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Editorial: the new EEAS: one step forward, two steps back?

Is it acceptable for the new service not to have hit its stride yet? The thinning out of human resources and the absence of leadership have produced at least two more victims:

- firstly, the Union's external policy;
- and then the staff themselves have started to vote with their feet, as they try to abandon ship. The promises made by Lady Ashton regarding seeking inspiration from the best practices of institutions seem very far away.

In an environment dominated by every-man-for-himself, demotivation and resignation, the sole positive note is the spirit of cooperation dominant among the staff representatives. Despite the paucity of resources at their disposal, they are doing their utmost to defend their staff members, and sometimes with success, as happened in the staff assessment case (see attached the agreement signed with management on this matter).

Who is afraid of transparency in the External Service staff selection procedures?

This is an open secret: in the selection procedures for appointments to vacant positions in the EEAS, whether at Head Office or in the Delegations, there is the form... and there is the content. The form is well known and is a matter of routine: positions are published, applications collected, pre-selection takes place, followed by interviews by the panel and the appointment of the lucky winner. The content is a good deal less clear, not to say obscure. Decisions are taken behind closed doors with a complete absence of transparency, particularly as regards the candidates themselves. Are the criteria of competence and experience regarding the requirements of a position always those which guide the assessments of the board and the final choice? Or are the "choices" already made in advance, even before the positions are published? At least as far as certain appointments are concerned, at all levels of responsibility, since the EEAS was set up, a great deal of perplexity has resulted. What can be done to restore rigour and credibility to the selection system?

Naturally, we are aware of the fact that political and geographical balance must be ensured in our Service. But not all appointments can be "political" at all "levels" of the management structure. A clear distinction needs to be made between political appointments and appointments on which the careers of officers in a public institution such as ours are built.

It is not difficult to imagine the blow to the morale of the EEAS foot-soldiers when they see unfounded choices and favouritism spreading in the appointment procedures. They become confused, since every word uttered by the management structure is in praise of excellence, motivation, esprit de corps.

With the aim of taking a step in the direction of the transparency so frequently praised by our bosses, and to avoid any temptation towards favouritism and even any suspicion about the actions of the selection boards, the three professional bodies represented on the EEAS Personnel Committee (NEAR, US and PLUS)

recently wrote to Mr David O’Sullivan, Chief Operating Officer, to inform him of their unease on this matter. They are asking for personnel representatives to be involved in the selection procedures by having them invited to take part in the work of the selection board in order to be certain that appointments are being made on a basis of complete impartiality.

Local agents: still nothing

The statutory amendments which preceded the creation of the EEAS were introduced so that the social protection of local agents could be improved, or so that this kind of protection could be provided in countries where nothing was provided. We are forced to admit that nothing has been carried out in this area either by the Commission or by the EEAS.

Social dialogue: the poor relative of the EEAS

The EEAS is present in over 169 countries. This in itself presents an initial challenge to organise a social dialogue in a body such as ours. To this challenge can be added another: that of a new service where everything has to be set up from the word go.

Furthermore, staff representation is provided with very limited time off to do its job. On top of this, the Personnel Committee is only able to meet twice a month at the Commission, which hardly makes its job any easier. And as if that were not

Beware the return of the delegation

The lack of a careers policy in the institutions was also illustrated on the return of the delegation. A considerable number of our colleagues went quite a long time without an appointment, sometimes even without an office.

Left to their own devices, these colleagues found their situation most depressing – they were

An official *concertation* meeting was asked for and we are waiting for an answer of the Management. It is fair to wonder who is afraid of transparency in our organisation. This would in no way prevent the EEAS staff representatives from attentively following current and future appointments in the interest of the excellence and respectability of our institution. Candidates, yes. Candidness, no!

We accept the fact that the College is currently extremely preoccupied, if not by the future of its members, then at least by the question of how to satisfy the demands of the Council to cut staff salaries and pensions, whether active or retired.

enough, the EEAS management have not always been prepared to allow them the limited time off which the staff representatives were promised a year ago.

So, once again, well done Mrs Ashton who, despite the promise she made on the single occasion when she paid a “brief visit” to the staff representatives, failed to be inspired in this area, too, by “best practices” current in Community institutions.

drawing a salary and did nothing in return. This situation can be the fate of many staff members, regardless of their grade, their gender and even their position in the management structure. Yet another illustration of the way in which Lady Ashton is inspired by best practices in action in the field of personnel management.

