

Chapter 4 European Commission's external activities

Brief presentation of European Commission's external activities and their co-ordination with the Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy.

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The European Commission is independent of national governments. Its job is to "*promote the general interest of the Union and take appropriate initiatives to that end*" (see Article 17 TEU).

It *inter alia*:

- Drafts proposals for new European laws, which it presents to the European Parliament and the Council.
- Is the EU's executive arm – in other words, it is responsible for implementing the decisions of Parliament and the Council. That means managing the day-to-day business of the European Union: implementing its policies, running its programmes and spending its funds.
- With the exception of the CFSP and other cases provided for in the Treaties, it ensures the Union's external representation.
- Oversees the application of Union law under the control of the Court of Justice.

Like the Parliament and the Council, the European Commission was set up by the EU's founding treaties. A new Commission is appointed every five years.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND CFSP

Under the pre-Lisbon TEU, -the Commission was fully associated with CFSP (ex-Article 27 TEU). The post-Lisbon TEU no longer includes this provision but the Commission is still involved in the CFSP.

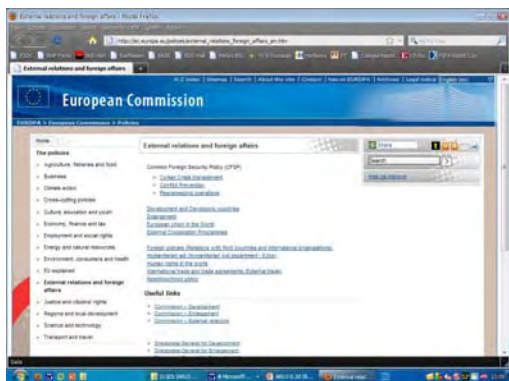
It has the right to support an initiative by the High Representative, and in some cases to submit a joint proposal, but no longer has an independent right of initiative on CFSP issues. It participates in decision-making, including in the Political and Security Committee (PSC) which is the linchpin of CFSP.

The Common Security and Defence Policy which is an integral part of CFSP, was given a range of crisis management functions. Some of these are clearly military, and here the Commission's role is primarily to strive towards ensuring that non-CFSP activities which accompany or follow on a military crisis operation proceed smoothly and coherently. Others are civilian. The Commission has a greater role in civilian missions, in particular through its responsibility for implementing the CFSP budget, from which these missions are normally funded.

In addition, the Commission may carry out activities in other EU policy areas than the CFSP, which may contribute to crisis management, e.g. as part of development policy or humanitarian aid. Furthermore a whole range of topics which come up in CFSP directly affect policies implemented by the Commission. These include terrorism, sanctions policy, human rights and democracy. The Commission has specific tasks in all these areas, and in some it has its own instruments. One example:

Since January 2007, the **Instrument for Stability (IfS, budget: € 2.062 bn for 2007-2013)** has become a strategic tool designed to address a number of global challenges to stability in complement to other instruments, through development cooperation measures, as well as financial, economic and technical cooperation measures with third countries. The IfS has a short-term and a long-term component. The short-term component (Crisis response and preparedness) aims "in a situation of crisis or emerging crisis, to contribute to stability by providing an effective response to help preserve, establish or re-establish the conditions essential to the proper implementation of the Community's development and cooperation policies". This *inter alia* covers conflict prevention, support to post-conflict stabilisation and to early reconstruction of key infrastructure. The long-term component aims "in the context of stable conditions for the implementation of [Union] cooperation policies in third countries, to help build capacity both to address specific global and transregional threats having a destabilising effect and to ensure preparedness to address pre- and post-crisis situations". Its main priorities include risk mitigation and preparedness relating to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials or agents, strengthening response capacities of non-EU member countries to cross-border threats such as terrorism and organised crime and enhancing pre-and post-crisis preparedness capacity building.

For more details on the Commission's role in external activities, including



- CFSP
- Development,
- Enlargement,
- External Cooperation Programmes,
- Humanitarian Aid (ECHO)
- International Trade and Trade Agreements,
- Neighbourhood Policy

please consult the **European Commission central web page**.
(Click on the above image)

CO-ORDINATION WITH THE COUNCIL'S CFSP/ CSDP ACTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

As mentioned earlier in this learning unit, coordination of all EU external activities is crucial to ensure consistency.

Article 21 (3) TEU emphasises the role of the Council and the Commission in order to ensure consistency in the field of external actions as follows: *"The Union shall ensure consistency between the different areas of its external action and between these and its other policies. The Council and the Commission, assisted by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, shall ensure that consistency and shall cooperate to that effect."*

As Article 42 (4) TEU states, decisions relating to CSDP *"shall be adopted by the Council acting unanimously on a proposal from the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy or an initiative from a Member State. The High Representative may propose the use of both national resources and Union instruments, together with the Commission where appropriate."*

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