

A closer look into EU's external action frontline

Framing the challenges ahead for EU Delegations

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Key messages

The 'new' EU Delegations (EUDs) can be the best of both worlds – a long-term, 'whole-of-EU' approach to complement and work with the EU Member States' diplomatic assets – or the worst – a disjointed technocratic approach increasingly influenced by short-term Member States' political agendas.

The image of the EU is made in-country, and at the elite level is largely influenced by the extent to which the EUD manages to earn credibility vis-à-vis the country authorities and civil society.

There is pressure for the EUDs to show results: the 2014-2020 period will be a testing phase for a number of experiments in EU's external action abroad. Yet, the ultimate success of the EUDs depends on leadership and the willingness of all actors to develop effective internal and external relationships.

Introduction

EU Delegations are potentially a huge strategic asset for the European Union and the achievement of a more coherent, visible and effective external action. They have gone through considerable changes in recent years, particularly since the Treaty of Lisbon came into force in 2009 and the European External Action Service (EEAS) came into being in 2010. This paper is the first in a series of Briefing Notes (BN) dedicated to how the EU's external action actually works in practice. We aim to provide insights from the 'front line' of EU external action and to identify what influences the impact of EU Delegations on the ground, both in terms of promoting a more coherent and result-oriented EU external action.

An independent study on EU Delegations

Building on ECDPM's analysis¹ on the evolving context for EU external action and the post-Lisbon institutional arrangements, the specific objective of this independent research project is threefold: (1) To assess the changing roles and day-to-day realities of EU Delegations (EUDs) compared to the earlier EC Delegations; (2) To seek specific evidence about the EUD's potential (and major bottlenecks) to strengthen the visibility, cooperation and consistency of EU external action; (3) To explore the interest – or lack of – of

¹ See, <http://www.ecdpm.org/euexternalaction>.

EUDs' partners (EU Member States, partner country's actors, other donors etc.) towards further integration or collaboration.

ECDPM seeks to inform decision makers and observers inside and around the EU of the challenges and opportunities faced by EU Delegations. Our findings will serve to feed practical yet independent ideas into the follow-up to the EEAS Review as well as the next European Commission's work plan, including that of the High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy

Our research project involves both desk and field research (currently covering Ethiopia and South Africa although this may be extended to other countries), complemented by interviews with stakeholders in Brussels and via telephone/teleconference in other countries.

Preliminary findings and key assumptions

The main purpose of this first Briefing Note of the series is to frame the key challenges faced by EU Delegations. Based on preliminary findings from a first research phase² we aim to identify key assumptions on whether EUDs achieve greater influence on the ground in terms of promoting a more coherent and results-oriented EU external action. The following publications will test and review these assumptions in more depth, in the particular context of Africa.

This Briefing Note first provides a summary of the transformations undergone by EU Delegations (EUDs) since 2010, explaining very briefly what is a EUD and its roles and functions. It then analyses EU Delegations under five dimensions, in five separate sections:

1. Challenges in the transition from EC to EU Delegations.
2. The relationship between EU Delegations and other EU institutions (at Headquarters level).
3. The dynamics between EUDs and Member state embassies and diplomatic representations operating in a given partner country or region.
4. The relations between the EUDs and the host country's institutions and society.³

Why EU Delegations matter

Since the signing of the Lisbon Treaty, EU Delegations represent the European Union in third countries and international organisations. EUDs operate under the authority of the EU's High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy and, in close cooperation with Member States' diplomatic and consular missions, they ensure that decisions on the EU's positions are implemented. As the European Institutions external frontline, EUDs assume the role of local coordination with Member States and the external representation of EU foreign policy. EUDs are also tasked with the implementation of EU's development policy abroad.

The EEAS has 139 EU Delegations (of which 49 are in Africa) and represents the EU in 163 countries and international institutions. Around 60 per cent of its 3400 staff is based abroad. About 1/3 of staff are employed by the EEAS and 2/3 are employed by the European Commission. Within the EEAS staff, national diplomats occupy a growing proportion of posts.⁴

This diplomatic and cultural biodiversity is important, not only because it gives shape to EU external action's hybrid management culture but also opens up opportunities for national diplomats to gain a better understanding of EU/EC systems. By representing the entirety of the Union, EUDs together with EU

² This note is based on aggregated research data obtained through desk research, and more than 40 semi-structured interviews covering cross-cutting EUDs-related issues as well as around 20 country situations, including two field visits to Addis Ababa in November 2013 and Pretoria in February 2014. We are very grateful to all interviewees for their time.

³ The case of EU Delegations to multilateral organisations such as the African Union is a particular one which requires a tailored research approach adjusting to the fact that the African constituency interacting with the EU delegation is not a country-based "society" but rather the community of African representatives working in Addis Ababa as well as all AU actors dealing with the EU delegation. Further research would also be required to study a fifth dimension: the relations between host country institutions and society on the one hand and other EU actors present on the other, assuming that those have an impact on the EU delegation itself.

⁴ Figures from EEAS Review (2013).

Member States are the face of Europe abroad. This role bears immense responsibilities, particularly while the EU continues to suffer the consequences of an unprecedented financial, economic and political crisis, and strives to develop a “new narrative”⁵ that renews its public image, including overseas.

