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# ENHANCING TEAMWORK WITHIN THE EUROPEAN UNION DIPLOMACY AND INCLUDING KEY EXTERNAL PARTNERS IN THE EU COORDINATION PROCESS IN GENEVA

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## *Abstract*

This paper reflects on the state of affairs of the Geneva-based EU diplomacy, while examining adaptive challenges faced by its Member States. It also presents the concrete experience of Lithuania's EU Presidency in participating in the EU coordination process. The objective of this research is to identify where improvements can be made to strengthen the EU Diplomacy in Geneva. This article underlines the value of reinforcing the EU coordination process, in particular by increasing the inclusion of the small and medium sized Member States and of the key partners. The article generates new materials on the basis of interviews conducted with Ambassadors and Deputy Permanent Representatives (DPRs) of the EU Delegation, 15 EU and non-EU countries, in the context of Geneva. It offers valuable findings as well as interesting questions and possible venues for further research.

## **Introduction**

Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky<sup>1</sup> underline that human progress and the ability for large numbers of people to live together are linked to “the growth and

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We would like to thank the Ambassadors and Deputy Permanent Representatives of multilateral missions and the EU Delegation in Geneva who participated in the interviews, lending us their precious time and providing the authors with very valuable material for this paper.

We would like to thank Professor Jan Wouters (Professor of International Law and International

variation in scope, structure, governance, strategy and coordination of political and commercial enterprise”. The European Union (EU) illustrates the development of a complex governance system for a diverse population to live and prosper on a very large scale. It is one of the most advanced forms of multilateral cooperation among States<sup>2</sup>. The EU is a relatively new governance model, comprising 28 Member States with a history of difficult relationships, marked by intense competition for hegemony and periods of armed conflict. In this sense, it is significant that countries embroiled in conflict in the past now form a union that was awarded the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize for “having contributed to the achievement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe”.

At the same time, the EU project is one that is still in construction. A major landmark in the evolution of the EU took place through the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon signed in 2007, entering into force on December 2009. The Treaty led to the creation of a High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the main coordinator and representative of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) within the EU, and head of the EU External Action Service (EEAS), represented through EU Delegations around the world. Through the work of the EEAS, diplomatic coordination in the EU is being boosted in order to enhance the force of the voice of the EU on the international scene. In this paper, the EEAS and rotating Presidency are referred to as “the local EU diplomatic representation”. See Figure 1.

Savall and Zardet (1995<sup>3</sup>, 2008<sup>4</sup>) underline that the strategic force of an organization is based on its internal cohesion. Internal cohesion results from an efficient coordination of stakeholders. If we apply in this context adaptive leadership

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Organizations at the University of Leuven, KU Leuven), and his colleagues Anna Luise Chané and Katrien Meuwissen, of the Leuven Centre for Global Governance Studies, as well Professor Ramūnas Vilpišauskas (Director of the Institute of International Relations and Political Science of Vilnius University) and Dr. Tomas Janeliūnas (Institute of International Relations and Political Science of Vilnius University) for their very useful comments and review of our article. Their remarks have been a source of improvement for this paper.

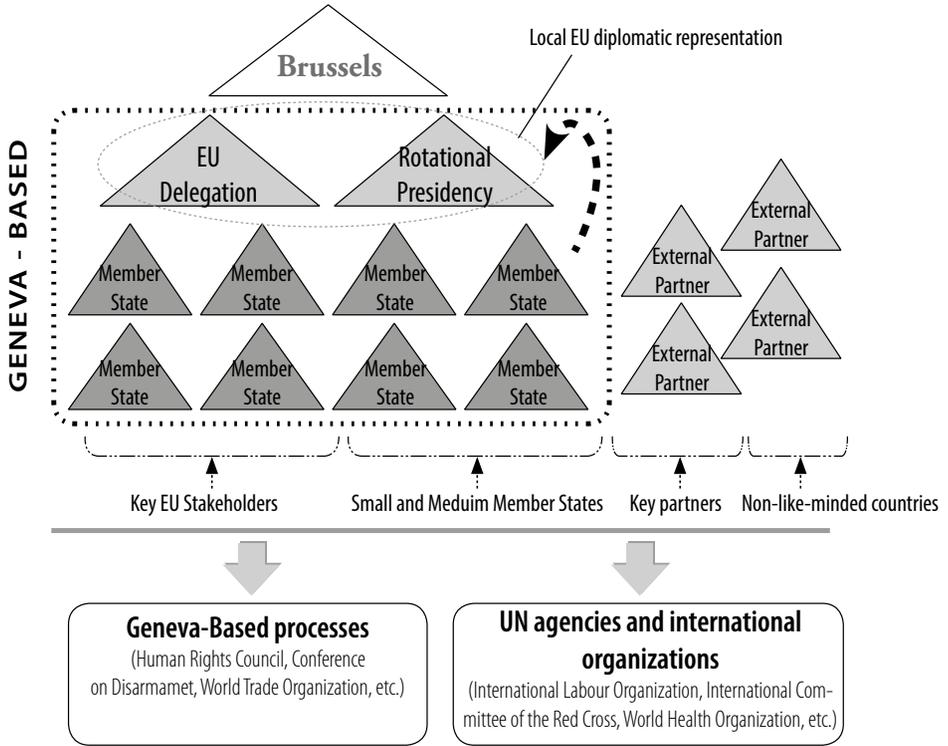
<sup>1</sup> Heifetz R., Alexander Grashow A., Marty Linsky M., *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*, Harvard Business Review Press, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Wouters J., Chané A.-L., Odermatt J., Ramopoulos T., ‘Improving the EU’s Status in the UN and the UN System: An Objective Without a Strategy?’ in Christine Kaddous (ed) *The European Union in International Organisations and Global Governance* (Hart Publishing, forthcoming), 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Savall H., Zardet V., *Ingénierie stratégique du roseau*, Edition Economica, 2ème édition, Préface de Serge Pasquier, 1995.

<sup>4</sup> Savall H., Zardet V., *Mastering Hidden Costs – Socio-Economic performance*, IAP, Charlotte, USA, Preface of A. Buono, 2008.

theory, as well as group dynamics theory, the goal of the local EU diplomatic representation should be: (1) “to mobilize people [country representatives] to tackle tough challenges and thrive” (Heifetz, Grashow & Linsky, 2009<sup>5</sup>); (2) “to allow the group [EU] and its individuals [Member States] to establish a unique and meaningful identity where each is an integral part of the other” (3) to allow the EU and its Member States to operate efficiently at their highest potential.



