eEUROPE ACTION PLAN:
THE CASE OF COMMON FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY

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The two most important decisions taken at the Helsinki European Council in December 1999 were the launching of the eEurope initiative to promote the use of the Internet and intensification of the cooperation in common foreign and security policy, particularly defense. The two projects were closely related. The goals of the first directly affect the pursuit of the latter in that the Internet is a critical tool for publishing and distributing information about CFSP.

The eEurope concept, announced at Helsinki and further elaborated upon at the Special European Council at Lisbon in March 2000, emphasized the growing importance of the Internet and an emerging information society. Building on the belief that information technology and telecommunications are rapidly changing the way individuals, businesses, and governments conduct their affairs, the member states of the European Union (EU) committed to take the necessary steps to make the Internet accessible to all citizens, thereby creating a digitally literate population. They also agreed that it was essential to increase citizens' interaction with the EU and their respective governments by improving the quality and quantity of information on its own websites and improving access to such information in general, for example, by making the sites more user friendly.

At the same time it was conceptualizing eEurope, the Council agreed at Helsinki "to take decisions and, where NATO as a whole is not engaged, to launch and conduct EU-led military operations in response to international crises" as part of its common European policy on security and defense.[1] This decision was noteworthy because it went further than any previous agreement in committing the individual member states to pursue a common defense. Furthermore, at Helsinki the Council took the groundbreaking step of naming a Secretary-General/High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy (Javier Solana) to act on behalf of the European Council in fulfilling the goals of CFSP. Solana's appointment was important because it gave a highly-respected and proven face to CFSP and allowed the EU's efforts in this area to be channeled through his office.[2]

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[1] Presidency Conclusions, Helsinki European Council, December 10-11, 1999.

[2] Solana served as the Spanish foreign minister from 1992 to 1995 and the secretary-general of NATO from 1995 to 1999 before being named as High Representative.

Although CFSP is not specifically mentioned in the Helsinki or Lisbon reports, on-line government is. Improving government services available on the Internet was listed as one of the ten priorities in the eEurope plan of action. Insofar as foreign and security policy is a primary function of governing institutions and the successful development of that policy is of vital interest to the EU member states, it is important to examine what CFSP is, how it fits into the eEurope initiative, what steps are being taken to meet the eEurope targets, and what additional steps are needed. Such an examination is crucial to the success of both projects, because at the foundation of each lies the enhancement of public trust in the decision-making powers of the European Union as it continues to integrate and enlarge.

Common Foreign and Security Policy

The Treaty on the European Union signed at Maastricht in 1992 created a union consisting of three pillars—the European Community, common foreign and security policy, and justice and home affairs. The creation of the second pillar established CFSP as a constituent part of the EU.[3] However, cooperation in foreign affairs at the European level is not a new phenomenon. Under the auspices of European Political Cooperation (EPC), launched in 1971, member states agreed to consult with one another on matters of international importance and to "speak with one voice."[4] However, such cooperation remained strictly intergovernmental and largely ineffectual throughout the 1970s and 1980s. With the fall of communism, the Gulf War, and the breakup of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, the inability of the European Community to respond effectively to foreign policy crises—even ones on its own doorstep—was clearly exposed. The realization of this inadequacy led European leaders to further institutionalize cooperation in foreign and security policy at the intergovernmental conference at Maastricht, Netherlands. The Maastricht Treaty called for the enunciation of a CFSP that would safeguard the values and interests of the EU, strengthen the security of the EU and its member states, preserve international peace and security, promote international cooperation, and advance democracy, the rule of law, and human rights. Furthermore,

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[3] For more information, see Elfriede Regelsberger, et al, *Foreign Policy of the European Union: From EPC to CFSP and Beyond* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1997).

[4] Desmond Dinan, *Ever Closer Union? An Introduction to European Integration*, 2nd edition (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999).

