



2023/2134(DEC)

15.11.2023

DRAFT OPINION

of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

for the Committee on Budgetary Control

on 2022 discharge: General budget of the EU - European External Action
Service
(2023/2134(DEC))

Rapporteur for opinion: Katalin Cseh

PA_NonLeg

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. Notes the key role of the EEAS and especially of its Delegations in the context of the geopolitical impact of the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the resulting need to support partner countries around the world and strengthen global alliances; highlights the importance of continued strong political engagement and leverage at bilateral level, as well as in public and cultural diplomacy to promote the Union's values, principles and interests, and in strategic communications to combat disinformation; calls for more efficient use of available resources to be introduced to avoid putting the Union's effectiveness at risk on the international scene; sees the need for EU delegations to continue their coordinated efforts to increase the visibility of EU-funded projects in order for resources to be used to the fullest extent possible;
2. Notes that in 2022 40% of the appointed Heads of Delegations were women; calls on the EEAS to lead by example, as set out in the Gender Action Plan III, and to continue to improve the representation of women and marginalised groups across all levels with the goal to establish gender parity in all leadership and management positions, gender-responsive leadership and gender-sensitive recruitment processes as soon as possible; regrets the slow pace at which the EEAS staff is moving towards balance as regards diversity, gender and geography imbalances and notes that all categories of staff should be included and calls on all Member States to nominate more women and candidates from marginalised groups to seconded positions in the EEAS;
3. Recognises the importance of the creation of the EEAS Crisis Response Centre (CRC); reiterates the importance of adequate levels of cybersecurity for assets, premises and activities, including for headquarters and the EU delegations; notes the significance of the culture of security and safety across all entities which need to be ensured through personnel, procedures, infrastructure, tools (including IT) and an adequate budget to ensure that all of them can perform their critical and essential functions in the event of unexpected or critical situations;
4. Calls for the Union to enhance its toolbox to counter foreign interference, propaganda and influence operations, including the reinforcement of the EEAS strategic communication task force; highlights the need to broaden its mandate in relation to state sponsored disinformation originating in China and the Middle East, particularly Iran; reiterates its call on the EEAS to allow the task force to track the routes of foreign interference, to reveal sources that are distributing to the spread of disinformation in a similar fashion within the Union as well and providing it with further necessary financial and human resources;
5. Welcomes the strengthening of the EU delegations' engagement in our neighbourhood and in the Western Balkan countries in order to support a more active and effective communication policy on the European perspective and to be prepared to provide the best possible assistance to the countries engaged in pro-democratic and pro-European reforms;

6. Urges the EEAS to follow-up on their announcement provided in their written answers to the Committee on Budgetary Control in the context of the 2019 discharge, to adopt and put into practice its self-standing implementation provisions on outside activities and assignments, which create a sui generis legal basis for heads of delegations to better protect the European Union's image and reputation;