**Figure 1.** Representation of the EU Diplomacy in Geneva

Source: prepared by the authors

As outlined by Heifetz & others (2009), “The adaptive success in an organizational sense requires leadership that can orchestrate multiple stakeholder priorities to define thriving and then realize it. The same authors identify the adaptive challenge as “the gap between the values people stand for (that constitutes

<sup>5</sup> Heifetz R. & al., 2009, (note 1).

thriving) and the reality that they face (their current lack of capacity to realize those values in their environment)”.

What are the criteria for efficiency and effectiveness of the EU diplomacy? Based on what was expressed by the representatives we met in Geneva, in order to both satisfy Member States needs and collective goals (such as increasing the influence of the EU) more information-sharing is needed within the group, as well as internal burden-sharing, in order to increase the capacity to negotiate collectively.

This paper reflects on the state of affairs of the Geneva-based EU diplomacy, while examining adaptive challenges faced by its Member States. It also presents the concrete experience of Lithuania’s EU Presidency in participating in the EU coordination process. The objective is to identify where improvements can be made to strengthen the EU diplomacy in Geneva. This article underlines the value of reinforcing the EU coordination process, in particular by increasing the inclusion of the small and medium sized Member States and of the key partners. The article generates new materials on the basis of interviews conducted with relevant stakeholders. The authors believe that it offers some findings as well as interesting questions and possible venues for further research.

## **1. Background and research methodology**

This article is the result of collaboration between a researcher in the field of management and a practitioner in diplomacy. Xavier Pierre is researcher at ISEOR, a research institute in management science, and teaches at the University of Lyon III (France). His work focuses on the management of trans-organisational cooperation. Ambassador Rytis Paulauskas is the Permanent Representative of Lithuania in Geneva and led the Lithuanian 2013 EU Presidency in Geneva, as well as Task Force for the Lithuanian OSCE’s Chairmanship in 2011. He focuses on the application of the “adaptive leadership” and “smart power” concepts in the multilateral diplomacy.

The Lithuanian Foreign Ministry undertook thorough preparations for the EU Presidency. As for each country holding the presidency, a logo was developed. It is a visual form of identity and a message that each country wants to spread about itself and its presidency philosophy. The circle in the logo represents the colours of the Lithuanian flag and of a united European Union, to symbolize the willingness of the Member States to work together, foster European values and overcome challenges that arise. A strategic line was developed for Lithuania’s EU policy to the EU Presidency: “More Europe in Lithuania and Lithuania in

Europe!” Although some external and internal actors perceived Lithuania as a post-Soviet newcomer, a goal during the Presidency was to demonstrate its ability to be an effective interlocutor within the EU community. Lithuania acknowledged the importance of a strong partnership with the EU delegation and members to attain common goals, such as responding to increasing tensions in the Middle East, humanitarian crises and any natural disasters arising during the period of the Presidency. At the same time, the adaptive challenge for the EU in Geneva was to improve its level of external and internal efficiency.

This paper is the fruit of a shared interest by the two authors in increasing cooperation within the EU diplomacy and the evolution of the role of the local EU diplomatic representation. This project is aligned with the objective of the EU local diplomatic representation in Geneva to see the Member States “work as a team”. As we demonstrate in this paper, there is a need to further enhance the existing feeling of belonging to the EU group as well as to develop leadership by the local EU diplomatic representation, in order to increase cooperation among Member States.

The authors conducted 17 interviews in total with Ambassadors and Deputy Permanent Representatives (DPRs) of the EU Delegation, 15 EU and non-EU countries, including Lithuania, which held the Presidency of the EU at that time (second semester of 2013). See Table 1.

Table 1. **Interviewed countries and institutions**

LOCAL EU DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION	EU MEMBER STATES	KEY EXTERNAL PARTNERS
EU DELEGATION EU PRESIDENCY	DENMARK FRANCE GERMANY UNITED KINGDOM GREECE IRELAND ITALY LATVIA LITHUANIA NETHERLANDS PORTUGAL	CANADA GEORGIA SWITZERLAND USA

Source: prepared by the authors

The experience of Geneva-based processes and the preparation of each interviewee varied, as well as his/her previous experiences of European diplomacy in other bilateral and multilateral contexts. Some interviewees even went as far as preparing for the interview by organizing consultations with their team in Geneva and with other relevant diplomatic missions. The choice of the countries selected to participate in the interviews represents a sample of the large EU countries, the medium, and small Member States, as well as key external partners of EU. In our analysis, and as it is observed in practice, we divide the Member States in two categories. The first group called the “key EU stakeholders” is composed of the more influential countries wielding power due to multiple elements according to Joseph Nye<sup>6</sup>:

$$\text{PERCEIVED POWER} = (\text{POPULATION} + \text{TERRITORY} + \text{ECONOMY} + \text{MILITARY}) \times (\text{STRATEGY} + \text{WILL})$$

The second group includes the rest of the EU Member States categorized as “small and medium countries”. The EU Delegation itself was also interviewed in this process. The EU Presidency was represented by Lithuania, which assumed the role at that time, but also through interviews with countries that recently held the role or preparing to assume it in the near future. The average length of the interviews was one hour. The interviews were conducted using a semi-directive methodology based on an open questionnaire (see Table 2). The questionnaire is the result of preliminary exchanges between the two authors, based on the research experience in inter-organizational cooperation environment of the management researcher, and on the diplomatic practitioner’s perception of EU diplomacy processes in Geneva. The questionnaire was further developed as well during the interview process. We would like to thank all of the Ambassadors and DPRs who participated in this exercise for offering their precious time to this project.

After the interviews, 385 sentences were extracted and selected and classified on 83 key ideas structured in 5 themes and 14 subthemes, with the purpose of analysing converging and specific ideas between interviewees<sup>7</sup>. Key sentences are used throughout the text to depict the observations made in the paper. The results are presented in this article, theme by theme. Using the reflections expressed in the

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<sup>6</sup> Nye J., *The Future of Power*, New York : Public Affairs, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Savall H., Zardet V., *The Qualimetrics Approach - Observing the Complex Object*, IAP, Charlotte, USA, 2011.

interview process, this article analyses the cooperation and the coordination of the EU diplomacy in the multilateral context in Geneva.

