



**CONVERGING
ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS**

**RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING
IN THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

Report by Handley Stevens and Moshe Maor

**Series Editor: Dr Moshe Maor
The European Institute**

THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTE

London School of Economics and Political Science

**CONVERGING
ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS**

**RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING
IN THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

Report by Handley Stevens and Moshe Maor

**Series Editor: Dr Moshe Maor
The European Institute**

Project Directors
Professor G.W.Jones, Department of Government, LSE
Dr Howard Machin, Director, European Institute, LSE

August 1996

Editorial Note

Moshe Maor is a Research Officer at the European Institute of the London School of Economics and Political Science. His publications include *Intraparty Conflicts and Coalition Bargaining in Western Europe* (Routledge, forthcoming), and *Political Parties: Comparative Approaches and the British Experience* (Routledge, forthcoming). Dr Maor is also co-author of *Barriers to Entry into Political Systems* (Papyrus 1988, in Hebrew) and author or co-author of several articles published in various journals and edited volumes. His field of specialisation is comparative political parties and comparative administrative systems. Current research relates to The Convergence of West European Party Systems as well as the present project on The Convergence of EU Administrative Systems: Training, Recruitment and Role Perceptions.

Handley Stevens is a Research Associate in the European Institute of the London School of Economics and Political Science. He also chairs recruitment panels for the Civil Service Selection Board. As a civil servant he occupied a variety of posts with both European and management responsibilities in the Diplomatic Service (1965-70), the Civil Service Department (1970-73), Trade and Industry (1973-83) and Transport, where he was an Under Secretary from 1983 to 1994. His research interests cover administration and transport policies in both the United Kingdom and the European Union.

The authors acknowledge with thanks the assistance of Olivier Sterckx, who carried out the initial research for this report and prepared a first draft.

Converging Administrative Systems

General Introduction by Series Editor, Dr Moshe Maor

This paper is part of a project on *Converging Administrative Systems* which is funded by the ESRC, project number R00023 5266. The aim of the project is to discover whether the development of the European Community is leading to the convergence of the administrative systems of the member states.

The project covers recruitment and training in eight states which have joined the European Community at different times, as well as one non-member (Norway) and the Commission itself. In each country the evolution of recruitment and training has been reviewed over the period 1970 to 1995, and questionnaires and interviews have been conducted among senior officials of Agriculture, Transport and Health ministries.

As background to these questionnaires and interviews, reports have been prepared on the evolution of the arrangements for recruitment and training over the past 25 years in each of the states covered by the study and in the Commission itself. These are expected to throw light on the extent to which recruitment and training may have been influenced both by membership of the European Community and by the trend towards new public management. In order to facilitate comparison, each of the country reports has the same structure:

I : General background information on the civil service of the country concerned, including its size, structure, historical development and administrative culture

II : External recruitment, a description of current arrangements and changes since 1970

III: Internal Appointments, current arrangements and changes since 1970, included in this study of recruitment and training because internal appointments are the alternative to external recruitment at all levels above normal career entry

IV : Training, both before and after career entry and in mid-career, current arrangements and changes since 1970

V : A final section drawing together evidence of changes linked either to Europeanisation or to new public management

The following reports have been published as working papers in the present series, or are in preparation:

Recruitment and Training in EC Member States, by June Burnham and Moshe Maor, April 1994;

Recruitment and Training in the United Kingdom, by Handley Stevens, July/November 1995;

The Impact of European Integration on Recruitment and Training of Senior Public Officials: a Methodology Using Information Provided by Directors of Personnel, by Moshe Maor, June 1996.

Measuring the Impact of New Public Management and European Integration on Recruitment and Training in the UK Civil Service, by Moshe Maor and Handley Stevens, August 1996.

Recruitment and Training of Senior Public Officials in Britain and Germany, 1970-1995: Continuity and Change, by Moshe Maor, June 1996.

Whether there has been convergence and if so whether such convergence owes more to Europeanisation or to new public management must await analysis of the evidence assembled in the country reports, the questionnaires and the interviews taken together.

Recruitment and Training in the European Commission

Report by Handley Stevens and Moshe Maor

Section I - General Information

The size of the Commission

It is surprisingly difficult to state with any certainty how many people work for the Commission. In 1995, the administrative resources section of the budget, which is supposed to control staff numbers and the associated costs, provided for 19,803 staff on permanent and temporary contracts under the terms of the Staff Regulations, but these figures do not account for the very substantial penumbra of consultants, contractors and others who work for the Commission on a more or less permanent basis but on less securely established terms. A closer scrutiny of the 1995 budget shows that there were in addition 2,031 administrative staff paid from resources provided for programme rather than staff expenditure, approximately another 500 paid from research programme funds, and an unknown number of staff paid from resources allocated to the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund. There are also some 550-600 "detached national experts", staff on secondment from their national civil services, 551 auxiliary staff employed under Title III of the Staff Regulations, local staff employed under Title IV, about 500 freelance translators, about 300 Agency typists at any time, over 1000 staff employed on contracts for technical and administrative work, and 1400 contract staff for the maintenance and surveillance of buildings and equipment. Altogether the total number of staff working for the Commission is probably in excess of 27,000; even that would not include staff at more than 100 Commission offices in member countries and overseas.

The Commission likes to make favourable comparisons between its relatively modest size and that of other administrations. For example Hay notes that the Commission's policy and executive services are about the same size as the French Ministry of Culture or the British Lord Chancellor's Department (which administers the courts and legal services), and smaller than the total staff of the City of

Amsterdam or Madrid;¹ and Martin notes that there is less than one European civil servant (0.8) for 10,000 European citizens, while there are 322 national civil servants for the same number of citizens.² But such comparisons are of doubtful relevance, since the work of the Commission is very different from that of a city or even a national administration. It is the member states rather than the Commission who are in most cases responsible for policy implementation - and that is what generally requires large numbers of staff.

Permanent officials - grades and levels

Under Article 1 of the Staff Regulations, an official of the Communities means "any person who has been appointed, as provided in these Staff Regulations, to an established post on the staff of one of the institutions of the Communities by an instrument issued by the appointing authority of that institution".

Staff are divided into categories, A, B, C, D and LA. Staff in category A, who carry out the Commission's policy work and fill all senior positions, and staff in category LA, who fill posts in the Commission's language services, require a university degree or equivalent qualification. Staff in category B, mainly responsible for executive tasks such as the Commission's own financial and personnel services, require two A level passes (or the equivalent school-leaving certificate in other EU countries). Category C is for secretarial and clerical staff, who must have the equivalent of 5 GCSE passes. The messengers, drivers, and other manual staff covered by Category D are required to show only that they have completed their compulsory education.

Since the present study is concerned with the recruitment and training of senior public officials, it will concentrate on the arrangements which apply to staff in Category A, which has 8 grades, as follows:

| | |
|----------|---|
| A1 | Director-general (or deputy director-general) |
| A2 | Director (or principal adviser) |
| A3/A4/A5 | Head of unit (or adviser) |
| A4/A5 | Principal administrator (or head of section, deputy head of unit) |
| A6/A7 | Administrator |
| A8 | Assistant administrator |

¹ Hay R, *The European Commission and the Administration of the Community*, (Brussels: EEC, European Documentation series, 1989)

² Martin D, in *What future for the European Commission?*, Philip Morris Institute for public policy research, 1995, pp 47-61

Staff are normally recruited at the lowest grade (A8), or at A7 if they have two or three years professional experience. Between A8 and A4, the rank to which a permanent official may normally expect to rise in the course of a full career with the Commission, there is no link between grade and function, which means that there is considerable flexibility in the level at which policy work can be done below the level of Head of Unit, and no expectation that staff at Grade A5 will have more junior A grade staff working for them. Staff in the most senior grades, most obviously Directors-General (A1) and Directors (A2), are generally expected to manage the staff reporting to them, though a Principal Adviser at Grade A2 may have no staff beyond immediate secretarial support.

Until about 1985 the lowest grade with any management responsibility was Head of Division (A3), but in recent years some staff at A4/A5 have been allowed to exercise management responsibilities as Head of Unit. This has introduced a valuable element of flexibility into the grading of the lowest tier of management, and enabled staff with good prospects of promotion into more senior management positions to obtain earlier experience of management than used to be the case.

The absence of any rigid hierarchical structure below the level of Head of Division/Head of Unit facilitates the Commission's normal working methods under which it is quite common for only two people to be familiar with any particular dossier - one senior official in the management grades and one more junior official who more or less "owns" the policy. Of course, if the policy is under active discussion with the Commissioner and his *cabinet*, or with the Member States at a senior level, the Director-General, if not already involved, will also become familiar with the issues.

Temporary staff

Attention has already been drawn to the large numbers of temporary and other staff who work for the Commission in various capacities alongside the staff permanently engaged under the statutory regime. These fall into several distinct categories.

The first group of such staff are the temporary staff covered by a special set of terms and conditions within the framework of the Staff Regulations. The largest numbers of temporary appointments are held by scientific and technical staff in the Directorates responsible for the management of research programmes, and at the various establishments which together comprise the Community's own Joint Research Centre. In July 1994, 2,163 staff paid from research appropriations were

on temporary contracts, and only 901 were on permanent terms.³ This emphasis on temporary appointments for research staff reflects a policy dating from 1976 which is designed to encourage mobility within the Commission's research services and between these and national research centres, and to make it easier for the Commission to adjust its research programmes to changing requirements.⁴

Another large group of temporary staff is found in the *cabinets* of the Commissioners, where at the same date 221 staff were on temporary terms, out of a total of 303. This is a convenient arrangement because it allows Commissioners to bring most of their own staff with them, if they so wish, without the need for the lengthy recruitment and appointment procedures which apply to permanent staff. However, many staff who have joined the Commission in this way are appointed to permanent positions when they have completed their period of service in the Commissioner's *cabinet*.

Finally, there are some 300 other temporary staff scattered throughout the Commission. Some of them fill posts classified as temporary in the budget, in which case they may be engaged for a fixed or indefinite period, but not normally more than five years. Others are appointed to fill permanent posts on a temporary basis for a maximum of two years, with the possibility of a third year on renewal⁵. Such appointments cannot be extended beyond three years in total, though they may be a stepping-stone on the way to a permanent appointment.

Detached national experts

The "detached national experts", staff on secondment from various administrations or private companies in the Member States, form a distinct category of temporary staff with their own terms and conditions. The Spiereburg report (1979) criticized the European Communities for their lack of openness towards the different national administrations, and recommended both a rolling programme of four-year temporary appointments and the utilisation of national experts seconded from their home administrations for short periods ranging from one month to one year. The first exchanges had in fact taken place in 1977, when 5 Commission staff were seconded to national administrations for a few months and 25 came to the Commission. Numbers of outward secondments have remained small, in the region of

³ Petit-Laurent Ph, *Réflexions sur l'efficacité de l'Institution et de son administration*, unpublished report submitted to the European Commission, November 1994, table at p 41

⁴ Hay R, *op cit*, p 35

⁵ Article 8 of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants

20-30 a year since the early 1980s, but inward secondments grew rapidly from about 1985 onwards, and now account for about 600 staff at any time who serve for much longer periods of up to three years. The Commission's annual reports record the growth since 1985 as follows:

| | |
|------|-----------------|
| 1985 | 54 |
| 1986 | 89 |
| 1987 | 150 |
| 1988 | 240 |
| 1989 | 286 |
| 1990 | 400 (approx) |
| 1991 | 600 (approx) |
| 1992 | 650 staff years |
| 1993 | 625 staff years |
| 1994 | 583 staff years |

These numbers are not so very large when measured against the size of the Commission as a whole, but their significance lies in their concentration, since they account for about 15% of all A grade staff, 30% of staff at A4/A5 and even higher proportions than that in some Directorates.⁶ The Spierenburg committee thought that the presence of more than about 20% temporary staff at A4/A5 would distort the European character of the Community administration.⁷

The terms of service of the detached national experts were set out in a Commission decision dated 26 July 1988 (revised 20 September 1991). They are defined in Article 1 of that decision as national and international civil servants or private sector employees temporarily serving with the institution under the staff exchange scheme. Their salaries are paid by the national, regional or local administrations or companies which provide them and they must be citizens of a Member State. The Commission covers their living expenses in Brussels. They may work at the Commission for a period of not more than three years and not less than three months. As they are not part of the statutory staff, they have no access to internal competitions and cannot normally be integrated into the statutory staff. However, it does not prevent them from applying and being recruited to temporary

⁶ Petit-Laurent, *op cit*, p 13

⁷ Spierenburg D, *Proposals for reform of the Commission of the European Communities and its services, Report by an independent review body under the chairmanship of Mr Dirk Spierenburg*, (Brussels: EEC, 1979), p 38

staff posts.⁸ Initially limited to Category A, the exchanges have been extended to Category B. Community civil servants on secondment to national administrations remain subject to the Staff Regulations.

The role and above all the number of national experts on secondment was criticized in a report of the Committee on Institutional Affairs presented to the European Parliament in 1993.⁹ The committee acknowledged the advantages of the presence of national experts in the Commission departments. Not only do they bring their skills to the Commission, they also bring a greater understanding of Community problems and of its structure to their national administrations. This understanding is very important given the necessarily close collaboration between the Commission and national administrations, and was the main reason why the Commission had encouraged the increase in such secondments.¹⁰ However, the Committee also saw some disadvantages: in some parts of the Commission there appeared to be a higher number of national experts than Community officials. Moreover, some Member States were overrepresented, giving rise to fears that such a strong representation of national civil servants and their exercise of public power could weaken the independence of the European civil service.¹¹

Consultancies and contracts

A third category of temporary staff includes those engaged by the Commission under various forms of contract. The Commission Budget is divided into two parts: Part A "administrative expenditure", and Part B "operating expenditure". Part A provides the resources for the number of Commission staff, both permanent and temporary, approved by the Council and Parliament as joint budgetary authorities. Traditionally the Council in particular has been very reluctant to increase the administrative budget in line with the increased size of the Community and the widening scope of Commission responsibilities. No doubt the intention was to exert pressure on the Commission to redeploy resources and increase

⁸ Spence D, 'Staff and Personnel Policy in the Commission', in Edwards G and Spence D (eds), *The European Commission*, (Longman: Harlow, 1994) p 73

⁹ Cassanmagnago-Cerretti M-L, *Report of the Committee on Institutional Affairs on the role of national experts and the Commission's right of initiative*, European Parliament 1993.

