

Press Release

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EU External Action Service must be part of budgetary control process. Inge Graessle MEP.

The EU's future External Action Service must be subject to the European Parliament's authority over budgetary control, the speaker of the EPP Group in the budgetary control committee, Inge Graessle, said. "There are still difficulties with the existing concept for the external action service", which is due to be created once the Lisbon treaty enters into force. The European Parliament as part of the EU's budgetary authority should be able to control the new service.

"We support the creation of the European foreign affairs service, but it has to be under full parliamentary control. Therefore it has to be part of the regular budgetary control procedure. This is the only way make the organisation's expenses and human resource policy transparent", Graessle said.

Referring to the expected size of the External Action Service, Graessle points to large increases in the staff of the European Commission representations in non-EU countries, which increased by 186 percent between 2000 and 2008, in contrast to a growth of only 62 percent for the whole of the foreign affairs division in that period. More than 20 percent of the staff in European Commission's delegations is working in European countries outside the EU, about one third in Africa.

The European Commission has allocated 984 posts for its Delegations as of 1 April 2009, but actually there are 5038 employees, of whom 3067 are locally employed and financed by material expenses, Graessle said. They are not mentioned in any budgetary plan.

"This severe lack of transparency could be exacerbated in the new diplomatic service which will incorporate staff from the EU member states and the Council", Graessle said. The new service must be subject to full budgetary control, in order to avoid costs rising disproportionately.