**Table 2.** Questionnaire

PARTICIPANTS	THEMES - QUESTIONS
1/EU DELEGATION AND EU PRESIDENCY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Effective functioning of EU coordination; Perceived obstacles;</li> <li>– Member States’ behaviours; Perceived role of the EU Delegation, Presidency, Member States; Coordination between Brussels and the EU Delegation in Geneva; Future of the EU presidency; Prospects for improvement in the EU coordination.</li> </ul>
2/EU MEMBER STATES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Perception of each Member States’ own role played in EU coordination; Perceived difficulties in EU coordination; Behaviours by actors involved in coordination process;</li> <li>– Consultation by the EU Delegation with Member States during the coordination process; Autonomy versus influence of Member States; Impact of work organization in each EU mission as a result of the EU coordination; Benefits of EU coordination for each Member State; Current and future strategies adopted by each Member State in response to EU coordination process; Perceived role of the EU Delegation, Presidency, Member States; Prospects for improvement in EU coordination.</li> </ul>
3/EXTERNAL PARTNERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Understanding of EU coordination processes; Identifying benefits and difficulties during negotiation processes with the EU coordination and EU member States; Current and future strategies adopted in response to EU coordination processes; Prospects for improvement in EU coordination.</li> </ul>

Source: prepared by the authors

## 2. Application of the Lisbon Treaty in Geneva

The Lisbon Treaty foresees a limited list of EU competences as well as a clear delineation between the competences of the EU and Member States. The Lisbon Treaty provides important guarantees regarding the protection of the distribution

of powers (see Appendix 1); including Article 13 (2) TEU which defines that “each institution shall act within the limits of the powers conferred on it in the Treaties, and in conformity with the procedures, conditions and objectives set out in them.” The intense discussions which have taken place in 2011 regarding (1) the distribution of competencies between the EU and MS, and (2) between the EU and other regional groups regarding the EU status and the sequence of its statements in IOs resulted in the adoption of the General Arrangements by the COREPER on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2011. The General Arrangements seem to be functioning reasonably well. Yet the question on “what constitutes the CFSP” raised on a regular basis indicates that the issue might be simmering for quite some time to come, at least in Geneva. The EU Presidency is expected to assume the role of an honest and impartial broker in these discussions.

The status of the Rotating Presidency in Geneva retains some of the features of the “pre-Lisbon Treaty” Presidency. The EU Delegation now largely takes care of internal coordination as well as external representation, for example by presenting many of the EU’s positions at formal UN meetings and negotiations. However, the Rotating Presidency still undertakes certain EU representational duties, in particular in those cases where the EU is legally confined to an observer status within the international organization, attributed to other regional international organisations or other players too. Four models of representation might be distinguished:

- 1) The EU Delegation has undertaken the majority of the external representation functions in the UN Human Rights Council (except during the process of the HRC decision making), the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) which can be characterised as a classical *Post-Lisbon Treaty Presidency*.
- 2) *The hybrid model of the Presidency*, which has some features<sup>8</sup> of pre- and post- Lisbon Treaty (an exception is WIPO)<sup>9</sup>, has been developed in the specialised UN agencies<sup>10</sup>. The EU Delegation, which has undertaken the function of internal coordination in the Conference of Disarmament also has to share the function of representation with the Rotating Presidency.

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<sup>8</sup> The Lithuanian representative, elected in 25/5/2012 to the Executive Board of the World Health Organisation (WHO) delivers statements on behalf of the EU and its MS in it.

<sup>9</sup> The EU has an observer status only in the Standing Committee on the Law of Patents and the Committee on Development and Intellectual property of the WIPO. All the preparation work for the sessions and statements are delivered by the rotating presidency on the behalf of the EU. The workload is even greater for the rotating presidency during WIPO General Assembly.

<sup>10</sup> The International Labour Organisation, World Health Organisation, International Telecommunications Union.

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The representatives of the EU Delegation are registered as part of the delegation of a Rotating Presidency and speak up from its seat. The situation is similar (not identical) in other disarmament fora, where the EU holds the status of a regional international organisation only and is seated among the observers. Ireland has already requested Lithuania to represent the EU Presidency in the Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation. The extension of the request to the Irish or the Greek Delegation to be represented in the Executive Committee of the UN HCR shall be considered altogether.

- 3) The nature of *the pre-Lisbon Presidency* essentially remains at WIPO pending the accumulation of the competencies by the EU Delegation and undertakes the functions foreseen by the Lisbon treaty.
- 4) The Lisbon Treaty did not affect the Common Foreign Trade Policy, which belongs to the exclusive competence of the EU, therefore the Presidency's role for EU activities in the WTO remained unchanged. The Presidency prepares EU coordination meetings, their agendas, makes conclusions concerning the questions discussed during the meetings, if necessary - prepares compromise positions or proposals.

### **3. Value of enhancing teamwork between EU Member States and with the EU local diplomatic representation in Geneva**

Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky<sup>11</sup> consider that, “new environments and new dreams demand new strategies and abilities, as well as the leadership to mobilize them”. With the evolving hierarchy of global power among States, EU Member States are striving to maintain influence in a new environment in diplomacy. The dream in this context is an EU with a capacity to defend and promote values such as democracy, and protecting its sovereignty and developing its economy. One of the objectives of the EEAS is “to promote an international system based on stronger multilateral cooperation and good global governance”<sup>12</sup>. The Union not only wants to participate in the multilateral system, it actually has a role in shaping it. In order to achieve this goal, the EU should have a strong and effective voice within the UN and the UN system<sup>13</sup>. Most representatives interviewed believe that

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<sup>11</sup> Heifetz R. & al., 2009, (note 1).

<sup>12</sup> Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union.

<sup>13</sup> Wouters J. & al., 2014, (note 2).

the voice of the EU would be stronger if Member States speak with the same voice or coordinate their actions and demonstrate their solidarity to external partners. This new environment and the EU's ability to realize its "dreams" demand a strategy and leadership that can orchestrate multiple stakeholders working together as a team.

There is a willingness to develop the capacity to negotiate collectively in a more efficient manner to influence external partners and the work taking place in international organizations.

Interviewees affirmed that to be able to act more collectively and to be more proactive there is a need to enhance cooperation between EU Member States on an on-going basis. An adaptive challenge for the EU is to further engage the countries in this dynamic and to develop a feeling of belonging to the group.

Member States and the local EU diplomatic representation expect from the joint diplomacy that players will engage in internal burden-sharing, as well as information-sharing and effective outreach with important external EU partners. After important meetings, it is assumed that EU participants will redistribute strategic information to other Member States. Member States, in particular small and medium countries, expect the EU Delegation to also redistribute information and to consult the EU group after and before meetings.

