



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2014 - 2019

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*Committee on Foreign Affairs*

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**2014/2086(DEC)**

10.2.2015

## **OPINION**

of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

for the Committee on Budgetary Control

on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2013, Section X - European External Action Service  
(2014/2086(DEC))

Rapporteur: Anneli Jäätteenmäki

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## SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Foreign Affairs calls on the Committee on Budgetary Control, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Welcomes the fact that in its third financial year, the European External Action Service (EEAS) has continued to implement its budget without major errors being identified by the Court of Auditors (ECA); notes the progress made in fixing the errors identified during past years and supports the recommendations for further improvements made by the ECA in its annual report; welcomes the special report on the establishment of the EEAS published by the ECA and the many useful suggestions for improvements which that report contains;
2. Remains concerned about the considerable number of high-grade posts in the EEAS, which is out of all proportion to the number of such posts in the Union institutions as a whole and the reduction in the number of staff across all the Union institutions; notes the associated problem of a top-heavy managerial structure which requires urgent reform; also notes the absence of a competency framework for managers as basis for the evaluation of pre-selected candidates; emphasises that competence in the field of foreign affairs must remain the main criterion for hiring decisions;
3. Expresses its concern about the continuing imbalances in the EEAS staffing profile; notes that while the EEAS has made progress in addressing the geographical imbalance, problems still remain, while the gender imbalance, in particular in AD grades and managerial positions, remains substantial; also notes the ongoing reliance on seconded national experts, which continues to present a challenge to the staffing formula agreed upon during the establishment of the EEAS;
4. Underlines that significant cost savings can be made by better cooperation between Member States in terms of their foreign and security policy and by pro-actively identifying joint efforts the EEAS can gradually take over in order for the Union to be both a stronger and a more efficient global player;
5. Emphasises that working practices to ensure co-operation with DEVCO and to support thematic divisions (such as the Directorate for Conflict Prevention and Security Policy) should be further developed;
6. Stresses that thematic divisions should be involved in programming during all stages to avoid that conflict prevention, peace building, gender and human rights are last-minute add-ons;
7. Stresses that the financial regulations, as currently applied to the Union delegations, continue to impose a heavy administrative burden on the Head of Delegation, which distracts from the Head of Delegation's primary responsibility of political work; urges the EEAS and the Commission to find a solution to this issue, which could entail a change to the financial regulations, provided that this does not also entail a reduction in the quality and rigour of the delegations' financial management; notes also the continuing use of

budget lines from both EEAS and Commission budget for administrative expenditure, which unnecessarily complicates financial circuits; supports the ECA report recommendation regarding the need to increase support for public procurement procedures in Union delegations;

8. Welcomes the few examples of co-location of Union Delegation and Member States diplomatic representations; re-emphasises, however, the importance of continuing efforts to identify opportunities for long-term savings and synergies between EEAS delegations, HQ, Commission and Member States, to ensure the sustainability of the EEAS budget in a time of budgetary restraints and urges, therefore, to maximise the opportunities for co-location and the shared provision of services;
9. Emphasises the cost saving potential of providing consular services through Union Delegations; invites the EEAS to prepare a detailed analysis of its financial implications and Member States to agree on this issue and to develop harmonised rules and legislation;
10. Expresses its concern that Union Delegations are lacking staff in their political sections and for the operational planning and implementation of CFSP missions; notes also that there are practical difficulties for the Union Delegations to receive and deal with intelligence reporting;
11. Notes that the EEAS continues to dedicate insufficient resources to the external aspects of internal policies and that it lacks the personnel needed to provide proper input on the programming of the financial instruments, thus undermining the coherence of the EU's external action;
12. Stresses the vital importance of setting-up a Shared Services Centre (SSC) that would result in important cost savings by providing centralised logistical, procurement and administrative support to the CSDP missions and to the Union Special Representatives and their offices; deplores the long delay in setting up the centre and urges all stakeholders involved to strive to reach as a matter of urgency an agreement on an ambitious SSC, capable of efficiently supporting missions, especially at their start-up, of standardising work processes and of delivering faster and more cost-effective procurement;
13. Stresses that the integration of Union Special Representatives into the EEAS is vital, both from a budgetary perspective but also to increase the coherence of Union foreign policy;
14. Reiterates again its call to save money on travel costs through innovative solutions in the areas of training and job interviews, including head of delegation positions, for example by making increased use of videoconferencing.

## RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

<b>Date adopted</b>	9.2.2015
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+: 51 -: 5 0: 7
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Francisco Assis, Petras Auštrevičius, Amjad Bashir, Goffredo Maria Bettini, Mario Borghezio, Elmar Brok, Klaus Buchner, James Carver, Fabio Massimo Castaldo, Lorenzo Cesa, Aymeric Chauprade, Javier Couso Permuy, Andi Cristea, Arnaud Danjean, Marcel de Graaff, Georgios Epitideios, Knut Fleckenstein, Eugen Freund, Michael Gahler, Richard Howitt, Sandra Kalniete, Manolis Kefalogiannis, Tunne Kelam, Janusz Korwin-Mikke, Andrey Kovatchev, Eduard Kukan, Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Arne Lietz, Barbara Lochbihler, Ramona Nicole Mănescu, David McAllister, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, Tamás Meszerics, Francisco José Millán Mon, Javier Nart, Pier Antonio Panzeri, Demetris Papadakis, Alojz Peterle, Tonino Picula, Kati Piri, Andrej Plenković, Cristian Dan Preda, Jozo Radoš, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, Alyn Smith, Jaromír Štětina, Charles Tannock, Eleni Theoharous, László Tőkés, Ivo Vajgl, Elena Valenciano, Hilde Vautmans
<b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>	Zigmantas Balčytis, Brando Benifei, Angel Dzhambazki, Mariya Gabriel, Antonio López-Istúriz White, David Martin, Igor Šoltes
<b>Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote</b>	Viorica Dăncilă, Doru-Claudian Frunzuliță, Christine Revault D'Allonnes Bonnefoy, Beatrix von Storch