The role of Delegations before and after the Lisbon Treaty

The current role of EU Delegations cannot be fully understood without an historical perspective on previous European Commission (EC) Delegations. Originally, EC Delegations represented the European Commission only, and dealt exclusively with issues over which the EC held competence or shared competence, with a focus on trade, aid and development. The roles and functions of EC Delegations expanded significantly after 1999, when the group of external relations (Relex) Commissioners⁶ launched an ambitious reform programme aimed at transferring many responsibilities and decentralising administration and decision making from Brussels HQ to the EC Delegations abroad, modernising the administrative and operational infrastructures, and increasing the human resources of EC Delegations. Thus, EC Delegations became responsible for programme identification, programme preparation and some procurement, as well as for technical, contractual and financial implementation⁷. Before the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the coordination with Member States' diplomatic missions was assumed by the Member State holding the rotating EU Presidency.

With the Lisbon Treaty entering into force, the EEAS was established by means of a bloc transfer of staff from the Commission and the Council Secretariat, complemented by a small allocation of new posts that would allow the recruitment of EU MS seconded national diplomats. EC Delegations ceased to exist and were transformed into EU Delegations. The roles and functions of EUDs are multiple, and can be summarised as follows:

- **The EUDs act as chair of the EU presidency.** EUDs are responsible for coordinating with the diplomatic missions of Member States and ensure the external representation of EU foreign policy with third countries and multilateral organisations. EU Delegations organise and host regular meetings (at least monthly) at the level of Heads of Mission (HoMs). They also lead coordination at the technical levels (political, trade, development, etc, setting the agenda, chairing the meetings, and ensuring follow-up)⁸. EUDs act as a full-fledged secretariat (provision of facilities, agenda-setting, chairing, minutes, draft report, follow up of amendments...).
- **EUDs are in charge of representing EU's foreign policy, defending EU's values and interests.** EUDs conduct political dialogue and ensure diplomatic representation on behalf of the EU and the High Representative. They are also responsible for presenting and implementing EU common policies such as trade, development, fisheries, health, common agricultural policy, etc.
- **EU Delegations are also responsible of EU multi-annual development cooperation programmes,** playing a key role in the programming of aid, and in the implementation of all development actions supported by the EU. They ensure the day-to-day management of external assistance programmes, including in regards to administrative expenditure. They also coordinate the implementation of all EU assistance, multilateral and bilateral, and take the lead in EU joint programming processes.
- **EU Delegations provide logistical support and assistance to EU institutions.** This includes providing support to high-level missions by DGs with an external dimension (trade, fisheries, migration), as well as to European Parliament's visiting delegations.
- Finally, **EU Delegations could provide support to and complement Member States in their role of providing consular protection to EU citizens**⁹,¹⁰ when requested by Member States (e.g. in crisis situations).¹⁰

⁵ Barroso speech and project on a New European Narrative.

⁶ The Relex Group of Commissioners was composed by members of the Commission responsible for, external relations, economic and monetary affairs, for development and humanitarian aid, for enlargement and for trade policy.

⁷ See Frederiksen and Baser (2004).

⁸ The rotating presidency among Member states is still active existent but with a much reduced mandate.

⁹ Official Journal of the European Union (2010), Art 5.10.

¹⁰ There are other roles being attributed for example Policy Coherence for Development – see Foreign Affairs Council (Development) 12th of December 2013.

EU Delegations sometimes have regional mandates and consult amongst themselves in a given region. They cooperate with regional organisations and represent the EU vis-à-vis multilateral institutions. They also identify priorities of action at regional level, contribute to regional strategies and programming of funding and managing regional initiatives. The question here is to understand the specific regional role played by EU Delegations and how they are viewed by regional organisations. One set of indicators in that realm relates to the depth of EUDs' involvement in regional discussions and negotiations through specific regional mandates. A second set of indicators could relate to the coordination between EUDs and EU Special Representatives (EUSRs) who have regional mandates in the Middle East Peace Process, the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, and the Southern Mediterranean.

EU Delegations are hybrid administrative constructs that combine diplomatic tasks (in virtue of their belonging to the EEAS) and operational tasks such as development cooperation and trade (a role inherited from EC Delegations). The structure of a EUD usually comprises: a Head, with rank of Ambassador, sometimes a Deputy Head, and several sections. The sections, staffed relatively to the size of the relations with the host country or the multilateral organisation are: Administration and Finance, Political, Operations, with many Delegations also having a Trade and Economic, Governance/Civil Society/Human Rights section. The type, size and composition of sections however varies and at times sections are merged or split. There is often also a Press and Information officer (or unit) that serves the EU Delegation as a whole.

In the following sections we will look into the five dimensions identified above. We will be guided by the following questions: Which changes introduced by the Lisbon Treaty have had the most relevant implications and why on the internal coherence and efficiency of EU Delegations as they seek to achieve impact? How far and how well do the EU and its Member States, at the level of EU Delegations, reconcile their values with their interests? To what extent do partners understand and value the role and functioning of the EU and its Delegations? The main focus of these questions will be in relation to Africa, but the analysis is designed to have a wider relevance than just the EU's relations with the African continent.

1. Challenges in the transition from EC to EU Delegations

This section identifies some of the challenges that have emerged during the Post-Lisbon transition, with regards to staffing. In particular, we look into the recruitment process of Heads of Delegation, and whether their background has an impact on the roles they undertake and how EU Delegations operate. We also explore the emerging dynamics between EEAS and the Commission's DEVCO staff.