One of the most obvious added values of the joint EU diplomacy is the possibility to combine human and financial resources. Local EU diplomatic representation (Delegation and Presidency), Member States as well as key external partners perceive this as an advantage of the EU working as a team. In Geneva, there are approximately 7,000 meetings a year that take place in the context of multilateral diplomacy. The common EU diplomacy permits greater coverage and the practice of burden-sharing between Member States, significantly increasing efficiency at this level. Combining the resources of the Member States offers the EU "*the equivalent of a US administration*". The objective is to be able to share knowledge, contacts and resources of the 28 Member States and the local EU diplomatic representation and to negotiate, in order to achieve the EU's strategic goals.

#### **4. State of cooperation within the EU**

Many EU representatives noted the necessity to further increase the confidence level between EU countries and expressed a desire for increased discussions to enhance and intensify the level of cooperation between Member States (see Extract 1). While EU coordination meetings are the opportunity to exchange views and to share information, there is a feeling by some member States that the EU joint diplomacy can go farther.

There is a shared feeling that good will to cooperate is not translated enough into action in particular by the larger States. Some representatives observed that the proclaimed principles of solidarity and transparency are not always respected. Small and medium States have the impression that key EU stakeholders act according to their own strategy without sufficiently taking into account the interests of the other stakeholders. There is a general feeling that each EU country could contribute more and that increased burden-sharing could take place. As a result, there is a predominance of national interests that play out and there is a sense that the EU could be more present at negotiations. The adaptive challenge is to integrate each Member State's national interests in the coordination process in order to enhance the burden-sharing.

Another challenge is to increase cohesion and trust within the group and to ensure that information is not being shared with outside partners without the consent of the group. Some representatives observed that leaks of information have taken place after EU coordination meetings. Additionally, there is a need for increased trust among Member States in order for burden-sharing to take place effectively and ensure information sharing among Member States after important meetings.

**Extract 1.** Need for enhanced teamwork within the EU

LOCAL EU DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION – “To come to a consolidated position in the EU is a complicated process.”

KEY EU STAKEHOLDER – “My personal perception is that the EU is underperforming compared to what we could be doing together.”

KEY EU STAKEHOLDER – “We did the right thing establishing the European Diplomacy. Now, how to do it more effectively in Geneva? Our ambition should be to be a proactive player.”

KEY EU STAKEHOLDER – “If you don't have the resources nationally to cover everything, you need to rely on someone else and the EU is useful for that.”

KEY EU STAKEHOLDER – “We are effective at a level of minimum cooperation: exchanging information. We should improve our capacity as a negotiating partner.”

SMALL OR MEDIUM MEMBER STATE – “Presently the tendency is more about the interests of the Member States. The big players tend to play their games resulting in decreased cooperation.”

SMALL OR MEDIUM MEMBER STATE – “My country is very pro-European Union integration. We want to push it as far as we can.”

If on one hand, a relative homogeneity of views and values between EU Member States exists, there is also an apparent divergence in the way they approach the issues, and how they conceive EU coordination and external representation rules making it difficult to obtain a common position in the EU. Key external partners interviewed have noticed some tensions within the EU group and it is no secret when a common position on an issue or on a UN resolution is not reached.

## **5. Impact of the EU coordination on relationships with external partners**

A risk defined by external partners in the EU's coordination process post-Lisbon Treaty is the perception of the EU operating as a block, and encouraging "block diplomacy" resulting in polarization, hampering multilateral negotiations (see Extract 2). It is important to keep in mind that this criticism of the EU is not necessarily neutral in that it is particularly expressed in describing circumstances where the EU position was not aligned with the partner's own position. However, it is also crucial to acknowledge this widely shared perception in order to enhance cooperation with partners.

The external partners interviewed did not hide the fact that they value their cooperation with the local EU diplomatic representation (Delegation or Presidency) in particular when they are aligned with their own position and can offer support for them. They find the EU coordination valuable when it helps them to implement their own strategy.

Representatives of the external partners are learning how to play the EU coordination game depending on the alignment with their own positions. When the EU position is close to theirs, they deal directly with the EU Delegation. However, when the position differs, external partners both from the North and South hemispheres will approach EU Member States with which, for regional, historic or linguistic-cultural reasons, they have stronger ties, and try to influence the opinion shapers or split the EU group. In other words, it has been observed that partners can apply the well-known "divide and conquer" tactics in certain circumstances.

Key external partners tend to have particularly strong links with certain EU Member States, which are historical or based on the same interest-value-logic on certain issues. Although key partners were concerned previous to the joint

EU diplomacy that their historical partnerships would weaken because of the coordination process, they also value having close partners in the EU that can influence the rest of the group.

**Extract 2.** The EU's relationships with external partners

LOCAL EU DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION – “From the external partners point of view, there is a risk they will look at the EU as a block, less flexible, more polarised. It is not fair, but it is an easy accusation. Block politics affects the international community in a negative way. If the EU becomes a more collective player, we will have more and more of this antagonism.”

LOCAL EU DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION – “First, the EU Delegation chairs meetings between Member States to obtain a common position. After that, it has to defend this position at the UN with all of the other States to convince them. Very often, the EU Delegation has to then go back to the 28 member States to re-negotiate and re-coordinate before going back to the UN. It is a difficult exercise. But we are a strong player at the UN in Geneva on human rights. Some partners think that we are too slow, but the EU is a club of Democracies co-building positions.”

KEY EXTERNAL PARTNER – “Our strategy is to adapt. We will engage who the opinion shaper is. On some themes it is the EU Delegation. Sometimes it is a Member State. Sometimes it is both.”

KEY EXTERNAL PARTNER – “We are constantly with the EU. We suffer the coordination process, we influence it, we go to capital to break it or play it.”

KEY EXTERNAL PARTNER – “The EU is a large and important partner for us. We are linked on many issues.”

KEY EXTERNAL PARTNER – “The EU is the most successful experiment [in governance] in the last century.”

KEY EXTERNAL PARTNER – “We see the advantage of having one voice. When the 28 say something it is something. It is attractive. I wish we could have that.”

KEY EXTERNAL PARTNER – “The EU can be the most frustrating organisation to work with.”

KEY EXTERNAL PARTNER – “In two years it has improved. I realize that the EU in Geneva has made a lot of progress integrating other countries in their processes.”

KEY EXTERNAL PARTNER – “EU coordination meetings make us wait. This is a problem.”

KEY EXTERNAL PARTNER – “When you have a negotiation, the point will be possibly A or B. But if the EU comes with C, the position may be far away from a common position on a resolution. The EU should be much more flexible, not with a single position. The strength of EU is that you have the numbers. It should also give you the possibility to be much more flexible.”

