

# European Commission Delegations and EU Public Policy: Political Stakeholders' Perceptions from the Asia-Pacific

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## The Importance of EU *Public Diplomacy*

- Efforts by a state to communicate to, and engage with, foreign publics are often seen as contributing to a new kind of diplomacy, 'public diplomacy', which could be expressed through a variety of activities.
- The lack of efficient external communication may be a factor which contributes to the deficiencies in EU expectations.

Delegations have a key role to play

# The Stakeholders

- Primary data drawn from 336 face-to-face stakeholders' interviews conducted from 2003 until 2008.
- Ten Asia-Pacific locations: Australia, China, Fiji, Japan, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, SAR Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Thailand.
- Question: How effective, relevant and locally-connected are European Commission Delegations in third countries?

## Political Elites' Perceptions: *Positive, Informed*

- “The ‘EU in Schools’ programme is especially useful in the long term in raising the awareness of the EU among Singaporeans”.
- “Promoting people to people contacts through cultural exchanges”.



# Political Elites' Perceptions: *Positive, Informed*

- “Sometimes [delegation] representatives in Hong Kong will explain or give briefing sessions to us on topics like their enlargement”.
- “Popular material put out by them. Especially for politicians like me, so that they can get a grip on – talking about Kyoto for example – exactly where Europe stands on it”.

# Political Elites' Perceptions: *Positive, Informed*

- “The Delegation would be a great help *potentially*. But I don't feel the need for this yet”.
- “At present we actually don't have any contact with them, but in the future I believe we can make use of their linkages...to foster cooperation or exchange. .. if they can organise a visit of European management organisations to Hong Kong, I'd love to see this. It would be very useful”.

## Political Elites' Perceptions: *Uninformed, Negative*

- “It is not clear about what this EU office works on. Maybe its cultural work is unclear”.
- “The EU Commission has a very low profile and people barely know it exists”.

## *Political Elites' Perceptions: Informed, Negative*

“The Delegation people keep trying our patience. They act as if they’re our mentor, saying that Thailand is ‘inadequate’ in human rights protection. Europe thinks that they’re superior to us, but we have the right to think differently than them” .

“... a dialogue with them...usually it’s a one-way communication exercise...I can’t recall a time when they were ever interested in anything we might have wanted to raise with them”.

## *Political Elites' Perceptions: Informed, Negative*

- “...in the longer term the European Union needs to be far more flexible if it truly going to make a contribution to the developing regions of the world”.
- “We sent things to them [[but then] they were forwarded to Brussels and no decision was ever made in the Delegation”.

## The Delegations as a Source of Information

1. On-line tools
2. Regular ECD newsletters and even magazines
3. Trade reports containing an overview and assessment of trade developments between the EU and the home country or region

## The Delegations as a Source of Information

4. Regular lectures/seminars held in conjunction with the major national business organisations
5. News and information on a range of EU actions/regulations/standards in areas like technology and environment
6. Needed to be better attuned to local issues and greater location-specific information

## The Delegations as an Interlocutor

1. The importance of personality
2. Discourage dictatorial approaches to communication
3. Hosting social events such as dinners, business lunches, and cocktail receptions



## The Delegations as an Interlocutor

4. A widening of the ECDs' 'presence'
5. Educational initiatives
6. Role of liaison-coordinator for the Member States' embassies was also advocated



Thank you!

