



Around Europe

Quaker Council for European Affairs

No. 339 February 2012

The EEAS: First Year Score Card - Room for Improvement

In December 2010, QCEA cautiously welcomed the establishment of the EEAS and set out the many challenges it faced at that crucial moment: organisational issues, budget issues, recruitment and training issues, and the daily working routines in teams that have multiple lines of accountability.

In December 2011, Catherine Ashton, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Vice President of the European Commission, published a report to the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on progress made. Two things are striking: the report was published on 22 December 2011, a date which could look as if it was intended to give it as little publicity as possible. The other is that the Foreign Ministers of twelve Member States wrote to the High Representative on 8 December 2011 setting out only thinly veiled criticism of the progress made and of Catherine Ashton's leadership of the EEAS in what is referred to as a non-paper.

Ashton names several challenges she has faced in the first year:

- The global economic crisis and the tensions within the euro zone
- The Arab Spring
- The acute budget pressure faced by Member States and the consequences this has for the diplomatic services of Member States.

All three challenges should provide an ideal context in which to demonstrate the importance of a coherent, efficient, effective and coordinated approach to foreign policy within the European Union.

Agenda setting

The High Representative sets the agenda for the EU's foreign policy. This role, previously taken by the rotating presidency, is vital. It involves both preparing and chairing the Foreign Affairs Council and appointing the chairs of the foreign policy working groups in the EEAS. These chairs, in turn, set the agenda for their working groups and are thus equally well placed to drive forward the priorities set by the High Representative. She has appointed the chairs of all these working groups. But in the non-paper it is suggested that annual agenda planning for the Foreign Affairs Council could be an important tool. This

suggestion is so obvious that the fact that there appears a need to make it is heavy criticism indeed.

Representation at the UN

In May 2011 the UN General Assembly passed a resolution which gives the EU an upgraded status allowing its representatives to make interventions during sessions; they can be invited to participate in the general debate of the General Assembly; and EU communications which relate to the work of the Assembly can be circulated as documents of the Assembly. In short, it gives the EU the possibility to present a common position. This is real progress. It is maybe too early to judge whether it is being used well.

Speaking with one voice?

What is required for the EU to speak with one voice? A common analysis across all relevant services: but

because some services involved in foreign policy and external affairs are not in the EEAS and don't appear to take briefings from it, there is still a gap.

Coherent management of funding: but as the external action instruments are still being managed in three different places (at least) there is still a gap.

Cooperation between everyone involved in external relations and foreign policy: but the staff in the EU Delegations still get instruction from Commission Departments in Brussels (other than the EEAS) and the Heads of Delegations (who are part of the EEAS) don't always get copied into these. The twelve Foreign Ministers rightly criticize this. The fact that Ashton is a Vice President of the Commission should mean that she could do something about this.

Involvement of and cooperation with Member States: there must be a question about the relationship between Ashton and the Foreign Ministers of Member States if twelve of them think it necessary to produce a non-paper in advance of her annual report.

Conclusions

For twelve months, during which there have been a number of significant global events, the top brass of

"Cooperation between everyone involved in external relations and foreign policy is still needed"



the European Union's Foreign Policy has been bogged down in managing a large scale organizational transition. If nothing else, this has undermined the ability of the EU to be seen as a global actor of consequence.

The EEAS now has 3611 staff, of which about two

thirds are working in Delegations and the other one third in Brussels. This is a huge resource and it is hoped that in the coming year and years citizens will see more action, more visibility and more impact.

Martina Weitsch

Election of the new Commissioner for Human Rights at the Council of Europe

The Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights at the Council of Europe was established in 1999 as an independent, non-judicial institution within the Council of Europe, mandated to promote awareness of, and respect for, human rights in the 47 member states.