CFSP should "include all questions related to the security of the Union, including the eventual framing of a common defense policy, which might in time lead to a common defense."[5]

Member states, while at that time shying away from defense, began to develop common positions and joint actions in foreign policy. In reality such cooperation continued to be primarily intergovernmental in nature, as states jealously guarded their foreign policy decisionmaking prerogatives. But the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1992 to 1995 and then in Kosovo in 1998 and 1999, showed that agreeing on a common position or a joint action was not enough without better means to act as a European entity politically—and militarily. An identifiable European security and defense identity and policy was necessary if the EU wanted to play a role in European security, in full consultation and cooperation with NATO but outside of it if NATO declined to be involved.[6] This groundwork was laid with the formulation of the headline goals at Helsinki.[7] These goals included creating the capability to deploy, by 2003, military forces of 50-60,000 persons within 60 days and for at least one year that would be able to fulfill crisis management, peacekeeping, and humanitarian missions.[8] In addition, the EU would establish the necessary new political and military decisionmaking bodies and would make its decisions.

Decisions on CFSP generally remain in the hands of EU member states under the European Council umbrella. Since December 1999, the High Representative for CFSP Javier Solana has the

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[5] Treaty on the European Union, Title V, Article J.4.1., available on the Internet at http://europa.eu.int/en/record/mt/title5.html.

[6] The Helsinki decision was seen by many to be one of the lessons learned from the Kosovo war. However, the major impetus was a change in British Prime Minister Tony Blair's thinking during the course of 1997 and 1998, which led to the joint Anglo-French initiative on European defense at St. Malo in December 1998. For more information, see Jolyon Howorth, "Britain, France and the European Defence Initiative," *Survival*, vol. 42 (Summer 2000), pp. 33-55; Philip H. Gordon, "Their Own Army? Making European Defense Work," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 79 (July/August 2000), pp. 12-17; and Gilles Andréani, Christoph Bertram and Charles Grant, *Europe's Military Revolution* (London: Centre for European Reform, February 2001).

[7] For the headline goals, see Presidency Conclusions, Helsinki European Council, December 10-11, 1999, Section II.

[8] The missions are more specifically known as the Petersberg tasks after the mountain where the conference that introduced them was held. The tasks include: humanitarian and rescue tasks; peacekeeping tasks; tasks for combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking. Western European Union Council of Ministers, Petersberg Declaration, June 19, 1992, available on the Internet at http://www.weu.int/eng/comm/92-petersberg.htm.

power to act on their behalf. The Council maintains its own website and devotes a section on it to CFSP. The pages in this section contain an overview of CFSP; Solana's speeches, reports, statements, articles, agenda, and biography; CFSP statements; information about military structures and the European Union Monitoring Mission; and links to other relevant information. The Council also maintains a public register of Council acts (to be discussed below), a link to the Council's press releases, and information about the current presidency.[9]

The Commission meanwhile plays a role of its own in CFSP insofar as it carries out and monitors international programs, controls the budget for foreign affairs, and contributes an "executive" voice to European foreign policy. The commission divides responsibility for external affairs among six directorates-general (external relations, enlargement, development, trade, humanitarian aid, and cooperation programs). Each directorate maintains its own website and all of them can be accessed via the Commission or European Union (europa) home pages. The most relevant directorate in terms of CFSP is external relations (headed by Christopher Patten). The external relations website provides information on commission initiatives abroad, relations with individual countries, the Commission's foreign delegations, and links to related directorates and the Council.

The Council and the Commission use their respective websites to inform the public about foreign and security policy in general, the EU's relations with other countries, and current and past foreign policy initiatives (*e.g.*, Solana's peacemaking efforts in Macedonia or the Commission's reconstruction activities in southeastern Europe). Overall, the websites serve as public information and research tools more than forums for public input, but users of each website are able and encouraged to send e-mail to the respective webmasters.

