

EXACT Report on Study Visit to Brussels

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Authors: Nicole Koenig



In October 2010, the Marie Curie PhD fellows undertook a 5-day study trip to Brussels. The study trip was composed of three elements. First, the fellows had the opportunity to get to know the staff and premises of the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS). Second, Dr. Elfriede Regelsberger held a two-day seminar on "professional approaches to Foreign and Security Policy". Third, Dr. Anne Faber held a two-day seminar on "methodological approaches to research".

1. Meeting at the Centre for European Policy Studies (25 October 2010)

Piotr M. Kaczynski, Research Fellow in the Politics and Institutions Unit at CEPS, gave an introduction on the work in think tanks in general and within CEPS in particular. He explained the differences between the work of think tanks vis-à-vis other types of institutions such as lobbies or universities. He presented the structure of CEPS, its main research areas and networks. Mr. Kaczynski underlined the fact that CEPS is politically independent and that its funding is provided by a number of different public and private entities and institutions.

This introduction was followed by a presentation by Marco Incerti, Research Fellow and Head of Communications at CEPS. Mr. Incerti gave an overview of the CEPS dissemination strategy and communication channels. He stated that the issue of communicating research results has become more and more important due to the increasingly competitive think tank landscape.

Parallel to this presentation, administrative meetings with the fellows that will be working with CEPS took place. Thereafter, potential focal research topics were discussed and assigned to individual fellows.

2. Intensive Seminar: "Professional Approaches to Foreign and Security Policy" - Dr. Regelsberger (26-27 October 2010)

Dr. Regelsberger started by giving a brief introduction on the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) as well as current trends and developments. Her lecture focused on the origins of the CFSP, its legal provisions, institutional structure and instruments. Dr. Regelsberger put special emphasis on the provisions, structures and instruments introduced by the Lisbon Treaty. This introduction was followed by group interviews with five CFSP officials.

Throughout the interviews, the focus lay on a) the Post-Lisbon institutional set-up, and b) the CFSP policy agenda and priorities.

The first interviewee was an official from the Policy Unit of the Council of the European Union.¹ He described the role of the Belgian presidency as 'non-Presidency' leaving the agenda-setting power in the hands of the High Representative (HR). This development is supposed to lead to more continuity and long-term strategies. The Policy Unit and the EU Special Representatives will be incorporated into the European External Action Service (EEAS). He stressed the fact that the EEAS is still at an early stage and that merging the different bodies and officials into one institution will require "multidimensional adaptation". While it is clear that the HR will be represented by the rotating Presidency in the European Parliament, the question of the HR's representation in different committees and working groups remains open. According to the interviewee, one of the major achievements of the HR in the past months was reaching an agreement with Serbia to co-sponsor a United Nations General Assembly draft resolution on the International Court of Justice advisory opinion on Kosovo.

The second interviewee was an Ambassador to the Political and Security Committee (PSC). He started by giving an overview of the work of the PSC. According to him, the post-Lisbon transition phase left the EU with a vacuum. Much of the energy is spent on internal diplomatic struggles. He characterized the 'transition phase' by a general lack of leadership and stressed the need for ownership by the member states. According to the Ambassador, five policy areas are currently of particular importance: the Strategic Partnerships, the EU's neighbourhood, the institutional set-up of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and the Iran nuclear issue.

The third interviewee was also an Ambassador to the PSC. He identified permanent structured cooperation, capability development, the question of a European operational civil-military headquarters and the necessity to speak with one voice as major post-Lisbon challenges. The Ambassador left no doubt that the PSC's permanent Chair will be a national diplomat. According to him, the most important policy issues on the EU's CFSP agenda are the Strategic Partnerships, the Middle East conflict, Africa and the future development of the CSDP. The further discussion touched upon different CSDP missions, the role of the Battlegroups, EU-Africa relations, and the Eastern Partnership.

The fourth interviewee was another Ambassador to the PSC. He mentioned the Strategic Partnerships, the Middle East conflict, the Western Balkans and the ongoing CSDP missions as being at the top of the CFSP agenda. He presented an overall positive assessment of the post-Lisbon performance of the EU in CFSP. He believes that there is a residual role for the Rotating Presidency: the Presidency might continue to gather and pool opinions on issues on the agenda, organize seminar on the issues of national priority and maybe chair the Gymnich meetings. The presidency may also try to move topics from the Foreign Affairs Council to the General Affairs Council in order to reduce its loss of agenda-setting power. He clearly framed the EU in terms of a 'soft power' and opposed measures leading to a perceived militarization of the EU. While the Irish are engaged in many CSDP missions, an EU Operational Headquarters is out of question.

¹ Our interviewees preferred to remain anonymous

The fifth and last interviewee was an official, working in the Council of the European Union. She highlighted the Union's internal organizational problems in relation to the changes introduced by Lisbon Treaty, in particular the setting up of the cabinet the HR. The main development in this respect concerns the Union's new responsibility of preparing the agenda of the Foreign Affairs Council, a task that was previously assigned to the country holding the rotating Presidency. The agenda is now decided on an ad hoc basis shortly before Council meetings. Another development that Mrs. Herrmann mentioned is that the European Council now devotes more time to external relations. She explained this development by Mr. Van Rompuy's ambitions to get more involved in CFSP issues. Once the permanent chairs of the working groups will be appointed, only few tasks will be left to the rotating Presidency. This should lead to more continuity once the 'learning process' surrounding the HR terminated.

3. Intensive seminar: "Methodological approaches to research" – Dr. Faber (28-29 October 2010)

The first session of Dr. Faber's course concentrated on "general questions and theoretical approaches to EU external action". Dr. Faber's course was structured as follows: individual fellows had to prepare a presentation on a specific topic based on the main findings of the corresponding course readings. In a second step, the fellow was asked to relate the findings in literature to her/his own research. Finally, overarching questions related to the readings were discussed in working groups leading to a general discussion. The topics addressed during this session were:

1. EU external action as a research object
2. Disciplinary approaches to EU studies: History, political science, law and economics
3. Social sciences: Principles and paradigms
4. Understandings of theory in the social sciences

Apart from the seminar, two fellows were given the opportunity to participate in a conference presenting the findings of the FP7 Collaborative Project titled "Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships in (post)Conflict Reconstruction: The Role of the European Union" (Multipart). The two fellows then reported the main results of the conference to the group:

The project aimed at investigating whether, how, and under what conditions multi-stakeholder partnerships can positively impact on human security and facilitate non-violence and long-term peace, while providing a productive framework for relations between local actors and external actors, including third party mediators and international organisations. The analysis was based on three case studies: Kosovo, the Democratic Republic of Congo and

Afghanistan and focused on four sectors: security; economic and social development; democracy, good governance and rule of law; and confidence building. The researchers came to the conclusion that Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships in post-conflict settings are highly complex arrangements presenting a number of operational challenges. The reality on the ground shows that Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships do generally not live up to their potential. In order to enhance the positive impact of Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships, the researchers presented a number of policy recommendations focusing amongst others on issues related to ownership, timing, transparency, accountability, coordination and sustainability. For more information and the full project report see: <http://www.multi-part.eu/>.