1.1. The appointment of Heads of Delegations: what happens behind the façade?

Appointments of HoDs are announced publicly, but there is little information in the public domain on the selection process itself¹¹. The lack of transparency at the final part of the process is a source of some frustration.¹² Officially the HoD selection process is as follows: after the list of openings is published, and candidates submit their applications, a panel establishes a shortlist, based on objective criteria. The ideal candidates should have previous experience in the country/region and proven management experience (e.g. as Ambassador). The panel presents the shortlist to the HRVP, who takes the final decision. After completing their term, HoDs enter the general EEAS rotation system, and become priority candidates for other posts within the Service. This is a way of encouraging the spread of institutional memory.¹³

The extent to which Member States, the EEAS and the EC bargain for specific posts is unclear. A particular concern is whether Member States may seek to establish "spheres of influence" in specific countries or regions. Given that country/region experience and language skills is considered an asset in the selection process, it is not unlikely that in the coming years there could be trends emerging whereby e.g. Eastern European Ambassadors are posted in ex-Soviet republics; Spanish Ambassadors end up in Latin America; and the French and British in their respective ex-colonies. This approach would not serve collective EU interests or the credibility of EU Delegations well.¹⁴

¹¹ Formuszewicz and Kumoch (2010).

¹² Interviews in South Africa with MS officials, January 2014.

¹³ Interview with EEAS staff, July 2013.

¹⁴ Interviews in South Africa, February 2014.

1.2. Is the role and performance of Heads of Delegation conditioned by their background?

With the Treaty of Lisbon, the role of Head of Delegations (HoDs) has significantly expanded. They regularly chair Head of Missions (HoMs) meetings; lead on EU political dialogue processes; and invest in demarches. They also hold the overall responsibility for clearly communicating the role of EUDs, EU policies and positions. In addition to these diplomatic coordination roles, HoDs are also ultimately responsible for signing off all the EUD's financial transactions. Yet there is a scheme of formal sub-delegation and deputising powers (*suppleance*) for both the administrative budget lines and operational budget lines meaning that senior staff in Delegations such as Deputy Head of Mission, Head of Operations or Head of Administration can significantly share responsibility.¹⁵

Several interviewees note that the background and attitude of HoDs is the key determinant in the way Delegations function.¹⁶ A HoD with an EC/DEVCO background appear to be more at ease with EC programme management procedures than national seconded diplomats, who in some cases may even feel alienated by technical and administrative tasks, or show a limited interest in development cooperation altogether¹⁷. Over the longer term having a "development cooperation management bias" may not always be an asset, especially in those countries where the EU is phasing out development aid. Yet even in countries where development cooperation is phasing out (such as South Africa), having an understanding of development cooperation is still important at all levels of the EU Delegation in the medium term¹⁸. A question to be explored is whether EU Member States national seconded diplomats will prove to be more skilful diplomats than those HoDs with an EC background, as a priori the latter were not specifically recruited to be diplomats, but primarily in the past as EC representatives and administrators of funds.

In any case, what appears key to the success of a HoD is his or her ability to exert leadership and gain the trust and respect of Member States' ambassadors to enhance EU's foreign policy while respecting Member States' competencies and interests. Having knowledge of the context in which Member States' ambassadors operate can be of help for this task. A lack of leadership not only undermines their role but the credibility of the EEAS altogether¹⁹. Whether certain Member States will prefer the appointment of a "weak" HoD as a means to retain their bilateral influence, is a point to be researched more thoroughly.

At the same time, HoDs need to be able to manage the EUD team well internally and create an atmosphere conducive for a coherent and efficient way of working. The hybrid administrative construct of the EUDs may create challenges for the HoD in creating a common 'identity' of its staff, as further explored below.

1.3. Stirring the "melting pot" in EU Delegations: burden or opportunity?

EU Delegations bring together a myriad of nationalities, administrative and working cultures. About a third of EUDs staff are employed by the EEAS, with an increasing number of EU Member States national seconded diplomats joining the service noted as 'Lisbon appointees' Although in many EU Delegations the number of Lisbon appointees remains small. The European Commission employs the remaining two thirds.²⁰ EEAS employed staff generally work for the EUD Political Section. They are in charge of conducting political analysis, reporting on the political developments in the country where they are accredited to, and of pooling political intelligence with EU Member States. They also support the Head of Delegation in conducting political dialogue and making diplomatic representations (demarches) on behalf of the HR. EC employed staff generally comes from DEVCO (although specific DGs may also have detached staff in EUDs). EC staff usually work in the Operations Section(s). EC staff working for the Operations section will be in charge of programming EU aid (a shared responsibility with the EEAS), of implementing EU external assistance, conducting policy dialogue and managing administrative expenditure. EC staff may

¹⁵ There are some restrictions - EEAS staff cannot be sub-delegated the authority over the operational budget.

¹⁶ Interviews in South Africa, February 2014.

¹⁷ Interviews in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with EUD staff and Member states, November 2013.

¹⁸ Interviews in South Africa, with EUD staff, MS and South African stakeholders, February 2014.

¹⁹ Interviews in Nigeria with EUD and Member States staff 2011.

²⁰ House of Lords, Subcommittee on External Affairs (2012) states that by November 2012, 249 of the 901 staff at AD level in the EEAS were temporary agents from national diplomatic services, representing a proportion of 27,6%. In EEAS Headquarters, 19,9% of staff at this level were temporary agents from national diplomatic services, and in the EU Delegations, the proportion was 39,5%.

also contribute to political work, as per the Working Arrangements, but the degree of involvement varies from one Delegation to the other.

