

UACES 42nd Annual Conference

Passau, 3-5 September 2012

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**‘In the face of adversity’: Explaining the attitudes of EEAS officials
vis-à-vis the new Service.**

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ABSTRACT

The establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS) by the Lisbon Treaty was preceded by time-consuming negotiations about the composition, organisation, budget and accountability of the service. In spite of the negative views among EEAS officials concerning the actual implementation of the reforms, they displayed a surprisingly positive attitude towards the new organisation and identified strongly with it. This contribution aims to explain this empirical puzzle by drawing on two different approaches to attitude formation: one based on material calculations and another one on socio-psychological factors. The paper shows that a narrow understanding of rationality based on short-term career-related calculations cannot account for the support that the EEAS garnered among its ranks since a majority of officials reported a negative impact in terms of careers prospects. An explanation of positive attitudes towards the EEAS thus needs to take into account a broader conception of ‘career prospects’, including other indicators such as reputation and job satisfaction. Moreover, this contribution shows how a strong identification with the European Union (EU) and a desire to make EU foreign policy work might also explain why officials profess strong support for the EEAS.

KEY WORDS: Attitudes; European External Action Service; European foreign policy; international civil servants; organisational reform.

INTRODUCTION

The establishment of the European External Action Service (EEAS) was preceded by time-consuming negotiations about the composition, organisation, budget and accountability of the new service. The uncertainty surrounding the structure and composition of the service was said to have created a lot of frustration among EEAS officials. For instance, Graham Avery (2011) summarised the situation in the following terms:

the EEAS has begun life with handicaps. The long delay in its creation has led to uncertainty and low morale among personnel transferred to the new service. Although they are to ‘carry out their duties and conduct themselves solely with the interests of the Union in mind’, the nationalism displayed by member states in setting up the service has given an unfortunate impression.

For its part, a Chatham House report stated that ‘[r]ivalries emerged among stakeholders competing for posts at the top of the new organisation. Sniping from member-state capitals, members of the European Parliament and some Commission insiders who are ambivalent

about the service's benefit have further undermined the [High Representative], and lowered EEAS morale' (Hemra *et al.*, 2011: 1). Despite these portrayals in the literature, we still know very little about the attitudes of EEAS officials towards their institution. Hence, this paper tackles two main questions: what attitudes have officials displayed towards the creation of the EEAS? And how can we explain these attitudes?

This contribution studies the establishment of the EEAS from the vantage point of officials themselves and, in this sense, it differs from existing research that has focused on the legal and institutional basis of the service, on the decisions taken relating to its establishment, and on the performance of the EEAS in the implementation of European foreign policy so far (see Duke, 2011; Koenig, 2011; Missiroli, 2010; Morillas, 2011; Vanhoonacker and Reslow, 2010; Wouters and Duquet 2012). The paper also seeks to contribute to the scholarship on the role of international bureaucracies using the EEAS as a case study (e.g. Bauer, 2011; Hooghe, 2011, Trondal *et al.*, 2010; Yi-Chong and Weller, 2008). Even though international institutions are 'central features of modern international relations' (Koremenos *et al.*, 2001: 761; Martin and Simmons, 1998), we still lack systematic studies that show how they work from an 'inside-out' perspective. In order to explain EEAS officials' attitudes, this contribution draws on rational choice and sociological approaches. These perspectives offer different explanations regarding attitudes towards organisational change. While both approaches conceive actors as being rational, the first approach understands rationality in instrumental and material terms and focuses on personal career opportunities and costs. For sociological approaches, on the other hand, rational calculations are based on a distinct ordering of preferences, whereby psycho-social factors such as identities and norms take precedence.

The paper starts with a brief discussion on the process of establishing the EEAS and spells out some of the key provisions regarding staff regulations. The next section then presents the empirical evidence regarding a) officials' attitudes about the implementation of the reforms and b) their overall support for the establishment of the EEAS. The findings show that in spite of the overwhelmingly negative press coverage and uncertainty surrounding the structure and composition of the EEAS, officials still displayed a surprisingly positive attitude towards the new service. In order to explain this conundrum, this contribution resorts to different perspectives to attitude formation, those emphasising career prospects and those that bring in identities and norms. The former would expect positive attitudes as a result of a utility calculus whereby joining the EEAS provides career benefits for those involved. The latter would expect such positive attitudes to be the result of identification with the European Union (EU) and the EEAS and normative consistency between norms held by individuals and those promoted by the EEAS. In this regard, the analysis of the empirical evidence points at some limitations of rationalist perspectives, which take a narrow understanding of career opportunities and costs. It also shows that in order to be able to account for officials' attitudes towards the EEAS, identities and norms need to be brought into the picture.