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[9] The presidency of the Council rotates every six months among the members states. Each country is responsible for maintaining a presidency website with information about Council meetings, including summit and presidency reports and conclusions.

eEurope and CFSP

The Lisbon report, as mentioned above, identified ten areas where action should be taken to meet the goals of eEurope.[10] The relevant priority in the case of CFSP is government on-line. In this area, the report noted that better use of the Internet would improve access to public sector information. In addition, the Internet's potential could be used to meet "the objective of the Amsterdam Treaty is to ensure full transparency for citizens on the activities and decision making of the EU Institutions and further ensure that these decisions are taken as openly as possible." The benefits were identified as bringing government services closer to citizens, reducing government expenses, creating jobs, and creating Europe-wide market information. The report went on to identify the targets that member states should meet by the end of 2000. These included: ensuring access to four types of public data (legal and administrative, cultural, environmental, and traffic congestion information), ensuring consultation and feedback on policy initiatives, and ensuring electronic access to basic interactions (*e.g.*, tax forms).[11]

Initial progress was made in meeting the target of improving citizen feedback with the creation of the Dialogue on Europe. Using the Internet and other new technologies, this interactive debate allowed citizens to discuss the institutional reform of the European Union leading up to the conclusion of the intergovernmental conference at Nice in December 2000. This particular initiative did not relate specifically to CFSP. However, with the signing of the Treaty on Nice in February 2001, the Dialogue has since evolved into a debate on the future of Europe, with direct relevance to further political integration and the development of EU competencies in the area of foreign and security policy.[12] Furthermore, the debate on Europe's future is accessible from a link on the EU's home page.[13]

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[10] The ten areas are: European youth in the digital age, cheaper Internet access, accelerating e-commerce, fast Internet for researchers and students, smart cards for secure electronic access, risk capital for high-tech SMEs, e-participation for the disabled, healthcare online, intelligent transport, and government on-line. *eEurope: An Information Society For All*, Communication on a Commission Initiative for the Special European Council of Lisbon, March 23-24, 2000, p. 3.

[11] *eEurope: An Information Society For All*, Communication on a Commission Initiative for the Special European Council of Lisbon, p. 16.

[12] "Dialogue on Europe" and "The Future of Europe—Debate," available on the Internet at http://europa.eu.int/futurum/dial_inter_en.htm.

[13] See http://europa.eu.int/index_en.htm.

The eEurope Action Plan of June 2000, in contrast to the Helsinki and Lisbon reports, made specific mention of an international dimension. Specifically: "The new economy is a global development and, in particular, the Internet by its nature is multi-jurisdictional, since its content and services are globally accessible. Although eEurope does not, in itself, contain specific actions in the international field, it will have implications for the Union's external policy."[14] In addition, the Lisbon report called for an open method of coordination and benchmarking for reaching the goals of eEurope.[15] With regard to government on-line, the primary target was to improve access to public sector information. The particular goals laid out in this area were:

→ end 2000: develop a coordinated approach to public sector information at all levels of government;
→ end 2001: promote the use of electronic signatures; exchange information on EU experiences using open source software; and make the basic services of the European Commission available on-line;
→ end 2002: simplify on-line administrative procedures; ensure public data is on-line in four primary areas (legal/administrative, environmental, cultural, and traffic congestion information);
→ end 2002/3: ensure general electronic access to main basic public services.[16]

A follow-up report in November 2000 went even further in identifying specific quantitative and qualitative benchmarks for measuring progress in meeting these goals. Examples of how the EU and member states would evaluate success included tracking the percentage of basic public services available on-line and the amount of public use of government on-line services.[17]

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[14] *eEurope 2002: An Information Society for All*, Action Plan prepared by the Council and the European Commission for the Feira European Council, June 19-20, 2000, p. 3.

[15] The eEurope initiative is the first instance of the EU following the practice of using specific measures to identify progress on the goals it has set for itself.

[16] *eEurope* Action Plan, p. 23.

