

Address given by Neil Kinnock on the recruitment of officials following enlargement (Brussels, 19 February 2003)

Caption: On 19 February 2003, in Brussels, Neil Kinnock, Vice-President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Administrative Reform, holds a press conference in which he emphasises the Commission's need for additional human resources with a view to the fifth enlargement of the European Union and outlines the procedures and objectives of the recruitments.

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Press Conference

Three weeks ago I gave you an update on the implementation of Reform, and I made the point that the efficiency gains and other advances that are becoming evident will ensure that administrative expenditure remains well within the limits set out in the 1999 Financial Perspectives, and will enable us to deal effectively with the fresh demands related to enlargement of the Union.

Obviously, that enlargement in just over 14 months time will mean a substantially increased workload for the Commission. In June of last year, we therefore identified the relevant extra human resources needs and, after careful calculation, we concluded that the Commission would require 3900 additional staff. Of those, 3430 would relate to permanent operational posts, 150 would relate to the work of the Joint Research Centre, and around 350 would be posts for researchers and outside personnel.

Recruiting on the broadest possible geographical basis across the EU is obviously a basic requirement of the Staff Regulations which govern the employment conditions of the EU civil service. Consistent with those rules, and with our policy of maintaining reasonable geographic balance among the staff of the Institution, the Commission has today decided on the approach to be taken in order to deal fairly and efficiently with the demands of enlargement.

In all previous enlargements of the Union, the basis for recruitment of officials from incoming Member States was produced by a mixture of negotiation, comparisons between old and new Member States and, occasionally, reference to objective criteria such as population and sometimes GDP.

The only constants were that small Member States should have a share of staff that was relatively larger than their share of the EU population, and that the biggest Member States should have a share of staff that was roughly the same.

Clearly, however, this enlargement is unlike any other in many ways and the differences include the realities that a large number of countries will be joining at the same time, and that there is great diversity in the size of their populations.

It is therefore essential to establish clear and objective criteria as the basis for determining the overall share of posts to which nationals from the new Member States can aspire, whilst simultaneously continuing to observe the general principles relating to small States and relatively large States.

The Commission has identified three objective criteria which, used in conjunction with each other, provide a fair and balanced outcome despite the diversity in size of the new Member States. Those criteria are:

The number of inhabitants in each new Member State;

The weighting of votes for each State in Council;

The number of seats in the European Parliament for each State.

Using these criteria, which obviously take into account the political arithmetic arising from the Nice Treaty, the Commission will: First, calculate the overall share of posts which corresponds to the overall weight of the new Member States in the enlarged EU and

Second, set an indicative overall recruitment target of 2/3 of this figure during a seven year transition period. According to this approach, the new Member States represent a weighted 21.6% of the enlarged EU, which gives an overall share of posts of 5161 and a recruitment target over 7 years of 2/3 of that total 3441 posts. 42 of those posts are at Director level and 189 are middle management head of unit posts.

Thirdly, with the total recruitment figure established we will then use the same criteria of population, Council votes, and Parliament seats to determine the share of posts due to each new Member State. You will find the exact details in the press release and the Communication from the Commission.

You may be assisted by a few explanatory remarks about these recruitment targets:

First, they cover all categories of posts other than research posts and Director General and equivalent posts. Recruitment of researchers for the Joint Research Centre can only be based on operational criteria, so no special measures are needed. The Commission's current policy that at least one national from each Member State should hold a Director-General, Head of Department or similar position will continue to apply.

Secondly, for officials in general, competitions will be organised by nationality. There will be two exceptions to this rule: the selection process for middle and senior management posts will cover all enlargement countries and competitions for linguists will, naturally, be organised on the basis of languages. In all cases however, it must be absolutely clear that we aim to recruit highly skilled candidates. In the interests of candidates, