**Team on Recruitment and Promotion**

As a general overriding principle the team agrees that **recruitment and promotion should be based primarily on merit, level of experience and suitability for the post.** While this may seem obvious, there is significant anecdotal evidence to suggest that this is often not the primary consideration when making important staffing decisions in the EEAS. Too often, it seems that other considerations – political interference, nationality, personal contacts, lobbying on behalf of candidates and reciprocal deals – take priority in the final decisions on recruitment and promotion. While acknowledging that the EEAS is a political organisation, and that Member States have a particular sense of ownership over it, the team believes that greater efforts must be made to ensure that staffing decisions are taken in an independent, impartial and professional manner, in line with international best practice. A number of proposals from the working groups follow from this general principle, notably the call **for clear procedures on selection and recruitment,** and greater transparency in the associated decision-making processes (proposals #32 and #42). This should include respect for the outcome of panel interviews, and meaningful feedback to applicants, including on their ranking.

As regards **selection procedures,** the team felt that there is a lack of consistency across the EEAS. Responsibility for the running of panels is largely delegated to policy officers, who may have little or no experience of interviewing/scoring candidates. Questions and scoring methods tend to differ depending on who is on the panel. This can in general be considered unprofessional. The team therefore proposes to expand on proposals #32, #33 and #42 to advocate the establishment of key criteria for certain roles, the drafting of sample questions and the introduction of standardised scoring sheets, as well as training on interview skills/best practice for officers involved. Consideration might also be given to the establishment of a pool of officials prepared to sit on panels, who have been through the relevant training, rather than having to find volunteers each time.

It is clear that many colleagues are deeply frustrated at what they perceive as the **lack of opportunities for meaningful career progression in the EEAS**. Hence the proposals to introduce a more sophisticated grading/categorisation of posts (#19, #64, #65, #66), an expansion of the scope of what qualifies as management experience (#29, #56), calls for internal competitions for certain categories of staff (#43, #44, #79), greater possibilities to move between groups (#84, #96), for certification opportunities (#46), as well as access to policy jobs for newly certified colleagues (#45, #94). As regards the categorisation of posts, the team acknowledged that the EEAS has already made some efforts in this regard – notably the papers on Career Paths for AD and AST staff of 2015, the paper on Expert Posts, and the decision on Heads of Unit or equivalent, and Advisors or Equivalent. However, there was broad agreement on the need to introduce greater differentiation in posts in order to better reflect levels of experience and expertise. It should be noted that the team was divided as regards the merits of ‘internal competitions’ restricted to certain categories or groups of staff. On the one hand, the group recognises that certain categories of temporary staff would like to have their experience recognised, and have the opportunity to continue to make a contribution to the EEAS. However, on the other hand, we should not introduce ‘shortcuts’ that could be seen to undermine the fairness of the formal competition system by legalising temporary status as permanent. The introduction of a specific concours (EPSO panel) for the RELEX family (see below) is seen as one way of addressing this issue. However, the issue of internal competitions merits further discussion at the level of the Taskforce.

Participants in the Career Taskforce have drawn attention to the basic structural imbalance within the EEAS – which has a disproportionately high number of staff in senior grades. More junior positions are regularly filled by contract agents and SNEs. While both of these categories of staff play an important role in the overall functioning of the organisation, the **EEAS needs over time to develop a core group of professional foreign policy officials.** The team therefore strongly supports the proposal (#20, #44) to organise a specific EPSO competition for young specialists in international relations, and to set a minimum recruitment target every year. Those successfully recruited to the panel should have a guarantee of a job in the EEAS or one of the Foreign Policy DGs (NEAR, DEVCO, ECHO, FPI), subject of course to sufficient vacancies becoming available. Proposals #92 and #93 from the CA group are also relevant in this regard.

An issue which should also be addressed over the medium-long term is the basic unfairness inherent in having staff from a wide range of grades, categories and pay levels often performing the same functions. (eg. AD/TA, CA, SNEs all working as Desk Officers, SC often performing AST jobs, and vice-versa). This situation has clearly developed over time, and in many cases represents a pragmatic approach to the filling of positions given limited staff and financial resources. However, over the longer-term the fundamental inequity will only lead to increased frustration amongst those staff who feel that they are at a disadvantage vis-à-vis colleagues doing the same work, or who lack any meaningful career perspective. Consideration should be given to how best to recognise the contribution that temporary officers (whether SNEs, CAs, of TAs.) make, and – where possible – provide opportunities for them to have a career perspective in the EEAS. Some of the proposals put forward move in this direction (eg. #84, #91).

The **situation regarding Temporary Agents** in the EEAS could be further clarified. Notwithstanding the paper finalised in August 2015 (ARES (2015) 3509474) which sets out the Basic Principles regarding the management of TAs in the EEAS, there appears to be a degree of confusion over the precise meaning of Article 2 (e) of the CEOS which relates to the 4+4+2 principle. Hence the call, on behalf of the TA group, for greater flexibility with regard to the duration of posts in the EEAS (#62) and the call by the AD group to clarify the 8 year principle (#3). It is clear that a number of TAs are frustrated at what they see as a lack of career opportunities for them in the EEAS, as well as a lack of recognition of the value of EEAS experience by their home services. These issues could be further addressed within the framework of the Human Resource Network – and in consultation with current and former TAs. On the other hand, the team was in agreement with the objective that TAs should be represented at one third-40% across all grades and functions (#18, #61, #76). The corollary of this is that permanent officials would also be appropriately represented (minimum 60%) across all grades and functions (incl. Senior Management and Heads of Delegation posts). The team agreed that recruitment of TAs should pay more attention to matching of experience with the jobs applied for (linked also to proposals #64, #65 & #66) and that TAs taking up a a second non-consecutive contract should in principle be able to do so at a higher grade than their first contract.

There is a general perception that decisions regarding the publication of posts are opaque. Members of the team felt it was important to ensure greater **transparency in terms of posts available/published**, in particular vacancies at AST level.

The **Promotion and Reclassification exercise** as it is currently designed, can be considered somewhat arbitrary in that it places a disproportionate responsibility on reporting officers (whether Heads of Division, Heads of Delegation, Directors, MDs etc.) in deciding who should be proposed for promotion or reclassification. This issue also merits further discussion in the team and the Taskforce, including the question of whether more impartial and objective criteria could be established to ensure that there is a level playing field in this area. Greater efforts should also be made to ensure that staff who opt for mobility or rotation are not penalised when it comes to the promotion exercise.

Finally, while primarily for the team on mobility and rotation, proposal no.4 on **inter-institutional mobility** also has read-across with regard to recruitment and promotion i.e. EEAS staff should in principle have similar opportunities to apply for posts in the Commission/EP as staff in the other institutions currently have with regard to posts in the EEAS.