[17] European Council, List of eEurope Benchmarking Indicators, November 20, 2000, p. 10.

As of February 2001, the benchmarking results showed 45% of all Internet users accessing the EU website downloaded information they found, about 30% sent e-mail queries to the EU, and over 40% used the Internet to submit forms. Results of the February study also showed that 54.6% of all Internet users within the EU area visited government websites. See the e-government results from 2001 on the Internet at http://europa.eu.int/information_society/eeurope/benchmarking/list/2000/index_en.htm.

The benchmarks described above indicate general progress in increasing the usage of the EU's websites. However, they are perhaps too generalized to be particularly helpful in evaluating the quality and quantity of information available in a specific policy area, such as CFSP. Other factors, therefore, should be used to make a judgment about the utility of each site. First, the overall design and utility of the Council and Commission's sites need to be examined. Is the information on CFSP easily accessible to an inexperienced Internet user? Are the number of mouse clicks required to locate information minimized? Do the search engines produce results foremost that provide the most access to information on a given subject like CFSP? Second, the amount of information available on-line is another important factor to evaluate. Does the classification system used prevent information from reaching the public? Do the respective Council and Commission websites meet the EU's standards of transparency, and, if so, is access easy to achieve? Finally, public opinion polling can be used to determine how the public feels abut CFSP. Do EU publics have confidence in the EU's decisionmaking on CFSP? How do they get information about CFSP? How do they evaluate the various CFSP-relevant websites?

Assessing CFSP On-Line

Overall web design, volume and accessibility of information, and public opinion are important factors to consider for any website. The eEurope initiative broadly rests on achieving the best possible results in these areas. For CFSP, in particular, these factors have special relevance. Since December 1999, the EU has been developing a European security and defense policy (ESDP) and its defense capabilities. Much of this project's success depends on how the EU handles its relations with non-EU members of NATO (especially the Untied States). One way of doing so is to be as transparent as possible in making decisions. And the Internet is a powerful medium for doing so. Publishing information in the Internet about ESDP (and CFSP) will go a long way in reassuring skeptics about the EU's intentions to work openly in this area.

Website Design

A cursory evaluation of the Council and Commission websites yields mixed results. Some progress has been made to better present CFSP to the public, especially since the launch of eEurope. However, until recently, it could be said that the europa website was much like the EU itself—opaque and often incomprehensible. Finding information on CFSP was possible, but there

was no guarantee that it would be easy. The best way to find information was to know in advance where to locate it. It is from personal knowledge as an experienced Internet user that seeking information on CFSP can take anywhere from five minutes to an hour or more.

Since the inauguration of the eEurope initiative, awareness of the Internet's power and reach has led to tremendous strides being taken in rationalizing the overall presentation and comprehensibility of the EU website and its CFSP pages. The europa home page has a new look and provides quicker links to various activities and institutions.[18] To access the Commission's external relations websites, for example, a click on "Activities" on the europa home page brings up a menu box from which "External relations" may be chosen. This leads to a general page on external relations but a link is given to a site called "European Union in the World."[19] This site acts as a gateway to all of the directorates-general charged with external relations. It provides quick and easy links to country-specific and topical information, specifically including CFSP, as well as other EU institutions, including the Council and the EU presidency. The structure of the CFSP page itself has not changed substantially in the past year, being primarily informative in nature.[20] However, the External Relations home page provides simple access on one page to a variety of information.[21]

The European Council website, in contrast with the much-improved Commission site, is less aesthetically pleasing and has not changed in appearance since the launch of eEurope. The Council home page itself, while providing a link to CFSP, accessible by clicking on the link from Solana's web page or by selecting CFSP, lacks coherence and consistency. Furthermore, a cross-link from the Council newsroom to Solana's site provides the same information as the main Solana page yet the presentation is different visually, causing the user to wonder whether the content is in fact the same in both sections. For example, choosing "Latest infos" (*i.e.*, current news) from Solana's site provides information on Solana's activities and statements. Statements on CFSP in general are available under the rubrik "CFSP statements," but the "Latest news" in the "Newsroom" provides

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[18] See "The European Union On-Line" at http://europa.eu.int/index_en.htm#.