This contribution draws on empirical evidence obtained from semi-structured interviews and a closed-ended questionnaire with EEAS officials. In total, forty EEAS officials were interviewed and thirty four agreed to fill in the survey. Interviewees were selected taking into account variables such as nationality, gender, seniority within the organisation and unit of origin (coming from Directorate-General (DG) Relex, Council Secretariat and national ministries). Several rounds of interviews were conducted in Brussels and on the phone between November 2010 and February 2012. All interviews were anonymous; references in the text contain only a coded number.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE EEAS

Before discussing the specific attitudes of EEAS officials towards their institution, this section presents a few elements of the context in which the Service was established which will help understand the initial attitudes of those working for the EEAS: 1) the timeline of the reforms; 2) the political and institutional context; and 3) staff provisions contained in the Lisbon Treaty and subsequent decisions. First, the timeline for the establishment of the Service was certainly a challenging one. Although planning for the set up of the EEAS had begun after the signing of the Constitutional Treaty back in 2004 (Duke, 2009), it did not start in earnest until after the ‘yes’ vote at the Irish referendum in autumn 2009. As a result, arrangements had to be rushed in 2010 to make the 1 January 2011 deadline for the transfer of staff. This introduced additional pressures for those managing the transition process and created frustrations among those affected. On 1 January 2011, many EEAS staff still did not know what their specific role would be; the structure of the organisation was still in the making; and many posts remained vacant.

Second, one factor that shaped the EEAS – and that would have an impact on officials’ attitudes – were the intergovernmental and inter-institutional negotiations that preceded its establishment. The organisation’s blueprint that came out of these negotiations reflected many compromises reached between the member states and between the member states and EU institutions. For instance, it was agreed that member states’ diplomats were going to have substantial representation in the ranks of the Service to alleviate concerns of a Commission-dominated EEAS. This and other compromises were endorsed by the Council Decision of 26 July 2010 establishing the organisation and functioning of the EEAS (European Union, 2010a).

Third, it is important to examine some of the staff provisions that were agreed in 2010. The Lisbon Treaty did not provide much detail regarding the composition and conditions of the EEAS staff beyond stating that the Service ‘shall comprise officials from relevant departments of the General Secretariat of the Council and of the Commission as well as staff seconded from national diplomatic services of the Member States’ (Article 27, TEU Lisbon). The Council Decision of 26 July 2010 and the Staff Regulations adopted on 26 November 2010 (European Union, 2010a; 2010b) set down clearer parameters. In terms of composition, it was agreed that when the Service reached full capacity, officials from EU institutions should represent at least sixty percent at AD level (i.e. administrators) and that officials from the national diplomatic services of the member states should represent at least thirty percent of EEAS staff. In order to make up that figure, the Staff Regulations stated that, until June 2013, the EEAS would only recruit officials from the Council Secretariat and the Commission as well as staff from the diplomatic services of member states. From 1 July 2013, posts would be opened to officials from other EU institutions, such as the European Parliament.

As far as working conditions are concerned, Article 6.7 of the July Council Decision states that member states diplomats will be employed as temporary agents and will have the same ‘rights and obligations and be treated equally’ (European Union, 2010a: 35). The duration of employment for national diplomats has been set at eight years (previously, the limit for temporary agents was six years). The maximum duration of their contracts is four years renewable once. However, the Staff regulations allow for a two year extension, up to a total of ten years, in exceptional circumstances. The member states must provide their officials

with a ‘guarantee of immediate reinstatement at the end of their period of service to the EEAS’ (European Union, 2010a: 35). As far as recruitment is concerned, the Staff Regulations emphasise its meritocratic nature, but also that adequate geographical and gender balance should be ensured.

While the first appointments to senior positions in the EEAS structure and EU Delegations were made in September 2010, the transfer of officials from the Commission and the Secretariat General did not take place until 1 January 2011. A total of 1,643 permanent members of staff were transferred (see Table 1), with a total of around 2,805 staff, including national seconded officials, temporary agents and local agents. By the end of 2011, the EEAS had approximately 3,611 staff, including 1,551 working in Brussels and 2,060 in Delegations (EEAS, 2011: 8). The transfer ‘in block’ took place relatively smoothly, although most of these officials continued to be based in the same buildings of their institutions of origin, which meant that, initially, EEAS staff were scattered across eight buildings in Brussels. From February 2012, EEAS staff are being relocated to their common premises in the ‘Capital’ building.