The first Commissioner for Human Rights was Alvaro Gil-Robles, a Spanish national who held the post until March 2006. He was succeeded by Thomas Hammarberg, a Swede, whose mandate expires shortly. To give you an idea of the work undertaken by the current Commissioner in 2011, he carried out 19 visits to member states, and attended and organised numerous events throughout the year. He also published Issue Papers, Opinions, Recommendations,

Statements and Thematic Reports on human rights themes to raise awareness and give advice to member states on the protection of human rights. For instance in June, the Commissioner published a report on discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity in Europe. In his latest "Human Rights Comment" of 2 February, Commissioner Hammarberg writes that 'The right to conscientious objection to military service should be guaranteed in all parts of Europe. He concludes with 'Conscientious objection is a human right. It is thus high time that all member states complied with their commitments and recognised this right effectively.' Having lobbied for many years for this right to be recognised, QCEA is greatly heartened by the Commissioner's Comment.

Much of Commissioner Hammarberg's work focussed on steps to be taken to protect certain groups in society from discrimination. These included people with disabilities, older persons, Roma, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons, asylum seekers and immigrants. Some of the problems he encountered relate directly to the current economic crisis and have worsened since 2008, child poverty being a case in point. Commissioner Hammarberg felt strongly that his Office suffered from insufficient funds, a familiar refrain at the Council of Europe which only has a budget of a little over 237 million euro for 2012 to



New Commissioner for Human Rights Nils Muižnieks

cover its normal programmes and the running of the European Court of Human Rights (This works out at 0.161 per cent of the EU's budget of 147.2 billion euro for 2012). Some additional monies do come in the form of voluntary contributions and partial agreements of which some

member states are members. The five major contributors to the Council of Europe budget are, in alphabetical order: France, Germany, Italy, the Russian Federation and the UK.

The Commissioner for Human Rights is elected by the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) from a list of three candidates drawn up by the Committee of Ministers for a non-renewable term of six years. The three candidates this time were: Pierre-Eves Monette (Belgium), Nils Muižnieks (Latvia) and Frans

Timmermans (Netherlands). Voting took place on 24 January in Strasbourg during the January PACE session. Of the 239 votes cast, Pierre-Eves Monette received 27 votes, Nils Muižnieks 120 votes and Frans Timmermans 92 votes. Nils Muižnieks was therefore elected as the new Commissioner for Human Rights and will take up his post on 1 April 2012.

From 2002-2004, Nils Muižnieks was the Latvian government minister responsible for social integration, anti-discrimination, minority rights and civil society development. Since 2005, he has been Latvia's member of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and its chairman as from January 2010. In his letter of candidacy, Nils Muižnieks said, 'I think it is high time for someone from the Eastern half of Europe to assume a prominent European human rights post such as that of the Commissioner. Those who helped to build freedom in a post-communist context have a special contribution to make to European human rights culture.' Both Alvaro Gil-Robles and Thomas Hammarberg fulfilled their mandates with distinction - and without fear or favour - they will be hard acts to follow. We wish the new Commissioner well in his important task.

Liz Scurfield



Daylight Madness: The UK's Lacklustre Green Transformation

The British Prime Minister says we are in this together, but honestly, who believes him? David Cameron also claimed his coalition government would be "the greenest ever". Given that 80 per cent of our greenhouse gas emissions are energy-related, that all the energy efficiency technology and know-how is mature and immediately available, surely there are reasons to be optimistic?

Sadly, no (or at least, not by objective standards of the available potential). Whether it's scrapping the Sustainable Development Commission, cutting renewable energy and energy efficiency schemes (for example, the Warm Front scheme), failing to properly capitalise the Green Investment Bank, assisting the Canada lobby to exempt high-emitting tar sands, rupturing the UK's near-term climate budgets, or allowing the 'Big Six' energy companies to exploit consumers, you'd be hard-pressed to accept that these are the actions of a sympathetic government overly concerned about its green credentials.

Here is a snapshot of recent developments:

The win-win solution...

•The Green Deal - "Putting energy consumers back in control of their bills and banishing Britain's draughty homes." Chris Huhne, Energy and Climate Change Secretary

•According to the influential Committee on Climate Change, energy bills are rising due to the increased cost of gas, and not due to green polices.

•Costs for developing clean, sustainable electricity, heating and transport will be very similar to replacing old polluting power stations.

