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USING SCIENCE DIPLOMACY
FOR ADDRESSING GLOBAL CHALLENGES

THE SCIENCE AND DIPLOMACY OF GLOBAL CHALLENGES: FOOD SECURITY IN EU-AFRICA RELATIONS

OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS, A SET OF INSTITUTIONS, CONCERNS, COMPETENCIES, PARTNERSHIPS AND PROGRAMMES HAVE SHAPED THE FEATURES OF EU-AFRICAN UNION FOOD SECURITY DIPLOMACY. TO WHAT EXTENT HAS SCIENCE PLAYED A ROLE IN DEPLOYING THIS FOOD SECURITY DIPLOMACY?

Given that food security is explicitly identified by the EU as one of the 'global challenges', and given the fact that the EU is spending millions to fund food security research, especially in Horizon 2020, one would expect to observe clearly designed strategic interfaces between science and diplomacy on this topic; however, there has in fact developed an intricate tripartite dynamic:

- The **growing institutionalisation of strategic instruments and interfaces** between science and diplomacy arenas, beginning with the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) in 2007 to the EU-Africa R&I Partnership on Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture (FNSSA) in 2016.
- The rise of **cross-cutting attention from internal services** for science policies and, consequently, the emergence of a foreign policy rationale for funding scientific projects that address 'global challenges' in science funding. The topic writing process of Horizon 2020 programmes in these areas involves a multiple-services mobilisation, for example food security projects oriented to Africa involve several Directorate Generals (RTD, DEVCO, AGRI), two different directorates at the European External Action Service (Africa as well as Global and Multilateral Issues), and the EU Delegation to the African Union.
- The creation of a **dedicated 'science diplomat' role** in the person of the S&T attachés in EU delegations, who have played a key role by building networking resources and shared understanding while also measuring, construing and taking into account the institutional fragilities of the AU (as a core diplomat would do).

Global framings (geopolitical and market connected issues, cooperation purposes), specific instruments (High-Level Policy Dialogues, Horizon 2020) and practical know-how (policy officers awareness and relational skills, ad hoc positions) thus shape a real science diplomacy framework.

However, the **consistency and boundaries of 'science diplomacy' should not be overstated** because of remaining vagueness and divergent interpretations of the term. 'Science diplomacy' doesn't itself actualize a clear and shared strategy, but only serves to label different ways of using science to achieve organisational and policy goals. The frictions both between the EC and the EEAS, and between the DGs themselves also should not be overlooked: DGs are still characterised by their organisational autonomy – each has its own rationale and aims/standards for success. Further, the analysis of professional practices reveals asymmetrical relations between key players: actors who operate within research arenas (who retain some degree of autonomy), science diplomats (who seem to be quiet and often marginalised in their own spaces), and diplomats (for whom science is not a core issue).

KEY FINDINGS OF THIS CASE STUDY

- **There is an on-going institutionalisation of science diplomacy interfaces in food security science cooperation with the African Union that is shaped by an intricate multidimensional dynamic. This involves not only financial funding and organisational initiatives, but also refinement of specific roles and ways of working.**
- **Science diplomats can be understood as organisational brokers between different geographical areas and professional interests.**
- **There is no shared understanding across actors and structures of the EU about the definition and usefulness of the term 'science diplomacy'. The mutual awareness of the two core elements shows a distinct asymmetry with greater salience of the diplomatic dimension in science policy than vice versa.**

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is a need to map out and better coordinate the science diplomacy related activities in the different Commission services.
- If the notion of resolving 'global challenges' is to be promoted as central to the EUs foreign policy, it will require deep articulation between science policy and foreign policy (and better coordination between DG RTD and EEAS).
- Increased support for EU S&T attachés at the EU delegations is needed, especially in priority regions that are facing the global challenges most intensely.
- Innovative dissemination formats for EU funded research on food security (and other global challenges) should be developed, with the aim of feeding into EU diplomacy.

While science diplomacy interfaces are institutionalizing, a shared understanding of what science diplomacy is and its importance for science and foreign policies is still not settled.

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