



## THE EUROPEAN UNION'S EXTERNAL ACTION SERVICE: VIEWS FROM THE INSIDE



Before Christmas, the IIEA Brussels Branch focused on analysing the October 2 Lisbon Treaty referendum result. With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty on 1 December 2009, it is now time to turn the page on the past in order to analyse the various changes brought about by the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty.

One of the more exciting developments brought about by the Lisbon Treaty is the creation of a European External Action Service (EEAS). The EEAS, under the authority of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (currently, Baroness Catherine Ashton), will act as a "foreign ministry" and "diplomatic corps" for the EU.

Of course, the mere fact that we now have a legal basis for the EEAS in the

Treaty does not imply that, with a wave of a wand, it will come into being. The creation and operation of the EEAS will require hard work, good will and wise heads.

We were, in this context, privileged to have the opportunity, on 26 January 2010, to listen to two persons who have in-depth knowledge of the nascent EEAS. Catherine Day, Secretary General of the European Commission, and Jim Cloos, Director at the Secretariat General of the Council of the European Union, have been intimately involved in putting the nuts and bolts of the EEAS together.

We were also privileged to have in attendance the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the EU, His Excellency Rory Montgomery, the Deputy

Permanent Representative, Her Excellency Geraldine Byrne Nason and the Irish Ambassador to Belgium, His Excellency Brian Nason. There were many other distinguished guests in the conference room, which was packed to the rafters.

Catherine Day first of all underlined the determination of the Commission to make a success of the EEAS. Since there are many complex challenges which must be overcome in order to create and operate the EEAS, she said "generosity of spirit" is required from the various actors. She stressed that she was happy to note that this "generosity of spirit" was present amongst all those involved.

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**THE COMMITTEE WISHES TO  
THANK THE LARGE NUMBER OF  
MEMBERS WHO PAID THEIR  
SUBSCRIPTIONS IN RECENT  
WEEKS.**

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*“No structure, no matter how carefully it may be put together, would be successful without the good will of all those concerned. I believe that all those concerned wish the EEAS to be a success.”*

Rory Montgomery,  
Permanent Representative  
of Ireland to the EU

Catherine noted the importance of creating a common foreign policy for the EU in a world where the EU is faced with significant and varied challenges. She then explained how the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy would have three separate roles: the High Representative will be, separately, Head of the EEAS, Vice-President of the European Commission for Foreign Affairs coordination and President of the Foreign Affairs Council of the Council of the European Union. While she wears one of these "hats", she will not be wearing one of the other hats. For example, when the High Representative acts as President of the Foreign Affairs Council, she will not also act as the Commission's representative at that Council meeting (the Commission will thus have a separate representative present at such Council meetings).

Catherine also set out why the issue of staffing the EEAS was so important. As a general point, she stressed that it was vital to recruit the very highest quality officials for the EEAS. As such, recruitment would be merit-based, while not neglecting the need for geographic balance to reflect the diversity of the EU. She also hoped that Member States would, in the interests of continuity, choose to second staff to the EEAS for sufficiently long periods of time. It was very evident from her speech that the EEAS raises many complex staff management is-

sues, given that the EEAS will recruit staff from the Commission, the Council and the Member States.

Before entering into a substantive analysis of the EEAS, Jim Cloos put the EEAS in its proper historical context. In his introduction, he covered, *inter alia*, the failure of the European Defence Community in 1954, the achievements of the Single European Act and the ground-breaking Maastricht and Lisbon Treaties. He also effectively set out why the EU needs, now more than ever, an effective presence on the international stage and how the EEAS will give us that presence.

As regards the challenges involved in creating and operating the EEAS, Jim was very much in agreement with Catherine Day. In addition to the points Catherine made, he expanded on how the High Representative would function. He went into detail as regards how the High Representative would manage her three distinct functions. Importantly, he stated that she could delegate tasks, where necessary.

He also stressed the importance, for the High Representative, of ensuring that she worked effectively with the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy and the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso.

As regards staffing issues, Jim Cloos stressed that the right recruitment system should lead to one single "EEAS service", rather than three separate services working within the EEAS (that is, a Commission service, a Council service and a "Member State" service).

His Excellency Rory Montgomery, the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the EU, commented from the floor that it was important that the various actors maintained a constructive and reasonable approach to the EEAS. He stated that if the EEAS can build confidence amongst the Member States, it may, over time, take the place of certain services provided by the diplomatic corps of Member States. Finally, he stated that no structure, no matter how carefully it may be put together, would be successful without the good will of all those concerned. He considered that such good will was present.

The IIEA Brussels Branch wishes to express its gratitude to the Permanent Representation of Ireland for the use of its new conference facilities.

## FORTHCOMING EVENT WITH RICHARD CORBETT

### THE NEW INSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE: WILL IT WORK?

22 FEBRUARY 2010 AT 7 PM (NASC, ROND POINT SCHUMANN 6)



*“We must use the EU to find common solutions to common problems that cannot be solved by national action alone. But this requires EU institutions that are effective, efficient and accountable.”*

Richard Corbett

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Richard Corbett is uniquely well-positioned to speak on the subject of the institutional architecture put in place by the Lisbon Treaty.

Richard was first elected as an MEP (in a by-election) in 1996. He was re-elected in 1999 and 2004.

As an MEP he was the spokesperson for the Socialist Group on the Constitutional Affairs Committee of the European Parliament. In that context, he dealt with the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty and with the reform of Parliamentary procedure.

Richard was also on the Civil Liberties, Justice, and Home Affairs Committee.

He served as an MEP until 2009 when he lost his seat to the BNP. Mark Mardell of the BBC said it all:

*“The saddest moment of the night: Labour MEP Richard*

*Corbett lost his seat. Irrespective of party politics, there are some people who are good for politics as a whole. Mr Corbett, a decent, thoughtful politician, is also one of the few people who understand how the European Parliament actually works and explained it well. He'll be missed on all sides of the chamber.”*

Richard came out punching. From August to October 2009 he played a very significant and much appreciated role in the Irish referendum.

In December 2009 he was invited to join the cabinet of the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy as his advisor on, *inter alia*, relations with the European Parliament, the UK and some other Member States and on constitutional issues.

**NOTE: JOHN BRUTON WILL SPEAK TO US IN MARCH 2010**

**DATE AND LOCATION TO BE CONFIRMED**

**YOU, THE MEMBERS, ARE THE IIEA. AS SUCH, WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO SUGGEST TOPICS AND SPEAKERS FOR FUTURE EVENTS.**

## AR DHEIS DÉ GO RAIBH A ANAM

The Committee of the IIEA sends its sincerest condolences to the family and friends of Aidan Feeney, who died suddenly in hospital in Dublin on 26th December 2009. Aidan was, in previous years, a member of the Committee of the IIEA where he held the post of Treasurer. He is remembered for his intelligence, his brilliant wit and his kindness to one and all. His untimely death, at only 48, leaves us with great sadness and a sense that the Irish community in Brussels is missing a dear friend.