30/3/2017

**Task Force Careers**

**Contribution of Working Group on AD Officials**

**Vision**

Our vision is that all categories of staff should feel that their contribution is valued by the organisation, and that they have a fair chance of progressing in their career, based solely on their merit.

In the EEAS, there are so many factors that come into play for appointments: nationality, support by national authorities (more difficult to achieve for EU officials), gender etc. that merit has become a secondary consideration. **We strongly believe that appointments should be based solely on merit**.

It has become almost impossible to engage in any sort of career planning or invest into training, as the prospect of being able to use the acquired knowledge is highly uncertain.

The fact that, whilst performing identical AD tasks, EU officials are in the EEAS for the long term and TA's only stay for a limited period, makes it more difficult to create an esprit de corps. Even so, we believe that it should be possible to improve the current situation.

We propose a few measures that could instil some confidence that all colleagues are treated fairly and equally, especially as far as appointments are concerned.

The list of proposals we support is attached as an annex.

**Tools**

Mobility and Rotation

Numbers of posts/applicants

The first problem to address is the mismatch between the limited number of posts available and the unlimited number of external candidates who are able to apply and potentially obtain a job, sometimes at the expense of colleagues who are then left on temporary posts, often artificial creations without any substantial tasks, demotivated and frustrated.

We propose that every year, before the beginning of the mobility/rotation process, the administration will establish the maximum number of posts which will be made available to colleagues from outside the EEAS (EU Institutions and member States). That number could only be increased if the Institution/Member State wishing to appoint one of their staff to EEAS accepts to appoint an EEAS official to an equivalent position and for the same period of time. As Member States are sensitive to budgetary considerations, they should show some understanding for the fact that it's a waste of tax payers money to have a considerable number of highly experienced, qualified and well paid colleagues being left without a real job.

In line with the Council Decision of 2010 establishing the EEAS, TA contracts shall not exceed 8 years, unless…extended for a maximum of two years in exceptional circumstances and in the interest of the service.

As a general rule, **inter-institutional mobility needs to be encouraged**. Right now it's very much a one way street, with colleagues from other Institutions coming to the EEAS, and staying here. We should envisage the possibility of transfers in the interest of the service, including temporary transfers, between the EEAS and other institutions.

We agree that all colleagues except those having specific responsibilities such as IT or security should be strongly encouraged to **alternate between positions in headquarters and delegations**. Two "out" one "in" seems to be the preferred pattern. Before a first posting in a delegation, colleagues should have spent some time at headquarters, either a full posting or a targeted training period (minimum 6 months), including on topics such as the role, functioning and interaction of EU institutions, working procedures, EU policies. A posting in a Permanent Representation of a Member State should be considered equivalent to a posting at headquarters. On the other hand we have reservations on the suggestion to restrict access to certain jobs for colleagues who have not yet served in a delegation, given the difficulty to be selected for such posts.

As far as EEAS **mobility policy** is concerned, we are in principle in favour of colleagues being strongly encouraged to move after 3-5 years in a post. There should be some flexibility as to the timing, and colleagues should be able to stay in the same division. Colleagues with specialised skills (IT, security, specific geographic, linguistic or legal knowledge) should not be forced to move to unrelated areas. But above all the **process should be more objective and transparent**, giving all colleagues a fair chance to accede to a post and diversify their experience.

Another measure that could be envisaged would be to give the possibility of **early retirement** to those colleagues who are willing to leave. We want to stress however that such a process needs to be **entirely voluntary**. This would also allow in the medium term to organise an External Relations competition to recruit young graduates who want to have a career in the EEAS and rejuvenate our ageing organisation.

Selection process

The second issue is the process for selecting candidates in the framework of the mobility and rotation. The process is extremely cumbersome, requiring thousands of man-hours every year devoted to interviews by panels, whilst colleagues are not convinced that the process is fair, objective and transparent. The results of the selection panels are kept secret and are then often reversed, perhaps following political interference, to favour applicants who have not been successful. As a result, there is growing frustration and disillusionment with this process, which is perceived by colleagues as non-transparent and unfair.

