Internship Report Erik Houwing

Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the OECD

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Introduction
Before I started my internship at the Dutch Delegation to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), I thought that I knew a lot of what was going worldwide. I regarded myself as well acquainted with many topics in a wide variety of areas, ranging from politics to economics to technological innovation. During my internship I learned that I was wrong, and I found out about so many more topics. Take for example circular economies, energy security, or official development assistance. I met an overkill of topics during my internship. I learned a lot, but also about what I do not know. This placement report is not meant to illustrate just that, but also to give an insight in the work I did, the people I met, and the things I learned.

I expected to learn about the work of a Permanent Delegation, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and about the OECD. What is the OECD, what are its work streams, and how does it function? I was very interested in the political and diplomatic dimension of the OECD. With my supervisor we agreed that she would teach me a new style of writing. Additionally to that, I did a personal research project on EU coordination of EU member state positions.

Before this internship at the Dutch delegation, I had already done four internships. I did this while I was studying in Zwolle at Windesheim for History Teacher. These internships were a story of mostly failure and disappointments. In the end I discovered that, after failing two out of four internships that teaching was not something for me. Embarking on a new internship five years later, I hoped to experience the opposite. I also wanted to find out whether working for the government, or at an international organisation, is something for me. Looking back now, I am convinced that I had a good and instructive time, and gained better insights in what I hope my future will look like.

Writing a placement report like this is a bit different as drafting a report on my former internships, as those were structured along the lines of competences. For this report, I will discuss several issues as outlined in the Internship Manuel. I will also reflect on my placement goals and the things that I wanted to learn. I will combine these that do with the requirements of the placement report from the Internship Manuel and competences I learned. I devoted a lot of time to the theoretical part of the Placement Report. I structured it like I would structure a research paper. It taught me a lot about the EU and its role and position at international organisations. My placement report is long, but so was my internship.
1.) Preparations
I found out about this internship through dr. Ine Megens. I told dr. Megens that I wanted to do an internship with an international organization, the Dutch government, or at an embassy. I did not speak French and I thought that this would be problematic. Dr. Megens had just supervised a student at the Dutch delegation, and told me that at the OECD speaking English was sufficient. I was interested, even though I had never heard of a permanent delegation before. I researched well, asked dr. Marek Neumann and dr. Megens to write me a recommendation letter, and filed an open application in March. I had not contacted the Delegation beforehand with questions. I did not hear anything at all for months after my application. I got refused in Berlin, and felt a bit demotivated. I tried a lot, but did not get any positive replies. Then 3 months later I got contacted by Carla Boonstra in early June, who said that they were interested, and that she wanted to do an interview with me if I was still interested. I was, and a week later I heard that I was accepted. It was a bit confusing but I was very happy and managed to get the internship that I was really after. Together with my mom I looked around for a place to live in Paris. I managed to find a room via a website. My mom brought me to Paris by car, which made it easy to get my stuff there. My room costed €650 a month, but my pay was around €970 a month, and thus I covered my biggest expenses.

2.) The OECD
The OECD is an intergovernmental organisation with 35 member states, 5 key partner countries, and many associate countries. The OECD is a research and think-tank, which functions as a platform for its member countries to discuss economic and societal developments throughout the world, with an emphasis on their own member countries. The expertise of the OECD are data gathering, statistical and policy analysis, and policy recommendations. A wide variety of topics are being discussed, ranging from water to circular economy to the quality of education worldwide. The OECD has as credo, ‘better policies for better lives’, and tries to foster economic progress and to stimulate world trade, but also eradicate poverty. Recognising the growing interdependence of economies throughout the world, the OECD is convinced that co-operation is important for a peaceful and harmonious world.