¹⁰ Hay, *op cit*, p 50

¹¹ Cassanmagnago-Cerretti, *op cit*, p 6-9; Penaud J, *La fonction publique des Communautés européennes*, in *Problèmes Politiques et Sociaux* 713-714, (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1993), p 67; Petit-Laurent, *op cit*, p 14

efficiency, but in the late 1980s, under intense pressure from the Iberian enlargements and the 1992 internal market programme, the Commission found a convenient loophole in the creation of so-called "mini-budgets". This procedure entailed the allocation to relevant staff costs of some of the money intended to finance particular expenditure programmes under Part B of the budget, thereby sidestepping the limitations on administrative expenditure imposed under Part A.

Mini-budgets were condemned by the Court of Auditors in 1990, and subsequently in two reports on the staff policy of the Community institutions which were made for the European Parliament by the Committee on Budgets. In 1992 the report by Mr James Elles, the Committee's Rapporteur, stated that almost one third of the staff working for the Commission came from outside and were paid in part from the operating section of the budget. Moreover, in some DGs the number of outside staff was greater than the number of statutory staff. The report emphasised the need for greater budgetary transparency, which mini-budgets do not permit.¹² Mr Elles' 1994 report noted that the mini-budgets had been deleted and were included in the Commission's administrative budget. However, the conversion of posts from mini-budgets into the normal budget was not yet complete, and in 1994 considerable staff expenditure still remained, particularly under the headings of research and structural funds.¹³

At their peak the mini-budgets covered several thousand staff. Even in 1994, after three years of budgetary reform leading to the re-integration of about 1,000 posts into the proper administrative budget, there were still more than 4,000 external staff under contract to the Commission (excluding the detached national experts), equivalent to almost 25% of the official staff complement. Many of these were under contract to provide technical services (eg computer services) or security and accommodation services, but the fact that in 1994 some services such as the European Social Fund (60%), the Internal Market directorate (30%) or the Human Resources Task Force (69%) were still heavily dependent on external resources in one form or another, shows that there is still a long way to go before it is easy to establish with confidence just how many staff really do work for the Commission.

¹² Elles J, *Report of the Committee of Budgets on the staff policy of the Community institutions*, European Parliament, 1992, pp 6-11.

¹³ Elles J, *Report of the Committee on Budgets on the staff policy of the Community institutions*, European Parliament 1994, pp 8-13.

Organization of the services

The Commission is organised in Directorates General (DGs) and services, each consisting of a number of units, which may be Divisions headed by an A3, or smaller units headed by an A4 or A5 official. These are normally grouped together into directorates each headed by a Director (A2), who in turn reports to the Director-General. In many Directorates General an additional line of command has been inserted at the level of the Deputy Director General, who supervises the work of several directorates. In the larger DGs the tendency has increased for Directors-General to have a small number of staff directly attached to themselves and operating outside the hierarchical structure. Similarly senior officials, known as Advisers, may be attached to Directors without any supporting service.

Although there is a common structure based on units grouped into directorates and services, the Commission has a wide power of discretion concerning the organization of its services,¹⁴ and Table 1 shows how much the different DGs and Services vary in the numbers of staff and units of which they are composed.

¹⁴ Dubouis L, *Fonctionnaires et agents des Communautés Européennes - Commentaire des décisions rendues par le Tribunal de première instance et par la Cour de Justice des Communautés Européennes de septembre 1989 à juillet 1993*, in *Revue Trimestrielle de Droit Européen No.2 1994*, pp 171-373, cites Tribunal of First Instance, 10 July 1992, *Eppe v Commission*, T-59/91 and T-79-91, Rec.p.II-2061 at p 239.

Table 1. Structure of the Commission (1995)

| Directorates-General and Services | | Employees | Divisions | Units |
|-----------------------------------|---|-----------|-----------|-------|
| DG I | External Relations | 613 | 12 | 37 |
| DG II | Economic and Financial Affairs | 231 | 6 | 22 |
| DG III | Internal Market and Industrial Affairs | 430 | 6 | 30 |
| DG IV | Competition | 309 | 5 | 26 |
| DG V | Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs | 295 | 5 | 24 |
| DG VI | Agriculture | 826 | 10 | 41 |
| DG VII | Transport | 127 | 4 | 16 |
| DG VIII | Development | 766 | 6 | 37 |
| DG IX | Personnel and Administration | 2,536 | 4 | 33 |
| DG X | Audiovisual, Information, Communication and Culture | 369 | 3 | 24 |
| DG XI | Environment, Nuclear Safety and Civil Protection | 119 | 3 | 17 |
| DG XII | Science, Research and Development | 2,486 | 18 | 82 |
| DG XIII | Telecommunications, Information | 492 | 6 | 40 |
| DG XIV | Fisheries | 164 | 4 | 15 |
| DG XV | Financial Institutions and Company Law | 82 | 2 | 7 |
| DG XVI | Regional Policy | 196 | 5 | 16 |
| DG XVII | Energy | 409 | 7 | 20 |
| DG XVIII | Credit and Investments | 101 | 2 | 9 |
| DG XIX | Budgets | 260 | 3 | 17 |

| | | | | |
|----------|--|-------|---|----|
| DG XX | Financial Control | 164 | 3 | 15 |
| DG XXI | Customs and Indirect Taxation | 229 | 3 | 17 |
| DG XXII | Coordination of Structural Policies | 60 | 1 | 5 |
| DG XXIII | Enterprise Policy, Distributive Trades, Tourism and Cooperatives | 56 | 2 | 7 |
| | Central Translation Services | 1,678 | 8 | 71 |
| | Joint Interpreting and Conference Service | 506 | 2 | 18 |
| | Statistical Office | 352 | 6 | 27 |
| | Secretariat General | 335 | 8 | 24 |
| | Legal Service | 170 | 0 | 0 |
| | Task Force, Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth | 55 | 1 | 5 |
| | Security Office | 55 | 0 | 0 |
| | Spokesman's Service | 52 | 0 | 0 |
| | Consumer Policy Service | 40 | 1 | 4 |
| | Euratom Supply Agency | 23 | 0 | 2 |

(Adapted from Page E, *People Who Run Europe*, forthcoming)

Some of the Specialised Services, such as the Secretariat-General, the Legal Service or the translation and interpretation services perform central functions which are not likely to be re-classified as Directorates-General; others may be classified as specialised services until a decision is taken to establish them as separate Directorates-General or to integrate them within an existing Directorate-General. The Petit-Laurent report (November 1994) recommended a five year programme to improve the Commission's structure and organisation and to facilitate a better allocation of resources by reducing the number of DGs and Services to less than thirty,¹⁵ but the Santer Commission does not seem inclined to follow his

¹⁵ Petit-Laurent, *op cit*, p 42.

advice. On the contrary, since 1995, Consumer Policy and Education, Training and Youth have both been elevated to the status of full DGs, and DG I has been formally divided into three Directorates-General, DG I, IA and IB. Table 2 shows how the pattern changed between 1970 and 1995.

Table 2. Structure of the Commission (1970-1995)

| | 1970 | 1975 | 1980 | 1985 | 1990 | 1995 |
|----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Commissioners | 9 | 13 | 13 | 14 | 17 | 20 |
| DGs | 20 | 19 | 19 | 22 | 24 | 25 |
| Other Services | 7 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 10 | 10 |
| Directors (A2) | 98 | 110 | 116 | 126 | 146 | 166 |

(Source Page E, *op cit*)

Changes at this level require the approval of the College of Commissioners. At lower levels the structure of departments can be changed following a report from the Management and Organisation Division, which is directly responsible to the DG for Personnel and Administration (DG IX). The same Division makes suggestions for the allocation of staff resources, but each Director-General enjoys a wide measure of autonomy in these matters within the overall limit of the resources for which he or she is responsible.

Another way of dealing with new or expanded functions, but one which requires the consent of the Council of Ministers, is to set up an autonomous Agency with its own staff and budget. Several member states have found such arrangements useful as a means of placing executive functions at arm's length from political control, and as a means of reducing or at least appearing to reduce the size of central bureaucracies and their cost. The Commission's Agencies, whose staff do not in most cases count against the staff numbers approved for the Commission in the annual budget, have also proved a convenient means of accommodating new or expanded functions without appearing to increase staff numbers, an effect which was probably amplified by the insistence of the member states that new Agencies could not be established unless one could be sited in every member state, with the exception of Belgium and France which already host the Commission and the Parliament.¹⁶ The full list of Agencies is now as follows:

¹⁶ The package decision establishing nine new Agencies, moving one from Berlin to Thessaloniki and agreeing extended functions for another is published in the Official Journal, C 323 of 30 October 1993.

European Agency for the Evaluation of Medicinal Products
European Environment Agency
European Training Foundation
European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
European Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction
European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions
Office for Harmonisation in the Internal Market (includes trade marks)
Community Plant Variety Rights Office
European Monetary Institute (precursor of Central Bank)
European Agency for Safety and Health at Work
Translation Centre for Bodies in the European Union (most of the Agencies)

Historical development

The administrative structures and procedural arrangements of the Commission are a mixed inheritance from the different traditions of the Member States. It is well known that the European Coal and Steel Community (1952), the earliest of the three economic Communities which were fused in 1967, was modelled on the French Commissariat au Plan which Jean Monnet had created immediately after the war. Many of the structures and functions of the European Atomic Energy Community (1958) were borrowed from the French Commissariat de l'Energie Atomique; but if these arrangements offered a template for the European Economic Community (1958), the hierarchical working arrangements which President Hallstein adopted for the Commission of the EEC owed much to those of the German Bundeswirtschaftsministerium which he had led.¹⁷ The formal arrangements governing the rights and obligations of staff, first adopted for the ECSC, appear to be derived from the French *fonction publique*, but the arrangements for union participation in matters affecting the staff are influenced by German models. The primary responsibilities of the General Secretariat for recording decisions and acting as a source of general advice to the Commission are closely related to the functions of the French Government's General Secretariat, but its responsibility for the manual of procedures, for the system of staff inspection and for inter-service co-ordination owe something to British influence.

This eclectic inheritance has its strengths. It shows that the Commission is not afraid to draw on a wide range of different administrative traditions where each has a contribution to make. But one tradition has been grafted onto another in a

¹⁷ Cassese S, *The European Administration*, (Brussels: IIAS, 1987) p 12.

somewhat haphazard manner, and it is perhaps not surprising that as the Commission's size and functions have grown, so also has the volume of criticism of its administrative performance.

In 1978 the Jenkins Commission decided that the development of the Commission's responsibilities had reached a point, particularly with the prospect of further enlargement, at which it was right to look closely at the structure of the administration, its machinery and the staff resources available. The number of Commissioners had varied over the years, with successive reductions and enlargements. There had also been an increasing tendency for the different DGs to develop in isolation from each other, and for the careers of officials to be limited to a single department.¹⁸ The Commission asked an independent review body under the chairmanship of Ambassador Dirk Spierenburg to look at these matters and to report, which it did in 1979. After a general analysis of the Commission at the time, stressing the lack of coherence and the increasing bureaucracy, the report made concrete proposals about the structure and the organization of the Commission and its departments, and the Commission's staff. The organisation was to be slimmed down - fewer Commissioners as well as fewer administrative units - but career prospects were to be enhanced by encouraging mobility and removing the bulge from the staff pyramid.

In the event the Council could not accept the proposed reduction in the number of Commissioners, though the Commission did succeed in reducing the number of basic administrative units by 48 out of a total of 339.¹⁹ The proposals of the Spierenburg report concerning staff recruitment, promotion and training were as follows:²⁰

- The Commission should set up an external body composed of three members appointed by the Commission, possibly after consulting the Court of Auditors, for a period of three years renewable to give an opinion on the Commission's requests to the Council for additional staff, after due consideration of existing staff resources throughout the Commission Services. If this were done, the Commission should be entitled to expect that its requests for staff would be thoroughly examined by the budgetary authority, and that reasons would be given for their decisions

¹⁸ Nutall S and Noel E, Functioning of the Commission, in *European Governmental Studies*, (London: Sweet & Maxwell, 1983) p 108.

¹⁹ *ibid*, p 113.

²⁰ Spierenburg D, *op cit*, pp 27-32.

- A central staff register should be set up, listing officials' qualifications, training and experience and their aptitude for particular jobs, not only to facilitate the better use of staff but also, by making possible an active policy of staff mobility, to improve career planning and increase job satisfaction.
- A better system of staff reporting should be set up.
- Improvements to the recruitment procedure should be made; first by publicising competitions in the different member States, particularly through more regular contacts with universities and public authorities; second, by a greater decentralization of the places in which the tests were conducted; and third, by the appointment of external assessors so that the diverse national cultures would be better represented.
- The Commission should explore the possibility of organizing joint competitions with other institutions.
- The Commission should allow the possibility of recruiting graduates to category B.
- The probation period following recruitment should be increased from nine months to one year.
- Emphasis should continue to be placed on adequate staff training, especially vocational training, language training and management training. In particular, the existing exchange scheme between Commission officials and national civil servants should be reinforced.