Initial research identified tensions between EEAS staff and Commission staff within EUDs²¹. A number of indicators will need to be monitored in the longer run, including: the general atmosphere between EEAS and EC staff; the degree and flexibility in team management; and the extent to which different administrative chains of command affect the efficiency of EU's external action²²; and the legitimacy of the Head of Delegation as perceived by staff. We have identified three major sources of tension between EEAS and DEVCO staff.

First, the Lisbon Treaty increased expectations on what EUDs should deliver which has been picked up in country by a number of stakeholders, but did not immediately increase their capacity to deliver. Staff in EU Delegations have to perform new tasks and fulfil new roles that mobilise considerable human resources (in particular acting as Chair of Presidency and taking the lead in joint programming); yet EU Delegations have not been sufficiently strengthened in capacity, and in some cases have even lost several (DEVCO) posts after the Workload Assessment. Political sections are generally understaffed and under-resourced (although this seems to be gradually improving with time) and relied on DEVCO and even in some instances DG TRADE staff to fulfil their roles, further overstressing their limited capacities. This problem was accentuated during the European Development Fund/Development Cooperation Instrument programming phase in 2013.

The second source of tension is the difficulty to separate what is "political" from what is "operational"²³ in the work done by EUDs. Under the current division of roles, political dialogue falls under the responsibility of the EEAS/Political section. Policy dialogue falls under the responsibility of DEVCO/Operations section. Policy dialogues run in parallel to political dialogue. Yet, in practice, the processes overlap to a certain degree; every policy reform (however technocratic) is profoundly political. In the absence of clear guidelines, and coherent communication coming from HQ (EEAS-DEVCO), the coordination between political sections and operations sections remains at the discretion of the EU Ambassador.²⁴ If creatively managed, this ambiguity can also be a major source of the EU's strength in a country. It also depends on the motivation of the EUD staff working in either the Political, Trade or the Operations sections to find synergies and share (political/sensitive) information and leverage financial resources to make things happen.²⁵

The third source of tension is growing discontent among EC staff working in Delegations, resulting from a perceived deterioration of their global expatriation package. The amendments introduced to the Staff Regulations, and which have entered into force as of January 2014, have impacted negatively on EUD staff. The most contentious change relates to the alignment of annual leave entitlements with Headquarters (representing a 40 per cent reduction of previous entitlements and a distancing from entitlements for Member States' diplomats). It is too early to assess the impact of the Staff regulations reform on the EEAS/EC ability to attract and retain the best professionals to EU Delegations. But there is a risk that EUDs performance is affected negatively.

Our new research findings suggest that, after a first phase of transition, relations between EEAS and DEVCO staff are now generally productive and constructive, albeit with a few exceptions. During the adaptation phase, several HoDs had to re-organise the structure of functional and thematic sections to increase internal coherence and ease the tensions between staff. For instance, in Ethiopia, the political (understaffed) section and the governance section work on very close topics and divide their tasks in a coordinated manner, regardless of staff's affiliation. In South Africa all senior staff meet together in a Monday management meeting with the HoD chairing, and informal contact to leverage ideas, resources, or contacts to support each other's dossiers is common. In other cases, a peace and security section was

²¹ Herrero Cangas and Keijzer (2011), and Sherriff and Hauck (2012).

²² This co-ordination of human resources management in delegations counts with two separate working groups or channels: On the one hand, EUDEL involves the administration of the EEAS and DEVCO and the central services of the Commission. On the other hand, COMDEL co-ordinates positions between the various Commission services with staff in delegations.

²³ Herrero Cangas and Keijzer (2011).

²⁴ Some interviewees note that in EUDs to multilateral organisations, Operational and Political sections tend to work extremely well together: they are so exposed that they cannot afford showing divisions. Interview with EEAS staff, July 2013.

²⁵ Interviews in South Africa, 2014 and also Sherriff and Hauck (2012), p. 35.

staffed with EEAS and DEVCO personnel. There are also accounts beyond the countries visited whereby an eroded legitimacy of a HoD spurred further tensions between DEVCO and EEAS staff, leading to dysfunctional management. We therefore assume that tensions between staff can be eased if managed swiftly and creatively by the Head of Delegation. Yet, in some ways the EU institutions (EEAS/DEVCO) are set up to compete meaning that there is a constant requirement of such creative management from the HoD as well as a good collective attitude from EUD staff.

Finally, a number of interviews conducted for this study also reveal that EUD staff actually value the “biodiversity” of their new working environment, and appreciate the expertise brought by their fellow national seconded diplomats (NSD) – while the NSD also are generally impressed by the qualities, network contacts and “Brussels knowledge” of their Commission counterparts. One of the challenges for EUDs will thus be to spread a common EU diplomatic practice, from analysis and reporting down to compliance and security rules (via the new MATEUS system).²⁶ Local staff also contributes to this diversity and are a key resource, particularly with regards keeping an “institutional memory” and also have their own in country networks which are very useful to the EUD. While heterogeneity could become an asset in creating a common EU foreign affairs culture, the variety of statuses (between contractual agents, civil servants, EEAS and Commission staff) is also a source of concerns.²⁷ Formal systems and approaches to really create a common ‘all EU’ ethos in EU Delegations remain limited due to career paths, training opportunities and line management more related to individual DGs or national foreign ministries rather than following a common form.²⁸