The OECD was formed in 1961, as a successor of the Organisation for European Economic Cooperation, which was founded to distribute American and Canadian Marshall Aid over Europe, as part of the reconstruction of Europe after World War II. The OECD is structured as following: The Council of the OECD consists of representatives of all member countries and of the European Commission, is chaired by the Secretary-General Angel Gurria. Decision is
taken through consensus. There are two kinds of committees, the standing committees and the substantive committees. The diplomats working at the Permanent Delegation represent the Dutch government in the standing committees. These are the Executive Committee, the Development Assistance Committee, the Economic Regional Development Committee, the Budget Committee, and the External Relations Committee. In the other committees, experts generally come over from member states. The substantive committees serve as a way for member countries to discuss policy, new ideas, and review reports and member countries process. The Secretariat facilitates the work and staff of the OECD. The Dutch Permanent Representation exists of six diplomats, and promotes the interests of the Kingdom of the Netherlands at the OECD. Additionally to this, the OECD has many Part II organisations, like the International Energy Agency, of which the Netherlands is also a member.

3.) Personal goals
I was supervised by Marit van Zomeren, the deputy Permanent Representative. In the beginning we agreed that I would help her with the Development Assistance Committee, the International Energy Agency, and that I would pick a third additional theme. This was to be the External Relations Committee of the OECD. We also agreed that she would teach me how to write reports back to The Hague, and that she would be strict. I was eager to learn, and did not really care if I received a lot of feedback. I also wanted to learn a lot on how the Permanent Delegation works, and how the OECD as an international organisation is structured and functions.

In the beginning we met on a weekly basis, discussing my agenda for the upcoming week, the meetings and their themes, and what was relevant for the Dutch government and for me personally. Some meetings had to be reported on because of its content, other meetings I visited because of its informative and interesting aspects for me personally. I had a lot of freedom, and I was interested in the political side of the organization. Though the OECD Secretariat likes to point out that the OECD is a non-politicized organization, politics emerge for example when speaking of enlargement of the organization. We also discussed my progress, and the things I learned. When the internship advanced, so did the agenda, which became really full during November and December. This required of me to plan well, and be selective in the meetings that I wanted to visit. Sometimes we did not discuss progress, which was fine as long as I knew what to do. The last two months the agenda was more relaxed, which allowed for more time to discuss content and me helping my supervisor discussing issues relevant for the Dutch government. I liked that a lot and I learned from this the most. There was always enough
to do, and from time to time I would ask colleagues what they thought of my contributions, reports and output.

Looking back on the personal goals I set in the beginning, I am eager to conclude that I fulfilled them. Writing was sometimes a painful process. My supervisor was strict, I consequently received sometimes over 40 comments on one report. I learned how to structure a report thematically, and went from writing a report based on bullet points to a report based as a story or narrative. I learned to identify what was important, to pay attention to member countries positions and input. On overall, my supervisor was positive about my writing, but halfway through she told me to make the next step, towards a more analytical level. Over the course of the months, I got a better feeling for the political aspects and power struggles between countries and the secretariat, and amongst countries. Sometimes writing and reporting was difficult, but I send all my reports back to The Hague, and sometimes someone got back to me. The feedback I received was really helpful, and I think that I learned to write reports. However, at the end of my internship, I still received lots of feedback, and it sometimes felt as if the quality of my reports had not improved. My supervisor was of the opinion that I sometimes wrote obscure, which I think is a consequence of my education in History. The writing style is really different. Providing analysis with History papers is really important, whereas with reporting it was mostly the member countries positions and outcomes.

I also learned very well how the OECD works and what the work of the Permanent Delegation is like. Though at first glance this seems obvious, having been there for six months, I really feel that I can say that I have acquired a deep knowledge of the structure of the OECD, and of the political dimension. I did not really partake in the work of the External Relations Committee, but more often I joined my supervisor to the Executive Committee, a committee in which deputies meet to discuss matters before they go to Council. This taught me a lot about international organisations, and allowed me to see many themes. An example is enlargement. The last two weeks my supervisor also let me help her on summarizing member countries comments to two highly politicized issues, giving me a good and final insight in aspect of negotiation within the OECD. However, to have a very good oversight of all the activities taking place at the OECD is very difficult.

