PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Cultivating the Union's Foreign Relations: The EEAS and International Diplomacy (EURDIPLO)

When the EU in 2009 launched the European External Action Service (EEAS), it was with considerable self-confidence and the aspiration to speak with one voice in international politics. Today, the EEAS is an organizational reality with headquarters in Brussels and diplomatic representations in more than 150 capitals around the world. The EEAS HQs and diplomatic representations make a very important yet also special institution in the landscape of EU institutions (Spence and Batora 2015; Raube 2012). The EEAS is engaged in diplomacy, ranging from international negotiations (e.g. the Iran nuclear deal) to military missions and economic sanctions. EU delegations represent and service member states in countries with no national representation and increasingly serve as the hub for coordination among the member states that have their own representation. The roles of the EEAS in preparing and executing the EU's foreign policy might well expand further in the coming years due to increasing support for introducing qualified majority voting in specific areas of the Union's external relations (http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-5683_en.htm).

However, what do we really know about the EEAS? Is it a political success, and, more precisely, what are the obstacles and potentials of this recent addition to EU institutions? A critical review in 2013 indicated room for further improvement. However, given the significance of the EEAS for the EU's conduct of foreign relations, it is surprising how little we know about the EEAS. What kind of diplomatic actor is it? How is it situated EU 'domestically', i.e., vis-à-vis other EU institutions and ministries of foreign affairs? To which degree does it address concerns of civil society organisations? Is it recognised externally as the voice and ears of the Union? Does it reflect changing foreign policy paradigms? We believe that it is imperative to gain a better understand of how the EU cultivates its foreign relations, not least at a time characterized by profound change in relations with major actors, including the US, China, Russia and multilateral institutions. The purpose of the project is to advance our understanding of the EU's foreign relations by focusing on the key institution in EU diplomacy, the EEAS.

During the last few decades EU studies have made considerable progress, and though the major part focuses on EU domestic affairs, meta-studies document significant advances in research on European foreign policy (Jørgensen et al. 2007; Jørgensen et al. 2015). However, this literature has three shortcomings. First, it focuses on the genesis, design and internal functioning of the EEAS (Vanhoonacker & Reslow 2010; Duke 2012). It thus ignores the international context, specifically how the EEAS is situated in the global institution of diplomacy characterized by distinct principles, norms and rules (Watson 1982; Knudsen & Navari 2018). Second, studies tend to be Brussels-centric, i.e., they

focus on the EEAS HQs and only examine the diplomatic representations to a limited extent (Austermann 2014, 2015). Third, scholars focus on the formal institutional settings of the EEAS (Wessel & Odermatt 2018; De Baere & Wessel 2015) and show less attention to the interplay between the EEAS and other diplomatic services, including those of member states, third countries and multilateral institutions.

Research question. In order to advance our understanding of European diplomacy, the research question is: *How does the EEAS conduct the Union's foreign relations, specifically when it comes to conflicting objectives?* As the foreign service of a union of states, the EEAS has to coordinate the interests of member states and EU institutions but also take the objectives of third parties (European civil society, third states and multilateral institutions) into account. The project addresses the research question in a fashion that branches out in three segments. First, it takes a case-based approach and studies concrete examples of diplomatic initiatives towards the three main third countries (the US, China and Russia) and three major multilateral institutions (the UN, WTO and NATO). Second, the project examines both the EEAS HQs and diplomatic delegations. As noted above, existing research tends to neglect the delegations, but they are really in the front line of European diplomacy. Finally, the project makes use of genuine methodological triangulation in the three work packages that employ participant observation, in-depth case studies and elite interviews. Combined, we believe it is a powerful package that is bound to yield significant advances of our knowledge about the EEAS.