We recommend to strengthen and make more transparent the role of the panel in the following way:

-questions prepared by a person/entity familiar with the job requirements but not part of the panel and drawn at random;

-interviews and deliberations of the panel to be recorded;

-candidates are given a ranking on the day of the interview;

-the number of slots on the shortlist is pre-determined (3-5);

-shortlists are published.

Alternatively, we propose to extend the system of internal/external publications to the Heads of Delegation/Management posts as is currently the case for certain (mostly non-management) posts in delegations. Panels would continue to exist for posts published externally. This principle should apply for all positions, including Heads of delegation.

Recruitment

We also need to stop the practice whereby TA's are concentrated either in senior management posts with the corresponding grades or at entry level posts and grades. The goal should be that TA's should represent about a third of colleagues in each and every grade and function from AD 5 to AD 16.

The prior experience required to have access to a certain grade and function should be equivalent for all and be aligned to the average number of years required to reach a certain grade in the institutions. Criteria should be established to compare professional experience of the different categories of applicants. For instance EU officials can rarely claim management experience after 10 years of service, whilst MS officials can have management experience much earlier, putting the former at a strong disadvantage already at the stage of pre-selection.

**Accompanying measures**

Career planning and training

Every official should benefit from personalised career counselling, planning and training. Once mutually agreed targets in terms of career have been identified (regional, thematic) adequate personalised, high quality training should be provided to help colleagues prepare for their next assignment.

In an administration such as ours where staff come and go constantly, much greater emphasis should be placed on team building.

Family policy

Greater attention should be devoted to colleagues with families who wish to serve in a Delegation. It is not unusual nowadays for spouses, male or female, to have a professional activity, nor is it unreasonable for them to expect to be able to pursue some form of activity when their spouse is posted abroad for a long period. The possibility of double or shared postings, where the partner is also an EU official, should be systematically and seriously considered. Agreements with Member States and International organisations to offer posts on a reciprocal basis should also be considered.

The possibility that children will be able to pursue their education in the best available school is also a legitimate concern. We are worried by the recent trend of limiting reimbursement in this area. The administration should commission a study on the evolution of the cost of education worldwide and ensure that allowances are in line with real costs incurred by families. The possibilities of concluding an agreement with certain establishments including boarding schools should also be examined.

Senior advisors/Senior experts/Roving Ambassadors

We encourage better use of Senior advisors (to assist a department with the organisation of a high level event), Senior trainers (for the training of junior colleagues), Roving Ambassadors geographic or thematic (to strengthen our presence in countries where we don't have a permanent presence or to deal with an issue such as climate change), especially for returning Heads of Delegation or other senior colleagues.

Deputy Heads of Division/Deputy Heads of Delegation/Heads of political section

We are not in favour of the creation of additional hierarchical layers as this only makes the structure more cumbersome. However, where deputies or heads of section exercise real managerial responsibilities, in view of the size of the division, delegation, section, this should be duly recognised as management experience.

**Proposals**

**Mobility & Rotation**

1. Introduce a limit on external recruitments, in line with the number of posts reasonably expected to be available, to reduce the number of officials left without a meaningful job. Mobility and rotation should always take into account the career development of the officials concerned and not result in any downgrading due to a lack of available positions at the appropriate level.

2. Make pre-selection procedures through panels more transparent; alternatively introduce a distinction between internal and external rotation for management posts (as is currently the case for non-management posts) and do away with the panels for internal publications. Ensure an appropriate balance between internal and externally published posts, taking into account the legitimate career aspirations of permanent officals.

3. Draw-up an action plan, in agreement with other institutions and possibly Member States, to encourage inter-institutional mobility.

**Recruitment**

4. Seek to implement the target of at least one third and maximum 40% of TA's, in line with Council decision, across all positions and grades.

5. Organise a general EPSO competition to recruit young specialists in international relations.

**Career path**

6. Develop a personalised career development plan for all statutory staff, including career plans and relevant training and coaching.

7. Screening and grading of all posts to make a distinction between "junior" and "senior" posts both in headquarters and delegations in order to provide colleagues with positions in line with their qualifications and experience. As a general principle, the AD career should feature gradually increased responsibilities, so that colleagues with experience of exercising greater responsibilities are not forced to take a step backwards in mobility due to the lack of posts or adequate planning.