This is reflected in the theoretical part of the Internship Report. I have a decent grasp of how EU coordination works, but I simply did not know about everything which went on at the OECD. My theoretical research is therefore more an exemplary research. I discussed my assignment with a few of my colleagues, to get a better idea of how EU coordination is taking place at their committees. The assignment captures many aspects of EU coordination and
involvement, but not everything. There are many different examples and angles to look from, which do not fit into the report of this scope. I did ask dr. Neuman-Stanivukovic for pointers, as I did not really know what kind of questions to ask when speaking of EU coordination. The research itself was interesting, and provided me with new insights of EU involvement in international organisations. On overall I would like to write more, but I lack the space for it.

Finally, I also have a good grasp of what the work of a Permanent Delegation comprises, but I have little insight in the structures of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I often sent reports to the same persons, but I have never spoken with them.

4.) The internship

The first month was one of many new impressions, especially the first week. The work of the OECD is diverse, and consequently the work of the Permanent Delegation too. Though I focused on energy and development assistance, I also worked on migration, and joined my supervisor to the Executive Committee. Everywhere I went, many different themes were discussed, of which many I had no idea about. Especially in the beginning this was difficult. Looking back, there are two kinds of dimensions to the work of the OECD. Firstly, the content that is being discussed. Secondly, there is the underlying dimension of the decision making processes. Who initiates what, what are member states positions, and how does this materialize into the output of the OECD. It was sometimes difficult to keep track of everything. As interns, we join the delegation at a random moment, but after a few months it got easier.

Over time it got easier to separate names and abbreviations, and I was able to identify reoccurring themes. The OECD structure became familiar. It was easier to understand what was important and what was not. In January I started reading in a report on the state of the Dutch aid programme and its focus points. This made it easier to follow the work on development assistance within the OECD, and knowing what is important to report back on. In retrospect, this is something that I would have liked to do differently. I started my first month with a task that did not prepare me well for the content of the meetings. The new intern who joined two weeks before I left had more time to read on the things going on. I would have liked to experience the same.

I worked with another colleague to organise a screening of the documentary Seablind, followed by a panel discussion. We did not have to arrange the location and the director had already agreed to come to Paris, but we did have to find panellists, invite people, and coordinate everything else. Though we invited over 200 people, in the end about 70 people attended our event, plus 19 who watched online. It was really fun to do something different than attending
meetings, and allowed me to apply things we learned during Euroculture II. I tried to take the initiative, but my colleague was really busy. I felt dependent on her, even though I think that I could have organised more by myself. However, we had to coordinate, check on each other’s things, and discuss matters. This was important, but made the process slow and sluggish. In general, I learned that things have to be clear, that we cc each other in e-mails, and that if needed, we present invitee’s with one option on where to meet.

I also did things for the ambassador. Usually this comprised of comparing reports and finding similarities or differences between these. This was sometimes weird and difficult. I had to read a report of 200 pages, and compare this with a report of 50 pages. It felt like I had to compare apples and oranges. How does a report on the quality of living in the Netherlands compare to a report on Sustainable Development in the Netherlands by the Central Bureau for Statistics? In the beginning the ambassador was not satisfied with what I handled him. We discussed this, and he kindly told me it was a learning process. I wanted to do my work correctly and redid it. In later stages and on other moments he was satisfied. During another task I did for the ambassador, he would continuously tell me to add more content towards my product every time I provided it to him. It made me feel insecure, as this happened several times. I spoke about this with my supervisor and my father, who both told me that the thinking process continues as soon as new material arrives. To the ambassador, I am such a small part of his work. But for me, he dominated my work on a large scale, being my boss.

In week 46, ten weeks into my internship, I felt that work was piling up, and I had lost oversight. I wanted to see as much of the OECD as possible, but I also had other tasks to do. Additionally to this, colleagues sometimes had little insight in the agenda of an intern. I had to be precise, plan well in advance where I could go and what I had to skip, and discuss with colleagues what I could do for them. From time to time, I had to skip meetings which I wanted to visit, but after a while I started to realise that this is part of the work, and that it is fine. I also learned that I could do a lot while being at the office, as long as I focused on the tasks at hand.