[19] See http://europa.eu.int/comm/world/index.htm.

[20] See http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/cfsp/intro/index.htm.

[21] See http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/index.htm.

statements by Solana and on CFSP. A brief explanation of these division is provided at the bottom of the "Newsroom" page but the type is small enough so as to make it easily ignored.[22]

Other significant difficulties exist in finding news on CFSP. Given the decentralized nature of the EU and the immense volume of information available on the europa server, simply clicking on "what's new" on the home page does not provide users with easy access the newest press releases on CFSP. Furthermore, using the EU's RAPID database to access archived press releases may require sifting through thousands of documents to find the desired information.[23] Going directly to the European Council's CFSP site narrows the amount of material. However, locating recent documents on that site means knowing what the difference is between "external relations" and "CFSP statements." It also requires knowing that both links are only available by following the Council's link to the "newsroom." Additionally, documents available on the EU presidency website, such as presidency conclusions, may or may not necessarily be simultaneously available in the Council newsroom.

Improving the rationality and presentation of information, especially in the Council's case, will go a long way in helping the EU promote its defense efforts. In the case of ESDP, skepticism about the EU's intentions will persist without consistent, coherent access to information on this subject. In this case providing access to documents may be as important as the kind of access available, and simplifying the existing presentation is vital. Currently the link to information about ESDP is accessible as "EU's military structures" on the Council's CFSP page. The page that exists is a text document providing a lengthy historical background and links to another relatively length description of decisions made regarding the set-up and structure of ESDP and its responsible bodies. Given the important but controversial nature of ESDP, the Council would do well instead to create a site specifically devoted to this policy area (not just descriptive links) that would be accessible from the EU's or Council's home page. The site should contain historical background (for research and explanatory purposes), but recent developments should be prominently displayed (*e.g.*, information on the November 2000 capabilities commitment conference). Additional

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[22] See http://ue.eu.int/newsroom/main.cfm?LANG=1.

[23] A search conducted on May 29, 2001, on RAPID for press releases using the phrase, *common foreign and security policy*, in the title produced 8,887 results. A similar search in the text produced 25,020. Using quotation marks reduced the numbers to 3 and 331, respectively.

information could be given on country commitments, military budgets, force deployments as well as links to the defense ministries of individual member states as well as NATO.[24]

Increasing Transparency

As suggested above, providing access to documents is crucial for the success of the eEurope and ESDP initiatives. The EU, in fact, recognizes that transparency is critical for the success of the entire European project. The Amsterdam Treaty (signed in 1997) broadly stated that any legal EU citizen has the "right of access to European Parliament, Council, and Commission documents."[25] The treaty further gave the right to decide on the rules of procedure to govern such access to the Council, in consultation with the European Parliament. The Council, however, has a history of taking steps to improve such access and has more recently begun to integrate foreign and security policy into its considerations.

This provision built on previous progress made by the European Council to increase public access to documents.[26] Starting with a Council Decision in December 1993 establishing a code of conduct giving the public "the widest possible access to documents" held by the Council and Commission, citizens were granted access to voting records and explanations of votes on various legislative acts. This was expanded in May 1995 to include background information for Council meetings and in October 1995 to include minutes and excerpts of minutes on legislative acts. The First Report on the Implementation of the Council Decision on Public Access to Council Documents in July 1996 called for an extension of the time limit on the Council to respond to public information queries (from one month to two, with written notice after the first month). More significantly, the report called for the establishment of a register of documents.

By the time of the Second Report in June 1998, the Council noted a tenfold increase in the number of applications for documentation and a significant increase in the percentage of documents

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[24] In fact, the NATO website (http://www.nato.int) is an example of how well information can be presented using simple links and providing multi-media options.

