Foreign and external relations of federated entities

A seminar co-organized by the Conference of European Regions with Legislative Power (REGLEG) and the Forum of Federations

Date: September 19, 2008
8:45 – 17:30
Address: Hendrik Consciencegebouw, Koning Albertlaan II 15, 1000 Brussels

Foreign policy has traditionally been the responsibility of central governments. In many countries, however, constitutional powers and responsibility for the conduct of public policy are shared between the central government and the constituent units or federated entities such as provinces, regions, cantons, nations and so on, with each level responsible for a set of functions.

In the globalized international system, the scope and nature of constituent units’ involvement abroad, whether with other polities, international organizations or with private organizations, has grown as the volume of international transactions has increased dramatically in the last decade. Regions with legislative powers have become more engaged in international activities because the exercise of their constitutional responsibilities has been affected by globalization. Areas such as agriculture, natural resources, transportation, economic development initiatives, labour, environment, energy, health, education, and all others can fall within their authority and require regions with legislative powers to undertake international action. This evolution has led to a way of governance in which both central authorities and regions with legislative powers increasingly play an important role at the international level.

REGLEG and the Forum of Federations are organizing a one-day seminar that will examine current trends in the external relations of regions with legislative powers. The objective is to generate an international dialogue between representatives and practitioners from these entities and members of central governments in- as well as from outside Europe. The seminar will begin with a focus on the constitutional and legal instruments that regions with legislative powers can use to establish external relations. (This builds upon the Forum of Federations’ program “Dialogues on Foreign Relations in Federations” (Global Dialogue Theme V)). The afternoon session will tackle the issue of

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1 The Global Dialogue on Federalism is a joint project of the Forum of Federations and the International Association of Centers of Federal Studies. The projects lets experts in different federal countries examine different themes in federal governance, starting with a roundtable in their own country and culminating in an international roundtable. The insights they discover are shared in comparative publications: a booklet and a book on each topic. Theme V of the Global Dialogue Project examined foreign relations in 12 federations (Australia, Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Germany, India, Malaysia, South Africa,
how regions with legislative powers practically implement their external policy, while focusing on public diplomacy, development cooperation and the organization of external policy.

Draft Format

The one-day conference involves:

- A keynote speaker from REGLEG
- A comparative overview of the Forum of Federations’ program “Dialogues on Foreign Relations in Federations”
- A morning plenary session;
- Three concurrent roundtable-style working sessions in the afternoon
- A closing discussion session designed to extract the lessons learned from the plenary session and workshop discussions.

The morning plenary session will give participants an opportunity to gain insight on the constitutional, legal and institutional framework of their external policy. Two guest speakers, one invited by REGLEG and the other by the Forum of Federations, are practitioners, or former practitioners, from regional governments which have legislative powers.

The Forum will invite a practitioner, or former practitioner, from Argentina or Brazil, to discuss the influence of regional integration (MERCOSUR) that has led to an increase in foreign policy initiatives by the provinces; REGLEG will invite a practitioner from the UK region Wales as a speaker for the second plenary presentation of the forenoon session.

Afternoon workshops: Each workshop will be chaired by a discussion moderator who will also serve as a rapporteur in the final session. The role of the Chair will be to introduce the session and provide his or her perspective on the policy theme of the workshop. He or she will then introduce the lead discussants of which one will be non-European and one will be from REGLEG. Each lead discussant will speak for 15-20 minutes at the beginning of each workshop and will focus their speech on the policy theme of their particular workshop (i.e. organization of external policy, development cooperation and multilateralism; public diplomacy). At the end of the working session the Chair will summarize his or her notes and confer with the rest of the participants to ensure that an accurate characterization of the discussion is presented in the closing plenary session.

Spain, Switzerland, and United States). Other Global Dialogue themes focused on Constitutional Origins, Structure, and Change in Federal Countries; Distribution of Powers and Responsibilities; Legislative, Executive and Judicial Governance; The Practice of Fiscal Federalism; Local Governments and Metropolitan Regions in Federal Countries; and Diversity in Federal Systems (for more see http://www.forumfed.org/en/global/dialogue.php).
Program

8:45  Registration

Moderator for the forenoon session: Koen Verlaeckt, Secretary-General, Flemish Department of Foreign Affairs

9:15  Welcome and Keynote Address
Geert Bourgeois, Flemish Minister of Foreign Affairs and President of REGLEG

9:30  Introduction: Foreign Relations in Federal Countries – A Comparative Overview
George Anderson, President of the Forum of Federations, presents the main findings of the project “Dialogues on Foreign Relations in Federal Countries”

10:00  Q & A

10:20  Coffee break

10:40  Plenary Presentation 1: “MERCOSUR - The impact of Integration on the Foreign Policy Activities of Brazilian States”
Alberto Kleiman, Coordinator, International Cooperation, Secretariat for Federative Affairs, Presidential Office, Federative Republic of Brazil

11:10  Plenary Presentation 2: “On Wales’ external relations (from a UK perspective)”
Desmond Clifford, Head of the Welsh Assembly Government EU office, UK

11:40  Q & A

12:00  Lunch

13:30  Three parallel afternoon sessions

Session 1: Public Diplomacy
Chair: Nicole Mckinnon, Director of the Department of Information and Public Diplomacy, Ministry of International Relations of Québec, Canada
Case-Study: Flanders (Koen Verlaeckt, Secretary-General, Flemish Department of Foreign Affairs, Belgium)
Case-Study: California (Ezilda Samoville, Director, Office of International Relations, California Senate, USA)

Session 2: Development Cooperation and Multilateralism
Chair: Noe Cornago, Associate Professor of International Relations, University of the Basque Country, Spain
Case-Study: Catalonia (Xavier Martí González, Joint coordinator of Cooperation Areas, Catalan International Development Cooperation Agency, Spain)
Case-Study: Alberta (Chris Kukucha, Assistant Professor, University of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada)

Session 3: Organisation of External Relations
Chair: Freddy Evens, Flemish Department of Foreign Affairs, Belgium
Case-Study: Salzburg (Dr. Andreas Kiefer, Director of the European Affairs Department of Land Salzburg regional administration, Austria)
Case-Study: Schwyz (Dr. Georg Hess, Member of the Cantonal Council and Finance Director, Canton of Schwyz, Switzerland)
Case-Study: Argentina (Eduardo Iglesias, Ambassador, Argentina)

15:30 Coffee Break

15:45 Rapporteurs’ Report to the Plenary

Moderator for the afternoon plenary session: Felix Knüpling, Director Europe, Forum of Federations
Nicole Mckinnon, Director of the Department of Information and Public Diplomacy, Ministry of International Relations of Québec
Noe Cornago, Associate Professor of International Relations, University of the Basque Country
Freddy Evens, Flemish Department of Foreign Affairs

16:15 Q+A from the Floor and Final Discussion

17:00 Conclusions and Closure
-REGLEG: May Persoons, Flemish Department of Foreign Affairs
-Forum of Federations: George Anderson

17:30 End of seminar – farewell drink