**Training**

8. Training offer to be widened, in cooperation with specialised institutions, universities, Member States.

9. Personalised training plan to be agreed with each staff member, in line with needs of current posting and also in view of future assignment.

10. Whenever possible, provide training on history, culture, diplomacy, political system and language initiation prior to posting in delegation, in addition to the customary pre-posting training.

11. Regular team-building events to be strongly encouraged in headquarters and delegations.

**Family policies**

12. Take measures to actively support couples wishing to serve in a delegation by promoting double postings.

13. Pursue agreements with other institutions Member States (including via an expanded Diplomatic Exchange and Secondment Programme), International organisations, to make posts available to spouses of officials working in a delegation on a reciprocal basis.

14. Commission a study on the cost of primary & secondary education world-wide; whenever necessary adjust education allowances to the real costs incurred.

**Senior advisors/Senior experts/Roving Ambassadors**

15. Develop a more coherent policy regarding the position of "senior advisers", including in terms of minimum grade, experience and specialisation, make them more "visible" in the organisation charts, with duties and areas of specialisation that responds to political, thematic or geographical priorities. Explore the possibility of using this category of posts, considered equivalent to HoD or advisors, to give career prospects to colleagues having reached the limit of promotion under the revised Staff Regulations.

16. Develop a wider network of outreach to Universities and Institutes of European Studies in Europe.

17. Appoint senior colleagues as non-resident Ambassadors stationed in Brussels.

18. Make use of experienced colleagues for mentoring/training of young colleagues.

**Retirement**

19. Examine the possibility to expand recourse to voluntary early retirement or "golden handshake". Explore the involvement of retired colleagues in activities such as recruitment, training, communication.

**The 2014 paper on "Career path for AD staff"**

We believe that this paper goes broadly in the right direction. We need to point however that it has been only very partially implemented to date.

The paper includes interesting proposals on the career of EEAS diplomats recruited at entry level AD grades; however there are very few such colleagues as no competition for young diplomats has ever taken place. As stated in the paper, 68% of AD staff (which includes TA's) is graded AD10-AD14. This figure is likely even higher today. According to the EEAS 2015 report on Human Resources there are 268 AD5-AD9 out of a total of 934 officials and temporary agents.

We very much support the proposal of targeted training to support the diversification of all staff (not just junior staff), focussing on community policies, diplomatic, management skills, language training, security, crisis management etc. We believe that the human and financial resources dedicated to training should be considerably increased and better targeted to the needs of the existing population. In particular, training focused on the development of management skills and competencies should be made available to those who aspire to management posts, and not only existing managers. A necessary corollary is of course that there are management posts available in sufficient numbers for the colleagues who have undergone training. Otherwise the investment in training will have been wasted and this will also generate further frustration for colleagues (witness the numerous certified colleagues unable to find a post).

As far as the generalist career path is concerned, we believe there should be a progression in the challenge offered by consecutive posts, in line with the grade of the official. This implies that not all posts are graded AD5-AD12 as is currently the case. We also strongly support inter-institutional mobility but find that there are currently very few possibilities for EEAS colleagues to move to other Institutions or Member States.

As far as Management career is concerned, there are very few possibilities to accede to management posts and selection processes are often opaque. We also wonder whether the proposed transitional measures for deputies have ever been implemented. Colleagues who are deputies find it difficult to obtain another post at the same level, let alone a higher level, in the mobility. As a result, a number have reverted to taking up desk officer jobs. The same goes for Working Group chairs, whose posts are considered equivalent to management posts but who have in many cases beebn downgraded following mobility.

The decision on the qualification as "experts" of a number of colleagues has generated a lot of frustration, as the process is perceived as un-transparent, and colleagues have not always been given the possibility to make their case.

In short, we believe that this paper is a good basis but what is lacking is implementation: we need to recruit new colleagues, to provide more possibilities for those who are willing and able to accede to management posts, for those who possess the required qualifications and expertise to be recognised as experts.