2. Relations between EU Delegations and other EU institutions

The added value that EUDs bring to the ensemble of EU institutions largely depends on the quality of their interaction. In this section we look into how EUDs relate to the EEAS and DEVCO Headquarters and some Directorate Generals (DGs) of the European Commission.²⁹

2.1. Relations with Headquarters: EEAS and DEVCO

The quality of the EUD-HQ relationship can be measured by different indicators, including: the extent to which HQ decisions prevail over advice from EUDs/HoD; coherence of instructions received from HQ; timeliness and quality of support from HQ to EUDs; frequency of communication and information sharing; the diplomatic management of visiting high level political officials; the involvement (or not) of the EUD in inter-service task forces at HQ level; level of coordination and joint approach; and the efficiency of human resources management. Our assumption is that trust and good coordination between the field and HQ levels is essential for EUDs's to gain political assertiveness.

In countries of strategic importance to the EU, fragile or conflict situations, the relevant Managing Directorate as well as the Cabinet will closely follow developments, and will therefore have a more prominent role in steering the EUD / HoDs line.³⁰ In a country where EU crisis management operations are deployed, EUDs coordinate with EEAS Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) structures and member states but are usually not staffed to contribute adequately to this dimension of EU's external action.³¹ In a EU Strategic Partnership country like South Africa where visits from Commissioners are not

²⁶ MATEUS is the Management and Assessment Tool for European External Action Service Security, a quantified web-based programme being developed to manage EEAS and EUDs security. EEAS presentation to the security committee, 11 September 2013.

²⁷ Interviews with EUDs and HQ staff, November-December 2013.

²⁸ Interviews including with EUD staff in South Africa, January 2014.

²⁹ Relations with other EU institutions, bodies and agencies dealing with external action (European Parliament, European Court of Justice, OLAF, European Investment Bank, FRONTEX, Joint Research Centre, etc.) require further examination and are thus not covered in this note. In countries where it operates, relations with ECHO autonomous offices follow various degrees of coordination and participation to be assessed on a case by case basis.

³⁰ Interview with EEAS staff, July 2013. DG DEVCO has invested the past three years to developing new harmonised guidelines on programme cycle management, but has not yet released the final product in its totality.

³¹ EEAS review recommends more security experts should be detached to EUDs, p. 6.

infrequent and there is a regular Summit, different dynamics prevail. In other cases HoDs have a large amount of flexibility in defining their roles and initiatives.

Yet, recent research identified a lack of orientation from HQ on crucial issues (such as how to conduct political analysis and political reporting) and some tensions between the EUDs and HQ in relation to aid programming.³² A number of EUDs complained that HQ/DEVCO had adopted a prescriptive top-down approach with regards the choice of priority sectors in aid programming, disregarding advice by the EUD and compromising their dialogue efforts with both partner authorities and actors.³³ Yet in some settings EUDs – having the contextual knowledge of the country – are recognised by Member States and by National Stakeholders as fighting their case extremely well with the HQ.

2.2. Examples of relations with other European Commission DGs: MARE and HOME

EU Delegations are reportedly the primary source of political information on a given country context for European Commission's Brussels-based DGs. EU Delegations provide useful assistance organising the logistics of HQ missions for DGs such as Climate Change, Environment and Marine (MARE) and Home Affairs (HOME). A question often raised is whether there is sufficient access and interaction between EUDs and thematic DGs. This question is particularly relevant in EUDs that do not have staff from specific DGs other than DG DEVCO or in cases where the HoD is a Member State diplomat and not a former Commission official. Yet, it seems that the lines of communication are sufficiently open between the DG Cabinets and the HoDs in strategic countries.

Interaction with DG HOME takes place mainly in the framework of Mobility Partnerships negotiations. Thanks to EUDs' country context and political analyses, DG HOME defines and leads in the EU's political negotiation, leaving the Delegation in the second line. EUDs contribute to the action list to implement Mobility Partnerships; they identify priority projects and ensure synergies with Member States. EUDs have generally very limited capacity to deal with migration issues and can request an exploratory mission from HQ. Amongst the few detached DG HOME officers working in EU Delegations one operates in Morocco.

EUDs mostly interact with DG MARE in the framework of the negotiation of Fisheries Partnership Agreements (FPAs), although they are only informed once the negotiations are concluded. Six MARE attachés (contract agents) are seconded to EUDs of Morocco, Mauritania, Senegal (covering Cote d'Ivoire, Cabo Verde, Guinea Bissau), Mauritius, Fiji and Gabon (with a focus on piracy). They receive instructions from and directly report to the Commission in Brussels, but have a double hat as they also fit within the EUD organisation chart. Depending on the country and the level of priority of fisheries for the country, they will be placed within the Rural Development section, although in some occasions they report directly to the HoD. They at times also manage specific "sector budget supports" to the Ministry of Fisheries' policy reform process (as this is an integral component of the FPA); this "budget support" is disconnected from DEVCO operations, raising questions about overall coherence of the EUD work. There are also questions regarding whether – given reduced capacities in EUDs – the existing sections can manage a productive two-way relationship with other line DGs and simultaneously do the substantial work they have in front of them from their own DGs.

