabius, who negotiated on behalf of the EU, and not the High Representative nor the President of the European Council. Brussels foreign policy leaders were entirely pushed aside by strong national leaders.<sup>43</sup> This demonstrates the reluctant position of Germany to burden-share with EEAS in high-priority areas. The relations with Russia are certainly crucial to Germany and, therefore, Berlin prefers to control EU policy towards Moscow.

## Poland

Before examining the attitudes of the Polish diplomacy towards the External Action Service, it is worth mentioning that the domestic debate on what the establishment of the new actor actually means, both for European foreign policy and national diplomacy, is largely not that advanced as it is in the case of Germany or the United Kingdom. The crucial issue which gained the attention of Polish policy makers and experts was the question of geographical balance in the recruitment process for the Service, as Poles were

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41 Adebahr 2013, 14–15; Interview with an official from the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs, March 2015.

42 Adebahr 2013, 17–18.

43 Interview with a former senior official from the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs, March 2015.

strongly underrepresented, particularly in the immediate aftermath of the creation of the EEAS. Furthermore, cooperation with European diplomacy was an issue in the context of the Polish Presidency of the Council in 2011. Apart from that, the new diplomatic Service has rarely been mentioned in the Polish MFA's documents from 2010 onwards. In March 2012, a strategic outline with Polish Foreign Policy Priorities for 2012–2016 was published and the EEAS was labelled as an "appropriate instrument" at the EU's disposal, which "serves the purpose of ensuring more effective coordination of the EU's external action."<sup>44</sup>

In general terms, Poland supported the idea of a common diplomatic service from the beginning, and perceived the institutionalisation of diplomacy at the Brussels level as an added value to their own national diplomacy.<sup>45</sup> Aware of the limitations and rather provincial character of the Polish foreign policy in terms of its strong focus on regional and transatlantic directions, Warsaw sees the External Service as a power multiplier of the Polish voice in the world, and tries to upload its national foreign goals into EU policy.<sup>46</sup> According to MFA staff, Poland has been particularly interested in bringing its ideas regarding the Eastern dimension European Neighbourhood Policy to the European level, and in gaining support from other member states. The successful uploading of Polish initiatives changes the ideas from local to European ones. One fruitful example was the Polish initiative of European Endowment for Democracy. Polish leaders managed to win over EEAS officials to its idea and, in spite of the initial opposition from Berlin and other national capitals, the project has been implemented.<sup>47</sup> Regarding the readiness of equipping the newcomer with stronger competences, according to a study conducted in 2012, Polish diplomats expressed the opinion that Warsaw would be ready to pass additional competences to the EEAS. For instance, there is strong support in Poland for the proposal of establishing common embassies with other EU member states. So far, there is a Visegrad house in Cape Town, in South Africa, which is used by diplomats from the four Visegrad countries, but Warsaw would be open to further similar cooperative ventures.<sup>48</sup> However, the clincher in terms of the further shift of competences towards Brussels and its scale would be the feeling that Poland is strongly represented at the top management level of the Service. With the departure of Maciej Popowski from the position of deputy Secretary General at the EEAS, the situation looks ever more critical.

Furthermore, as Poland clearly benefits from a stronger EEAS, the former Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski's signature accompanied his German counterpart's in both of the letters mentioned above from 2011 and 2013. Additionally, in 2013 Sikorski joined Italy, Spain and Sweden in supporting a strategic framework for EU foreign policy – "We have created a new European External Action Service to serve the overall EU

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44 Polish Foreign Policy Priorities 2012, 12.

45 See i.e. Sus 2015.

46 Interview with a senior official from the Polish Foreign Ministry, October 2014.

47 Interview with an official from the Polish Foreign Ministry, May 2014; Richter and Leininger 2012.

48 Gromadzki 2013, 66.

interest abroad, effectively underpinning our role as a global player”.<sup>49</sup> What is interesting in this context is the view of interlocutors from the Polish Foreign Ministry who see the public proposals, towards HR and EEAS, as channels to influence the agenda of the High Representative.<sup>50</sup> In opposition to its German colleagues, the Polish officials do not find the agenda of the Foreign Affairs Council a promising way of promoting national interests, since the decision-making process was uploaded rather to the summits of the European Council.<sup>51</sup> In turn the representatives of Poland strongly agree on having a key asset in terms of Polish personnel in the EEAS structure. The Polish MFA has tried hard to promote its officials to senior and junior positions in the Service, in order to enhance the communication between Warsaw and Brussels. However, without a visible success so far.