Compared to my internships at the HBO, I was always motivated to go, even though meetings often were long. During my time on the HBO, my internship was but a few hours each week, and still I was reluctant. But during the many hours at the office, looking at the reflection of the Dutch flag in the windows of the building opposite of me, I realised that I experienced the opposite. Days passed fast, I never went to work reluctantly, and I was interesting in everything that went on. I saw many interesting people, ministers, the President of Peru, and other dignitaries.
During my work I realised that I had to be accurate and precise. The overflow of information and names make it hard, but I also mixed things a lot, or read that I have to go somewhere, but then instantly forgetting the name of the event. Also with writing reports this could be an issue. These are details, but still things that I can pay attention too. I sometimes lost oversight, and then communicated inaccurately. This is the opposite of my studies, because I really control that topic. To other interested students I would suggest to do research on the OECD before applying. Reading on some of the work streams and in some of the publications is a good idea.

5.) Life in Paris
My accommodation was fine and living in Paris was good and interesting. I usually hung out with the other interns, a group of approximately 10, but I spend most of my time with Colin, my fellow intern at our delegation. Sometimes life in Paris was a bit boring, as many of the interns also had their own group of friends. One had lived in France, two others were partially French. We were not a tight group. This improved in January, with a new batch of interns, of which no one knew anyone else in the city. This let to many events in the last two months, increasing the fun. Reflecting on life as a diplomat, many colleagues said that social life might be lacking from time to time. It felt familiar for me.

I did have some difficulties with my landlady. Though not with me personally, my landlady had many problems with other people from about September till I was about to leave. Because I was around all the time she would talk with me about these problems, and I would give her advice. In chronological order, she broke up with her boyfriend; lost her job; had a death of a relative; kicked her daughter out of the house; reapplied to a job and got fired again; had problems with an acquaintance who she rented the living room to; fought with a close friend, who she did not want to meet again. I would tell her to stop ‘fighting’ with everyone, but that proved difficult for her. The lowest point was when she had problems with her daughter. I thought about moving, but in the end decided not to. On the other hand, I also experienced nice things. My landlady would cook for me, sometimes clean my room, or do my laundry. It felt like being ‘all in’. This was nice, but then again, there were many problems too. In the beginning of February she found new work again, and got her life back on the tracks.
Conclusion
Before I started my internship I had a vague idea of the work of the Permanent Delegation, and few expectations. Now I realise that I could not have a properly grasp about I would, what the OECD does, or a permanent delegation. I understood that a delegation represents the government, but about what and do what degree I did not now. Now I know so much more and have such a better understanding about international organisations. I had a lot of freedom to choose myself what I wanted, and I went to many interesting meetings. I learned a lot about the structures of the OECD and the engagement of the EU. Though the EU is a different international organisation, my experience at the OECD helps me better understand it.

My internship at the Dutch delegation was for me the perfect opportunity to learn a lot, to develop my skills, and to orientate myself on my future career prospects. Sometimes it was not easy to understand fully what was required of me, but I managed to complete all my tasks. My internship gave me an insiders perspective of international organisations, diplomacy and the Dutch government. I also learned a lot on a wide variety of topics, but I also found out that there is still so much to learn. I gained more experiences in planning and cooperating, and learned to say no when my agenda was full.

I wanted to find out whether I want to work for the Dutch government. Looking back I can conclude that I want, and that I want to apply for the ‘Rijkstraineeprogramma’. I have spoken with other trainee’s, with my supervisor and many other civil servants about their experiences. The ‘Rijkstraineeprogramma’ allows me to see the Dutch government and policy making aspects from several angles, and is an opportunity to continue developing myself. I learned a lot about working at a permanent delegation and I learned to write. I would have liked to have a better insiders understanding of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I worked for that Ministry, but from a distance.