3. EU Delegations and Member States

3.1. EUDs added value

The EUDs are valued for being "information hubs" and producing political and economic reports, which give smaller Member States access to important information and analysis they may otherwise not have. EUDs reports allow Member States with stronger analytical capacity in country to complement their own reporting. In some countries the EUD is valued for sharing its own reporting, information and analysis with Member States. In addition, the EUDs also at times monitor the local press and share their summaries with the Member States. Yet the extent to which this is a two-way street with EU Member States embassies sharing their analysis with the EUD seems to be limited. This EUD capacity in reporting also gives the opportunity

³² Interview with EEAS staff, July 2013.

³³ Herrero, Galeazzi & Krätke (2013).

for some Member States embassies to divert some capacity to other bilateral concerns rather than reporting.³⁴

For small Member States with limited diplomatic representation, the broad geographical coverage of the EU Delegations network has a clear added value. If Member States cover several countries through one embassy³⁵ they may find it useful to have access to the reports and press analysis of the EUDs in the countries they are responsible for as well as invitations and preparations for particular aspects of Political Dialogue. For Member States that have international ambitions but lack financial and staff resources, the EUDs can also be used as an influence multiplier, by appointing a national seconded diplomat as Head of Delegations in a country of particular interest. For those Member States that have their own wide diplomatic network, the added value of the EUD is of a different nature: it can be seen as a channel through which they promote a national position, a provider of funds to flank a political stance and confront the host country's leadership while not taking this risk to damage bilateral relations themselves³⁶. How EUDs manage this wide range of expectations requires more thorough examination on a case-by-case basis.

3.2. EUDs new coordination and leadership role

EU Delegations are responsible for coordinating and chairing all EU working groups and meetings in third countries.³⁷ The EEAS does the same at the level of the Council of the European Union, for external relations working groups (with some exceptions, including the Development working group (CODEV) and the Africa Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Working Group).³⁸ Before the Lisbon Treaty entered into force, this role was fulfilled by the Member State holding the rotating EU Presidency.³⁹

In most countries, there is little resistance from Member States to allow the HoD to fulfil this coordination role. Member States also welcome the consistency, which is seen as an added value by many. Yet some diplomats working for small states may see the EUD presidency role as a loss of power and visibility in comparison to the rotating presidency system (an argument heard also at headquarters level).⁴⁰ There are some cases where Member States have maintained a strong grip over the EU agenda, thereby undermining the EUD's credibility and harming its reputation vis-à-vis the partner government. Whether the rotating presidency has also transferred more 'ownership' of the EU agenda to Member States in the past and has contributed to creating a EU common spirit, which – in comparison - a constant EUD chair does not generate, deserves further examination.

A number of indicators deserve special attention when assessing whether the EUD is "in the lead" and effectively and efficiently fulfils its coordination role.

- EUD's ambition and influence in agenda setting when chairing EU coordination meetings⁴¹ and the extent to which communication between EUD and HQ can counteract the influence of MS national interests in setting the agenda.
- Effective leadership in the coordination of EU bilateral and multilateral aid. EU Joint programming of aid is a case in point.⁴² The (lack of) progress in actually getting EU Joint Framework Documents is a key indicator of the real appetite for the EU Member States to share information, analysis and jointly articulate values and interests at the country level. In some countries, Member States can actually

³⁴ Interviews with Member States in South Africa, February 2014.

³⁵ For example, the embassies of some of the EU Member States in Pretoria, South Africa simultaneously are responsible for other African countries such as Angola, Mauritius, Botswana, Namibia, Lesotho, Swaziland etc.

³⁶ Interviews in Ethiopia, 2011, interview with ECDPM staff, October 2013 and DRN, ECDPM & ODI (2011).

³⁷ Other smaller sub-groupings of EU states exist also at the country level e.g. Nordic group and a Visegrád group but these do not have the weight or responsibility of the EU collectively even if they are sometimes used to consolidate positions.

³⁸ European External Action Service (2013).

³⁹ In October 2013, with one exception (Gambia), all EUDs in Africa were in charge of the permanent EU presidency.

⁴⁰ Interviews in Ethiopia and South Africa, November 2013. See also European Parliament, Directorate-General for External Policies, Policy Department (2013), p. 42 ('The organisation and functioning of the European External Action Service').

⁴¹ Interview on situation in Central African Republic for ADE-ECDPM (2011), Annex. Interview with EEAS staff, July 2013 on the EUD in New York.

⁴² Galeazzi, Helly and Krätke (2013).

prefer ad-hoc donor coordination groups like the G-19 in Mozambique, rather than EU coordination frameworks.⁴³

- In the field of economic and investment diplomacy, the ability of the EUD to create a collaborative trend (through the shape of EU business forums/association, chambers of commerce) amongst national European investors and business representatives.⁴⁴
- Shared intelligence, joint reporting and analysis (through Political Economy Analysis – PEA - or Conflict Analysis exercises for instance) in addition to the preparation of HoMs reports are also useful indications of the role played by EUDs.⁴⁵ Initial interviews carried out in a number of countries tend to converge towards the fact that EUDs do share more with Member States than the other way around, since they are under some obligation to do so, as per the treaties.⁴⁶
- The added value, effectiveness and spread of secured EU communication systems used by the EUDs and Member States' embassies could also point at the level of efforts made to ensure safe internal EU communication. For example, are secure EU wide IT systems adopted for rapid dissemination of information and decision-making? And if so, how important are they?
- The existence of EU compounds (like the one in Nigeria or in Tanzania), could be a way to improve sharing of information amongst the EU family, and facilitate EUDs coordination role. Functional issues like housing the EU Delegation in one building and having good meeting rooms should not be dismissed lightly.
- In some countries EUDs have considerably more staff and expertise⁴⁷ than Member States' embassies, which could also increase their relative power.
- The ability and willingness of the EUD to have and share its privileged access to national stakeholders with the Member States.
- The degree to which Member States with a strong presence and national interests in a third country, actually control, lead, or influence the EU agenda.