Commission Brussels RELEX	Commission Brussels DEV	Commission Delegations RELEX	Council Secretariat	New posts 2010/2011	Total
585	93	436	411	118	1,643

Table 1: Transfer of Staff on 1 January 2011

Source: European Union (2010c).

The first year of operation of the EEAS was not an easy one. Alongside teething problems that go with any organisational change/merger, the EEAS had to operate in very difficult conditions. It first had to react to the unprecedented revolutions in North Africa. Then, as the economic crisis deepened, it witnessed how foreign policy was sidelined by European leaders’ efforts to save the common currency. The economic crisis affected foreign policy, not only by reducing the time for discussion, but also the resources available for diplomatic services across Europe and has resulted in defence cuts in the majority of member states. Yet, even acknowledging the newness of the Service and the challenging context in which it was created, the general perception was that the performance of the EEAS had been disappointing (Economist, 2011, 2012; Lehne, 2011; Vogel, 2012). As one experienced observer put it: ‘[t]he EEAS is simply irrelevant’ (Economist, 2012).¹ Some member states (Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland and Sweden) publicly expressed their concerns about the performance of the Service in a joint letter to Catherine Aston on 8 December 2011. In turn, disapproval of the Service and of Ashton’s performance was said to have negatively affected morale. For instance, in September 2011, EUobserver (2011) reported that EEAS staff were leaving the Service, amidst bad working conditions, poor management and low morale. The aim of this paper is to investigate to what extent these claims are accurate by examining EEAS officials’ attitudes towards the establishment of the Service.

OFFICIALS’ ATTITUDES VIS-A-VIS THE EEAS

Drawing on qualitative analysis of the interviews, this section presents a summary of the attitudes of officials towards the EEAS and the implementation of this institutional reform. Attitudes can be generally defined as evaluative judgements, which are shaped by the most important beliefs of individuals (Haddock and Maio, 2008: 114). Reporting an attitude means making a decision in favour or disfavour of a certain issue (i.e. liking or disliking) (Haddock and Maio, 2010: 4). Here, our focus is on the general attitudes towards the EEAS. We asked officials how they felt about the establishment of the Service before it was set up and how they felt about it at the time of the interview (to take into account variations in time). We then compared this set of general attitudes to another set of attitudes: attitudes vis-à-vis the process of organisational change, how the EEAS was put in place and how the process was managed. As shown below, these two sets of attitudes are of similar strength, but pull in opposite directions.

As mentioned in the previous section, the establishment of this new organisation has drawn a lot of public attention. While critical comments were flooding in from the press, those serving the EEAS remained largely silent. The interviews conducted confirmed many of the concerns expressed in the literature and, more importantly, showed that most of the interviewees were critical regarding the way in which the EEAS was established and how the process had been managed overall. The general view was that the process of implementation of the EEAS had been disastrous, a ‘man-made disaster’ (#24). For instance, officials referred to the establishment of the new service as ‘a big screw-up’ (#4) or a ‘hostile takeover’ (#1). Many former DG Relex officials expressed their feeling of disappointment, which related to feeling ‘betrayed’ by their management in the Commission. This was combined with the impression that member states were trying to regain influence in EU external relations and to ‘take over’ DG Relex and Commission’s competences. Uncertainty about the roles of officials and about organisational procedures was still patent a year after the creation of the EEAS. Even senior staff admitted that the change was badly prepared and that the process had been too hierarchical, a clear example of ‘how not to communicate’ a reform (#2).

Officials felt they had been left in limbo and the lack of clarity about the roles and responsibilities in the Service resulted in low morale: ‘in December 2010, there was an e-mail, you don’t work for the Commission any more but for the EEAS; there was frustration, [and a feeling that] the troops are being treated as cannon meat’ (#8). This frustration was expressed both by officials originating from the Commission and the Council Secretariat. To quote one of the interviewed officials, whose words echoed the views expressed by others:

The EEAS is way below expectations in terms of organisation and capacity. Its management of crises is dysfunctional. There is a distinct lack of clarity on the roles within the Service, resulting in low morale amongst its personnel. It is reactive rather than proactive and, consequently, its management struggle to prioritize the application of its efforts (#13).