I think that my internship helped to become a better candidate. It looks good on my CV, but beyond that I also found out what I want to start my career in. It allowed me to get a good insight in the work, but also in the application procedure. I know better now what I want, and better to express that. All these things I hope will help me get accepted to the ‘Rijkstraineeprogramma’. If I get accepted, I would try to learn quickly who the relevant people are, the structure of the ministries, and to be accurate and precise in what I write and say.
Internship assignment: EU coordination at the OECD

Introduction
The Treaty of Lisbon was supposed to address the problems of an incoherent and uncoordinated foreign European policy. A coordinated and shared position within international affairs is hard to find with 28 member states. The founding of the office of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and the founding of the European External Action Service were steps towards making Europe ‘speak with one voice’. Enshrined in EU law, Article 34, paragraph 1 of the Treaty of the European Union (TEU) reads that

‘Member States shall coordinate their action in international organisations and at international conferences. They shall uphold the Union's positions in such forums. The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy shall organise this coordination.

In international organisations and at international conferences where not all the Member States participate, those which do take part shall uphold the Union's positions’.1

Most of Article 34, but also Article 24, speak of a common foreign and security policy, and the role of the United Nations Security Council. Extensive research has dealt with the question to what extent the EU has the capacity to act coherent and coordinated within the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).2 Hosli e.a. assume that advanced stages of integration on the European continent has ‘promoted and intensified convergence of EU states’ foreign policy behaviour…[and] expected to have increased EU voting cohesion within the UNGA’.3 O. Hosli e.a. hypothesize that ‘1.) EU cohesion in the UNGA increases over time; 2.) EU cohesion in the UNGA is lower in areas of ‘high politics’ than ‘low politics’; and that 3.) EU cohesion is higher than global cohesion in the UNGA.’4 They conclude that EU cohesion increased from 1980s onwards; that the second hypothesis is only partially true, depending on the topic; and that the third hypothesis is largely supported.5 This research is done through statistical data gathering, and looking for correlations between EU member states positions.

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1 Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union art. [34], 2010 O.J. C 83/01.
However, there is also attention and emphasis for other international organisations within the scope of Article 34, such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). To emphasize this, Article 220 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union outlines that

‘The Union shall establish all appropriate forms of cooperation with the organs of the United Nations and its specialised agencies, the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development’.

The OECD is an international organization with 35 member countries, five key partners, and many associate and partnership countries. 22 of these 35 OECD member countries are EU member states. The OECD is a consensus based organisation without voting, but soft law is made. Obliged under EU law to coordinate efforts, the main question of this paper is how the EU coordinates EU member states positions within the OECD decision making process?

To be able to answer this question, I will do several things. Firstly, I will give a historical and institutional background. Secondly, I will observe briefing meetings, and interview people. After that I will conclude how and to what degree the EU is coordinating member states positions at the OECD. This research is meant as exemplary and to give an overview or impression.

1.) Institutional and historical background
The roots of the OECD lay in 1948, when the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC) was founded to help administer Marshall plan aid. By allocating American financial aid and by implementing economic reform programmes, the reconstruction of Europe had begun.

The OEEC transformed in 1961 into the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development with the signing of the Convention on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and membership was extended to non-European states. Nowadays the OECD functions as a global think-tank, forum and research institute for its 35 member countries. Using the motto “better policies for better lives”, the OECD tries to promote policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world. It provides

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6 Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union art. [220], 2010 O.J. C 83/01.
7 These are, in alphabetic order: Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom.
evidence-based policy guidance and helps develop international standards and guidelines on policy issues that affect citizens around the world.

A year before the transformation of the OEEC in the OECD, on December 14, 1960, the European institutions which would many years later merge into the European Commission joined the OEEC with the signing of the Supplementary Protocol No.1 to the Convention on the OECD. These institutions were the European Economic Community, the European Atomic Energy Community, and the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community.8

Since the Treaty of Rome signed in 1957, the European Economic Community was entitled to open Permanent Delegations to international organisations and in third countries.9 The signing of the Supplementary Protocol meant that the EU joined the work of the OEEC. The EU is not a full-fledged member, but the EU is not an observer either. To clarify, the EU does not contribute to the budget by paying a fixed membership fee, nor does it have the right to vote on legislative acts that are being adopted by the Council. However, just like all the member countries, the EU maintains a Permanent Delegation, staffed with an ambassador and diplomats. The EU Delegation is small compared to other delegations. Seven members of staff cover the OECD and UNESCO. The Dutch delegation exists of six and four respectively. However, experts come often from Brussels, just like experts come from member state capitals for committee meetings.