The implementation of these recommendations has been uneven. The proposals were translated into the appropriate administrative and legal form by a group of Commissioners chaired by Commissioner Ortoli, whose report was adopted by the Commission, but blocked by both Council and Parliament. Several were also strongly opposed by staff representatives, although they had been designed as a balanced package. Nevertheless the Commission continued to press for reform along the lines of the Spierenburg and Ortoli Reports. Priority was given to measures which could be taken by the Commission without requiring the Council to agree amendments to the Staff Regulations. Efforts were made to encourage staff mobility by providing a proper administrative framework for it, and to improve career development by making it more flexible. Internal staff training was also to be increased and made more responsive to real needs, in order to help improve possibilities for internal promotion.²¹

²¹ Nutall S and Noel E, *op cit*, p 117.

If the immediate outcome of the Spierenburg Report was disappointingly meagre, the problems which gave rise to it would not go away. The Commission's staff has been recruited in a series of waves, following the growth of the European Union, leading to a serious bulge in the pyramid of staff, with undesirable consequences for promotion prospects and career development. There has been a succession of upheavals, the first in 1968 following the merger of the executives and the others on the Community's successive enlargements. Each enlargement has meant a readjustment of the Commission's staffing and organisation. Some staff have been invited to leave to make way at least in part for officials from new Member States. On the occasion of each enlargement and frequently on the appointment of a new four-year Commission, there has been some adaptation of internal organisational structures. For instance, over the three year period 1986-88, the Commission recruited 1320 Spanish and Portuguese officials who were selected as a result of 106 competitions. To make this recruitment possible, about 446 officials chose to take early retirement, while an extra 939 posts were created reflecting the fact that enlargement entails additional duties for the Commission.²² The workload has also grown in recent years, particularly as a result of the single market programme and the extensions of Community competence resulting from the Single European Act and the Treaty on European Union (Maastricht).

In the face of these continuing and growing challenges, the Commission has from time to time renewed its endeavours to reform its administrative procedures. Between 1985 and 1989 a Danish Commissioner, Henning Christopherson, held the portfolio for personnel and administration in the College of Commissioners. As Minister for Finance and Deputy Prime Minister in Denmark he had been associated with government initiatives to simplify procedures and eliminate unnecessary legislation, so he brought to the Commission an interest in administrative reform and soon instituted a modernisation programme. In this he was assisted by Richard Hay, a British national with a Treasury background and experience in the *cabinets* of British Commissioners, who had become Deputy Director-General in the Personnel Directorate and was made its Director-General from 1986. The main features of the modernisation programme were:

- a high-profile training programme, consisting of two-day seminars for the entire staff of the Commission, taking each DG in turn, which concentrated on the importance of good work organisation including time management, team working, interpersonal relations, communications and related management themes;

²² Hay R, *op cit*, pp 25 and 39.

- a "screening" programme intended to identify those areas of the Commission which were severely under-resourced and encourage the redeployment of staff from elsewhere, with a target for the redeployment of 7.5% of policy staff towards new and priority tasks by the end of 1990;
- the development of a middle management tier within the hierarchy by allowing staff below Grade A3 to exercise management responsibilities, thus introducing greater flexibility into the administrative structure, and also giving officials the training benefit of earlier management experience than had previously been possible;
- more regular recruitment competitions, and faster procedures so that the period between the initial tests and decisions on the successful candidates should be no longer than 12 months;
- better training both for new recruits and for staff in mid-career, to include at the appropriate stage not only language training (always a priority) but also informatics and management.²³

The improved arrangements for recruitment and training were reinforced by a Social Contract with the unions and staff representatives, signed in 1986.

Having strengthened management within the services, the Commission was able, from about 1989, to pursue a policy of decentralisation, under which the Directors-General have been required to exercise increasing responsibility for the effective management of the staff and resources available to them. This has real benefits in terms of management responsibility, but it also tends to reinforce the centrifugal tendencies inherent in the Commission's strong vertical organisation, encouraging the compartmentalisation which risks fragmenting the coherence of its administration.

These successive reform programmes have had some effect. Career management has become more flexible, and nine redeployment exercises between 1990 and 1994 resulted in the transfer of 320 staff and the net suppression of 100 posts. But there is still much to be done and in the eyes of some observers the 1992 single market programme has placed new demands on the Commission which it is not adequately equipped to handle.²⁴

In 1994 another report was commissioned, this time from Philippe Petit-Laurent, who was shortly to leave the Commission's service after several years as director of personnel within DGIX. Despite the progress which had been made

²³ Hay R, *op cit*, pp 42-44 and interview 22 March 1995.

²⁴ Metcalfe L, *After 1992: Can the Commission Manage Europe?*, in Australian Journal of Public Administration, Vol 51 No 1, March 1992, p 117-129

over the past decade, this report (full title at Footnote 3) found that much of the analysis underlying the criticisms of the Spierenburg report was still valid. In particular the report recommended a progressive regrouping of Directorates around a series of major policy themes, to be achieved over the five-year lifetime of the Santer Commission, but it remains to be seen what action will be taken. Mr Erki Liikaanen, the Finnish Commissioner with responsibility for personnel and financial administration, is said to be interested in administrative reform, but he has initially given priority to the financial aspects of his portfolio.

Administrative culture

An administrative culture of the Commission could mean many different things, and the same reality is likely to be perceived differently by national governments, by decision-makers and by public opinion.²⁵ First there is the European culture engendered inside the Commission by the meeting of individuals of several nationalities and coming from different national administrative cultures. But there are also many "micro-cultures" within the Commission which have arisen from the presence of many nationalities and the dispersal of the Commission's offices²⁶. A third influence on the Commission's administrative culture could arise externally from how it is perceived by others.

The complex administrative culture of the Commission is a natural consequence of the multilevel bureaucracy by which the Community is governed. The Commission is at the heart of a multibureaucratic decision-making process which links:

- the Community bureaucracy,
- the permanent representations of the Member States in Brussels,
- the national administrations.

Because of this multibureaucratic decision-making process the administrative cultures of the different national administrations - particularly France and Germany - have formed the basis of and continue to influence the Commission's administrative culture.²⁷ The Community's staff regime is based on concepts which exist

²⁵ Bellier I, *La Commission européenne: haut fonctionnaires et "culture du management"*, Revue Française d'Administration Publique, No.70, 1994, p 254.

²⁶ Petit-Laurent, *op cit*, p 15.

²⁷ Wessels W, 'Community bureaucracy in a changing environment: criticism, trends, questions, in Jamar J and Wessels W (eds), *Community bureaucracy at the crossroads - L'administration communautaire à l'heure du choix*, Actes du colloque organisé par le Collège d'Europe, Bruges (de Tempel, 1985), p 12.

within the national public services.²⁸ It would be exaggerated to suggest that there are as many administrative cultures as Member States, the French influence being very strong. French administrative style and practices predominate and French rather than English or German remains the main working language within the Commission.²⁹ This imbues the institution with a mentality which looks to French culture and administrative norms as the unstated model of public administration.³⁰ Nevertheless, the French influence is not unchallenged. Successive waves of civil servants from new Member States have disrupted, and continue to disrupt, the process whereby officials are socialised into a dominant administrative culture within the Community bureaucracy; and the result is a grafting in of administrative practices from a wide range of national administrations. For example the procedure under which a reserve list is used in recruitment reflects Belgian influence, whilst the right retained by the administration not to respect in its choice the precise order resulting from a competition comes from Italy.³¹

In 1993 a report prepared for the Commission by three anthropologists explored the contribution of the potentially more fundamental change in administrative culture which might be brought about by concepts of management.³² To overcome the weaknesses of Community administrative organization identified during the early 1980s, the Commission seems to have become increasingly interested in Anglo-Saxon theories of management, especially after 1985, under the double impetus given by a Danish Commissioner (Henning Christophersen), and a British Director-general of personnel and administration (Richard Hay). A policy of decentralisation allowed some management initiatives to be developed among the DGs, and it was thought that this might encourage the development of a new culture integrating the different traditions of the States which constitute the European Union.³³

²⁸ Penaud J, *La fonction publique des Communautés Européennes*, in *Problèmes Politiques et Sociaux* No 617, (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1989) p 6.

²⁹ Abélès M, Bellier I and McDonald M, *Approche anthropologique de la Commission Européenne*, unpublished report to the Commission, 1993, p 35

³⁰ Spence D, *op cit*, p 65; Page E, *op cit*, p 6.

³¹ Ziller J, *Egalité et Mérite - L'Accès à la fonction publique dans les Etats de la Communauté Européenne*, (Brussels: IIAP, 1988).

³² Abélès M et al, *op cit*, p 76-80.

³³ Bellier I, *op cit*, p 260.

However, the difficulty of changing the administrative culture which has evolved from the complex interaction of administrative practices drawn from so many different traditions, in a system which is characterised by rigid structures and ponderous procedures, makes the Commission less open to management reform than many national administrations.³⁴ The 1995 accession of Sweden and Finland could lend additional support to those in favour of a management culture, but there remains a deep resistance from those who believe that such notions are not well suited to the dominant (French) culture of the Commission.³⁵ Spence also doubts whether a synthesis can be made of the French administrative method and the management culture common within the Anglo-Saxon tradition.³⁶

There may be no single effective challenge to the dominant administrative culture within the Commission, but there are powerful centrifugal forces at work, rooted in the relative autonomy enjoyed by the Directorates-General, each with its different functions, traditions and leadership. These differences were always there, but the scattered location of the Commission's offices since the Berlaymont was closed in 1991 has facilitated the development of an extensive range of micro-cultures. The three anthropologists, who studied the functioning of the Commission from within, found that the *esprit de corps* in one DG was not at all the same as that which existed in another. The cultural universe of DG VIII (Development) for example was not at all like that of DG III (Internal Market and Industrial Affairs), and staff identified with their own DG.³⁷

Alongside these cultural differences related to functions are others related to nationality. In their working environment the European official operates within the principles of cultural mixture and geographical balance. Away from work, however, there is a natural tendency to associate with people who speak the same language and/or share the same culture.³⁸ Each nationality possesses its club, its pattern of habits, its association of civil servants, its social facilities and its sports teams. At the same time each nationality will be perceived differently by others.

³⁴ Stevens A and H, *The Non-Management of Europe*, unpublished paper presented to the 8th Colloque International de la Revue 'Politiques et Management Publique', Paris, June 1996, p18

³⁵ Petit-Laurent, *op cit*, p 58.

³⁶ Spence D, *op cit*, p 91.

³⁷ Abélès M et al, *op cit*, p 10.

³⁸ Abélès M et al, *op cit*, p 25.

For instance, a celebration organised by the Irish will be much more tolerantly - even enthusiastically - accepted than one organised by the Germans because Irish nationalism is more acceptable than German nationalism.³⁹

Beyond these differences of nationality, one can observe a more general cleavage between the North and the South. The United Kingdom, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Austria and Germany, are generally considered Northern countries whereas France, Spain, Italy, Greece and Portugal are perceived as Southern countries; the position of Belgium is more debatable.⁴⁰ This cleavage can be seen in the use of such terms as "hierarchy", "subordination", "co-operation", "common interest" which, even if they are in the everyday language of the Commission and define a paradigm of European administrative culture, are susceptible to different interpretations according to whether they are perceived in the Northern countries, more familiar with the concept of management, or in the Southern countries.⁴¹ The hierarchical superior and the manager are two different entities - the first occupies a position, the second a function - sometimes united in the same person on whom staff pass a different judgment according to their knowledge of the various national styles.⁴² The different administrative cultures present among the Commission staff are marked in the way notes are written, and information conveyed or withheld. Submissions may be written in a classic French cartesian style or follow a more British sequential approach. The German sense of precision can put a Spaniard to the test, as may French formality or the Italian habit of working late.⁴³

The anthropologists' report identified many layers in the identity of a European civil servant (*feuilleton*) - the Commission itself, the local culture of the 'house' or DG, and the culture associated with language or country of origin. Despite this diversity of cultural influences to which the European civil servant is exposed, the report identified a continual preoccupation with such questions as which way the Community is going, and the nature of the Europe to be built.⁴⁴ Although the

³⁹ Abélès M et al, *op cit*, p 58.

⁴⁰ Abélès M et al, *op cit*, p 49.

⁴¹ Bellier I, *op cit*, p 254.

⁴² Bellier I, *op cit*, p 258.

⁴³ Bellier I, *op cit*, p 258.

⁴⁴ Abélès M et al, *op cit*, p iii.

missionary zeal of the first wave of European civil servants is not so prevalent among more recent recruits, they still share a common enthusiasm for building the institutions of Europe and thus create a sense of common purpose unlikely to be found among the national bureaucracies of the Member States.⁴⁵

The administrative culture of the Commission is thus delicately balanced between the forces of integration and disintegration. The cultural pluralism guarantees the cultural coherence of the Commission, but it also generates centrifugal forces,⁴⁶ which can be observed in what Spence calls "a parallel administration":⁴⁷

"There are thus opposing potentially disintegrative trends; national quotas and balance, "parachutage", "sous-marins", "cabinets", "pistons", seconded national experts, posts reserved for certain nationalities, etc; are all signs of disintegrative seeds lurking in the fruit of apparent integration".⁴⁸

If there is one thing which gives the European Commission a coherent administrative culture, despite all the forces which pull it in different directions, it is the dynamic of the European project itself and the organisation of the requisite tasks and powers, which allows the cultural differences to be integrated and given their proper value within a framework which holds unity and pluralism in fruitful tension.⁴⁹

There remains the possibility that an administrative culture which is under tension internally might be particularly subject to external pressure. Wessels argues that administrative culture may be influenced by attitudes and behavioural patterns of the Community population to the Community bureaucrats.⁵⁰ The attitude of the Belgians and particularly of the citizens of Brussels towards the Commission is important to the image that European civil servants have of their own work. They have the reputation of being favoured by comparison with the rest of the population and of maintaining only superficial relations with the Belgian

⁴⁵ Page E, *op cit*.