Linked to this was officials’ perception of a lack of strategic vision and leadership within the Service. Criticisms of Catherine Ashton and her leadership were frequently raised by officials. This also had a negative impact on their attitudes towards the institutional reform and the general mood inside the EEAS. Not surprisingly, there was a lot of nostalgia for the Solana era among Council Secretariat officials (#24, 40). On strategic leadership more generally, several officials referred to the fact that there was too much bureaucracy (even more than in former DG Relex and DG E of the Council Secretariat) and that the Service was too heavy in process and procedures. Other officials mentioned that the EEAS was still

lacking a ‘sense of direction’ and that there were ‘too many generals and not enough soldiers’ (#4, 15, 24, 30, 32, 37). Additionally, officials working within the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) structures complained that it was difficult to reach the highest levels in the organisation and the lack of a clear chain of command was repeatedly mentioned. Physical barriers and the fact that the Service was spread among eight different buildings were listed as additional factors that undermined the creation of an *esprit de corps*. One official, however, admitted that the current sentiment and low morale among staff also needed to be put into context, referring to the ‘pretty depressive state as far as EU affairs go more generally’ (#27).

These negative attitudes towards the implementation of the reform notwithstanding, attitudes towards the EEAS itself were much more positive as a whole. First, all the interviewees showed high levels of support for the ‘project’ of establishing an External Action Service. Prior to the creation of the EEAS, officials felt this was a ‘good idea’ and they were ‘excited’ with the prospects of creating a new service that could unify the different strands of EU foreign policy. Officials saw the establishment of the EEAS potentially as a way to end the division between pillars and the turf battles between the different institutions that had hindered the EU’s external action thus far. It was also an opportunity to combine different sets of skills and mindsets from Commission officials (and their more supranational approach in their role as ‘guardian’ of the Treaties); Council Secretariat officials (with a good overview of member states’ interests); and national diplomats (with their intergovernmental outlook and the advantage of having undergone diplomatic training) (see also Spence, 2012).

While these positive attitudes towards the EEAS before its creation would not seem surprising given frequent criticisms about the poor performance of EU foreign policy, more interesting is the fact that officials continued to have this positive attitude towards the Service and the role it could play in EU foreign policy at the time the interviews were conducted. This positive attitude towards the EEAS was so strong that it did not matter whether officials came from the European Commission or the Council Secretariat General. Also, the time factor – how long they had been working in the EEAS – did not seem to matter, as the general attitudes towards the EEAS did not change among those that had been working for the organisation for more than a year. Moreover, officials strongly identified with the Service. In a scale from 1 to 4 (1 meaning ‘to a less extent’ and 4 meaning ‘to a great extent’), identification with the EEAS scored an average of 3.25. Taking into account the high level of dissatisfaction with the management of institutional reform and the way in which the establishment of the EEAS was conducted, how can we account for the overwhelmingly positive attitudes and identification towards the EEAS across time and different categories of officials?

The following sections aim at explaining this empirical puzzle by testing the insights from two approaches to attitude formation: one that conceives attitudes in instrumental terms (i.e. cost-benefit calculations) and another perspective which takes into account psychological and social factors (i.e. identities and norms) in explaining attitude formation. From the perspective of the former, one might expect that positive attitudes reflect the benefits, primarily understood in career terms, derived by officials from joining the EEAS. The second perspective would expect that positive attitudes towards the EEAS result from a strong identification with the EU and the norms promoted by the EEAS.

INSTRUMENTAL APPROACHES TO ATTITUDE FORMATION: CAREER PROSPECTS IN THE EEAS

When it comes to attitude formation and organisational reform, organisational studies have distinguished between two different models: rational choice and sociological explanations (e.g. Bauer, 2011). Rational choice approaches to the study of individuals' attitudes bring to the fore utility maximisation processes. Attitudes are the result of cost-benefit calculations and utility maximisation understood in material terms or, as March and Olsen's put it, actors follow a logic of consequences (March and Olsen, 1989). When it comes to organisational reform, utility maximisation is most often related to the material consequences a particular reform might have on an individual, in particular, in terms of career prospects. Thus, administrative restructuring is welcome if the consequences are positive for an individual's career (Bauer, 2011: 5). The rational choice approach has been shown to explain attitudes in some previous studies, e.g. research on attitudes of European Commission officials towards management modernisation, also known as the 'Kinnock reform' (Bauer, 2011).

Based on this approach, officials' attitudes towards the Service depend on what career opportunities/costs the establishment of the EEAS creates for them. Given the overall positive attitudes towards the EEAS noted earlier, a rational choice approach would expect that the establishment of the Service has had a positive impact on officials' careers by providing them with more opportunities for promotion/progression and other related career benefits. By contrast, if career opportunities had been unclear or negative, we could have expected officials to oppose the establishment of the EEAS and instead support the *status quo*.