European schools

With the schools budget already squeezed to the utmost (although the Council is planning further restrictions for the future, despite everything) schools are looking for extra income in order to survive. This has led the Higher Council to decide to tax the management of university application files.

Parents of pupils in their last year of school will have to pay 130€ for an application to French, German or Dutch universities, and 260€ for the UK university system, which will be on top of the application fees already charged by these countries.

Buildings – Well done, colleagues!!

We all remember the way in which, when the EEAS was just beginning, your colleagues started by having to work at a number of locations, which hardly made things easy in the new service. The next thing was for everyone to have to move to the new building, which was still in the building-site stage. Staff worked while building operations continued, in an amazing venue where ventilation and electricity breakdowns were a daily event. And there was the dust, the plastic, boxes on every floor, cases of files dumped in the corridors for want of bookshelves, non-working lifts, fumes from paint and plastic chemicals

vaporised on the windows while the staff were in occupation of the offices.

And what did we hear from management? “Congratulations” that the (commercial) coffee machines had been installed—cynicism or thoughtlessness.

Fortunately this all came to an end. The situation improved, at least from that point of view. Yet the EEAS is still short of room in offices which were swiftly filled to overflowing.

The citizens of Europe want a mutually-supporting Europe

The latest Eurobarometer confirms the findings of previous surveys. The battle against poverty and social exclusion predominantly heads the list of priorities which Europeans want to see the European Parliament defend.

And more specifically, with regard to anti-crisis measures, they mention above all other themes the areas of employment and the fight against joblessness.

EPSO competitions published in the European Union Official Gazette

.EPSO/AD/244/12 .Croat administrators (AD 5)
.EPSO/AD/245-246/12
.Croat-speaking unit heads (AD 9/ AD 12) in the field of translation.

Publication: September 13 2012 .Official Gazette C276 A
Final date for on-line registration: October 16 2012
For more information, please visit the EPSO website

EPSO competition training: all information here: <http://u4unity.eu/trainingFR.htm>

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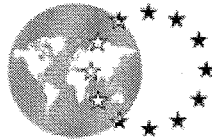
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COO/LB

Brussels,

MEMORANDUM OF INTENTIONS




Staff appraisal and promotion at the EEAS – political commitment with a view to the forthcoming adoption of the Decision on promotion (Articles 6 and 45 and Annex I B of the Staff regulations) of the EEAS

- a) The EEAS commits to do its best to ensure that at least 75% of officials in grades AST 1 to 8 and AD 5 to 12 be promoted to the next higher grade according to the average career speeds foreseen in Annex IB of the Staff Regulations.
- b) Starting on 1 January 2011, the above expected promotion rates represent an objective the EEAS shall strive to meet over the following reference periods:
 - 12 years for AST 1 to 4 and AD 5 to 8,
 - 16 years for AST 5 to 8 and AD 9 to 12.
- c) No such commitment is taken from grades AST 9 to AST 10 and AST 10 to AST 11 and grades AD 13 to AD 14,
- d) On the basis of a statistical tool that will monitor the individual career path of officials with regard to the objectives set in a) and b) and which will detect if these objectives have not been met, an early warning system will be put in place at the level of the Promotion Board. In case of unjustified variations from the expected promotion rates set out in b), an analysis by the Promotion Board will be carried out and corrective measures taken in order to remedy promotion rates.
- e) This aforementioned commitment will be reviewed in 2015 on the basis of the experience gained with the two first promotion exercises (2013 and 2014) and the work of the Joint Committee on Promotion with the aim of addressing possible shortcomings.
- f) In the next few years the Promotion board will pay particular attention to officials who completed their respective reference periods set out in b).
- g) Temporary agents: the same promotion rates foreseen in Annex IB shall apply mutatis mutandis to the Temporary Agents at the EEAS. However, this commitment could also be met through the reclassification of the Temporary Agent at a next higher grade, when prolonging his first 4 years time contract for instance.

The CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER,


DAVID O'SULLIVAN

THE REPRESENTATIVE GROUPINGS OR
TRADE UNIONS OF THE EEAS

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BRUSSELS,
30/5/2012