State-of-the-art: What do we already know about the EEAS? The pioneer literature focuses on contending preferences among EU member states and the institutional design of the EEAS. Is it an agent with limited room for manoeuvre or a body comparable to national ministries of foreign affairs? (Vanhoonacker & Reslow 2010; Murdoch 2012; Smith 2004). Recent literature branches out in several directions. One branch studies recruitment, training and belief systems among EEAS diplomats (Cross 2011; Duke 2012; Juncos & Pomorska 2013). Another branch studies policies towards selected countries and regions (Austermann 2015; Bachmann 2017; Reussner 2017). A third branch, inspired by the "practices turn" (Sending et al., 2015; Pouliot & Cornut 2015), is more directly relevant to the present project. It addresses issues introduced by the early literature and studies the EEAS as an organisation within the international institution of diplomacy (Bátora 2005, 2013; Adler-Nissen 2015; Bicchi et al. 2018; Glavind 2015). The key finding is that the EEAS has a special relationship with the institution of diplomacy. At the same time, the institution of diplomacy is dynamic, implying that institutional inertia is challenged by innovation; especially concerning instruments (Bjola & Holmes 2015; Bjola & Kornprobst 2018). This project is structured by the umbrella of sociological institutionalism, which is capable of integrating international society theory, theory of practices, and sociological organisation

theory. This is a controversial move because the extant literature provides alternative theoretical images of the EEAS' behavioural logic. First, rational choice-informed scholars analyse the EEAS as an institution that aims at maximising organisational self-interest, i.e., engage in bureaucratic politics. Scholars applying principal-agent models argue that the preferences of the EEAS are controlled by the member states, cf. the institutional design of the EEAS (Hawkins et al. 2006; Adriaensen & Delreux 2017; Kostanyan & Orbie 2013; Kostanyan 2014; Dijkstra 2017). A third group of analysts, drawing on Europeanisation theory, examines the EEAS as a factor not only reflecting but actually influencing national diplomacy (Lequesne & Weber 2016; Smith 2017). Finally, focusing on legitimacy and European foreign policy, some argue that the EEAS is bound to engage in cooperation with the European Parliament and therefore observes the changing political gravities within the European Parliament (Raube 2012; Wagner 2006; Raube & Tonra 2018).

Theoretical argument. The above theoretical contributions all offer important insights. However, based on insights from sociological institutional theory, this project argues that deeper concerns drive the EEAS. Following Jupille and Caporaso (1998), the project assumes that the EEAS is deeply concerned about its recognition, authority, autonomy and cohesion. In this context, the project acknowledges that such features cannot be taken for granted; they have to be earned. This explains why it makes sense, ten years after its creation, to examine the degree to which the EEAS has earned these qualities. Drawing on both principal agent theory (Hawkins et al. 2006) and sociological institutionalism (Haas 1990; Barnett & Finnemore 1999, 2004), the project assumes that the EEAS enjoys a certain degree of recognition and autonomy as well as potentials to build professional authority and strengthen a cohesive conduct of the EU's foreign relations. When addressing concerns about recognition and autonomy, it is not only the EEAS HQs that encounter other EU institutions and member states (represented by permanent representatives), the encounters also happen in third country capitals where the Union and most/some member states have embassies.

These theoretical premises lead to three basic hypotheses. Hypothesis 1 takes a point of departure in EU self-images. One of the strong self-images of the EU is being a post-Westphalian actor. In line with this, scholars expect that the EU will challenge existing Westphalian institutions, including diplomacy (Batora 2005; Spence & Bàtora 2015). However, though the EEAS, as any diplomatic actor, has opportunities to shape the institution of diplomacy, the EEAS is, as a contested newcomer, bound to operate within the institution of diplomacy. H1: In order to enhance recognition, authority and autonomy, the EEAS prefers to adapt to rather than challenge existing institutional principles, norms and rules. Hypothesis 2 focuses on the EEAS' diplomatic practices. Being a post-Westphalian actor situated in Westphalian institutions, the EEAS faces numerous internal and external challenges when practicing

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diplomacy. H2: To enhance its recognition, authority, autonomy and cohesion, the EEAS has developed independent diplomatic practices to meet internal challenges between the EEAS HQs and its representations as well as external challenges emerging from encounters between the EEAS and state- and non-state actors in third countries. Hypothesis 3 complements the two other hypotheses. H3: In order to enhance its position in European diplomacy, the EEAS prefers to adapt to changing policy paradigms, especially when considering concrete diplomatic initiatives or launching new administrative programmes. The three hypotheses structure the entire project, specifically the three work packages within which the team does research by means of carefully selected methodologies, including elite interviews, participant observation and in-depth case studies.