⁴⁶ Abélès M et al, *op cit*, p v.

⁴⁷ Spence D, *op cit*, p 71.

⁴⁸ Spence D, *op cit*, p 92.

⁴⁹ Abélès M et al, *op cit*, p 82.

⁵⁰ Wessels W, *op cit*, p 19

host community. They take part in the city life of Brussels, but they are not integrated with the rest of the population. This strengthens the feeling among them that they belong to a separate world and are not part of the city. The relative separation of the civil servants from their country of origin also causes them concern, as may be perceived when they speak of the future of their children or about retirement.⁵¹

Changes in administrative culture are also caused by the evolution of public opinion about bureaucracies in general and the Commission in particular. In recent years distrust of all forms of authority has increased and, at the same time, the generally positive attitude towards the Community has decreased. The "anti-Brussels" mood increased the more the Community bureaucracy got involved and took responsibility for unpopular measures.⁵² Europeans are only half satisfied with the way democracy works in the European Union.⁵³ One of the main problems for the Commission today is to communicate with and be understood by the citizens of the Member States.⁵⁴ For Spence it is no surprise that Commission officials are little understood and little liked. Viewed from a British perspective:

"The Commission appears on the national horizon only when its President causes controversy (by visiting the British Trade Union Conference or expressing a view about the outcome of the Danish referendum), or a newspaper publishes an article critical of EU policy or when a national politician attributes blame to the Commission rather than to the Council".⁵⁵

Another criticism of the European Union relates to the legitimacy of the "eurocrats" and their indifference to the socio-professional realities that their decisions affect.⁵⁶ They have even been accused of a particular form of deviant behaviour: that is, of being "technocrats apatrids".⁵⁷ The key role assigned to the

⁵¹ Abélès M et al, *op cit*, p 24-27.

⁵² Wessels W, *op cit*, p 19.

⁵³ *Democracy at work in the European Union*, Brussels, European Communities, 1994, P 7.

⁵⁴ Abélès M et al, *op cit*, p vi.

⁵⁵ Spence D, *op cit*, p 91.

⁵⁶ Bellier I, *op cit*, p 245.

⁵⁷ Spence D, *op cit*, p 62.

Commission as the exclusive initiator of all proposals for Community action raises questions about the political legitimacy of the officials who exercise such an important function. The Commission is seen as seeking to impose its own conception of European unification and to link the progress of European integration to the development of its own role.

This sense of being isolated from the local community and misunderstood by the European public at large could undermine the self-confidence of the European civil service, but given the relatively positive conclusions of the anthropologists' report, it seems more likely that external opposition may rather have tended to strengthen the contested sense of European identity within the Commission.

Changes since 1970

The most obvious change since 1970 is in the size of the Community and its role and consequently in the scale of the administration required to support its activity. In 1970 there were still only six Member States; now there are fifteen. The role of the Commission has grown not just to implement the policies for which provision was made in the original treaties, notably agriculture and the common market, but to support the new policies progressively introduced by the European Council and given legal substance by the Single European Act in 1986 and the Treaty on European Union in 1993. Staff numbers have grown accordingly from about 5,000 in 1970 to more than 25,000 to-day.

Sheer size has inevitably altered the character of the administration as well. The generation of the first pioneers has very largely passed, and with it the unbureaucratic enthusiasm and informality which characterised the Commission in its earliest years. Plans and programmes and structures have very largely taken the place of personalities as the driving force behind the Commission of the 1990s. Yet the arrangements for managing the staff have changed remarkably little in the past 25 years. From Spierenburg to Petit-Laurent there has been no shortage of reports identifying the deficiencies of arrangements which were designed for a much smaller, more informal, less dispersed administration; policies of modernisation and decentralisation have attempted to introduce some changes; but in the face of powerful centrifugal forces rooted in the relative autonomy of the different DGs and Services, and the patronage of national Commissioners, it will require the determined support of the President of the Commission to carry out an effective programme of administrative reform. So far the President has always had more pressing priorities.

Section II - External Recruitment

There are two main avenues of recruitment leading to senior official positions in the Commission. Entry to Category A is normally by open competition for appointment to the starting grade for that category (Article 31 of the Staff Regulations), which means Grade A8 for those fresh from University, or Grade A7 for those with two or three years professional experience. The other main route is by direct appointment to a senior position (*parachutage*) which requires no competition at all at Grade A1 or A2, and often takes the form of a special competition, open only to existing temporary staff, for example for a particular post at A3 or A4 level, when room needs to be found, at the end of a Commissioner's mandate, for the members of his *cabinet* whom he may have brought with him some years earlier on temporary appointment terms. The following table demonstrates clearly the relative importance of the two avenues for ultimate appointment to the top four grades.

Table 3

Parachutists and career officials in the DGs and central services in percentages

| Grade | career | parachuted |
|--------------|--------|------------|
| A1 | 18.2 | 81.8 |
| A2 | 34.3 | 65.7 |
| A3 | 55.1 | 44.8 |
| A4 and below | 66.7 | 33.3 |

(source Page E, *op cit*, p. 38).

In addition, if the Commission acquires new responsibilities, it may use a variety of means to fill posts at intermediate levels. It may run specific competitions for the appointment of permanent or temporary staff with the new skills or experience required, or it may call on the services of detached national experts or consultants on contract who can be brought in more quickly. Finally, each wave of enlargement leads to the recruitment of staff at all levels from the new member states, so that they can quickly take their place in appropriate numbers at all levels of the hierarchy. The system is therefore very flexible, but it remains appropriate to

describe it under the two main headings of general competitions at career entry level and special arrangements for filling more senior posts, with or without competition.

Legal basis of external recruitment procedures.

Employment in the European public service rests on a statutory foundation. All permanent staff are recruited and employed on the basis of the Staff Regulations, adopted by the Council in 1961, which set out rights and duties, career structure, salary scales, social welfare provisions and the pension scheme. The Staff Regulations, which can only be amended by further decisions of the Council (a laborious, but not infrequent procedure) are often criticised for the constraints they place on rapid and efficient personnel management, but they have the benefit of protecting the recruitment procedures from abuse or arbitrary decisions, which can be challenged before the European Court of Justice (staff cases are heard initially before the Tribunal of First Instance).

Some authors maintain that the European Union is essentially an international organization in which the relationship between the European Union and its employees is contractual. Two important models were the League of Nations Secretariat and the Secretariat of the United Nations, whose officials benefit from immunities and privileges, such as the inviolability of property and immunity from some taxation and from certain types of prosecution. Today the administration of the European Union enjoys many of the privileges and immunities which are common in international organisations. According to Amerasinghe, the situation which prevailed before definitive Staff Regulations were drawn up was that appointments were made by contract. The Staff Regulations were not explicit as to whether the nature of the relationship was contractual or statutory.⁵⁸ However, it now seems to be firmly established that permanent staff members of the European Communities have a statutory relationship with their employer,⁵⁹ even if some authors speak of a sui-generis employment relationship.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Amerasinghe C F, *The law of the International Civil Service*, Vol 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) P 89.

⁵⁹ Bodiguel J-L, *Les fonctions publiques dans l'Europe des Douze*, (Paris: LGDJ, 1994).

⁶⁰ Dubouis L, 'L'évolution de la fonction publique communautaire concorde-t-elle avec celle des Communautés européennes?' in *Etudes de droit des Communautés européennes, mélanges offerts à Pierre-Henri Teitgen*, (Paris: Pedone, 1984) p 127.

The two main principles underlying the recruitment process of senior public officials (A Grade) are merit, and the need for a balanced representation of the different nationalities in the European Union. Both principles are reflected in Article 27 of the Staff Regulations, which stipulates that "recruitment shall be directed to securing for the institution the services of officials of the highest standard of ability, efficiency and integrity", but adds that officials shall be "recruited on the broadest possible geographical basis from among nationals of Member States of the Communities"... and "no posts shall be reserved for nationals of any specific Member State".

One aspect of recruitment on merit is the application of an equal opportunities policy. One of the main aims of the new guidelines for recruitment adopted by the Commission in 1991 was to attract more women, especially into category A. This was one reason why it was decided to hold A8 competitions every year, and A7/6 competitions less frequently. Because the candidates for A8 competitions are not required to have had working experience (which is required at A7/6), these competitions are more attractive to young women, who are more easily recruited before their mobility is inhibited by commitments to a partner or family. As a result of the new policy, women comprised 31% of the A8 grade on 1 January 1994, by comparison with 13.5% for category A as a whole. The recruitment of female category A staff from Sweden and Finland since 1995 has also been very successful; 52% of the successful A8 candidates from Sweden were female, and 55% from Finland; and new appointments have doubled the representation of women at A1/2 from five to ten.⁶¹

Geographical balance is carefully respected in category A, where most countries are within one or two percentage points of what might be their theoretical representation, based on their share of seats in the European Parliament,⁶² but there are two significant exceptions, namely Belgium which has 12% against a theoretical representation of 5%, and the UK which also has 12% but against a theoretical share of 15%. At the level of Directors-General the Commission maintains a particularly careful balance between nationalities, and this balance is also maintained, but with increasing flexibility, at the levels of director and head of unit, at which level the flexibility is now substantial. At the B, C and D levels, merit is the only factor which influences selection.

The over-representation of Belgium and Luxembourg reflects the high level of interest from host-country nationals who are five to fourteen times more likely to

⁶¹ Interview - November 1995

⁶² Bodiguel J-L, *op cit*, p 159.

apply for competitions than the nationals of other member states. This high level of attraction exists for all grades, but it is highest in the B grades (37-42% of applicants), where the Commission recruits disproportionately from within relatively small groups of potential applicants, largely if not exclusively located in and around Brussels, and likely to be already associated with the Community system in one way or another.⁶³

The recruitment procedure

When a post falls vacant, the Commission must consider (Article 29 of the Staff Regulations) whether it can be filled by transfer or promotion of existing staff, either within the DG where the vacancy has arisen, or from another part of the Commission or another Community institution. At intermediate levels it is usually possible to fill most posts by these means, though some with particular requirements have to be filled by external recruitment. Most of the vacancies which cannot be filled internally tend to be in the basic grades (A7/6, A8, B5/4, C5/4, D3/2).

The next step is to check the availability of resources. The number of permanent and temporary officials the Commission can recruit each year is limited by the number of additional posts approved by the budgetary authority in that year's budget and any posts approved in the previous year which have not been filled or otherwise become vacant through retirements, transfers and resignations. However, since the recruitment process may take up to a year to complete and the budget may not be approved until shortly before the financial year begins, the forward planning of competitions is difficult. The difficulty is compounded by exchange rate fluctuations. The Commission's budget is set in ECU, but most of the staff are paid in Belgian or Luxembourg francs, whose value is linked to that of the German Mark. In 1987/88, and again very suddenly in 1993/94, a rapid decline in the value of the ECU in relation to the Belgian Franc caused the Commission to freeze all recruitment, disrupting the competitions and delaying the appointment of successful candidates. It is hoped that the establishment of a financial reserve will reduce the impact of such events in the future.⁶⁴

Another factor which tends to upset recruitment planning is enlargement, which may have the effect of temporarily blocking almost all normal recruitment from sources other than the new Member States. Hay states that over the three-

⁶³ *Recruitment requirements in the Community institutions*, Commission staff working paper (Brussels: Commission, 1992) p 20.

⁶⁴ Petit-Laurent, *op cit*, p 55.

year period 1986-88 the Commission recruited 1320 Spanish and Portuguese officials, who were selected as a result of 106 competitions. This compared with a normal recruitment level at that time of about 550 staff per year. To make this possible without freezing all other recruitment, about 446 officials chose to take early retirement, while an extra 939 posts were created to deal with the additional work associated with the enlarged Community (not least on account of two more languages). No such measures were taken to help ease the consequences of the 1995 enlargement (Austria, Finland, Sweden), which was expected to require the recruitment of 1,976 officials and 455 linguists from the new member states,⁶⁵ and this may be one reason why there has been no general A7/A8 competition for more than three years since the last one was launched in July 1993.

The recruitment procedure followed by the Commission involves the following parties:

- the appointing authority,
- the staff committee,
- the joint committee,
- the recruitment unit and
- the selection board.

The appointing authority is the administrative body regulating relations between the institution and its employees or future employees, in effect the employer. Normally each institution would have one appointing authority, but the Commission has two, one for administrative appointments (DGIX) and another for appointments under the research budget (DGXII). The appointing authority has jurisdiction over all decisions about the competition. It decides whether to open a competition in the first place, which procedure to use, and what to say in the public notice and the application form. It appoints the selection board, receives its decisions and transmits them to the candidates.

Staff interests are represented in the staff committee which appoints members to the selection board, in the joint committee which has to be consulted before a competition notice is issued, and within the selection board itself. The staff committee has the right to designate one member of the selection board (Staff Regulations, Annex III, Article 3), but in practice, following a position adopted by Commissioner Ortoli in 1976, it designates half the members of the selection board whenever appointments are being made to more than a single post.

The joint committee (the common joint committee where the competition is for posts in more than one institution) consists of a chairman appointed each year by

⁶⁵ Spence D, *op cit*, p 82.

the appointing authority and an equal number of members from the appointing authority and the Staff Committee. The joint committee must be consulted before the appointing authority adopts a competition notice. Although many proposals are adopted without amendment, that is not always the case and many of the significant features of the institution's recruitment procedures can be traced to initiatives of the staff representatives.⁶⁶

The recruitment unit is part of DGIX (Personnel and Administration) and is responsible for the practical and administrative organisation of the competitions, including the provision of secretariat services to the selection boards.