KEY EXTERNAL PARTNER – “The EU takes for granted non EU friends.”

KEY EXTERNAL PARTNER – “The EU puts a lot of energy in internal coordination. That is why it has an inward looking rather than outward looking perspective. After negotiations [between them] they have the feeling a lot has been done, but it is just the first step. Afterwards, everything still has to be done.”

*Source:* prepared by the authors

In general terms, interviewed external partners share positions that are similar to that of the EU and cooperate on many issues.

Unanimously, external partners value the EU project. They value the impact of EU on peace in Europe and see the interest of EU Member States working as a team. It is attractive to them to work with a group of 28 countries that has the ability to speak with one voice. Key partners expressed a strong desire to be consulted during the EU coordination process. Some expressed respect for the strength in numbers held by the EU.

## **6. Including key external partners in the EU coordination process**

While the advantage of EU coordination for Member States is understood by External Partners, they feel frustration in working with this system, even if they observe that the involvement of external Partners in the EU coordination process has improved in recent years.

In general, however, representatives of external partners emitted criticism concerning the EU coordination process and the capacity of the EU to be a positive partner in multilateral negotiations. In some cases this criticism might also be driven by the willingness to weaken the EU’s position. However they regret the fact that it is very difficult to negotiate with the EU group when the local EU diplomatic representation and Member States have completed the coordination process. It often requires great effort to define an “average position or consensus”,

that the EU group is not willing to go back to the negotiating table between them, regardless of the positions of their partners. When there is consensus in the EU group, partners find themselves in front of a block representing 28 votes. They feel that the EU group is self-centered and applies most of its efforts internally rather than investing the time and energy necessary to maintain strong relationships with key partners and other non-like-minded countries.

One element of frustration is also that partners must wait for the EU to coordinate before being able to consult with them or coordinate positions. The EU group imposes its own pace on external partners. Representatives perceive a lack of reactivity and the need to anticipate positions to be able to really negotiate and coordinate with the EU. The coordination process also impacts the EU's ability to be vocal during meetings while positions are being formed. Positions can also be formed too late in the negotiating process to be influential.

The fact that the EU position is often an average position between EU Member States could be problematic for succeeding in multilateral negotiations. Work to come to an agreement on difficult matters with non-like-minded countries demands flexibility in order to make the steps required for overcoming stagnant status quo situations. As the EU wants to speak with one voice and gets stuck in the position agreed between them, this results sometimes in hampering the EU members' ability to be positive players in difficult negotiations. There is a need to be able to negotiate and adapt to the stage of the negotiation. For some countries, the only way to deal with the EU coordination process is to act early on and lobby the group before the coordination takes place in order to influence its positions.

In the view of some external partners, the major danger in the EU coordination process is that the process itself tends to absorb all of the attention and the resources of the members and the local EU diplomatic representation while coordination is taking place, while forgetting key external partnerships and negotiations with non-like-minded countries. This could lead to disengagement by allies if partners continue to feel that they cannot negotiate and influence the EU group, or that it requires too much effort for too small a result. Another negative result for partners is that the local EU diplomatic representation and Member States tend to stop at achieving an internal negotiation, while forgetting that the coordinated position must then be negotiated externally and that this second step is the more important one.

## 7. External representation of the EU group

With regards to the external representation roles, some tensions appear in the relationships within the EU group. Wouters & al. (2014) underline that one of the greatest obstacles in having a unified and effective presence in the UN system is “the division of powers between the EU and its Member States, most notably with the right to speak or the right to negotiate international agreements”<sup>14</sup>. First of all there is no clear consensus between the EU Delegation and the EU Presidency. While before Lisbon, the group was represented by the Presidency, now the EU Delegation has the main co-ordinating position. The remaining issues are about the participation of the EU Presidency at meetings between the EU Delegation and external partners and at negotiations. Invitations to the EU Presidency to participate in these types of strategic meetings tend to be rather limited. A similar exclusion is experienced by smaller and medium Member States, leading to tensions with the EU Delegation. Most countries are satisfied with the EU Delegation holding a coordinating role, however some Member States questioned its role in representing Member States. Finally, some Member States, in particular the key EU stakeholders, at times only speak for themselves without coordinating with the rest of the group (see Extract 3).

### **Extract 3.** External representation of the EU group

LOCAL EU DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION – “The problem is representation. Some Member States want support for their own position.

They want the help of the EU. It is a case of selective EU-ism we live with.”

KEY EU STAKEHOLDER – “It is important to have members of the EU playing different roles not just presenting one position close to the average position. We could lose influence that way.”

KEY EXTERNAL PARTNER – “There is an internal competition for competence, especially in Geneva. Who talks? The Presidency? The Delegation? The Member States?”

KEY EXTERNAL PARTNER – “Only one EU member speaks. So it puts a lot of pressure on external partners to speak in informal meetings. There are fewer voices speaking. We need a multiplicity of voices.”

*Source:* prepared by the authors

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<sup>14</sup> Wouters J. & al., 2014, (note 2).

In some negotiating or representational situations, numerous EU States are present, and only one speaks, which can be awkward for the others participating. When Member States remain quiet, external partners have the feeling that they have less support during meetings, and as a result have to speak more to compensate. There is a sense for some EU countries that it would be more efficient if Member States spoke in their national capacity rather than having just one voice in order to complement arguments presented in a negotiation process and offer a larger range of positions. An adaptive challenge for the EU group is to identify the best way to deal with external representation and as a union made up of 28 Member States, the EU Presidency and the EU Delegation to act with its highest potential.

## 8. Coordination by the EU Delegation

The Treaty of Lisbon created the EEAS with the objective of establishing a constant coordinator and more consistency in its external actions.<sup>15</sup> Most representatives expressed their satisfaction about the continuity offered by the EU Delegation. The EU Delegation can also be perceived as more neutral. It considers that its role is principally to chair coordination meetings between EU Member States, but that it also holds other responsibilities. The EU Delegation has the objective of building and implementing a strategy for the EU Diplomacy to be more efficient and have a more long-term perspective, however, developing a strategic coordination is a work in process.