Work package 1: The EEAS and the Institution of Diplomacy (responsible: Jørgensen, Knudsen)
WP1 focuses on H1 and therefore examines the relationship between the EEAS and the historical institution of diplomacy. We expect the latter predominantly to shape and limit the former but in order to find out we also need to study the conditions under which the EEAS might have opportunities to shape or change the principles and practices of diplomacy. In other words, how does EEAS life within the institution of diplomacy influence the EEAS' conduct of foreign relations; particularly diplomatic relations with the US, China, Russia and multilateral institutions?

In the theory of international society, fundamental institutions such as international law, the balance of power, great power management, war and diplomacy are the key pillars of international society (Bull 1977; Bull & Watson 1984; Watson 1982; Buzan 2004). However, it would be wrong to assume that such fundamental institutions are not open to change (Holsti 2004; Buzan 2004; Knudsen & Navari 2018). While the constitutive principles of such institutions are relatively stable and account for much international continuity, the associated practices are more open for change (Knudsen 2016, 2018). International organizations such as the UN, WTO and NATO are based on, and bound by, the fundamental institutions, but they are also important to their working. In short, fundamental institutions and international organizations are mutually constitutive (Knudsen & Navari 2018). Informed by this theoretical framework, WP1 examines how the longstanding institution of diplomacy is shaping or limiting the EEAS. Moreover, WP1 examines the capacity of the EEAS for stimulating change in the institution of diplomacy. Drawing on the theory of fundamental institutions, WP1 will examine H1: Rather than challenging the institution of diplomacy, the EEAS is shaped by the principles, norms and rules of diplomacy. Methodologically, WP1 draws on three methods to examine the theoretically derived hypothesis. First, document analysis (constitutional documents, communiques, summit conclusions, speeches). Here, we will look for initial goals, values and strategies and their evolution. Second, elite

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interviews, focusing on the perceptions of diplomats, especially the principles, norms and rules of diplomacy. Third, participant observation, which allows us to observe the practices and routines of the EEAS, its foreign relations, and the handling of obstacles and opportunities.

Work package 2: In-depth case studies (responsible: Jørgensen, Sørensen, Svendsen and postdoc)
WP2 focuses on H2 expecting the EEAS to develop diplomatic practices to enhance recognition, authority, autonomy and cohesion between the EEAS HQs and its representations. Examining H2, WP2 examines in-depth the practical encounters between (1) the EEAS HQs, other EU institutions, EU- and non-EU member states and international organisations in Brussels, (2) the EEAS HQs and its representations as well as (3) the EEAS representations and EU as well as non-EU member states in third countries. WP2 contributes to the limited existing research on how encounters between the EEAS HQs and its representations as well as encounters between EEAS representations and third-party actors foster diplomatic practices (e.g. Adler-Nissen 2014; Austermann 2015; Baltag & Smith 2015). Social capital and trust-building can enhance cooperation and help to solve collective action problems (Olson 1965; Ostrom 1990; Ostrom & Ahn 2009). WP2 takes a qualitative in-depth case-based approach (Beach & Pedersen 2016). The main data sources are EEAS documents, interviews with relevant EEAS officials, expert groups and interest organisations as well as on-site observations of EEAS officials encountering EU- and non-EU states and non-state actors. Data is collected and analysed using a trinity of process- tracing, elite interview, and ethnographic methods (George & Bennett 2005; Neumann 2012; Glavind 2015; Schia 2013). The trinity of methods and textual, oral and performative data provides a comprehensive picture of what is actually written, said and done in encounters between the EEAS HQs, its representations, and third-party actors. Generating in-depth qualitative data is time-consuming. Consequently, Brussels, Genève, New York, Washington D.C., Moscow and Beijing are chosen for examination of encounters at the EEAS HQs as well as between and by its representations in third countries. Besides collecting and analysing relevant documents and perform participant observation, a postdoc especially recruited for WP2 will undertake a total of 75-100 elite interviews in the six selected research sites. The postdoc works in close collaboration with and under guidance from Jørgensen. The choice of six sites of contemporary diplomacy ensures a varied number of EEAS encounters in Western and non-Western capitals as well as Western and non-Western global governance cities. Variation across practical encounters in national capitals and global governance cities is crucial in order to answer if and to what extent independent diplomatic practices enhancing recognition, authority, autonomy and cohesion have developed at the EEAS HQs in Brussels and EEAS representations in selected sites. WP2 supplements WP1 by providing empirical evidence about the extent to which independent diplomatic

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practices, social capital and trust-building have developed within the EEAS. Besides supplementing WP1, EEAS practices uncovered by WP2 provides knowledge about how EEAS officials adapt to changing policy paradigms, which is a bridge to WP3.