[25] Treaty of Amsterdam Amending the Treaty on European Union, the Treaties Establishing the European Communities and Certain Related Acts, October 2, 1997, p. 46, Article 191a.

[26] For more detail about information about implementation of the Council's decisions in this and following paragraphs, see "Information on implementation of the policy regarding access to Council documents," available on the Internet at http://register.consilium.eu.int/utfregister/frames/introfsEN.htm.

made available. Additional actions taken included permitting public access to Council debates, making the details of votes on legislative acts available, posting minutes and excerpts of minutes (at http://www.eudor.com), providing annual and monthly summaries of Council acts, and creating a press release database (at http://ue.eu.int), including one specifically for CFSP statements.

In March 1998, a formal decision was made to make a register of documents available. With the regard to discussions of CFSP, this meant a specific decision needed to be made as to how classified documents should be handled given the sensitive nature of foreign and security policy. The Council decided in December 1999 "whereas measures should be taken to enhance further the performance of the public register of Council documents accessible on the Internet (http://ue.eu.int) since 1 January 1999," the public register should "include references to the document number and the subject matter of classified documents. No reference shall be made to the subject matter if disclosure of this information could undermine: the protection of the public interest (public security, international relations)." Furthermore, the register should indicate if a document has already been made available to the public and its content posted on the Internet.[27]

A "classified" category of documents had existed in the past. However, it came to be a matter of controversy in the wake of the Kosovo conflict. As noted earlier, the Helsinki decisions on security and defense policy came in reaction to the European Union's inability to act alone durin; the 1999 war in the former Yugoslavia. Another lesson learned at that time was that Europe needec to improve its ability to protect information. Given the excessive number of eyes that were entitled to see any given document on foreign and security policy and the need to work more efficiently witl NATO in order to meet the headline goals, the High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana issued a decision in July 2000 to create a new top secret category of classified documents. Specifically, his decision stated: "The European Council, meeting in Helsinki in December 1999, provided political impetus to developing the European Union's means for military and non-military crisis management in the framework of reinforced European security and defense policy. It is therefore necessary to...[add] the grade 'très secret/top secret'." Thus top secret woulc

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[27] Council Decision on the improvement of information on the Council's legislative activities and the public register of Council documents (December 1999), Section (2), Article 2, and Article 3 available at http://register.consilium.eu.int/utfregister/frames/introfsEN.htm.

be added to additional categories of secret, confidential, and restraint. A classified would only be downgraded or declassified if written consent were given.[28]

Solana's decision met with considerable controversy. Members of the European Parliament argued that the Solana decision thwarted their right of co-decision in transparency matters, and the Netherlands (backed by Sweden and Finland) made a similar argument in a lawsuit sent to the European Court of Justice.[29] A compromise among the Council, the Parliament, and the Commission was found on April 25, 2001, whereby:

> Documents classified as 'secret,' 'top secret' or 'confidential' in order to protect vital interests of the EU or of one of the Member States shall, however, only be registered or released with the consent of the originator of the document. Access may be granted to only part of the document. Refusal or granting of access must be based on the exceptions laid down relating to public security, defense and military matters, [or] international relations.[30]

In addition, a decision on direct access would have to be made within 15 days and a reason given for any refusal, and all restrictions would end after 30 years. Most important in terms of meeting the goals of improving access to government on the Internet, this agreement would make nearly 90% of all EU documents available on-line.[31]

What remains to be seen in the area of increasing transparency is how the Council meets the goal of posting 90% of its documents on-line and how quickly it does so. Member states, public interest groups, and individual users should monitor such progress and make more use of their rights of access—and file complaints when those rights are denied.