This rather narrow understanding of utility maximisation, however, can be complemented by a broader understanding of an official's perception of his/her own career and other non-material (non-salary related) benefits. In this vein, Bauer (2011: 10-11) argues that 'the implication of an organisational reform for the "well-being" of an individual should lie in the professional opportunity structure it creates or, more precisely, it should be crucial whether organisational change is *perceived* as advantageous or disadvantageous for the job itself or for the career prospects of an individual' (emphasis added). The perception is what matters here, not the actual impact that the change may bring to the official. Moreover, career prospects need not be limited to short term considerations, but should also include mid- and long-term prospects. Other factors which need to be included in the analysis are, for example, the loss or gain of prestige stemming from the job and the achievement of other (non-career related) personal goals, such as job satisfaction.

What emerges from the empirical evidence is the fact that the large majority of officials (all but two, of which one was unsure) claimed that the creation of the EEAS was likely to have a negative impact on their career. Only one member state diplomat with a very senior management position in an EU Delegation saw the creation of the EEAS as having a positive impact on his career prospects (#29). Other than this case, the view that the creation of the EEAS would have a negative impact on their career prospects was shared by officials regardless of their institution of origin and seniority. Officials argued that they would *de facto* reach a 'ceiling' to their careers in the EEAS and that they would be likely to experience more problems with promotion than if they had stayed in the Commission or the Council Secretariat.

A different matter was whether these concerns were warranted. In practice, the creation of the EEAS significantly reduced opportunities for promotion to senior management positions because of the need to meet the agreed quota for officials from the member states – one third of AD level officials from national diplomatic services by mid 2013. By the end of 2011, 174 posts were occupied by member state diplomats (a total of 19% of AD staff) most of them at senior management positions (Foreign Affairs Select Committee, 2011). For instance, more than half of the officials in the corporate board and management positions in the EEAS headquarters had come from the national diplomatic services. Similarly, a third of the appointments to management positions in EU Delegations had been from member state officials (EEAS, 2011: 9).

The Staff Regulations adopted in October 2010 stressed that selection procedures should be based on ‘merit’ criteria. However, the same regulations stated that, up to the 30th June 2013, priority may be given for certain posts in the EEAS to candidates from the national diplomatic services in case of substantially equal qualifications (European Union, 2010b: 8). In fact, many interviewees, especially those coming from the Commission, felt that the recruitment of new officials had not been done as it should be and that member state diplomats had been advantaged over Commission/Council Secretariat candidates who were equally or even better qualified. For instance, a former DG Relex official, coming from a new member state, was disappointed with the fact that his former colleagues, who did not have to pass the Commission’s *concours*, would now be privileged and have the possibility to obtain a higher position than he had in the EEAS in spite of his experience in DG Relex (#12). Some officials also felt that diplomats from the member states were benefiting from lobbying on their behalf by their capitals.

Despite the fact that they were generally seen by the others as the ‘winners’ in this process, surprisingly, member state officials argued that joining the EEAS had not had an automatic positive impact on their career prospects and that, if anything, it could have a negative impact as re-integration into their Ministries could be difficult after their posting in Brussels. As one official commented, ironically, the fact that every category of staff is ‘equally dissatisfied’ and that there is no consensus on who the ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ are could be seen as a success of this merger process (#24).

There were other factors that were mentioned as negatively affecting career prospects. Regulations on staff promotion agreed in 2010 raised some concerns. It was argued that the fact that the Service had inherited the Commission’s career structure and promotion regulations would have negative consequences for some officials. This is because it was perceived as a very rigid system and less flexible than, for example, that of the Council Secretariat. To alleviate these concerns, a transitional period was agreed for the 2011 rotation. Currently, the EEAS is developing provisions for staff promotion ‘based on the principle of equal treatment of permanent officials and staff on secondment from national diplomatic services’ (EEAS, 2011: 9). High competition for places experienced during the first year of life of the EEAS added to officials’ malaise. Indeed, the EEAS has become one of the most competitive institutions in terms of job applications.²

Negative beliefs about the impact of the establishment of the EEAS on career opportunities were expressed both by junior and by more senior EEAS officials, even though the impact on their careers was perceived to be different. Senior staff contemplating promotion were more concerned about the competition from member state diplomats when applying for a position of Head of Delegation or a senior position in the EEAS headquarters. Junior staff members

were also concerned that other colleagues from national diplomatic services would be advantaged. However, for those in lower management positions, the EEAS only added to problems which had their roots in the 2004 enlargement and the need to accommodate officials from the new member states, making promotion to higher positions almost impossible.

Despite the negative impact that the creation of the EEAS had on their career, a majority of officials said that, even under these conditions and given a choice, they would still join the EEAS. These findings challenge instrumentalist/materialist accounts of utility calculation and attitude formation. A case in point is that of those former DG Relex officials that had passed an internal competition process to become Heads of Unit in 2010. This internal competition, however, is only recognised in the Commission and thus, by joining the EEAS, they had to renounce to this career opportunity. Yet, even though a few of them decided to stay in the Commission, the majority still went on to join the EEAS.

