



## External Action Service: EP's budgetary powers guarantee parliamentary oversight

- MEPs welcome deal on organisation of Action Service
- Parliamentary oversight a key factor

**A crucial vote for the nascent EU diplomatic corps - the European External Action Service - could be held next week by the European Parliament. It comes just days after European Union governments and the head of the new service, Catherine Ashton reached a deal in Madrid on the functioning, organisation and political accountability of the new service. The European Parliament has budgetary authority over the Service and is eager to ensure there is strong Parliamentary oversight to its operations.**

The reactions of the MEPs who have been leading negotiations over the Service have been mainly positive to the new developments.

Speaking in the Foreign Affairs Committee on 28 June, veteran centre-right MEP Elmar Brok said, "the Parliament have more budgetary powers, in this sense we got slightly more than we have expected". He went on to say that "our objective is to get a functioning service that can get on with confidence building measures".

The operational part of the budget of the EEAS will be part of the European Commission's budget - and the Commission's budget can only be signed off by Parliament.

The administration part of the budget will be a separate part of the EU budget but will still be under the budgetary control of the EP.

### "An ambitious, broader EEAS"

Speaking just after the Madrid deal on the EEAS, former Belgian Prime Minister turned MEP Guy Verhofstadt praised the fact that the community method of different countries working together through European Union Institutions like the Commission and the Council would be protected. "We now have an ambitious, broader EEAS, with 6000-7000 diplomats and civil servants, based in the most appropriate way on the communitarian method, safeguarding, even strengthening the communitarian method on a number of issues."

Italian Member Roberto Gualtieri welcomed the deal saying "we secured agreement that the new service will be politically accountable to the European Parliament as the only directly-elected EU institution".

### Human rights guarantees

The Parliament also got a guarantee that the part of the EEAS structure will be devoted to the promotion of human rights, crisis management and peace building.

The staff of the new Service will be made up by around two thirds EU staff (from the Commission and the Council of Ministers) with the rest being diplomats from the 27 EU countries under secondment.

# Story

The head of the Service is Catherine Ashton, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Vice President of the European Commission. She was selected by EU leaders last December to head the Service. She will have to liaise with the European Commissioners for enlargement, development and humanitarian aid.