Public Opinion

The good news for CFSP is that the majority of European publics are predisposed in favor of a common foreign and security policy. The most recent Europe-wide public opinion polling in

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[28] Decision of the Secretary-General of the Council/High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy of 27 July 2000 on measures for the protection of classified information applicable to the General Secretariat of the Council (July 27, 2000), Sections (1) and (2).

[29] Frederick Jensen, "Military Secrecy in the EU Council Provokes Legal Challenges," *European Security Review* (October 2000), pp. 1-2.

[30] "European Parliament and Council Reach Compromise on Access to Documents," *European Report* (Brussels: Europe Information Service, April 28, 2001).

[31] Ian Black, "EU Strikes New Deal on Freedom of Information," *Guardian*, April 26, 2001, p. 2.

November/December 2000 indicated that 73% of the European public was in favor of a common security and defense policy and 15% was against. (Finland was the only country with a minority in favor with only 47% for. However, opinion in the United Kingdom was only marginally better with 51% for.) The percentages were slightly lower but still strong when asked about a common foreign policy—65% for and 20% against. (In this area, Finland and the United Kingdom were 45% and 36% for, respectively.) However, the response to whether the European Union should have as a priority the maintenance of peace and stability indicated 88% for and 7% against.[32]

These results indicate strong overall support for the EU's efforts in foreign and security policy. However, such support should not be taken for granted. It is hard for anyone to be against peace and stability—regardless of the end-provider. And while the polls show that 69% agree that the EU, rather than individual nations, should make decisions in foreign policy, the nature of EU decisionmaking remains primarily intergovernmental in this area.

Questions that have not yet been asked of the EU publics include: How do they get their information about CFSP? Do they use the Internet? How often do they use europa to find information on CFSP? Do they find what they seek on CFSP when using europa? How do they evaluate the CFSP websites' usefulness? (Similar questions could be asked regarding ESDP.) Having answers to these questions would certainly help the EU more effectively present CFSP and ESDP.[33] Continued public support for this project is vital as the EU takes on more responsibilities in these areas. And the Internet is increasingly becoming the tool of choice to get across one's messages.

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[32] European Commission, *Eurobarometer: Public Opinion in the European Union*, Report No. 54 (Brussels: April 2001), pp. 68-69, available at http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg10/epo/eb/eb54/eb54_en.pdf.

[33] An on-line survey on europa taken in February 2000 generally indicated that users were generally satisfied with the presentation of information on the website (77% answered yes). They used the website 46% of the time to seek information on EU policy and 61% for current EU news and affairs. The average time spent using europa exceeded 15 minutes for 88% of users. See Results of the EUROPA on-line survey (for the period 1 February to 1 March 2000), available on the Internet at http://europa.eu.int/survey_en.htm.

This particular survey, however, is not a representative sample of the EU public. It was conducted on-line with 75% of users already acquainted with the europa website. Less helpful is the fact that it does not pose questions related to specific policies.

The Future of e-CFSP

As the European Union continues to integrate and expand its competencies in foreign, security, and defense policy, it will become more important to provide access to information quicker, easier, and more often. Some of the recommendations described above—rationalizing the presentation of information on CFSP, creating a ESDP-specific site, monitoring progress in improving transparency, conducting policy-specific opinion surveys—will help achieve the goals set forth in eEurope, especially as they relate to common foreign and security policy.

Public support for CFSP remains high but overall support for the EU is less than overwhelming, and one of the most commonly-heard critiques of the EU is that a democratic deficit exists. Citizens feel that decisions at the European level are made more often than not without their input. Foreign and security policy provides a different challenge than other areas in that decisions are made at the highest levels in all member states (though some parliaments are more involved than others). However, where citizens have a right to and need for information is in how the decisions will impact their pocketbooks or their families—*e.g.*, whether money or troops will be sent abroad. Improving the insight they have into how decisions are ultimately made, what alternatives are considered, and how the public interest is incorporated can go a long way into solving the so-called democratic deficit. Such considerations go to the heart of the eEurope initiative.