In order to explain situations such as the aforementioned one, one needs to adopt a broader understanding of career prospects to include also medium and long term expectations and factors related to the overall 'well-being', in particular, job satisfaction and reputation. For instance, in explaining why they decided to join the EEAS, officials repeatedly mentioned the prestige/reputation that went with a position in the EEAS, while others said it was an 'exciting new challenge' (#3, 23, 24, 35). Many stated upfront that they were more interested in 'the work' itself or a new exciting challenge rather than their career. As far as prestige is concerned, one official said that coming from a small member state, the EEAS offered a more exciting professional opportunity: 'you have to choose between been a small fish in a big pond or a big fish in a small pond' (#33). According to one official that had lost the position he had as Head of Sector (a middle management function with a team and a budget) in DG Relex when joining the EEAS, 'job satisfaction and motivation were more important than salary and status' (#37). Another said that 'in terms of progression and promotion it [was] too early to say what the impact of joining the EEAS would be; but, in any case, this [was] not as relevant for [him] as job satisfaction' (#32) (also #34 said that it was not her 'main consideration' when joining the EEAS). For member state officials, working for the EEAS provided a unique working experience that they could not have got had they stayed in their capitals. From the perspective of former Council Secretariat officials, while there was the possibility in theory of remaining in the Secretariat, in practice, many did not consider this possibility because the Secretariat no longer played an active role in EU foreign policy. One diplomat emphasised that if the EEAS developed into a strong and prestigious body, it would be a very positive thing for his CV, although at the time of the interview it was still unclear whether the EEAS was going to be a success or not. Another official mentioned the fact that he had 'invested' a lot on his career into the geographical section he was responsible for and so he would still have chosen to go to the EEAS if given a choice (#18).

In the medium and longer term, and given the potential role that the EEAS could play in EU foreign policy and the level of responsibilities they could achieve, career prospects seemed much more positive. For many, the EEAS was the only place where they could do 'diplomacy' in Brussels or where they could carry out an exciting job in external relations and maybe in the EU Delegations. For instance, in the case of former Council Secretariat officials, the possibility of going to the Delegations was a new and exciting prospect for many – in the past, this option was limited to the Council Secretariat offices in New York and Geneva. While the creation of the EEAS had reduced the chances of former Commission

officials of going to what is considered as a 'good' Delegation (#13, 21, 34), one of the interviewees mentioned that the creation of the EEAS would at least reduce competition with officials from DG Trade or DG Development when applying for the post of Head of Delegation as had been the case in the past (#17).

There were, however, some negative points relating to 'job satisfaction' as a result of joining the EEAS. For example, some mentioned working conditions, not being paid for overtime and simply not finding a nice working environment in the Service. For example, former Council Secretariat officials stated that their institution of origin was simply a much nicer working environment than the EEAS, a more 'humane environment'. Other reasons they mentioned were bad management and disorganisation (see above). Those officials who chose to leave the EEAS wanted to wait until the situation in the EEAS became clearer or chose a more 'secure' career-path. Job satisfaction also comes from a job well done and the ability to perform one's duties. Some felt that in the Commission they had a better chance to do so because they had access to the financial instruments; the Commission was less hierarchical; they were more involved in the decisions; there was more continuity; there was a clearer idea of what everyone did and a sense of strategic vision.

In sum, the evidence presented above shows that an overwhelming majority of officials felt that the creation of the EEAS in its final form would have a negative impact on their career in the short term. A broader understanding of career prospects (one including issues such as job satisfaction and gains in the medium and long term) provides some insight into why some officials saw the creation of the EEAS as something positive, but cannot provide a full explanation behind officials' overall positive attitudes towards the EEAS. Hence, the next section turns to an alternative approach to utility calculation, one based on social and psychological factors.