EU civil servants monitor and take part in the OECD’s various committees, which in turn monitor the work of the Secretariat in accordance with the Programme of Work and Budget. Additionally, EU diplomats can be elected as members of the bureaus of subsidiary bodies, participate fully in the preparation of texts, including legal acts, and have an unrestricted right to make proposals and suggest changes.10 Even though the EU is not bound to budgetary duties, it does make many voluntary contributions. The membership type of the EU can be identified as a quasi-Member status.11 An EU document writes that ‘The EU shall seek full membership in the OECD similar to its WTO, FAO and EBRD membership’.12 This is not possible at the

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moment, as Article 16 of the OECD Convention states that only states can become members, but the EU has the aspirations to become a full member.13

2.) EU coordination
Coordination is done in Brussels and Paris. The coordination meetings in Paris are organized by diplomats of the EU delegation or by experts from the Commission in Brussels. Within Brussels, Directorate-General (DG) Trade coordinates OECD-EU relations horizontally. All relevant DGs coordinate, depending on the level of competences, EU member state positions. Sometimes DGs prefer a ‘single voiced EU’, in other situations it depends on the matter discussed.14 Regardless of the levels of coordination, EU member states retain the right to engage in the deliberations in most meetings.

I have visited two Development Assistance Committee (DAC) delegation briefings and one Committee for Agriculture briefing. Next to that, I have spoken with the EU DAC delegate, and the Deputy Permanent Representative, and asked them on their views of EU delegation briefings, the functioning, and the reasoning behind it. Firstly, I will outline the competences. After that, I will present an overview of EU delegation mechanisms.

2.1) EU Competences
The competences the EU has are those conferred to it as defined by the Treaties. The EU may only act within the limits of these conferred competences. Competences not conferred to the EU thus remain with the member states. The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union clarifies the division of competences between the EU and EU member states, and can be divided into three categories: the exclusive competences; the shared competences; and the supporting competences.15 The Union has exclusive competence in the following areas: customs union; the establishing of the competition rules necessary for the functioning of the internal market; monetary policy for the Member States whose currency is the euro; the conservation of marine biological resources under the common fisheries policy; common commercial policy.16

The next category of competences, that of shared one, includes more topics. The Union shall share competences with the member states in the following areas: internal market; social policy, as defined in the Treaty; economic, social and territorial cohesion; agriculture and fisheries, excluding the conservation of marine biological resources; environment; consumer

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13 Hadzhieva, The European Union's Role in International Economic Fora - Paper 3: The OECD, 69
16 Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union art. [3], 2010 O.J. C 83/01.
protection; transport; trans-European networks; energy; area of freedom, security and justice; common safety concerns in public health matters, for the aspects defined in this Treaty. The area of development cooperation and humanitarian aid is a special case. The Union has the competence to carry out activities and conduct a common policy; however, the exercise of this competence shall not prevent member states from exercising their own development cooperation and humanitarian aid programmes.17

The supporting competences exist of measures to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the member states. These actions can be: protection and improvement of human health; industry; culture; tourism; education, vocational training, youth and sport; civil protection; and administrative cooperation.18

2.2) Balance of Power

Several levels of coordination exist, ranging from EU instructions to the coordinated effort of finding a common position amongst member states. This depends on the matter at hand, the content discussed, and the conferred competences. The EU has the duty to coordinate if the competences are conferred to the EU, according to Phillip Phierros, deputy Permanent Representative of the EU. The EU does not coordinate if competences are not conferred. EU coordination meetings are presented as an ‘exchange of views’, allowing member states to present their positions. These gatherings are not always meetings, but can also be lunches for ambassadors and their deputies in an informal setting. This is a simplistic overview of reality, as the EU is in a constant struggle vying with her member states for influence.