With regards to the limitations in the relationship between the Polish diplomacy and the EEAS, there is a lot of ambiguity about how to preserve the strong national diplomacy towards the countries in Eastern Europe and, at the same time, how to gain a stronger position through the support of the other EU member states. Poland has not found a way-out of this impasse yet, however, as the recent Ukraine-Russia crisis has shown, the only way to influence Russia is to act in a coherent way (i.e. through sanctions). This is why Warsaw would be ready to be represented by the High Representative at the negotiations table with Kiev and Moscow, as long as Polish interests are recognised.

## Great Britain

The British government was actively engaged in the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty in terms of establishing the EEAS, and succeeded in its promotion of Catherine Ashton to the position of High Representative but, at the same time, the British government constantly emphasised that the new Service was nothing more than a complementary body to national foreign offices.<sup>52</sup>

After four years of a functioning Service, the following statement by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) expressed exactly the same opinion: “We will remain vigilant against any threat of competence creep on the part of the EEAS”.<sup>53</sup>

Apparently the question of the relationship between the British foreign ministry and the EEAS has been a sensitive issue for over a decade. It has been the subject of vivid debate among officials of the British government, Members of Parliament, and the academic world. In 2012–2013 the Foreign Secretary launched the Balance of Competence Review

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49 Bonino, Emma; Sikorski, Radoslaw; García-Margallo y Marfil, Jose Manuel and Bildt Carl. 2013. “In search of a global strategy”. *The European Voice*, July 4.

50 Interview with a senior official from the Polish Foreign Ministry, October 2014.

51 Ibid.

52 For more see: Edwards 2013.

53 Explanatory Memorandum 2013.

in Parliament, which aimed to explore the state of competence between the EU and the UK in foreign policy, and to check whether the existing arrangements are in Britain's national interest<sup>54</sup>The executive summary of the findings points to the existence of "comparative disadvantages of operating through the EU".<sup>55</sup> These are challenges in formulating strong, clear strategies, uneven leadership, institutional divisions, slow and ineffective decision-making processes due to the complicated internal relationships, and differing interests. Against this backdrop, the review emphasises British power and their ability to act internationally, and calls the EU to "reform its external action" in order to be more effective.<sup>56</sup>

In terms of patterns of cooperation, the UK supports the EEAS in areas where it sees added value to its own policy, i.e. sanctions, civilian crisis management, or pursuing long-term solutions to political problems, as it is the case of the Middle East Peace Process.<sup>57</sup>In other words, Great Britain is willing to cooperate and to back-up the newcomer in Brussels, as long as the European diplomatic Service can contribute to the stronger promotion of British international interests and its leverage towards partners. In order to make that happen there has to be an agreement over common values that are shared by the UK and by other member states. London has no interest to be represented by the EEAS due to the size and scope of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

In terms of influencing the European foreign policy agenda, the strong representation of British officials within the EEAS provides London with an excellent and intensely used channel for communication and promotion of national interest and foreign policy priorities.<sup>58</sup>

There are several obstacles in the relationship between FCO and the EEAS. First of all, the attitude towards the EEAS seems to have become a part of the Eurosceptic movement in Great Britain. In June 2015, the Telegraph published an article titled "The EU is stealing Britain's diplomatic influence – and so we must leave,"<sup>59</sup> arguing that European diplomacy downplays the British one and it contradicts national interests. Furthermore, the article was followed by a short public opinion survey with a question as to whether the EU should have its own diplomatic corps or not. Only 14 percent readers answered positively, whereas 86 percent responded negatively and considered it as overstepping the authority of the EU.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, Great Britain has been particularly unwilling to see the

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54 Foreign policy has been one of many aspects of the review, since the British government decided to review all aspects of its EU membership: Review of the Balance of Competences. Foreign Policy Report 2013.