BEYOND MATERIAL UTILITY CALCULATIONS: IDENTITIES AND NORMS IN THE EEAS

Psychological and sociological insights into rationality can be helpful in providing a more suitable explanation of attitude formation and officials' attitudes towards the EEAS. From this perspective, administrative change/restructuring is welcomed by individuals if it is congruent with the norms, roles and identities they hold. Sociological explanations emphasise the role of social norms as key forces shaping attitudes. Individuals follow a logic of appropriateness (March and Olsen, 1989) and abide by what is considered as an acceptable norm in their social environment rather than trying to achieve a straightforward gain. Such identities and norms are acquired through socialisation processes. Carolyn Ban (2011: 4) has defined socialisation as the 'process whereby an individual learns and adapts to the specific culture of a workplace, both through formal training and inculcation of cultural values and an understanding of the requirements of the job and, crucially, through an informal process of socialisation into the more unspoken norms and values underlying the culture'. By norms, we refer to the norms of the organisation, which can be described as: 'the (unwritten) rules that prescribe the attitudes and behaviours that are (or are not) appropriate in the context of the group' (Nijstad and van Knippenberg, 2008: 250). It is also important to distinguish between two different processes of norm adoption: socialisation to European identities and socialisation to causal and normative beliefs (Radaelli and O'Connor, 2009: 974). In our study, we include both notions: (1) officials' national and European identities and (2) their normative beliefs regarding the role of the EEAS and the EU in foreign policy. As the organisation is so young we do not expect socialisation in the EEAS to have taken place, but

we may expect prior socialisation in EU and national institutions to influence officials' attitudes towards the new service.

As far as organisational change is concerned, the literature has suggested that 'those who have previously been in contact with certain kinds of change or the rhetoric surrounding such change may indeed demonstrate less opposition to it' (Bauer, 2011: 12-13). For her part, Ban (2011: 4-5) argues that 'the likelihood of success [of socialisation processes] is largely determined by the distance between the individual's values and the organisational culture, i.e., that closer congruity, or greater "person-organisation fit" makes the socialization process more likely to succeed'. This is in line with the findings from the organisational psychology literature, which has looked at the importance of identification with the institution as an important factor determining the success of reforms. Both recruitment and self-selection play a role in this regard. According to Hooghe (2005: 869) 'individuals choose to join an organisation of which they are already supportive'. In the same vein, recruitment procedures can ensure successful socialisation as organisations might use these procedures to 'match their cultural values' (Cable and Parsons quoted in Ban, 2011: 8), i.e. organisations are likely to recruit in their own image (Hooghe, 2005: 869).

Thus, sociological approaches are most interested in explaining how the establishment of the EEAS challenges individuals' identities and norms. Do individual officials hold positive attitudes towards the EEAS because they identify with the new institution and its goals? From this perspective, one might expect that positive attitudes towards organisational change originate from a high level of identification with the EU and a feeling that the EEAS is representative of the norms held by individuals. In order to test this, we need to check whether officials were supportive of the idea to create the EEAS because they identified strongly with the European Union and/or whether they thought it was a 'good thing' for European foreign policy.

Identification with the EEAS and the EU more generally can be seen as a key element in the construction of an effective European diplomatic service. As claimed by a former DG Relex official, 'all the trappings of loyalty, identification and commitment that are customarily associated with diplomacy at the national level must re-appear and be acquired by EU diplomats' (Spence, 2012: 123). As we mentioned earlier, identification with the EEAS was strong even in the first year of operation of the Service (mean=3.25), especially when compared to levels of identification with their countries of origin (mean= 2). Even more interesting is the fact that identification with the EU is stronger than identification with the EEAS. This strong identification with the EU was also present when officials were asked about levels of identification prior to joining the EEAS. Again, identification with the EU was stronger (mean=3.42) than identification with their institutions of origin (MFAs/Commission/Council Secretariat) (mean=3.05) or with the unit/division of origin (mean=2.84).

This is also consistent with the responses on how attached the officials felt to their countries and the EU. Although they still felt 'fairly' or 'very' attached to their countries (81.8 percent of the respondents), this figure was much higher when asked about how attached they felt to the EU with all officials saying that they felt fairly or very attached to the EU. Moreover, 9.1 percent of officials saw themselves as 'European only' and 60.6 percent as 'European and national', while only 27.3 percent saw themselves as 'national and European' and only 3 percent as 'national only'. In sum, officials currently working for the EEAS have high degrees of identification with the EU and are more attached to the EU than to their countries

of origin (although identities here are not seen as mutually exclusive). These ‘European identities’ can explain the positive attitudes towards the establishment of the EEAS.³