The EU Delegation is very active and efficient in Geneva in organizing and chairing hundreds of meetings among EU experts, at the ambassadorial level, and with key external partners. Its role is rising, which represents a colossal workload for the EU Delegation, and also demonstrates its growing clout. A large number of representatives agree that the EU Delegation is consolidating more and more power with the perspective of agreeing on a common position. From the EU Delegation's perspective, it is very challenging to bring 28 countries to agree on a single position. On the other hand, there is the impression that the EU sometimes overtakes the influence of smaller or medium Member States in the process of bringing Member States to agreement. This, from the perspective of some representatives, could result in increased disengagement and tension. There is a latent fear of competence

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<sup>15</sup> Hadesian N., European Union's External Relations: More Consistency?, *Yearbook of Polish European Studies*, Vol. 13, 2010, pp. 107-127.

creep in this context.<sup>16</sup> Some States seem to be against this evolution, while some enjoy it, and others still are simply in the acceptance of facts. One point of view is that the role of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy is to make diplomats of different countries work together in the same structure. As mentioned above, many representatives inside and outside the EU noted that the EU Delegation has significantly improved its functioning and efficiency in recent years. Some internal and external partners recognize the EU Delegation as being effective on the coordination aspect. Some observe that they are taking on more and more substantive work.

There is still a perception, by some representatives, that the EU Delegation is not yet taking enough initiative, they feel that it needs to be pushed by Member States to be more proactive and vocal in meetings. However, it has also been observed that sometimes there is a vested interest by some delegations to promote national initiatives through the EU Delegation without the consensus of the membership of the EU as a whole. There is an understanding by some interviewees that the EU Delegation lacks the resources to be present everywhere and to cover every key issue. They have to make up for this by hiring interns to compensate. Perhaps increased burden-sharing by the EU Presidency and Member States could offer a solution. At the same time, some consider the resources of the EU Delegation are underused. There is a perception that the EU Delegation representatives are not mobilized enough to negotiate on behalf of the Member States and the group.

**Extract 4.** Coordination of the EU group

LOCAL EU DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION – “The aim of the EU Delegation is to be strategic. There is consensus that the EU Delegation should chair meetings. It tries to be more than a secretary.”

LOCAL EU DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION – “We deal with 40 resolutions at each session of the Human Rights Council, of which there are 3 sessions a year. On top of that, for each session, there are 30 to 40 declarations by the EU outside of the resolutions. And that is just the Council, not including the Universal Periodic Review. The team chairs 130 coordination meetings a year.”

LOCAL EU DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION – “The role of the EEAS is to coordinate the EU with an overarching goal: to have a common vision for each resolution. That is our challenge. In the EU we share the same values when it comes to thematic issues. On the other hand, if we talk about country-specific issues, there are 28 positions. That is why we meet 130 times a year.

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<sup>16</sup> Wouters J. & al., 2014, (note 2).

We had a common position on 99% of the resolutions these last two years. The Member States negotiate the common position, but they need someone to chair meetings on their behalf.”

LOCAL EU DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION – “The EU Delegation is good for continuity.”

KEY EU STAKEHOLDER – “The role of the EU Delegation is getting stronger and stronger.”

KEY EU STAKEHOLDER – “I see a huge EU Delegation in Geneva. These resources seem underused. We can use the EU Delegation to negotiate on our behalf.”

SMALL OR MEDIUM MEMBER STATE – “The coordination process should be in the hands of the EU Delegation because they know how to do it efficiently.”

SMALL OR MEDIUM MEMBER STATE – “The EEAS is really about coordination and not policy making. We should prevent them to work on policy making.”

SMALL OR MEDIUM MEMBER STATE – “Some countries are integrators. Some other States want Member States to have more competences.”

*Source:* prepared by the authors

While certain countries are advocates of further integration, some EU Member States would like to limit the role of the EU Delegation to a more technical, coordinating role. They do not want a strong EEAS that develops policy. Some representatives expressed concern about maintaining competences in the longer-term perspective and the respect of national views by the EU Delegation.

The adaptive challenge here is to identify how to enhance the role of the EU Delegation and at the same time to protect national competences and interests by developing active and constructive participation in the EU coordination process through increased burden-sharing by Member States, focusing in particular on small and medium States.

## **9. Enhancing inclusiveness in the EU coordination process**

Representatives, mainly from small and medium States, expressed concern about the involvement of EU members in the decision-making and coordination processes. The manner in which the current process plays out could be interpreted

in some situations, especially by smaller Member States, as an imposition of decisions by the EU Delegation. That said, others are under the impression that small and medium countries allow themselves to fall to the background and let the EU Delegation make decisions with the key EU stakeholders. An adaptive challenge for the local EU diplomatic representation is to further integrate Member States' concerns when preparing the agenda for coordination meetings.

**Extract 5.** Inclusiveness of the EU coordination process

SMALL OR MEDIUM MEMBER STATE – “There are tensions between us, member states. The EEAS should be careful not to overrule a Member State’s point of view.”

SMALL OR MEDIUM MEMBER STATE – “A general difficulty right now is linked to the way the EU Delegation manages agendas. What is raised by the Member States is often at the bottom of the agenda. The EU team pushes what is important for them. The EU team requires a bit of reflection on how not to leave Member States concerns to the end of the agenda. They are too focused on the issues they are following.”

SMALL OR MEDIUM MEMBER STATE – “It seems that the EU foreign policy is decided by a few countries and that the others end up left out of the decision-making process. If you want to speak the voice of 28, you have to spread the decision-making powers.”

SMALL OR MEDIUM MEMBER STATE – “When building the strategic plan, the EU Delegation in Geneva sends a draft to Brussels without consulting with Member States. It would be more transparent to show us. When it is in written form, it is harder to change it, even if it is a draft. Brussels and the EEAS are always in contact but the Member States are not informed. Brussels never gives feedback on demarches. It is a structural problem. Nobody is taking responsibility to do it. It is an internal management issue in Brussels.”

*Source:* prepared by the authors

A large number of representatives also have the feeling that the most powerful Member States dominate the coordination process. This may be a result of the fact that key members composing the EU Delegation team come predominantly from larger Member States. Another contributing factor to this perception is that the key EU stakeholders have access to intelligence information and that they are present in the Security Council. The small and medium States could at times feel excluded. Representatives from these countries expressed that they have the impression they

are asked to just follow the mainstream while larger countries just talk for themselves, do not provide information and feedback, and do not want to burden share with the others. This lack of inclusiveness of small and medium countries considerably weakens the EU group and the legitimacy of the coordination process. Countries have to be afforded the capacity to influence situations or enough competence to make a meaningful contribution. The mid-term challenge for the smaller and medium countries is to retain and enhance their competencies.