55 Ibid., 6.

56 Ibid., 7.

57 Interview with former senior official from FCO, March 2015.

58 Interview with an official from FCO, June 2015.

59 The Telegraph 2015.

60 Ibid.

EEAS representing the EU in international forums. During the negotiations of the Lisbon Treaty, London insisted on underlining the existing responsibilities of the member states for representation in international organisations.<sup>61</sup> They were eventually provided with reassurance in Declaration 13 to the Treaty, according to which the establishment of the Service should not “affect the responsibilities of the Member States, as they currently existed, for the formulation and conduct of their foreign policies nor of their national representation in third countries and international organisations.”<sup>62</sup> The British position became evident in 2011, when the UK mission to the United Nations blocked a substantial number of European statements to UN committees because it insisted that the statements should be made on behalf of the EU and the member states and not on behalf on the EU alone.<sup>63</sup> For London, the EU is only one of its several networks of influence in the international arena. This fact differs the British position from the attitudes of every other EU countries (perhaps with the exception of France who is also a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council).

## Conclusions

Since the European External Action Service may potentially bring a revolution to the nation-state diplomacy, it is essential to reflect on its role and relationship with national foreign offices. Moreover, the investigation of the relationships between member states and the EEAS will shed some light into their role within the EU as an international actor, and their visions of what the Union should potentially achieve in the international arena. Since, in foreseeable future, EU member states will remain key stakeholders in this field, it is important to examine where national capitals see opportunity for common approaches, what the issues are that must be left to the member states and how the inevitable division of labour between national diplomacies and EU-level diplomacy should be.

As the case studies have proven, all three countries, although differing in degree seem to have an ambiguous position towards the newcomer. On the one hand, they support stronger EU foreign policy coordinated from Brussels, not only in terms of rhetoric but also as a way to enhance their own foreign policy objectives. On the other, they are aware of the fact that the further development of the External Action Service could undermine the international role of national foreign offices 'by limiting their space to act. Not surprisingly, there is a common opinion in all three countries that the Service should remain complementary to national foreign services. Yet, the readiness to share national competences with Brussels diplomacy differs significantly among the three examined cases. While Germany and Poland seem to be open to the strengthening of the role of the newcomer (albeit for different reasons), the both see the Service as a promoter of their national interest, Great Britain remains resistant and

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61 Miller and Taylor 2008, 62–64.

62 Declaration 13. Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union 2008.

63 Carta and Whitman 2013, 146–146.

is openly against any shift of competences from the national diplomacy towards Brussels. As Simon Duke put it: “the apparent unwillingness of some of the Member States to see the EEAS emerge as a strategic actor in its own right is (...) a potential brake on any meaningful strategic direction.”<sup>64</sup>

The member states and the newcomer seem to be trapped in a vicious circle. National leaders keep complaining that the EEAS does not fulfil its mandate in terms of bringing coherence over the various foreign policy instruments, and coordination of external action. The answer from Brussels is, however, that the member states are unwilling to share their competences and restrain the role of the newcomer. With this view in mind, one can conclude that, for a turn towards a collective European diplomacy to be possible, member states have to go beyond the notion of complementarity in their relationships with the EEAS, and explore different modes of parallel functioning. At the same time, the Service and the High Representative, as its head, have to find a niche and prove their ability to bring added value to EU foreign policy. The on-going process of drafting the new EU Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy has chances to become such a stress test.<sup>65</sup> Of course, it would be a mistake to expect that the new EU Global Strategy, as an outcome of the on-going review process, will be a remedy for all ills of EU’s foreign policy. However, if Federica Mogherini, the successor to Ashton, manages to make an assessment of the member states’ divergent interests and to accommodate those by developing a comprehensive picture of European global priorities, courses of actions and instruments, it may be a step forward to the strategic orientation of a bolder and more active EU foreign policy.

Furthermore, by pointing out differences in the patterns of cooperation between the three national diplomatic approaches analysed and the EEAS, this paper draws attention to the still vague definition of the strategic role and political functions that the new Service should play in EU foreign policy. As van Veen, an expert from the Clingendael Institute, rightly noticed, the current debate concerning the functioning of the European diplomatic service is so procedural that it barely touches on what its strategic purpose should be.<sup>66</sup> Taking this into account, the systematic examination of the relationship between the member states ( $n > 3$ ) and the new Service seems to be indispensable in order to find further reasons and subsequently solutions to the entrapment of rhetorical support but limited will to share competences. For such research, the analytical framework has to be further developed (e.g. by operationalisation of the new intergovernmentalism approach) and the empirical material should be extended (primarily via interviews with national diplomats and EEAS officials). By shedding light on the diverse picture of how the member states and the European diplomacy have interplayed within the last five years, this paper has attempted to contribute to further research in this field.

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64 Duke 2014, 30.

65 See i.e. Sus and Pfeifer 2015.

66 Van Veen 2014.

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