4. EU Delegations' relations with partner countries

In this section we will look into the factors that influence the relation between a EU Delegation and the host country, authorities and society.

4.1. EU Delegations and the host country institutions

Historically the delegations of the European Commission in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of states focused on their relationship with the National Authorising Officer (NAO) in charge of the Cotonou Agreement and more specifically the management of European Development Funds. This individual has usually been a senior Minister in government (often the Minister of Finance or National Planning). In many respects they keep doing so in this region, but the widening of the scope of their activities and the increasingly political dimension of their work after Lisbon are transforming the way they interact with third countries' authorities. In South Africa, the relationship extends well beyond the NAO - still important given the extent of interests - to many other parts of the government because the EU has a Strategic Partnership and specific legal agreement (Trade, Development and Cooperation Agreement).

To a large extent the EUDs are the front line and the face of the European Union abroad, together with Member States. Their image is made of collective and individual reputation built over time out of concrete experiences, perceptions, stereotypes and symbolic events.⁴⁸ In many instances the work of the EU is derived from the attitude of EUD staff (arrogant or respectful), their participation (or not) in key events

⁴³ Interviews in Mozambique, 2011.

⁴⁴ Interviews in Nigeria, 2011 and Ethiopia, November 2013, South Africa, February 2014.

⁴⁵ PEA analyses were conducted by EUDs in Senegal, Cameroun, Guinea Conakry, Zambia, Ethiopia and Laos.

⁴⁶ Interviews on situation in Sierra Leone, ADE-ECDDPM (2011), Annex. Interviews, Ethiopia, November 2013;

Interviews in South Africa, February 2014.

⁴⁷ This expertise can also be provided by local staff with a good contextual knowledge and network.

⁴⁸ Interviews of ECDPM staff, 2013. and Particip-ADE-DIE-DRN-ECDDPM-ODI (2012); Interviews in South Africa, 2014.

where they are expected or invited, their reactions (dismissive or attentive) to requests or remarks by African counterparts, all gathered into anecdotes and memories about “the EU” or Europe.⁴⁹ The image given by the EUD is therefore a dimension not to be neglected. It is sometimes seen as the most important donor, a strong and biased political actor, an agency at the service of Member States or, alternatively, as a more neutral and reliable partner in comparison to some of them.⁵⁰ At times in Africa the EU struggles to move beyond being seen through the lens of the colonial legacy and as a donor, despite the efforts by the EUD.⁵¹

An indicator of the relations between EUDs and host countries is the frequency of substantial political dialogue and their ability to address contentious issues while not jeopardising trust and relations with authorities at the highest political levels. This is particularly relevant in the case of implementation of the Articles 8 and 96 of the Cotonou agreement and in settings where relationships are sensitive and trust can easily be eroded.

From the perspective of the national authorities, coherence of the EU, as demonstrated for example in joint demarches of the EUD together with interested Member States has the advantage of not having to interact on similar issues with several Member States. This decreases pressure on government capacity.⁵² On the other hand, incoherence of Member State positions can also be a source of negotiation power from the viewpoint of partner countries as it may open possibilities for ‘divide-and-conquer’ tactics whereby the national government plays different EU Member States and the Delegation off against each other.

Lastly, the capacity of the EUDs to achieve win-win results with the host country (negotiation skills, personality and network of the HoD, quality of senior but also junior EUD staff, political clout, and coherence of the EU family) appears as paramount when studying its role and performance. Following the above, one assumption can be put forward: the image of the EU abroad is made in-country, and is still largely determined in Africa by a colonial past and more recent donor-recipient dynamics. However, the behaviour of the EUD, Brussels headquarters and Member States ‘representatives’ will also influence it.

4.2. Delegations and civil society

The European Commission’s most recent communication on Civil Society⁵³ reflects EU’s ambition to engage strategically with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to support policy reform and political change processes⁵⁴, and to move beyond a purely technical and financial support role. A similar perspective is given in the EEAS and Commission’s 2011 communication on human rights and democracy.⁵⁵

The extent to which the EU engages strategically with civil society largely depends on EU Delegations capacity, quality and motivation of its staff to implement commitments, and creatively translate policy into practice.

Key indicators of EUD success in this new role include:

- Whether the EUD sufficiently invests in understanding the complex relations between civil society and the state and is able to translate this knowledge into political savvy interventions and an engagement strategy;
- The extent to which the EUD has regular contact with a broad spectrum of CSOs including think tanks, and business forums, beyond “the usual suspects”/EC aid beneficiaries and engages in sustained and quality dialogue with key CSOs on issues linked to: key public policy reform processes (domestic dialogue processes) and the programming of EU aid;

⁴⁹ Interviews in Ethiopia, 2013; Mozambique, 2011 and South Africa, 2014.

⁵⁰ ADE-ECDPM (2011). Case studies of Cote d’Ivoire and Sierra Leone. Interviews, September, October 2013.

⁵¹ Interviews in South Africa, 2014.