This is the case within the Development Assistance Committee (DAC), and partially within the Committee for Agriculture. According to the EU delegate within the DAC, coordination meetings serve as a tool to ‘create better diplomats’. Additionally, member states have more information and a space to exchange ideas. Members are free to differ in views within EU delegation setting, but also during OECD Council meetings. Development assistance is a shared competence. Both member states and the EU have their own development aid programs. The EU is a full member of the DAC and has voting rights. This matter is more contested within the Committee for Agriculture. The Legal department of the European Commission would perhaps argue that agriculture is a sole EU competence, and that member states should follow the position chosen by the EU. When speaking of fisheries, the EU has the sole prerogative to intervene on behalf of her member states.

17 Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union art. [4], 2010 O.J. C 83/01.
18 Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union art. [6], 2010 O.J. C 83/01.
Phierros emphasized that the OECD is not an international organization like many others. He regards the OECD more as a think tank, and less as a politicized international organization which always requires coordination. Three things obstruct further institutionalizing of coordination. Firstly, the level of distrust that exists between EU member states and the EU. Secondly, member states do not regard the EU as the most relevant actor in some policy areas, or as the right actor to speak for the member states. Thirdly, member states see their sovereignty and independence threatened by the EU, and consequently through EU coordination efforts. Academic research underlines this tension. EU member states are reluctant to agree to ‘speak with one voice’ because of the broad scope of the OECD, its focus on best practices and soft law. Neither are all EU members part of the OECD. The OECD is not a ‘typical negotiation-orientated international organisation’, such as the United Nations or the World Trade Organisation.\(^{19}\) When more political matters are being discussed, for example the enlargement of the OECD, EU coordination might take place. This would not mean that the EU imposes a position on its member states, but that OECD enlargement would be a perfect example of trying to get the EU to speak ‘with one voice’ within foreign policy and international organisations. Member states are invited to coordinate their positions, but are also reminded of their obligations towards the Union.

Phierros highlighted that in 2007 the Permanent Representatives Committee (COREPER) at the EU adopted a text on OECD enlargement.\(^{20}\) This text binds EU member states to join the OECD, but also pushes EU member states already part of the OECD, to support non-OECD EU member states in this process. This text was also shown by Phierros to all EU delegations in an earlier state, a reminder to EU member states of their obligations.

Problems might arise if the member state’s position clashes with EU law. If the competences are with the EU, the EU can take a member state to court, as happened in 2009 with *Case C-45/07 Commission v Greece*. In *Commission vs Greece*, the Commission challenged Greece at the European Court of Justice, after Greece forwarded a proposal to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). Greece had submitted to a committee a proposal that initiated a procedure which, after adoption, could lead to new rules. The Commission argued that member states no longer had the competence to submit to the IMO national positions on matters falling within the exclusive competence of the EU, unless expressly


authorized to do so by the Commission. The Court ruled that Greece had failed to fulfil its obligation under EU treaty law.\textsuperscript{21}

**Conclusion**

The European Union tries, in accordance to EU Treaty law, to align her member state positions at international organisations like the OECD. Member states are, depending on conferred competences, obliged to coordinate their positions within international organisations. The EU has the duty and the prerogative to lead this process. Even though EU member states are obliged to ‘speak with one voice’ in specific OECD contexts, it is difficult for EU member states to do so. What tools does the EU have to coordinate member states positions at the OECD?

Different types of EU coordination exist, ranging from EU instructions or briefings, to the coordinated effort of finding a common position. The EU has the right and duty to coordinate when competences are conferred. At other opportunities, the EU will also try to make her member states ‘speak with one voice’, for example with OECD enlargement. Though no competences are conferred, the EU and her member states might find it useful to take a common position. However, member states are reluctant to give the EU free reign, and often do not regard the EU as a relevant actor to speak for her member states. The OECD is not a ‘typical negotiation-orientated international organisation’ like the UN or the IMO, and thus the dynamics are different. Member states retain the right to engage in the deliberations in most meetings. However, the EU has shown in other platforms that it is not afraid or unwilling to challenge member states, if the EU thinks that the competences are with the EU, and that the EU has the sole right to speak on behalf of their member states. The EU also has her own ambitions of joining the OECD as a full member. Though something that will not happen in the near future, it will create an interesting dynamic.

**Bibliography**


**Websites**