•There is no downside to energy efficiency; it means a better quality of life, comfortable homes, reduced energy bills, more jobs in your community, and less oil to import from the volatile Middle East.

•The cost per unit of energy via energy efficiency: 1.3p. The cost per unit of energy via solar: 13p.

•Thanks to burden sharing and UK strong leadership on the 1997 Kyoto protocol, the long-running negotiations would be in an even worse state than they are today.

Could do better...

•Campaigners warn that the Green Deal will likely be rejected by householders because of its reliance on commercial loans with interest rates of 8% or more.

•Consumer price inflation rose more than expected last year, driven by a jump in average gas bills of 13% and an increase of 7.5% in electricity bills.

•Barclays and RBS (84% owned by the British public) account for more than 10 per cent of the total investment in coal-fired plants since 2005.

•The Coalition has cut winter fuel allowance for the elderly, and reduced in scope the Renewable Heat Incentive, as well as the Carbon Trust, instead gifting £250m in energy relief to big business.

•The Coalition is adamant about cutting the solar Feed-in Tariff (FITs) from 43.3p to 21p.

•Prime Minister David Cameron is not planning to attend Rio+20, despite the date of the summit being changed to avoid a clash with the Queen's diamond jubilee.

And as if that wasn't enough, the Carbon Reduction Commitment has now essentially been transformed into a carbon tax with revenues going to the Treasury instead of scheme participants.

Today, we face a stark choice between a political economy based on inequality and greed, or one based on just and sustainable relationships and reverence for the ecosystems to which we are an integral part. Instead of being earnest and courageously taking advantage of the economic crisis to cheaply and genuinely transform the

United Kingdom into being the low-carbon champion it proclaims itself, Britain has opted for unprecedented carbon emissions and increases in joblessness, energy costs, and further inequality.

By hook, or by crook, and in all likelihood, the UK Coalition will indeed be the greenest ever. But not through concerted action, ambition or vision; only because there has never been an authentically green government. Whether this is sufficiently responsible to mitigate the possibility of irreversible and potentially catastrophic climate change, it is too early to say. But of one thing you can be absolutely certain: our present complacency about sustainable energy security will in the future look like daylight madness.



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Paul Parrish



Council of Europe: Structure, History and Issues in European Politics

Book review

In this new book published by Routledge, Dr Martyn Bond, a founder member of QCEA and visiting professor of European politics and policy at the University of London, has provided a much needed introduction to the Council of Europe, the older but lesser known cousin of the European Union.

This informative book takes the reader through the maze of European institutions, treaties and issues in a clear and readable way, introducing the Council of Europe in the wider context of European politics. Bond outlines the structure of the organisation through its “four pillars;” the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe (CLRAE), the Committee of Ministers and the Conference of INGOs (International Non-Governmental Organisations).

The soft power role of the Council of Europe in promoting and protecting democracy, human rights and the rule of law, in contrast to the economic or military concerns of other European organisations, is discussed in detail. Two chapters are dedicated to examining the proactive and reactive mechanisms for human rights protection, including the Council of Europe’s most famous initiative, the European Court of Human Rights. Bond quotes former Secretary General Terry Davis’s comparison with the EU; “the EU is concerned with the standard of living, while the

Council of Europe is concerned with the quality of life.”

Bond explains the structural and political development of the Council of Europe, helpfully setting this within its historical context. He discusses how and why the Council of Europe developed in parallel with the EU, the role it played in the end of the Cold War and the amalgamation of the former Eastern bloc states into Europe.

This much needed book on the (for some) little-known Council of Europe provides a comprehensive and very readable overview of this vast 47 member state organisation. As well as outlining its historical development, it discusses the wide structural and budgetary reforms presently being carried out and the role that the Council of Europe can and does play in combating terrorism, addressing immigration and social cohesion, and other vital European and indeed global issues of the 21st century. Look out for Quaker references, such as an allusion to William Penn’s forward-thinking essay in 1693 on peace in Europe through a continental alliance and a mention of QCEA as a member of the Conference of INGOs with participatory status at the Council of Europe.

Hannah Slater

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