The selection board appointed for each competition, one for each language where appropriate, is independent. It does not represent the administration or the staff committee or the unions.⁶⁷ It is normally composed of officials with other jobs, or recently retired officials. It is rare to use outsiders.⁶⁸ This imposes an additional burden on busy staff, but has the advantage of involving the operational departments throughout the recruitment procedure. The members of each selection board must be competent to make an objective assessment of the performance of the candidates.⁶⁹ The boards are responsible for taking all decisions as to who is admitted to tests, what marks are awarded, and who should appear on the final list of those successful.

Inter-institutional competitions

The Spierenburg Report criticized the holding of separate competitions and proposed joint competitions for all the institutions. The other institutions which can take part in such competitions are the Council, the Court of Auditors, the Court of Justice, the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Since that time an increasing number of inter-institutional competitions has been organised for the B and C grades,⁷⁰ and with the Court of Auditors for audit staff. Discussions have taken place on the creation

⁶⁶ Zito U, *Recruiting and training of civil servants in the EC*, in *Europäische Integration und öffentliche Verwaltung* (Vienna: Orac, Verwaltungswissenschaftliche Studien, 1992).

⁶⁷ *Projet de guide pour les jurys*, unpublished Commission working paper, 1995, p 15.

⁶⁸ Zito U, *op cit*, p 78.

⁶⁹ Dubouis L (1994), *op cit*, p 244

⁷⁰ Bodiguel J-L, *op cit*, p 162.

of an inter-institutional Office which could organise competitions on behalf of all the institutions.⁷¹ However the Commission is inclined to discourage the establishment of inter-institutional competitions because, as the largest institution of the European Union, it could lose its leadership in the inter-institutional organs.

Recruitment by open competition

The Staff Regulations make provision for recruitment to be based on qualifications alone, on tests, or on qualifications and tests. In practice recruitment (except to Grades A1 and A2) is almost invariably by open competition based on tests. This is not to say that qualifications are unimportant - they are generally required as a condition for entry to the tests, but they are not the basis on which selection is made.

Entry to the A grades, giving access to senior positions, is normally by means of the competitions for entry at A7 (Administrator) or A8 (Assistant Administrator). The Commission is the only EU institution which regularly runs external competitions at the graduate entry level A8, but there are many advantages to recruitment at this level. In particular younger candidates are less likely to be committed to other employers or reluctant to move to Brussels for personal reasons. As a result, A8 recruitment attracts a better gender balance (more women) and a better national balance (a higher proportion of applicants from the non-host nations).

Candidates for the most recent of these competitions (1993) were required to hold a University degree (or equivalent qualification), to have a thorough knowledge of one Community language (usually their mother tongue) and a satisfactory knowledge of another, and to be aged less than 23 at the date of application for A8, or 26 for A7 (subject to allowances of not more than five years in all for military service, childcare responsibilities and physical handicap). In addition, candidates for the A7 competition were required to have at least two years graduate-level work experience or further education.

Competitions are advertised in the Press at the same time as the formal competition notice appears in the Official Journal. This is a legally binding document and must be observed by the administration of the Commission, by the selection board and by the candidates. Candidates have to obtain a copy of the Official Journal, which includes an application form to be completed and sent to the recruitment unit in Brussels, with supporting documents, by the closing date. The recruitment unit has the task of checking that the applications comply with

⁷¹ Zito U, *op cit*, p 81.

the formal and general requirements, such as nationality, provision of references and fulfilment of any military service obligations. In principle, the greater the number of applicants, the greater the chance of securing recruits of high quality, but the sheer volume of applications - over 55,000 for the 1993 A7/A8 competitions - must make it difficult to give each application adequate attention. It has been alleged that in the early stages at least the emphasis, perhaps unavoidably, is on elimination rather than selection. Candidates have to be very careful not to make any avoidable mistakes, however small, in completing the application form.

The next stage is for the selection board to examine whether candidates comply with the specific requirements for the post, of which the most significant are age, qualifications and professional experience. However, where there are very large numbers of applications, the selection board may initially reject only those who do not meet the nationality and age requirements, leaving the other requirements to be checked only when numbers have been reduced to more manageable proportions by the pre-selection stage.

In these circumstances the pre-selection stage is arguably the most important in the whole competition. In the 1993 A8 competition some 95% of candidates were eliminated at this stage.⁷² At that time the pre-selection tests consisted of two multiple-choice papers, the first being a general knowledge test (50 points) drawn up by the selection board, and the second a test designed to assess understanding of a second Community language (10 points) drawn up by a specialist outside firm. Although the marking system is heavily weighted in favour of the general knowledge test, all candidates are required to score at least 50% on each of the two papers.

Candidates who survive the pre-selection stage and whose applications are found to meet all the other general and specific requirements are invited to sit a further written examination. By this stage the numbers, which were as high as 55,000 at the start of the A7/A8 competition in 1993, will have been whittled down to (in that case) 1800 for A7 and 900 for A8. These further written tests consist of a general essay (about 2 hours), an essay on a specialised topic (for A7) and a dossier exercise (three to four hours) which normally requires the candidate to draft a speech and a summary on the basis of an official EC document.

About one third of those who sit the written examinations are invited to attend a final interview in Brussels, where they appear before the selection board for 45 minutes, to answer questions which further test their knowledge, their ability to

⁷² Interview - November 1995

make a clear oral presentation in response to questions, and finally their ability to speak and understand a second language.

About half the candidates who attend the final interview are declared suitable for appointment and informed that their names have been placed on the reserve list, from which candidates may be drawn for actual appointment as and when specific vacancies arise. The reserve list normally contains about twice as many candidates as the number of posts to be filled. This is justified by the fact that the competitions are generally organised before knowing the budget and therefore the number of posts to be filled, but even if new vacancies arise and there are successful candidates available but unplaced, they cannot be appointed to any post for which the competitions were not organised.⁷³ The use of the reserve list also permits the adjustment of the results of a competition, which might otherwise result in a high number of successful candidates from one nationality, undermining the principle of geographical balance.⁷⁴

The recruitment procedure described up to this point is organised on a centralised basis. The choice of candidates for a particular post is, however, decentralised. Once the reserve list appears, it is circulated to the Assistants of the Directors-General, who use it to see whether there are suitable candidates for the posts vacant in the DG which cannot be filled by internal transfers. They ask for one or more candidates to be called in for interview. A candidate may be called to several interviews before being offered a job, or she may not be called for interview at all before the final expiry date of the reserve list which lasts one or two years.⁷⁵ Much depends on the initiative of the candidates themselves in ensuring, with the help of such contacts as they may have in the Commission or in their national representation, that their names are actively considered for the posts for which they are best suited.

The Staff Regulations provide for appeal against decisions of the appointing authority to the Court of Justice and its Tribunal of First Instance. The appointing authority has wide powers of assessment (from the French administrative concept of *pouvoir d'appréciation*) recognised both by the Staff Regulations and the

⁷³ Mordt vs CJCE, 27 June 1991, Rec.p.II-407 in case T-156/89, cited in Dubouis (1994) *op cit*, at p 246.

⁷⁴ Bodiguel J-L, *op cit*, p 162.

⁷⁵ Zito U, *op cit*, p 77-80.

Court.⁷⁶ This power of assessment reduces the chances of success on appeal to the Tribunal of First Instance on such grounds as discrimination, abuse of power or unequal treatment (*rupture d'égalité*).⁷⁷

The recruitment arrangements are kept under continuous review and are therefore subject to change. Petit-Laurent argues for a greater professionalisation of recruitment, and there are persistent concerns that the system may discriminate against women. In 1988, for example, although one third of the candidates admitted to the written test for A7 were women, only 2 were appointed alongside 41 men.⁷⁸ The new emphasis on A8 recruitment has helped, since 52% of candidates at this level in 1993 were female, compared to 37% at Grade A7; but the success rate was still only 19%. Research carried out by the Commission showed that the general knowledge test discriminated heavily against women. A psychometric test had to be abandoned on the same grounds in 1992. The general knowledge test was replaced in 1994 by a test of knowledge of the European Union and its policies, and it looks as if the success rate for women may have improved to something nearer 30%, but there have not been enough competitions since 1994 to know whether this improvement can be sustained in competitions open to nationals of all member states.

Appointment to senior positions

The basis for appointment to senior positions by means other than open competition is found in Article 29.2 of the Staff Regulations, which allows other procedures to be used for recruitment to grades A1 and A2, and in exceptional cases for recruitment to posts which require special qualifications. If staff can be appointed without having to undergo competitive procedures, they also enjoy less security of tenure than their more junior colleagues, and may be retired in the interests of the service (Article 50 of the Staff Regulations) in order to make room for someone else. These arrangements may appear similar to those for the appointment and removal of "political officials" in the senior ranks of the French and German civil services, but the decisions are driven more by considerations of geographical balance than political allegiance.

⁷⁶ Judgment of Tribunal of First Instance, 25 February 1992 in *Schloh vs Council*, T-11/91, Pec.p.II-203, cited in *Dubouis L (1994) op cit*, p 248.

⁷⁷ Judgment in case C-107/90P, *Hochbaum vs Commission*, 17 January 1992, Rec.I-157, cited in *Dubouis L (1994) op cit*, p 248.

⁷⁸ *Penaud J (1989), op cit*, p 14

The College of Commissioners has from the first exercised close control over senior appointments, a practice which dates back to the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community.⁷⁹ In the very early days of the Commission it was natural for the Commissioners to want to fill key posts with people they already knew, and whose commitment to the European project could be relied on. But the six original Member States were also concerned to ensure an equitable distribution of posts especially at the senior level. There are not and never have been quotas, but there was an informal understanding among the six original member states that France, Germany and Italy should have 25% each and the Benelux States the remainder.⁸⁰ The Commissioners kept the control of appointments firmly in their own hands for many years - it was 1966, eight years after the foundation of the EEC before the Personnel Directorate (then as now DGIX) was given the power to decide what recruitment procedure to use to fill vacant posts, and at that time all appointments to the A and B grades were still decided by the Meeting of the Presidents (the President and Vice-Presidents). Posts at A4 and below were settled by *chefs de cabinet*, and confirmed by written procedure, but all appointments to Grades A1 to A3 were discussed by the full Commission.⁸¹

It is no longer possible for the full Commission to intervene quite so directly in all senior appointments, but *cabinets* keep information about staff of their own nationality. They take steps to ensure that geographical balance is maintained, and that the claims of their candidates are fully considered particularly where a vacant post is considered to be of national interest.⁸² *Chefs de cabinet*, who know many of the staff concerned, are particularly closely involved in the complex manoeuvres and deals which may be associated with appointments at the top two levels.

Some posts have a long tradition of being filled by a succession of staff of the same nationality, and this has given rise to allegations that the national flag has been planted. This would be contrary to the explicit terms of Article 27 of the Staff Regulations. The rulings of the Court of Justice indicate that the interests of the service and respect for the principle of promotion on merit would be compromised

⁷⁹ Spence D, *op cit*, p82.

⁸⁰ Coombes D, *Politics and Bureaucracy in the European Community*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1970) p 141.

⁸¹ Coombes D, *op cit*, p 153.

⁸² Michelmann H, *Multinational staffing and Organisational Functioning in the Commission of the EEC*, in *International Affairs*, Vol 32 No 2, 1978, p 483; also Spence D, *op cit*, p 76.

if the Administration, to assure geographical balance, could reserve a specific post to one particular nationality; on the other hand, it is not incompatible with the needs of the service for the Administration to give priority to considerations of nationality and geographical balance, when the qualifications of different candidates are similar.

It is difficult to measure the extent to which senior appointments are made from outside rather than by promotion of permanent staff. It is accepted that many staff appointments at the top two grades will continue to be made from outside, though the Commission likes to insist that such appointments are exceptional at A3. Some may be needed to correct geographical imbalance or to supply a specific skill or expertise, but the Commission does not record the numbers of such appointments or the grounds on which they were made.

Nor is it disputed that many temporary staff in *cabinets* find permanent posts in the Commission when the Commissioner who appointed them moves on. Each Commissioner has a *cabinet* of 5 or 6 category A officials, and a corresponding complement of category B and C supporting staff. The Commissioners are surrounded by about 300 staff, of which about a hundred are category A temporary staff, chosen by the Commissioner personally. They come from many different backgrounds, including the permanent staff of the Commission, the national administration of the Commissioner's member state, or from the private sector, and many of them seek permanent appointments. A *chef de cabinet*, equivalent to an A2 official, may be appointed director or director-general; an assistant principal private secretary may be appointed director (A2) or head of unit (A3),⁸³ though this can be more difficult because appointment to A3 requires a specific competition.

Parachutage creates some resentment because it makes it harder for career officials to reach the highest levels.⁸⁴ Former members of a *cabinet* who are absorbed into the permanent service of the Commission block the progress of others and distort the pattern of promotion.⁸⁵ Even in the case of those recruited to the *cabinet* from the permanent staff of the Commission their return sometimes

⁸³ Bodiguel J-I, *op cit*, p 160.

⁸⁴ Bellier I, *op cit*, p 256.

⁸⁵ *Staffing of Community Institutions*, 11th Report of the Select Committee on the European Communities, 1987-88, (London: HMSO, 1988) p 17

gives rise to difficulties. For instance, a re-organisation may be arranged to create senior posts irrespective of the need to improve services.⁸⁶

According to the Petit-Laurent report, *parachutage* is not the most harmful nor the most disturbing aspect of the *cabinet* system.⁸⁷ Experience in a *cabinet* can be of value and it is of advantage to the Commission not to lose the services of an individual with such experience.⁸⁸ Bodiguel notes that between 1982 and 1992 90% of promotions to grade A3 were internal⁸⁹, and Willis (1982) reported that 70% of the top two grades were recruited from within. Page's figures (see above) suggest that two thirds of A2s and more than 80% of A1s arrive by parachute rather than by promotion, and De La Guérivière reports⁹⁰ that *parachutage* is increasing at A3 level. It is hard to reconcile these findings in the absence of authoritative figures from the Commission.

Entry by the back door

The Commission has always been adept at finding ways around its own rules. The Spierenburg Report describes the procedures devised for external recruitment of staff at A3 and lower levels in the following terms:

As there are no special rules like those for Grades A1 and A2, these recruitments (at A3) are made by devious procedures, the appointee being brought in on a temporary contract and subsequently established as a full official by means of an internal competition at which because of his special experience he is sure of being successful. A similar procedure also operates for appointment of outsiders at A5/A4, which has a generally disruptive effect on career prospects. These purely formal competitions - the so-called "rigged competitions" - are understandably unpopular with staff; and they do not even provide a guarantee that the Commission will select the best possible candidate.⁹¹

⁸⁶ *ibid*, p 16

⁸⁷ Petit-Laurent, *op cit*, p 65.

⁸⁸ Spence D, *op cit*, p 81.

⁸⁹ Bodiguel, *op cit*, p 168

⁹⁰ de La Guérivière J, *Voyage à l'intérieur de l'eurocratie*, (Paris: Le Monde Collection "Actualité", 1992) p 37.

⁹¹ Spierenburg Report, para 104

A slightly more elaborate way of securing, ultimately, a permanent post at the Commission is by means of the unofficial "sousmarin" route which David Spence describes in the following terms:

If a seconded national official is sought by a Directorate General yet cannot take the normal competition route, eg on grounds of age, he or she may be employed on a contract as a consultant, thereafter obtain the status of auxiliary agent, graduate to a full temporary agent contract and thus be eligible for the internal competition for establishment, for which the age requirements are waived.

This suggests that the old practice of co-option, much practised in the early days and criticised by Spierenburg, survives in this more sophisticated variant. A particularly blatant recent example, though one not within the Commission itself, appears to be the staffing of the Committee of the Regions.⁹² It is alleged that the Committee's president Jacques Blanc, a former French Prefect, has staffed the committee very largely from people already known to him, if only to get it up and running quickly without having to wait 12-18 months to obtain staff through a normal recruitment competition. Even when eight posts were advertised internally in the summer of 1995, they all went to people already working for the committee on temporary contracts, in much the way described by Spence.

The numbers of temporary staff and their principle concentrations were noted in Section I. Temporary staff cannot occupy posts which carry formal management responsibilities (mainly at A3 and above) but in all other respects their responsibilities and terms of employment are closely modelled on those applying to permanent staff. Members of the large group of temporary research staff frequently apply for permanent status under internal competitions, and some are successful, but it is the 200 or so staff in the Commissioners' *cabinets* and the group of about 300 temporary staff scattered around the other parts of the Commission who are probably most relevant as candidates for the limited competitions leading to appointment as permanent officials.

One of the advantages of the *sousmarin* route into Commission employment is that the recruitment procedures for temporary staff are less formidable than those for permanent appointment, and the subsequent competitions for conversion from temporary to permanent status, being limited to staff already employed as temporary staff, are also less intensely competitive, if only because not so many candidates can compete. When a DG has one or more vacancies for temporary staff, it draws up a job profile. The profiles are sent to DG IX (personnel and administra-

⁹² *The Guardian*, 1 December 1995.

tion). DG IX publishes announcements in the press. In these advertisements the strictly limited duration of the job is clearly indicated and the job profile, academic and/or professional experience required are set out. DG IX then searches for several candidates corresponding to each profile, and transmits these to a selection committee composed of one delegate of DG IX, one staff representative chosen by the central staff committee and one representative of the DG in which there is a vacant job. The choice of the candidates is made by DG IX from this list, with the agreement of the DG concerned. The selection process for temporary staff differs from the normal selection process in that there is no written test. Otherwise, the procedures are similar. The unions would like to see written tests instituted for the recruitment of temporary staff. However, DG IX is not willing to do so, arguing that the CVs sent by candidates are a sufficient basis on which to make an assessment, subject to confirmation at an interview similar to the oral test faced by candidates for permanent posts, and conducted under the same procedural conditions of legality, equality and confidentiality.⁹³

Temporary staff filling permanent posts cannot be engaged for more than two years, with a maximum extension for one further year, but the other groups of temporary staff are commonly employed for up to five years, and contracts for research staff may thereafter be extended indefinitely (Article 8 of the Conditions of Employment of Other Agents).

Under a policy dating from 1988 temporary staff (except research) should not normally be employed for longer than five years, but in that time they should have the opportunity to compete twice in internal competitions for permanent posts.⁹⁴ Spence reports that following a large influx of temporary staff in 1989 to deal with the consequences of the Single European Act and the 'Delors I Package', the Commission advertised an internal competition in February 1994 to allow about 100 temporary staff to obtain permanent status.⁹⁵ A further competition was advertised in September 1994, mainly to deal with temporary staff leaving *cabinets* at the end of the Delors Presidency and seeking appointment at levels below A2.

It is impossible to say how many staff gain access to permanent posts at the Commission by way of temporary appointments followed by limited internal competitions, but the evidence from 1994 (when there were no open competitions at A7/A8 other than for nationals of the new member states) is that entry by the back door is by no means unusual.

⁹³ *Projet de guide pour les jurys*, unpublished Commission document, 1995, p11.

⁹⁴ Bodiguel, J-L *op cit*, p164

⁹⁵ Spence D, *op cit*, p 72.

Changes since 1970

In the early years of the Communities, personnel administration in the High Authority and in the Commissions was not highly formalised, and officials were appointed usually because they had some required specialised knowledge or because they were committed to European integration, or both. Many appointments were made by co-option, most frequently from national administrations. Figures produced in 1970 showed that 46% of category A officials came from the public services of national governments, 25% from national professional organizations and trade unions, 24% from the private sector, whereas only 5% had entered service with the Commission as their first employment.⁹⁶

The most obvious change since 1970 has been in the size of the Commission, and consequently in the need for more formal recruitment procedures. In 1970 there were less than 5,000 permanent staff from six member states, of whom just under 1,400 were in category A. By 1995 there were 15,000 from twelve member states, including 4,000 in Category A, and arrangements were being made to recruit nearly 2,000 administrators and 455 linguists from the three new member states. The last competition for entry to the Commission at A7/A8 level attracted more than 55,000 applications.

The Commission is also no longer the young pioneering institution which it may still have been in 1970. By the time the Commission reaches its 40th anniversary in 1998, there will be few staff in place who joined as young men and women at the very beginning. The Commission may not yet have reached a steady state in which the number of retirements is in itself sufficient to make room for a substantial annual recruitment programme, because past recruitment, linked to enlargements and occasional step changes in the scale of its responsibilities, has been very uneven. But there was a period between about 1988 and 1993 when the Commission was able to adopt a policy of holding annual recruitment competitions for the main entry grades including A7/A8, and this situation ought to re-emerge after the initial recruitment of Austrians, Finns and Swedes has been completed, at least until there are further major enlargements to be accommodated.

At present, however, the Commission's recruitment arrangements are still rather ad hoc. The programme of annual competitions has been suspended, arrangements to regularise the explosion of unofficial staff hired on the basis of "mini-budgets" have still not been fully implemented, the concentration of

⁹⁶ Coombes D, Special problems of educating and training officials of the European Communities, in Chapel Y (Ed) *Education and in-service training of international and european civil servants* (Bruges: De Tempel, 1975) p 92.

detached national experts in some parts of the Commission continues to cause concern, and the career prospects of those who do manage to enter the Commission by the normal recruitment procedures are still put in jeopardy by the prevalence of such alternative recruitment methods as *parachutage* and *sousmarins*.

The Petit-Laurent report has recognised the need for a more professional approach to the running of the competitions, particularly in the training of selection boards, their functioning, the preparation of tests - particularly written tests - and their marking. The need for improvement is linked to the considerably increased number of candidates, which has led to growing weaknesses in the recruitment processes. In addition, the important pre-selection tests, still appear to discriminate seriously against female candidates. Drawing on the experience of national administrations in Germany, France and the United Kingdom, which all have separate civil service recruitment and/or training institutions, the report recommends the creation of an inter-institutional agency for both recruitment and training, which could develop a more professional approach to both these major management responsibilities.⁹⁷ However, the creation of such a centre would conflict with the attitude of the Commission, an attitude criticised by the former Parliament in its Wynn resolution on the guidelines for the 1995 budget, and there is no sign yet that the Commission will do other than limp from one short-term solution to another, as it always has done in the past, following a management style which Petit-Laurent describes as "the culture of the ephemeral".

Section III - Internal Appointments

Although external recruitment occurs at all levels, the staff of the European Communities are recruited to a career service in which, normally, appointments are made to the starting grade for each category, vacancies in the higher grades are filled by promotion from below, and most staff can expect promotion to a senior grade within their category if their career extends over a period of 20 years or so.

The statutory foundations of the career service are laid down in Articles 43-46 of the Staff Regulations. Under Article 44 all staff are entitled to advance by one incremental step within their grade every two years. There are eight such steps in

⁹⁷ Petit-Laurent, *op cit*, p 62-63.

most grades (A1, A2, A8 have six steps and D4 only four) and each such step is worth 4.5% of the basic salary for that grade. Progress to the next grade is governed by Article 45, which provides for promotion to be determined by a combination of seniority and merit. The key sentence reads as follows: "Promotion shall be exclusively by selection from among officials who have completed a minimum period in their grade, after consideration of the comparative merits of the officials eligible for promotion and of the reports on them". Article 43 provides for such reports to be made on all staff at least once every two years, with the exception of Grades A1 and A2.

Opportunities for promotion

Article 4 of the Staff Regulations provides that "no appointment or promotion shall be made for any purpose other than that of filling a vacant post..." The number of promotions which can be made in any one year therefore depends on the overall number of posts in the budget and the number of vacancies which arise. These will fluctuate from year to year but on average the best staff recruited to category B or C may expect to reach grade B1 or C1 respectively over a period of 15 to 18 years; there are competitions restricted to serving officials for further promotion into the next category. In category A the average period for promotion from A7 to A4 is 15 to 20 years. Whilst A4 is the ceiling for a normal career in category A, there are opportunities for the best staff to be further promoted, though the pyramid narrows sharply towards the top (1 post at A3 for every 2 at A4; 1 post at A2 for every 3 at A3) and considerations of geographical balance become increasingly important from A3 upwards. Staff who reach A4 after 20 years or so can become dissatisfied if they can see no further prospect of promotion in the course of a career which normally extends to age 65, and there has been persistent pressure (both Spierenburg and Petit-Laurent) for the normal career progression to A4 to be slower, or for more internal promotions to A3, or both. At the top of category A, about one in four of the staff who reach A4 can expect promotion to A3, and about 90% of A3 appointments are internal. Over the decade 1982-1992 there were only 25 temporary staff appointments at Grade A3, whilst over the same period 280 A4 staff were promoted.⁹⁸

There is also pressure for more promotion opportunities from one category to the next, though it is already the case that about 20% of the intake into categories B and C comes from the categories below.⁹⁹ Moreover, internal promotions may

⁹⁸ Bodiguel J-L, *op cit*, p168.

⁹⁹ Hay, *op cit*, p 34

appear to have an element of institutionalised nepotism, and they would risk exacerbating, in the sensitive upper reaches of the administration, the geographical imbalance which already exists in favour of the host nations, but is even more pronounced in the lower categories.

Promotion procedures

Within the lower categories promotions are agreed within a promotions committee, on which the staff have equal representation. The committee checks the reasons for any accelerated promotions which may be recommended, examines the files of staff with a given level of seniority who have not been recommended, and checks that the promotions are consistent with budgetary considerations.

Different procedures apply to category A, where promotions are decided by a committee chaired by the Secretary-General. All the Directors-General are members, and each submits a list for their own service drawn up following consultation with their deputies and with staff representatives. The latter have no input to the separate arrangements which have been made for consultation among Directors-General about appointments to Head of Unit posts,¹⁰⁰ which may be at any level from A5 upwards, on the grounds that those appointed to such posts will be exercising management responsibilities. Such appointments are a critically important first step on the ladder leading to senior management positions, and the exclusion of staff representatives is much resented, particularly following the increase in Head of Unit posts at levels below A3 which used not to carry management responsibilities, but the exclusion has so far been stoutly defended by the management.

Staff reports

Whilst age, seniority in the grade and length of service play an important part in determining eligibility, a more subjective assessment of merit is a key factor in the selection of candidates for early promotion. The starting point for this assessment is the staff report which is made every two years by the official's immediate superior, usually the Head of Unit, and countersigned by a senior manager. After the necessary personal information - name, Department, grade and seniority, there is a half-page space for description of duties carried out over the reporting period, a note on languages used followed by a self-assessment of language skills and an account of publications and new knowledge gained during the reporting period.

¹⁰⁰ Bodiguel, *op cit*, p169

This is followed by an assessment of performance under the three headings listed in Article 43 of the Staff Regulations, namely ability, efficiency and conduct in the service, as follows:

I Ability

1. Knowledge required for post occupied
2. Proficiency
 - comprehension
 - judgment
 - articulateness - written word
 - articulateness - spoken word
 - organisational ability

II Efficiency

1. Quality
2. Speed
3. Consistency
4. Versatility

III Conduct in the Service

1. Sense of Responsibility
2. Initiative
3. Ability to work as a member of a team
4. Ability to get on with people

Each of these 14 qualities is marked against a five-point scale (Excellent, very good, good, adequate, unsatisfactory) and there is a small space on each line for Comments (optional). There is then a page headed General Assessment, which invites the reporting officer to mention the official's most outstanding qualities, the areas in which there is scope or need for improvement (with suggestions as to how this might be achieved), the official's ability to adapt to different duties and, where relevant, an indication of progress or lack of progress.

The present report reflects reforms (notably 5 boxes instead of 3 and the safeguard of countersignature by a more senior reporting officer) which were recommended in paragraph 81 of the Spierenburg Report. The official sees the assessment in full and has the opportunity to add his own comments. Open reporting is widely supported on the grounds that openness is an effective defence against any personal prejudice or animosity on the part of the reporting officer, but it is also criticised on the grounds that it leads to bland and ultimately meaningless reporting, and is liable to give rise to parallel systems of confidential reporting which are all the more damaging because they are subject to no formal rules whatsoever and their very existence has to be denied.

There is some evidence that the Commission's reporting systems are or have been subject to both these perils. It is widely understood that reporting officers hardly ever use anything but the top two boxes (excellent and very good), which seriously undermines the value of a five-point marking scale, and the general assessment is usually completed in perfunctory and uncritical terms. The existence of a parallel set of confidential personnel files covering all staff within the translation service over a period of ten years from 1981 was confirmed by a judgment in the Court of First Instance (cases T39/93 and T553/93) on 11 October 1995. Such blatant quasi-formal arrangements may be exceptional, but the weakness of the formal reporting system is bound to increase reliance on more informal information networks when choices have to be made for promotion purposes among large numbers of staff, whose claims are all supported by favourable written reports. This weakness is widely acknowledged, and there have been suggestions for reform, but there is no great enthusiasm among managers for the painful process of more rigorous appraisal, and those who have considered instituting reforms within their own Directorate-General have been dissuaded by the fact that any unilateral action would unfairly penalise their staff in competing for posts elsewhere within the Commission.

Informal networks

The importance of informal networks has also been recognised for many years. Michelmann noted in 1978 the existence of nationality-based networks run by the *cabinets* with an informal system of "credits" for officials negotiable at promotion time.¹⁰¹

A year later, the Spierenburg Report identified a number of concerns about promotion and career development, which suffered from:

- uncertainty from year to year about the number of posts authorised by the budgetary authority;
- the irregular shape of the career pyramid caused by successive waves of recruitment;
- direct recruitment from outside into the intermediate and higher grades; and
- the Commission's own promotion procedures, which resulted in more rapid promotion in expanding Directorates-General than in those whose numbers were stable.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Michelmann, *op cit*, p 482.

¹⁰² Spierenburg Report, para 94.

The Spierenburg Report went on to propose reforms intended to ensure the transition from "a period of unplanned development to a steadier one with better career opportunities", and although not all the specific recommendations have been implemented, the origins of many of the more formal arrangements described above have their roots in that report.

However, the continuing importance of informal networks, and the extent to which such arrangements can have a demoralising effect on staff, was still very much apparent in the survey of Commission staff carried out by the French consultancy CEGOS during 1988. In response to a question in the survey, staff said the best way to ensure promotion is to have the right connections, followed by seniority, luck, the right nationality, service in a *cabinet*, the will to succeed, ability, qualifications, knowing when to keep quiet and - last of all - producing results and hard work. 52% said of their promotion prospects "It doesn't matter what I do, promotion won't come any faster".¹⁰³

Senior appointments

Promotion into the two top grades, A1 and A2, is even more chancy, but this is for reasons which are well understood and formally sanctioned by the Staff Regulations. Article 29, which provides that in general vacancies which cannot be filled by promotion, internal competition or transfer from another Community institution should be filled by means of open competition, accepts that "a procedure other than the competition procedure may be adopted by the appointment authority for the recruitment of Grade A1 or A2 officials..." This permissive authority is balanced by the appointing authority's equally unfettered right of decision to retire such staff "in the interests of the service" under the terms of Article 50. These provisions, which grant a flexibility in senior appointments similar to that which exists in both France and Germany, allow the Commission to move or remove senior staff when this is required by the arrival of new tasks or new Commissioners, or when space has to be made for senior staff from new Member States, but they are also of crucial importance in enabling the Commission to maintain an appropriate balance of nationalities among the most senior staff.

At these levels there is intensive negotiation among the Commissioners and senior *cabinet* staff acting on their behalf, whose complex machinations have been described by a *cabinet* member as "like a game of chess, played by *chefs de cabinet*, who know the people and the vacant posts and keep it all pretty much in their heads". Member States act in this way because governments feel it may be

¹⁰³ CEGOS Report, 1988, quoted in Spence and Edwards, *op cit*, p 69

easier to influence or to do business with high-level officials who at least share the same culture. In a system heavily influenced by informal networks, staff who have the necessary pull (or *piston*), especially with the *cabinet* of their own national Commissioner, can progress rapidly, but the converse is also true; informal networks can form harsh judgments against which there is no appeal, and in a highly competitive environment senior staff who are thought to have made errors of judgment, or who fail to keep their support networks in good repair, are liable to find themselves rather suddenly faced with a requirement to "take Article 50".¹⁰⁴ The circumstances of such events are frequently shrouded in a degree of mystery, barely concealing suggestions of cabal and back-stabbing, but the risks and the rewards at this level are recognised as considerable, and the departure terms are generous. As a result, while individual cases may give rise to speculation and even concern about what has occurred, and the Petit-Laurent report proposes the adoption of codes of good conduct both for promotions of *cabinet* staff and for the use of Article 50, there is no very strong pressure to change the arrangements which apply to senior appointments.

Equal Opportunities

In 1994 women occupied 45% of posts in the Commission, the same proportion as it had been a decade earlier. But these figures owe much to the heavy concentration of women among secretarial staff in Category C (over 80%). At the top, there have been five women Commissioners out of 20 since 1995, but there were none at all until 1989, when Christiane Scrivener (France) and Vasso Papandreou (Greece) were appointed, and only Scrivener remained from 1993 to 1994. Although the representation of women in Category A posts has grown from 9.3% in 1984 to 13.5% in 1994, there were in 1994 still only 5.4% in the three highest grades. Table 5 sets out the position for all grades in category A.

¹⁰⁴ J.Dondelinger, 'Relations avec Administrations Nationales', in Jamar and Wessels (eds) Community Bureaucracy at the Crossroads, 1985

Table 5 - Women in category A

| Grade | Women | % | Total |
|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| A1 | 1 | 1.9% | 52 |
| A2 | 4 | 2.5% | 157 |
| A3 | 29 | 7.0% | 416 |
| A4 | 90 | 9.2% | 979 |
| A5 | 118 | 14.4% | 821 |
| A6 | 96 | 16.3% | 590 |
| A7 | 139 | 19.4% | 718 |
| A8 | 44 | 31.9% | 138 |
| Total A | 521 | 13.5% | 3871 |

(Source: *Women at the European Commission 1984-1994*, EC publication, 1994)

The first steps towards an active equal opportunities policy were taken in 1978 when a working party representing the administration and the trade unions and staff associations was set up to study the situation and make recommendations. This led to the establishment in 1984 of a standing joint Equal Opportunities Committee. There have been three action programmes - 1982-85, 1988-90 and 1992-96 - supported since 1991 by an equal opportunities unit within DGIX, whose tasks include the gathering and dissemination of information, raising awareness, monitoring and evaluating the progress of the action programme, and proposing further steps.

An analysis of the promotion record of men and women up to A4 level between 1988 and 1993 suggests that in general women's chances of promotion are much the same as for men, though there does appear to be some disadvantage at the more senior levels, notably at promotion from A5 to A4 where 13.16% of eligible women were promoted compared to 15.51% of eligible men.¹⁰⁵ Appointments at A3 and above remain a difficult area, not least because of the influence of the *cabinets* at these levels, but Liikanen has set a new target of parity between men and women for middle management appointments from the new member states in

¹⁰⁵ *Women at the European Commission*, p 32

1995, and 25% for middle management appointments of nationals from the old member states. The Commission's third positive action programme (1992-96) originally set targets of 14% women in category A and 10% in management posts, but as these targets have been reached, they have been raised to 12% in the case of management posts, and were thought likely to be raised to 16% for category A.¹⁰⁶

The equal opportunities unit is involved in some kind of action in 22 out of the 30 DGs and services in the Commission. Two DGs -both headed by staff from the north rather than the south - are running pilot programmes, including such features as seminars, training, a ban on internal meetings running beyond 5.45 pm, and a target of 30% of new recruits at A grade to be women. A spillover effect is beginning to be seen, with other DGs asking for at least the seminars, though the impetus continues to come mainly from the north. It is also interesting to note that Petit-Laurent does not mention equal opportunities policy at all in his report.

Changes since 1970

The Commission's procedures for making internal appointments have been considerably formalised since 1970. Twenty-five years ago relatively informal procedures were still adequate for a Commission which served a Community of only six Member States. As the Spierenburg Report says: "In the small Commission administration of the early days, when officials were well known to each other, it was not difficult to lay one's hands on the right person to fill a particular post".¹⁰⁷ By the end of the 1970s, as Spierenburg recognised, that position was no longer tenable, and more formal procedures were required in the interests of equity, good management and staff morale. These were duly put in place during the 1980s, and increasing efforts were made to apply an equal opportunities policy as between men and women, but old habits die hard, and there is bound to be an element of subjective judgment and personal chemistry in senior staff appointments. This is necessarily complicated in the case of the Commission by the need to maintain an appropriate geographical balance, hotly contested by the national networks, centred on the different national Commissioners and their *cabinets*, which strive to realise that objective in the most advantageous way for their own national interests. As a result, internal appointments, especially at the more senior levels, remain a battle-field on which the interests of the Community and its own permanent staff are in continuous tension with those of the Member States.

¹⁰⁶ Interview, November 1995

¹⁰⁷ Spierenburg Report para 79

Section IV - Training

The legal basis

Article 24 of the Staff Regulations, added only in 1972, states that the Community "shall facilitate such further training and instruction for officials as is compatible with the proper functioning of the service and is in accordance with its own interests. Such training and instruction shall be taken into account for purposes of promotion in their careers."

Objectives of training

The date of the reference to training in the Staff Regulations is indicative of the relatively low importance attached to training in the early years. Even after 1972 it did not have high priority, though the need for practical training in languages and data processing techniques was increasingly recognised, and provision made accordingly. Training finally received a higher profile in June 1989 when President Delors concluded the "Social Contract for Progress" with the trade unions and the staff associations. If the Commission was to achieve the ambitious targets set by the Single European Act and the goal of achieving a single European market by 1992, it was essential for management and staff to be committed to the shared objective of making the Commission more effective. The Social Contract recognised that human resources are the principal instrument available to the Commission to carry out its work, established new arrangements for informing and consulting the staff about policies affecting their interests, and set up an agreed work programme in which training "to match individual profiles to departmental requirements" featured at the top of a list of 13 items of staff policy.

Two years later, in 1991, this initiative resulted in "The New Training Policy" which redefined the objectives of training policy as:

- an essential component of the Commission's human resources policy;
- an integral part of careers policy, linked to the professional advancement of officials;
- one of the main functions of management;
- an instrument of the equal opportunities policy, defined in the Positive Action Programme for female staff.¹⁰⁸

In order to give effect to the new policy, in which training plans were to reflect both the interests of the institution and those of the individual, each Service was required to draw up a training plan every two years for joint signature by the

¹⁰⁸ The New Training Policy, Commission document, June 1991, para 2

Director-General concerned and the Director-General of Personnel; and all staff were to have their own Individual Training Records, to be drawn up every two years in the context of the biennial notation exercise, setting out their training plans, and subsequently their attendance record. Moreover an ambitious target was set - a total of six months continuing training for each official in every period of ten years, an investment equivalent to 5% of working time.

As for the content of the training envisaged, the interests of the institution suggested an emphasis on updating professional skills to facilitate mobility and redeployment, courses in adaptation to change, training in equal opportunities, and of course language training. It was proposed to introduce an individual language profile for each new official and to make it compulsory for officials to perfect their knowledge of a second Community language or acquire a command of a third Community language during their first five years of service. The interests of the individual would be reflected in the provision of training related to changed duties or promotion from one category to another, and more generally in his or her direct participation in drawing up the training plans.

These arrangements have been put into effect, and have led to a tripling of the training budget for 1995 by comparison with 1991.¹⁰⁹ DGIX continues to publish an overall training plan. Each Directorate-General then asks its staff to say what courses they would like to attend, and these requests represent a major input to the programme drawn up by each Directorate-General, but most DGs add training programmes of their own. For example DGXV (Internal Market) runs courses on its own goals, objectives and procedures, as well as on the scientific and industrial aspects of the sectors with which it has to deal; DGXXI (Customs and Indirect Taxation) runs a successful series of 20 Monday morning seminars on the work of each part of the organisation in turn, which has helped to break down barriers between different sections and establish a stronger esprit de corps.

Patterns of training

Training may take place before entry, immediately after entry or at any later time in the course of an official's career.

