

# EUROPEAN EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE

## A Concise Overview



The **European External Action Service (EEAS)**, established on 1 January 2011 after the Treaty of Lisbon took effect, aims to unify and coordinate EU foreign policy. Under the leadership of the High Representative/Vice-President (HR/VP), the EEAS works closely with EU member states' foreign and defense ministries and major EU bodies, while maintaining partnerships with the United Nations and other international organizations.

Central to shaping EU foreign policy, the EEAS manages civilian and military operations and responds swiftly to international crises. It champions democratic values, human rights, sustainable development, and a rules-based international order.

### Roles of the European External Action Service



The EEAS manages a broad portfolio, developing legislative and policy responses to global challenges and significant events.



Supported by the EEAS, the HR/VP helps the Council and the Commission ensure consistency in EU actions and policies. The EEAS's coordination role primarily involves alignment with both the Commission and the Council, including the European Council.



Guided by the European Council's strategic directions, the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) directs the EU's external actions, with the HR/VP and EEAS overseeing policy implementation and follow-up.

### How the EEAS works

The EU fosters global diplomatic relations and works with key partners through the **Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI)**, which manages funds for crucial EU external actions. Reporting directly to the HR/VP and collaborating with the EEAS and European Commission Directorates, the FPI supports the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy by addressing foreign policy demands, crisis management, supporting democracy, preventing conflict material trade, and tackling global security threats.

#### The EU's Election Observation Missions (EOM) support

democracy, human rights, and civil society globally, excluding areas under the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), such as EU Member States.

The EU Special Representative for Human Rights strives to promote a pro-human rights agenda, enhancing the effectiveness, visibility, and coherence of the EU's external human rights policies.

#### The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) was replaced

by the Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), allocating EUR 1.5 billion for human rights and democracy for 2021–2027.

The EU's Global Human Rights Sanctions program targets severe human rights violations and abuses worldwide.



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SEAL  
service européen pour l'action extérieure

## Composition of the EEAS

Based in Brussels, the European External Action Service (EEAS) merges expertise from EU officials, local personnel worldwide, and diplomats from the EU's 27 member states.

It's headed by the **EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy**, who also serves as Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP), managing the EU's foreign and security policies and overseeing the European Defense Agency (EDA).

This **dual role** enhances coordination between the Commission and the member states' foreign policies, despite foreign policy primarily being a national prerogative under EU treaties.

The EEAS operates through **Geographical** and **Thematic Directorates** covering regions and global challenges like human rights and crisis response, and includes departments for Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) planning and crisis response.

The **EU Military Staff (EUMS)** within the EEAS provides military expertise, conducts strategic planning and reports to the EU Military Committee.

The **EEAS Crisis Response Centre**, staffed by 150 personnel including 70 Regional Security Officers, addresses global emergencies, demonstrating its critical role during the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical conflicts like Russia's aggression against Ukraine.

Additionally, the **EU Intelligence Analysis Centre (EU INTCEN)**, established in 2002 and under HR/VP authority since 2009, conducts intelligence gathering to support EU decision-making.

## To remember

The role of '**High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy**', established by the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1999, was expanded by the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009 to include Vice-Presidency of the European Commission, adding more responsibilities.

The HR/VP is appointed by a qualified majority of the European Council and must be approved by the Commission President.

This position ensures the EU's foreign policy is coherent, linking the Commission's roles in trade, development, and humanitarian aid with the member states' foreign policies.

Globally, 144 EU delegations, coordinated by the EEAS, act like diplomatic embassies and independently promote EU values and manage diplomatic relationships.

They handle political, economic, trade, human rights, and development cooperation in their host countries.

The EU also appoints Special Representatives to focus on specific issues or regions, distinguishing them from Ambassadors who manage bilateral relations.

The EEAS's Policy Coordination Division coordinates briefings for COREPER and prepares the High Representative's briefings for the European Council.

Alongside the EEAS, the Foreign Policy Instruments service (FPI) manages EU external action funding, addressing foreign policy needs, aiding countries in crisis, supporting global democracy, preventing trade in conflict materials, and addressing international security threats through the European Peace Facility.