Work package 3 (responsible: Knud Erik Jørgensen, Sørensen and PhD)

WP3 focuses on H3 which states that the EEAS seeks to enhance its status by adapting to the changing major policy paradigms of its principals. The analysis of such ideational turns is not without difficulties. Studies of policy paradigms are often leaning too much on Kuhn's classic conceptualization of paradigms, they tend to determine the effects of paradigms in a too rough fashion, and they are not sufficiently specified to become operational analytical tools. To face these methodological challenges, the project turns to new understandings of the nexus between ontology and methodology (Daigneault 2013), to linkages between policy paradigms, transnationalism and domestic politics (Skogstad & Schmidt 2011), and to recent advances in participatory research methods (Bergold & Thomas 2012). Moreover, the project is aware of conceptual overlaps between policy paradigm and public philosophy (Weir 1992; Schumaker 2008) enabling the development of operational guidelines for our research. In concrete terms, the project carries out a document analysis of the main contributions to European strategic culture, comparing key documents over time (e.g. the European Security Strategy 2003 and the EU's Global Strategy 2015) and across actors (e.g. the above mentioned EU documents and national security strategies). Moreover, the WP will conduct elite interviews with the EEAS and national officials (permanent representatives). Finally, the WP will make use of participatory methods and team members will thus become embedded scholars within the EEAS organisation during a limited period. Such methods have been used successfully in studies of the European Commission and the European Parliament (Abelès 1992; Abelés & Bellier 1996) in studies of a ministry of foreign affairs (Neumann 2012; see also Neumann 2002) and a biotech company (Rabinow 2011). In all these cases, scholars analysed the lifeworld of people working within a specific institution.

Organisation and time line: The project team consists of six persons. *Knud Erik Jørgensen* is PI and overall responsible. He is involved in all three WPs. He has extensive experience with meta-studies as well as qualitative research on EU politics; especially European foreign policy. *Tonny Brems Knudsen* is an expert on the nature of international society; including the institution of diplomacy. A *postdoc* with qualifications in bilateral diplomatic relations and case studies will be hired for WP2 and employed for three years (one year funded by AU). *Catharina Sørensen* is an expert on international cooperation, EU public legitimacy and political attitudes and has profound experience from employment in both the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the EEAS. *Gert Tinggaard Svendsen* is an expert in research on

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collective action, social capital and network analysis. The PhD will do comprehensive research on the EEAS and the nexus between policy paradigms and policies. The research team possesses the competences required to deliver the three work packages. Most team members are based in Aarhus, which reduces transaction costs. The project will be part of international networks facilitated by an international advisory board. The PROJECT budget includes funding for two meetings with the advisory board.

	2019	2020	2021	2022
WP1	Meta-analysis begins, collection of data on diplomacy begins	Studies of the EEAS-diplomacy nexus continues	Studies of diplomacy continues, presentation of findings at EISA	Presentation of findings at ISA, Submission of article manuscripts
WP2	Acquire access to EEAS; case studies begin	Case studies continue, papers EISA and UACES	Case studies continue, preparation of article manuscripts begins	Submission of article manuscripts
WP3	Collection of literature on policy paradigms begins	Studies of paradigms continue	Studies of paradigms continue	Submission of book manuscript and a PhD thesis

Publication plan: WP1 and WP2 will each lead to 1-2 journal articles aimed at top journals such as *European Journal of International Relations* or *World Politics* and 2-3 articles aimed at top field journals such as *Journal of Common Market Studies* or *Journal of European Public Policy*. WP3 will lead to a book manuscript that will be submitted to an international university press.

Recruitment process for postdoc: The postdoc and PhD will be recruited through an open international call.

Ethical aspects. The project raises no particular ethical concerns but will fully respect AU's rules on 'Responsible Conduct of Research' (www.au.dk/en/research/responsible-conduct-of-research).

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