Another problem in the inclusiveness of the EU coordination process concerns the relationship with Brussels. The EU Delegation periodically proposes strategic plans to the EEAS in Brussels, however, Member States are left out of this process. Similarly, a great number of EU Member States in Geneva feel that they do not get sufficient feedback from the EU Delegation on consultations that take place on a constant basis with Brussels. Therefore, they feel a “cognitive distance”<sup>17</sup> with Brussels in the sense they are not involved, are not informed and are not aware of how Brussels influences the EU diplomacy in Geneva. When Brussels takes a decision, it is difficult to go back to change it. The adaptive challenge will be to improve the communication between Brussels and the local EU Delegation mission in order to make this relationship more transparent for Member States and to better integrate their concerns.

## 10. Potential for improving teamwork

Some interviewees consider that in Geneva the EU Delegation and the Diplomatic Missions enjoy relative autonomy to experiment with ways to improve the teamwork (see extract 6). The Treaty of Lisbon allows manoeuvring room for experimenting with the way members are organized. European Commission President Barroso and Vice-President Ashton issued on 20 December 2012 a ‘Strategy for the progressive improvement of the EU status in international organisations and other fora in line with the objectives of the Treaty of Lisbon’. Wouters & al. demonstrate that “the Barroso-Ashton Strategy to achieve this goal lacks the required level of vision and precision, and is thus inadequate for guiding

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<sup>17</sup> Zardet V., Pierre X., *Distance spatiale et cognitive entre acteurs impliqués dans le management d'un territoire*, Atelier de l'AIMS : Stratégies, Espaces et Territoires, « Loin, proche : la dimension spatiale dans le management des organisations », Orléans, France, 2007. [Spatial and Cognitive Distance between Actors Involved in the Management of a Region]

the EU's efforts towards assuming its desired leadership role at the UN level"<sup>18</sup>. There is a general appetite by delegations to identify actions for improving the efficiency of EU diplomacy in Geneva.

However, almost all of the representatives interviewed believe that there should be parameters that should be respected for discussions on the improvement of the EU Diplomacy in Geneva. First, some representatives noted that it would be dangerous to alter the structure of the local EU diplomatic representation, as coming to an agreement on what has been established was a difficult process. Now the goal is to experiment and to work on the management of the EU coordination process itself. Some representatives consider that what is needed is not a legalistic approach, but an analysis of ways to improve the teamwork. At the same time, endless debates around the distribution of competences between the EU Delegation, EU Presidency and the Member States have already taken place and resulting in a matrix that is simply collecting dust. These experiences have led to the idea that the improvement of the teamwork should be developed through action, through concrete cases, in order to discuss: how to make efficient use of resources offered by the Member States and local EU diplomatic representation how to develop the burden-sharing, with the goal of gaining benefits for both for EU and Member States. The general idea is how to improve EU coordination to render the process more inclusive for all the Member States and key partners.

The discussion on the improvement of the EU coordination process should integrate greater inclusiveness of the Member States. Small and medium countries clearly want to be consulted more. At the same time, there is a prevailing position among the key stakeholders that the inclusion in the consultative process should be merit-based and not a "free-ride". This approach however, could create a vicious cycle: representatives are not included due to lack of expertise, and thus they are prevented from developing it. The adaptive challenge here is how to include Member States in the consultative processes, the outreach activities and negotiations with external partners, in particular smaller Member States, and not only the key EU stakeholders, in order to develop their capacity to be positive contributors to EU diplomacy. There are questions about how to open meetings. Is it necessary to create more formats for consultations? Perhaps there should be consideration given to developing informal coordination processes or sharing more in writing.

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<sup>18</sup> Wouters J. & al., 2014, (note 2).

**Extracts 6.** Enhancing teamwork within the EU diplomacy in Geneva

LOCAL EU DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION – “The inclusivity aspect is an issue. Member States want to be more involved the consultation.”

LOCAL EU DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION – “External representation should be defined more in detail.”

KEY EU STAKEHOLDER – “In 2011, there were some endless debate on discussing a matrix of competences of Presidency, Delegation and Member States. This matrix has disappeared. The task and function are defined by the daily agenda. It makes no sense to establish principles to implement the Lisbon treaty. We are creating this experience. We should allow it to grow.”

KEY EU STAKEHOLDER – “Countries are not able to cover all the subjects. We need to do more burden-sharing. We are talking on behalf of the EU, but we do have all the countries present.”

KEY EU STAKEHOLDER – “The problem is not only coordination. It is about policy. We don’t have policy. Here in Geneva, we are very far away from Brussels. What they do in Brussels doesn’t interfere with what we do in Geneva. We can have a policy actions plan here in Geneva.”

KEY EU STAKEHOLDER – “The EU Delegation could have a bigger role, proposing coordination on some subject.”

KEY EU STAKEHOLDER – “We need a clear mandate for the EU Delegation. Collectively as nations, we are not willing to move on. We prefer our national ways of doing things. We have to task the EU to take the lead, to agree on a negotiation position, to negotiate and to come back to us. The EU delegation needs a pressure from member states to initiate an action.”

KEY EU STAKEHOLDER – “The problem is not the goodwill. We have to create a way of communication.”

SMALL AND MEDIUM MEMBER STATE – “The EU Delegation don’t want to hear about changing the structure, because it was hard to come to this actual situation.”

SMALL AND MEDIUM MEMBER STATE – “It is better to have a consensus than to apply the rules only when they suit us.”

KEY EXTERNAL PARTNER – “I think that the EU will be more influential if you align your troop on a larger front.”

KEY EXTERNAL PARTNER – “In New York there is a monthly meeting between the EU and partners. That will be an opportunity for us to copy paste, and it will be of benefit for all of us. Having talks between us before events, other than the major events, could be profitable.”

It appears important as well to discuss how to improve external representation. Is it important to keep the one voice system or would it be more interesting to “align the troops on a larger front” as one representative suggested, to develop the influence of the EU? Another important point is the inclusiveness of key partners in the EU coordination process. There is a need to include their perspectives either very early in the process, to end up with one position, or at least later in the process after having already defined a EU position. Of course, early engagement of the external key partners would benefit fostering strengthened links with them and the general influence. But earlier engagement within the EU group would help to define the EU’s interests and to be more influential with key partners.

Some representatives expect a strategic work plan to develop the coherence of the group in order to be more influential and more proactive. The idea is to have an evolving document outlining the strategic views of the EU group. There is a need to define Geneva-tailored political lines to implement in Geneva. A general question to debate is how to further increase the trust and the coordination between Member States and the EU Delegation in a manner to be more reactive collectively and to be more proactive. There is a general need to be active early on ahead of major events, such as sessions of the Human Rights Council.