⁵² In South Africa there are 22 Member States present requiring the attention of South African officials.

⁵³ EC COM (2012) 492: The roots of democracy and sustainable development: Europe’s engagement with Civil Society in external relations.

⁵⁴ The EU is committed to pursuing three key objectives: to promote a conducive environment for CSOs in partner countries, to support meaningful and structured participation of CSOs in domestic policies of partner countries, international processes, and EU programming cycles and to increase CSOs capacity to perform as independent and effective development actors in EU’s partner countries.

⁵⁵ European Commission and High Representative of the European Union for Foreign and Security Policy (2011).

- Whether the EUD is able to use its political weight (in the framework of political and policy dialogue with partner country's authorities) to address issues of accountability, space for participation, transparency, human rights, etc.;
- Whether the EUD has devised a political risk management strategy (including on how to deal with the consequences of political support to CSOs, and how to protect partner CSOs against abusive authorities);
- The extent to which relations with civil society are within the remit of CSO focal points only (and linked to projects financed through the thematic programmes), or are integrated within the broad EU intervention strategy (geographic instrument's focal sectors; new aid modalities; linked to domestic policy dialogue processes and the monitoring work of the Political Section);
- Whether EUDs have the necessary skills for effective engagement with domestic politics (this includes skills in Political Economy Analysis - PEA - and monitoring political contexts, building formal and informal networks, *inter alia* with key power brokers; playing convening, facilitating and brokering roles).

EC instruments have been largely criticised for being too rigid and slow, cumbersome for implementing partners and risk averse. This holds particularly true for supporting governance processes or reaching out to non-traditional local actors, particularly small-scale organisations (with real legitimacy on the ground but no capacity to comply to sophisticated bureaucratic procedures). The EC has recently made efforts to improve the flexibility of existing instruments in the framework of the revision of financial regulation. It will be interesting to assess the extent to which the use of the new and more flexible procedures allow the EUDs to engage more strategically with CSOs. Yet, beyond the more flexible procedures for financial instruments the EUDs can also engage with civil society acting as a provider of expertise, networks and being open and transparent in their communication on EU issues – a role the EUD in South Africa seems to play rather well and which is seen as having significant added-value by civil society actors there.⁵⁶

Assumptions to be further assessed

Our preliminary findings allow us to formulate a set of assumptions on what is likely to influence EU Delegations' ability to promote a more coherent and results-oriented EU external action. These assumptions will be tested through future research initiatives on EU Delegations that will focus primarily but not exclusively on Africa. These assumptions could be validated, significantly nuanced or even fundamentally challenged. Only further research will provide more insight.

Heads of Delegation

1. The functioning and performance of an EUD is largely dependent on the background of the Head of Delegation, and whether s/he earns credibility from his own staff, Member States, and the host country;
2. The HoD recruitment process remains opaque and increases the risk of Member States pushing for either weak or nationally biased Heads of Delegations;

Staffing issues

3. Bringing together EC staff and national seconded diplomats is enriching and favours the creation of a common EU foreign affairs culture;
4. Relations between EEAS and COM staff working in EUDs are generally constructive. But unresolved sources of tension lead to a progressive disconnect between operational and political sections, and a gradual de-motivation of staff, which in its turn negatively affects EUDs performance in the long-run;

Relations with Headquarters

5. Good coordination, communication, and trust between the staff of EEAS HQ and EUDs are essential to ensure political assertiveness across the whole spectrum of EU's external action.

⁵⁶ Interviews South Africa including with civil society and investment platforms, 2014.

6. EUDs under the “spotlight” will see a more prominent role played by the relevant Managing Directorate and the Cabinet in determining the line to follow; this reduces the risk of interference by Member States.
7. Commission's Directorate Generals with a strong external relations component will continue to rely on EUDs for logistical support, and retain the technical expertise and the “diplomatic leadership” in relations with the country authorities.

Member States' dynamics

8. Over time and provided that EUDs dispose of the sufficient human resources, the EU agenda in third country will increasingly be defined by EU Delegations, with input from HoM meetings.
9. EUD gradually earn the trust of Member States, who increasingly engage with EUDs in a two-way relationship of information flows.
10. In some countries the EU agenda is strongly influenced by Member States national interests, thereby undermining EUD leadership role and weakening its credibility vis-à-vis host countries.

Relations with partner countries

11. EU Delegations are gradually developing the necessary internal capacity (and political willingness) to engage strategically with CSOs, but a policy-practice gap remains.
12. By and large, the image of the EU is made in-country, and is largely influenced by a colonial past (and donor recipient dynamics), but also by the behaviour of individuals (staff in EUDs, HQ, Member States), and the extent to which the EUD manages to earn credibility vis-à-vis the country authorities that it is in the lead of EU external action.

The general assumption coming out of this first framing study is that the 2014-2020 period will be a testing phase for a number of experiments in EU's external action at the level of EU Delegations. EU Delegations can be the best of both worlds – a long-term, ‘whole-of-EU’ approach to complement the EU Member States diplomatic assets – or the worst – disjointed technocratic approach driven by short-term bilateral political agendas.

Only more detailed research and knowledge on the role of EUDs will help to better understand EU's external action and to strengthen it for the benefit of development results and more generally. Forthcoming publications will focus on more specific crosscutting themes based on field research and more precise stories.⁵⁷

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⁵⁷ The extent and focus of this work will be dependent on funding available.

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