

EUROPEAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**Date: Thursday, 9 March 2000****Time: 9.30 am****Venue: Committee room 1, The National Assembly Building****Title: European Commission Draft White Paper on Administrative Reform**

This paper has been submitted by Catherine Eva, Head of the European Commission's Representation in Wales, for the information of Committee Members.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION DRAFT WHITE PAPER ON ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM

The Vice-President of the European Commission, Neil Kinnock, proceeded on January 18 to present the European Commission with a draft White Paper on administrative reforms for his institution. The three main themes of the reform process complement each other and are closely intertwined: programming, allocation of resources, staff policy, financial management and supervision. The project will give rise to a large-scale consultation with the European Parliament, the Council and trade union organisations. The staff are involved thanks to a network of reform co-ordinators established in each service and Directorate-General. The final version of the White Paper is to be adopted by the Commission on 1 March.

Programming and resource allocation

A wide-ranging reform of the system for setting political priorities and allocating resources will ensure Commission activities are underpinned by adequate human, administrative and financial resources. In other words, in order to avoid falling into the same pit as the previous caretaker Commission, the EU's executive arm will refuse to take on the management of any programme or policy area if it does not have the resources to carry out the job. Day-to-day management will include the principle of thoroughly investigating the implications of the initiatives taken. The aim will also include the principle of establishing the budget on the basis of activities, a principle the Commission has decided to accept as a new standard for the budgetary procedure.

Staff policy

A major change in staff policy will accentuate continuing training, managerial standards, better recruitment and career prospects. It will also focus on improving working conditions and equal opportunities, individual assessment and provide a means of dealing in a serious but confident way with questions of discipline or professional shortcomings. From this standpoint, the competition-based recruitment system, as organised at present and certain articles of the Statute, could do with one or two changes.

Neil Kinnock is hoping to improve managerial capacities in terms of training and recruitment, so that the best person for the job will not necessarily be chosen from the ranks of European civil servants. Career prospects will more generally be a reflection of individual merit. The national balance of appointments will result from this system but no longer precede it.

Management performances will be assessed on a regular basis and appointments to middle management, advisory or Head of Unit positions may be reversed. In order to avoid this sort of unwelcome action, steps will be taken to improve monitoring during the probationary periods, that may be extended. Also on the cards are training courses or deployment measures applied as soon as failings become apparent.

As for discipline, the White Paper recommends introducing an inter-institutional disciplinary council, whose remit would also extend to the Parliament and the Council. Measures flowing from last October's Communication on whistle blowing, that is, the internal warning procedure, are to be applied. A specialised department is to be set up as a service for dealing with complaints about irregularities. As for pay, Commissioner Kinnock is sticking to what he said at the start of the reform process: the overall terms and conditions of service for staff should remain the same.

Financial management

A root-and-branch reform of the financial system will allow each service to manage its own auditing in the light of its needs and acting on the advice of the Commission's specialist service. This will involve making a precise definition of each agent and the Commission's audit service making regular checks of the standard and reliability of each inspection system. The aim is to introduce widespread ex-poste>P>inspection systems to replace the ex-anteones. The new management, audit and financial inspection system will require a reform of the financial Regulation. The possibilities are already being considered by the Commissioner for the Budget, Michael Schreyer.

Website: http://europa.eu.int/comm/reform/index_en.html