Another issue that should be discussed is how to develop and better organize the burden-sharing. Most Member States do not have the resources to be able to cover all the subjects discussed in Geneva on their own. This capacity issue also applies to the EU Delegation. The solution suggested by many interviewees is to increase and enhance burden-sharing. There is an appetite to see how the coordination of the EU diplomacy could be improved and it appears that the EU Delegation has a great role to play. There is a desire from some countries to see the EU Delegation take more initiative and to take the lead more. There is finally a need to improve the communication between Member States and the sharing of information. To take good decisions, countries realize that they need to share more information and point of views inside and outside the EU.

## **11. Organizational development process**

There is a need to implement an organisational development process in order to collectively address within the EU group in Geneva the issues highlighted in this paper. Some options could be proposed through the socio-economic approach

of management (SEAM) developed by ISEOR (Savall, 1981<sup>19</sup>; Savall, Zardet, 1995<sup>20</sup>, 2008<sup>21</sup>; Buono, Savall, 2007<sup>22</sup>). This methodology has been successful in various contexts to conduct change and increase effectiveness and efficiency in organizations by involving the stakeholders and developing managerial capacities.

As a first step, further interviews could be conducted with other ambassadors and DPRs as well as experts of the EU Delegation and diplomatic missions in order to identify where there is some prospects for improvement of the internal and external EU coordination process. It will be relevant to present these elements to the EU group in a collective session to create a “mirror effect”, offering the possibility to the actors to discuss their observations and to develop a shared vision of the adaptive challenge. On that basis, a few sessions could be organized to collectively define solutions for improvement. These elements could be formalized in a strategic action plan driven by the EU Delegation in cooperation with all the Member States involved in this process.

The socio-economic approach to management offers a structured methodology and tools to increase the capacity of management of complex projects with a large number of stakeholders with various objectives and behaviours. In the specific context of the EU diplomacy in Geneva, developing the ability of the local EU diplomatic representation, especially of the EU Delegation, to further involve and manage the Member States in the internal-external EU coordination process appears as a opportunity to address the adaptive challenge highlighted in this paper.

## Conclusion

On the basis of the expression of the 17 representatives interviewed, this article offers an analysis of the state of affairs in the EU diplomacy in Geneva and areas in need of improvement to enhance the work of the EU as a team. We have identified existing tensions and potential areas for increased cooperation.

The adaptive challenge for the smaller and medium stakeholders is to identify how to engage at their full potential by continually investing in the enhancement of their diplomatic capabilities in order to stay relevant in the multilateral

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<sup>19</sup> Savall H., *Work & people. An Economic Evaluation of Job-Enrichment*, Oxford University Press, 1981.

<sup>20</sup> Savall H., Zardet V., 1995, (note 3).

<sup>21</sup> Savall H., Zardet V., 2008, (note 4).

<sup>22</sup> Buono A., Savall H., *Socio-Economic Intervention in Organizations - The intervener-researcher and the SEAM approach to organizational analysis*, IAP, Charlotte, USA, 2007.

diplomacy and to foster meaningful relationships with the key internal and external partners. In order to encourage this progression, the adaptive challenge for the EU Delegation and key EU stakeholders is to determine how to create an inclusive internal climate conducive to a more transparent information exchange and decision-making processes. The adaptive challenge for the local EU representation as a whole is to look outward and work on inclusiveness of key EU external partners in consultations in order to consolidate strong relationships with allies, which is essential for effective diplomacy to take place.

It is relevant as well to reflect on the role of the rotational Presidency that is indisputably decreasing – and may very well disappear – but currently still exists according to the Lisbon Treaty and the EU practices at the Human Rights Council in Geneva. At the current stage of the evolution of the EU diplomacy, EU Member States continue to hold this role, because it is an obligation to do so, and this entails a considerable investment of resources. However, in practice, the Presidency is not necessarily welcome to assume its role, particularly if it might be perceived as retaining the pre-Lisbon components of the Presidency, by other EU stakeholders, which generates some frustration and tension. A question that could be discussed collectively by EU stakeholders in Geneva to address this issue is “how to leverage the Presidency in order to strengthen the voice of the EU in Geneva, while keeping in mind the interests of the country holding the role, other Member States and the EU Delegation”.

If the strategic force of an organization is based on its internal cohesion and if internal cohesion results from the involvement and the efficient coordination of stakeholders (Savall, Zardet, 1995<sup>23</sup>, 2008<sup>24</sup>), this paper demonstrates, in a diplomatic context, the need for more involvement and inclusiveness by actors in an organization that indeed exists in every sector. We have demonstrated how lack of cohesion in a group influences the efficiency of a diplomatic structure due to dysfunctions stemming from conflicting actors’ behaviours and objectives. Dysfunctions are translated in this paper through the positive approach of adaptive challenges that the actors are facing.

The EU coordination in Geneva has demonstrated real successes in the coordination process, such as obtaining 99% of the EU’s joint position on resolutions at the HRC, due in large part to efforts of the EU Delegation. However, the representatives of Member States interviewed expressed a gap between the results obtained by the actual process of coordination and the indicators of efficiency,

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<sup>23</sup> Savall H., Zardet V., 1995, (note 3).

<sup>24</sup> Savall H., Zardet V., 2008, (note 4).

such as the quality of information sharing, the effectiveness of internal burden-sharing, and the capacity to negotiate collectively. Perhaps the goal should not be so much having 100% agreement on common positions but rather enhancing the influence of the EU group by leveraging the diversity of views and using a strategic distribution of roles. The ultimate goal should not necessarily to be always weigh in as a block (even if it is often very effective), but also be able to adapt to the specificities of certain situations, and to engage aligned as well as non-aligned partners in a process that reflects the value of the EU.

The main prospects for improvement appear to be on increasing inclusiveness in the EU coordination process of the internal and external stakeholders through more consultations, work on the organization of the group through the use of management tools and increasing trust between EU members by working on communication. To develop and maintain sustainable cooperation between Member States, there is a need for someone in charge of managing the group. In that sense, the EU Delegation appears to be best placed to take on this role. At the same time, in order to enhance its efficiency, there is a need for more inclusiveness and involvement of all of the parties in the decision-making process. This can be achieved through the application of solid management science tools and participative methodologies. We hope in the near future to be in a position to implement the socio-economic approach of management to the structure examined in this paper in order to analyse its effects on the development of EU diplomacy in Geneva and on enhancing of the teamwork among Member States and the local EU diplomatic representation.