A second factor one might consider is officials’ support for particular norms and values and whether their support for the EEAS derives from the fact that they see it as a ‘good’ thing for EU foreign policy.⁴ The evidence here points at strong support among EEAS officials for a greater role for the EU in foreign and security matters (in total, 70.6 percent agreed and 29.4 percent agreed, but with reservations). Only 11.8 percent of interviewees disagreed with the statement that institutions should play a stronger role in the government of the EU. More specifically on the EEAS, officials felt strongly about the role of the EEAS in promoting a more effective EU foreign policy and enhancing the role of the EU in the world (mean=1.06, ‘1’ meaning ‘Agree, without reservations’ and ‘5’ ‘Disagree, without reservations’). Most of them also agreed that the EEAS should take an active part in designing European foreign policy (mean=1.13). Qualitative evidence also supports these findings. Officials said the EEAS should provide an original, political contribution to EU foreign policy. EEAS officials argued that the EEAS should act as a leader in foreign policy affairs (#8) and should help strengthen the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) (#21). Other officials mentioned that the EEAS should act as a ‘true European diplomatic service’ (#12) or a European Foreign Ministry (#22) that with time allows for a coherent European foreign policy (#13). Some mentioned that the EEAS should work in the interest of the EU and its citizens (#23). Officials from former DG Relex were of the opinion that the EEAS was a good project for CFSP, as it would transform and open up the former Relex environment (called also an ‘ivory tower’, #21), bringing some professionalism from the member states and building on their diplomatic culture (#16).

The high levels of identification of officials with the Service, and in particular with the EU would seem to explain why positive attitudes towards the EEAS remained even after a very problematic first year. Moreover, EEAS officials showed a strong support for the norms that underpin the EEAS and saw the EEAS as a good thing for EU foreign policy, shaping in turn their attitudes towards the Service. However, there are still some issues that the EEAS needs to resolve in order to strengthen the identification of officials with their institution. For instance, many officials agreed that the circumstances in which the service came about had had a negative impact on the *esprit de corps* and that the morale at the time of the interviews was pretty low. Many people were frustrated about this, especially former Commission officials, because in the Commission there had traditionally been a strong *esprit de corps* (#24). Many former DG Relex officials also felt let down by the European Commission, whom they had served for a long time and had developed a strong identification with. Some were hopeful, however, that the move to the new EEAS building in 2012 would help in terms of developing this *esprit de corps* as it would provide new opportunities to socialise together (meeting in the corridors, lunches, coffee, etc.).

CONCLUSION

This contribution has shown that we need to account for a broad understanding of rationality and include the identities and norms officials subscribe to in order to account for the positive attitudes of the EEAS officials towards the Service. Even in times of crisis and despite the problems encountered during its first year of operation, officials still felt that the EEAS was a ‘good idea’. As shown in this paper, an analysis based on short-term career opportunities and costs is limited: all the interviewed officials bar one argued that the creation of the EEAS would not have a tangible positive impact on their careers. A majority of officials even went

on to say that in the short term they would be faced with worse career prospects than prior to joining the EEAS. However, when career prospects are understood as including other non-salary related benefits such as job satisfaction derived from the fact that they will be dealing with policy matters that most interest them and that they would have access to ‘unique career opportunities’ such as joining the EU Delegations, then a more positive picture emerges.

From a sociological perspective, the evidence points to a twofold explanation in line with sociological and psychological perspectives. Firstly, they joined the organisation despite the problems relating to its establishment and management and despite the perceived negative implications for their careers because they identify strongly with the European Union. Secondly, officials are supportive of the EEAS in general because they support a stronger role for the EU in the world and they see the EEAS as a step towards achieving this aim. This shows that identities and fundamental beliefs should be taken seriously when studying attitude formation towards organisational reform. While the literature has often suggested that the first one trumps the latter, the case of EEAS officials shows that this is not always the case. Moreover, one can argue that in the case presented here, rational choice and sociological approaches, combined, offer interesting insights into our understanding of attitude formation, where both rational calculations on material interests and normative aspects come together.

From a practical point of view, the study has shown that the EEAS comprises of a diverse group of officials with different views on how to organise the service in the future and the role the member states should play in European foreign policy. Still, what they had in common was their support for the idea of a stronger European voice in the world to be achieved with the help of the new Service. The EEAS was thus seen as the means to best achieve a coherent, effective and legitimate European foreign policy. This may provide good grounds for building the *esprit de corps* of a European diplomatic service in-the-making.

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NOTES

¹ The performance of the EEAS during the Libyan crisis is a case in point (see Koenig, 2011).

² By the end of 2011, the EEAS had received 8830 applications for 181 posts, of which 66 are management posts in Brussels Headquarters or in EU Delegations (O’Sullivan, 2011).

³ However, another matter refers to whether this is the result of self-selection or prior socialisation within EU institutions, but this is beyond the aims of this contribution.

⁴ An additional point to consider here is whether the overall positive attitude towards the EEAS is also linked to the shared feeling of professionalism among EU officials, which had already been identified as a key factor by Simon Nuttall (1992) in his work on European Political Cooperation. The authors are grateful to the editor for pointing out this issue.

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