

EXACT Report on The Initial Conference

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The Initial EXACT Conference took place at the University of Cologne on 21 and 22 October 2010. The main purpose of the conference was to officially launch the EXACT programme and facilitate sharing of expectations regarding the results of the programme. It was also meant to put emphasis on academic challenges that EXACT Fellows could face in the course of their research on the EU External Action. EXACT – a PhD and professional training programme in the field of EU External Action funded by the European Commission - started on 1 October 2010. It involves 12 EXACT Fellows, 3 prominent European universities (University of Cologne, University of Edinburgh and Charles University, Prague), as well as several key European think-tanks and institutes (TEPSA and CEPS from Brussels, IAI from Rome, EIPA from Maastricht, FIIA from Helsinki, and IWE from Budapest). During the programme, EXACT Fellows will undergo intensive academic and practical training, provide concrete contribution to the work of EXACT partner institutions, and finalize their PhD theses and double Ph.D diplomas (cotuttele).

The public part of the Initial Conference took place after the Joint Meeting of the EXACT Supervisory Board and the EXACT Advisory Board. It started with welcoming speech by Professor Dr Wolfgang Wessels from the University of Cologne and presentation of the overall EXACT programme by Wulf Rainers. The Round Table that followed focused on the topic ***“New challenges for academic research in area of EU External Action”*** and it involved representatives of EXACT partner institutions¹ and EXACT Fellows², and EXACT visiting scientists³. In the opening of the Round Table Professor Dr Wessels emphasized, amongst other, the relevance of combining practical experience with academic research. During his presentation, Mr. Philippe de Schoutheete from the EXACT Advisory Board identified issues he considered most critical for future academic research in the area of EU External Action. In his opinion, beside the research on EU institutions, more engagement regarding analysis of concrete policy issues is required, such as: the challenges of the EU role within the UN, the partnerships with China and Russia, and the increased engagement of the European Parliament. After Professor Dr John Peterson from the University of Edinburgh addressed the characterization of the nature of the EU foreign policy and compared its foreign policy with the one of the US, the floor was open for the Round Table participants who contributed with their views on the challenges for the academic research on EU external action.

The discussion during the Round Table focused on several important issues. In regard to EU strategic partnerships, it was noted that the EU should work more on designing clear strategies for each strategic partner. It was also argued that the EU may need to rethink its interests and priorities in the context of globalization and consider the fact that some distant places may come to represent more relevant (economic) interest for the EU than those in EU's proximity. The challenge regarding legal

¹ C. Jeffery and E. Bomberg, University of Edinburgh; L. Rovna, Charles University; G. Bonvicini, IAI; J.P. Jacqu , TEPSA; P. Kaczynski, CEPS; J. Jokela, FIIA; A. Inotai, IWE; E. Best, EIPA and H. Marhold

² V. Boas and M. Haubrich Seco

³ E. Regelsberger, A. Tovias, R. Wessel

personality of the EU in external relations was underlined by several participants. Although the EU may be seen as overrepresented in certain multilateral arrangements (e.g. G8 or G20), the question remains how much that reflects the actual EU influence in the world. Furthermore, it was considered critical to start looking at the EU from the perspective of others in order to understand their perceptions and understandings of the EU. On the internal front, the EU continues to face the challenge of coherence in external relations even after the Lisbon Treaty. Most notably, the participants of the round table underlined that academic research should be important outside academia and that it should address emerging global challenges in the context of internal EU institutional dynamics.

The **Double-PhD ceremony** was opened by the Dean of the Faculty of Management and Prorector of the University of Cologne, Professor Dr Schulz-Nieswandt, who welcomed the participants and emphasized the relevance of the EXACT programme taking places in several countries with different academic cultures. Dr Lenka Rovna, Vice-dean of the Department of West European Studies of the Charles University, Professor Dr Charlie Jeffrey from the Department of Politics and International Relations of the University of Edinburgh, and Professor Dr Angelika Nussberger from the University of Cologne made presentation of their respective universities. The universities represent three among oldest universities in Europe with prominent history, tradition and academic achievements. The ceremony ended by signing of the EXACT agreement by three participating universities.

The conference continued with public lecture ***“The European Union after the Lisbon Treaty”*** by Mikolaj Dowgielewicz, Secretary of State for European Affairs at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The lecture was chaired by professor Wessels and it featured an introduction by Dr Werner Hoyer MdB, Minister of State at the German Federal Foreign Office and a current member of the German cabinet. Mr. Dowgielewicz started by elaborating the importance of the EU getting its act together and continued with the presentation of priorities of the future Polish EU Presidency. In the response to the questions from the audience, Mr. Dowgielewicz explained the implications of economic crisis and the consequent response from the EU.

The second day of the EXACT Initial Conference was devoted to consultations on the future plans regarding research and training of EXACT Fellows. On the basis of personal Career Development Plans and the current Ph.D research ideas, the session “Meet and greet” provided an opportunity for one-on-one discussions. EXACT partners and visiting scientists provided feedback and advice to EXACT Fellows and the Initial Conference ended with agreements on research and training plans for next period.

It should also be noted that, the Initial Conference was promoted in the German media that featured interviews with professor Wessels and EXACT Fellows.