Pre-service training

Many staff entering the Commission will have undertaken a substantial course of training in preparation for the entry competition. Quite apart from professional training in law or economics, successful candidates will have acquired a good

¹⁰⁹ Preface to Training Programme 1995

theoretical knowledge of the European Communities and how they work. They may have studied European Law or European Studies at University in their own country or at the Collège d'Europe in Bruges, or have attended preparation courses such as those run in France by Paris I, Strasbourg III and Montpellier I. National administrations also train their own staff and others for the competitions. The United Kingdom Cabinet Office has recruited up to 30 young graduates each year since 1991 into a European Fast Stream programme, which prepares them for the competitions by up to four years experience of relevant work in government departments, together with appropriate training. In France the Ministry of the Economy has developed a traineeship scheme for young civil servants from various administrations wishing to enter the European Union competitions.¹¹⁰

Another popular form of pre-service training is the traineeship scheme or *stage*, run by the Commission since 1960, under which opportunities are provided for a limited number of graduates from Member States or other countries to work on attachment to the Commission. *Stages* last about five months, with two intakes each year, are strictly temporary and remuneration is in the form of an allowance similar to a student grant. Although the Commission now accepts up to 1000 trainees every year, competition for these places is very heavy, and only about 13% of applicants are successful. Since 1960 numbers have grown as follows:

Table 5 Applications for *stages*

| Period | Member States | Others | Total |
|--------------------|---------------|--------|---------|
| 1960-1972 (EUR 6) | 2,369 | 300 | 2,699 |
| 1973-1980 (EUR 9) | 2,737 | 743 | 3,480 |
| 1982-1985 (EUR 10) | 1,933 | 614 | 2,547 |
| 1986-1990 (EUR 12) | 3,053 | 485 | 3,538 |
| 1991 | 878 | 157 | 1,035 |
| 1992 | 1,008 | 173 | 1,181* |
| 1993 | 980 | 203 | 1,183** |

* Plus 151 and ** plus 213 who are officials on special programmes (EFTA, PHARE,...).

(Source: Spence D, *op cit*, p 86).

¹¹⁰ Penaud J (1993), *op cit*, p 26

Although the traineeship scheme does not form part of the recruitment procedure for permanent officials, a *stage* is nevertheless a valuable experience which can help fit a candidate for the competition. Indeed, before 1993, the *stages* were seen as a way to avoid formal competitions. Since that time, however, a lapse of one year has been introduced before temporary contracts can be offered to former trainees.¹¹¹ Even so, the *stage* is one way to mark oneself out from others on the reserve lists to which successful candidates are assigned.¹¹² Firms in the private sector also find it useful to employ people who have done a *stage* on account of the knowledge, contacts and access to information which a trainee picks up.¹¹³

A more specialised training programme, which does lead to employment if successfully completed, is offered by the Joint Interpreting and Conference Service.¹¹⁴ Candidates under the age of 30, with a University degree in any discipline, well informed on current economic and political affairs, and with a good knowledge of at least three Community languages, can be trained in six months to provide simultaneous interpretation at Community meetings provided that they undertake to remain in Brussels as interpreters for the Commission for at least two years after completing the course.

Post-entry training

The Commission has for some years run short post-entry training courses for all new staff on such topics as the rights and obligations of an official, the social and administrative environment (where to find the crèche, the library, the medical service etc), an introduction to the major Community policies and to the history of the European institutions, and these courses continue to be offered.

More recently DGIX has succeeded in establishing a two-week course for newly recruited staff at Grade A8/A7. The concept had been agreed in principle by the Commission on at least three occasions over the past fifteen years,¹¹⁵ but it had always been resisted on practical grounds. Once an appointment had been made

¹¹¹ Spence D, *op cit*, p 86

¹¹² Abélès M et al, *op cit*, p 18

¹¹³ Spence D, *op cit*, p 86

¹¹⁴ Commission note of rules governing in-service training, based on Decision of the Commission of 16 March 1976

¹¹⁵ Petit-Laurent p 62 mentions 1981, 1983 and 1991

Directors-General were impatient for their new staff to start work and were reluctant to release them for training. Newly appointed staff themselves were not interested in yet more training on the structure of the European institutions, which they all had to know for the competitions; but when a selection of staff in their first year were asked what they would have found useful, DGIX were able to draw up a list of about 20 topics, ranging from how to deal with the media to how to chair a meeting with interpreters, as well as questions of legal and financial procedure, and how to draft documents varying from legal texts to records of meetings and Press releases. The two week course, which has been run several times since the beginning of 1995, includes a two-day visit to a member state to get a different perspective on the Commission, and two role-play exercises, one for an internal meeting to brief the Commission, the other for a Council Working Group. The course is hard work, but demand is strong and most of the students like it.

Mid-career training

The main types of mid-career training are languages, informatics and management. Another concern is to allow officials to keep abreast of developments in their special field, from which the particular environment in the Commission may insulate them.¹¹⁶ In DGXXI, taking the years 1993 and 1994 together, languages accounted for 31% of training days, informatics and management 22% each, the balance being accounted for by miscellaneous training programmes (16% including the Directorate-General's own training programme) and post-entry training (9%). The fact that in 1992 1,440 staff in category A took non-language training (compared to 613 taking language courses) suggests that the wide range of training taken up by staff in DGXXI may not be altogether unrepresentative.

Language training has always been the most important feature of the Commission's continuing training programmes. In 1975 for instance when there were less than 8,000 officials in the Commission, 1800 were enrolled for language courses. The Training Unit offers various types of language classes especially adapted to work at the Commission:

- a - standard classes (2x2 hours per week) in the official Community languages and Russian, Japanese and Arabic, covering 6 levels,
- b - more specialised advanced classes (2 hours per week) in the same languages for those who have reached level 6,
- c - intensive classes (4 hours per day for 3 weeks or 6 hours per day for 2 weeks) in the languages most requested,

¹¹⁶ Zito U, *op cit*, p 83

d - special classes for translators and interpreters.¹¹⁷

In 1992 613 staff in category A alone took language training at a cost of approximately BF 51,000 (more than £1,000) per student per year.¹¹⁸

Informatics training also has a long history as the Commission, like most other large administrations, has introduced more and more computerised systems, databases and word-processing facilities. The emphasis on management training is more recent. The Christophersen programme of management seminars in the late 1980s may have launched a greater awareness of the need for management and management training, but there was also some disillusion with the approach of the Danish company, Time Management, which won the contract at that time, and sought to impose on the Commission a system which required the supply of a great deal of proprietary stationery. This experience may for a while have damaged the case for management within the Commission, but a comparison between the 1991 and 1995 training programmes shows the significant increase in management training programmes now on offer.

Changes since 1970

The growing importance of training since 1970 can be tracked through the Commission budget which pays for all courses. The appropriation of BF 2,250,000 which appeared in the Budget for the financial year 1968 had risen to BF 20,700,000 in 1975, and there was a staff of 25. This large increase arose in part because of the arrival of officials from the new Member states for whom a programme had been worked out to help initiate them quickly into Community working methods and procedures, with a budget of BF 14,450,000.

In the 1960s there was no post-entry training because the Commission relied mainly on the education received by officials before their entry into its services rather than on training provided by itself.¹¹⁹ Moreover training was not part of the administrative culture of a pioneering organisation. However, the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community set up a training service in 1965, designed to improve knowledge of Community institutions and procedures and of problems of coal and steel.

In 1968 a Training Department was formed within DG IX, and in 1970 a programme of in-service training was established, provided mostly by outside

¹¹⁷ Training Programme 1995 pp 60-66 and The Keys to Training 1994 p 13

¹¹⁸ Petit-Laurent, *op cit*, p 62

¹¹⁹ Coombes D (1975), *op cit*, p 91.

lecturers visiting the Commission or by outside institutes and centres visited by officials. There were short courses in the main subjects of relevance to the Communities, modern techniques of management and decision-making, and languages. Such courses seem to have been designed mainly to give a general introduction to their content or to provide refresher courses of general background. These courses were voluntary, and officials participating in them were not given marks which might affect their future careers.¹²⁰

Meanwhile, in 1968, the Commission had established a Consultative Committee on Staff Training, which recommended, besides the training that carries on throughout the official's career, three stages of training, on appointment, after about three years service and at the half-way point. The report also recommended a promotion training scheme for those officials who wished to plan the course of their future careers mainly by entering internal competitions to move to a higher category.

These recommendations led in 1975 to the adoption of a three stage training programme. The first stage, immediately following appointment, gave an introduction to life in the Communities, by lectures and visits, including a week at the College of Europe in Bruges where participants were supposed to gain a better insight into the Treaties and Community policies. The new official then undertook some in-service training in several Commission departments before taking up his duties in his own Directorate.

The second section of the 1975 Training Programme was composed of refresher courses and advanced vocational training. There were language courses, administrative drafting, data processing, refresher courses for linguists, refresher courses for secretaries, advanced courses for librarians and documentary research assistants, refresher courses on economics and administrative and financial management techniques, refresher courses in the main fields of Community activities and short seminars on new trends in management, communication techniques and how to manage a meeting, seminars on Community countries and participation in extra-mural seminars and public meetings of a professional nature.

The third section concerned courses for career development. A course in economics was the first to be planned. The programme for this course included one year's study of economics in general and a second year's study of special aspects of economics as applied to Community problems. The first part of the course was run with the help of Belgian university staff, whereas the second part called upon the services of experts from within the Institution. A second course

¹²⁰ *ibid*, p 92

was launched which dealt with administrative and financial management. Within the same programme a course to prepare category D and local staff officials for access to category C was organized. This course was divided into two parts - general knowledge and specialized application - one part on accounts and filing and another on everyday office procedures.

The Spierenburg report of 1979 gave added impetus to training, particularly in relation to staff mobility, and to help prepare staff for management responsibilities. Mobility depended on the provision of adequate staff training, especially vocational training, language training and management training; and no one should be appointed Head of a division unless he or she had shown aptitude for management, fostered by the Commission through suitable training programmes.¹²¹

During the 1980s there was an increasing emphasis on training, including management training, culminating in the Social Contract (1989) and the New Training Policy (1991). Training has certainly come a long way since 1970, but problems remain, some of them the result of rapid growth, others more fundamental. The high cost of language training has already been noted, as has the tripling of the training budget since 1991. Petit-Laurent notes the high costs which arise from the fact that 40% of training is provided by outside resources, but he also remarks that costs are higher than they need to be because of the high level of absenteeism.¹²²

In the second part of his report Petit-Laurent recommends three emphases in training if the Commission is to meet the challenge of further enlargement. The first is to press home the enhanced emphasis on language training, especially for new entrants, which was already part of the new training policy. He notes that it will be particularly important to train some staff in the so-called minor languages of the Community, such as Portuguese or Greek if the Commission's relations with the national administrations in these countries are not to be left largely in the hands of staff who happen to have those nationalities. But he warns that management will have to be tightened up and absenteeism reduced if the cost of more language training is not to become excessive.

His second and third recommendations are for an increase in the numbers of Commission staff going on secondment to national administrations, to balance the large numbers of detached national experts coming to Brussels, and for better use of such opportunities. The exchange programme already offers to train national

¹²¹ Spierenburg Report, 1979, pp 24 and 32

¹²² Petit-Laurent, *op cit*, p 62

officials in the ways of the Community, but more use could be made of the shorter-term exchange programmes, such as CAROLUS under which members of national administrations spend short periods observing how others implement the same Community policies as they do.

Since 1970 the importance of training policy has been increasingly acknowledged, and much more attention and resources are now devoted to an activity which is recognised as having an important contribution to make towards the achievement of the Community's policy goals. But problems remain, not only of a practical nature, but even in some quarters in getting senior staff to attach enough importance to it to play their full part in drawing up programmes and in releasing staff to attend. As Petit-Laurent recognises, both training and recruitment are long term investments and senior managers, stretched to achieve short term priorities which dominate in the "culture of the ephemeral" find it difficult to give these activities the attention they demand and in his view deserve.¹²³

¹²³ Petit-Laurent, *op cit*, p 63

,

The European Institute

The Institute was created in 1991 for the development and coordination of teaching, research training and research about Europe in all departments and centres at LSE, for interdepartmental teaching and research, for public lectures and seminars, and for support and advice to all LSE researchers working on studies of Europe, both West and East, including Russia. 130 academics from all disciplines are Associate Members of the Institute and participate in its activities. The Institute's degrees are taught by members of the discipline-based departments of the School, and include leading country specialists on Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Ireland, Greece, Russia as well as Great Britain and area specialists on Scandinavia and Eastern Europe. Permanent and visiting staff come from most European states.

** teaching and research training*

The Institute has responsibility for interdisciplinary programmes on Europe: the European Political Economy Research Workshop (Ph.D. Students), the M.Sc. European Studies, the M.Sc. Political Economy of Transition in Europe, the M.Sc. Russian and Post-Soviet Studies the B.Sc. Russian Studies and for the School's contribution to the B.A. European Studies (joint degree with King's).

** interdisciplinary research*

Within the Institute are three interdisciplinary research groups:

- the Public Service Group,
- the Economic and Social Cohesion Laboratory,
- the Vicente Canada Blanch Centre for Spanish Studies,

a fourth group, the Hellenic Observatory, is being developed. In 1994, LSE Health, formerly a group within the Institute, became a full research centre; it remains closely associated with the Institute.

** developing LSE involvement in European networks*

Students and researchers at the Institute come from all parts of the world, including most European states. There are Erasmus links and the Institute promotes research networks and close links with LSE's European alumni. Workshops and conferences are organised with alumnus groups in Brussels, in EU member-states and elsewhere in Europe.

** organizing public debates about European developments*

Each year, the European Institute organises a series of public lectures and workshops. Speakers have included, Jacques Delors, Jan Bielecki (Minister for European Integration, Poland), Janos Martonyi (State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Hungary), Hans Tietmeyer (President of the Bundesbank), David Williamson (Secretary General of the European Commission), Vasso Papandreou (EC Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs), Giuliano Amato, Prime Minister of Italy, and Federico Mancini, Judge, European Court of Justice.

** for further information please contact:*

The Secretariat,
LSE European Institute, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE;
Telephone: + 44 71 955 6839 Fax + 44 71 955 7546.



THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTE

London School of Economics
and Political Science,
Houghton Street,
London WC2A 2AE.

Tel. (44) 71-955 7537

Fax. (44) 71-955 7546

Director: **Dr. Howard Machin**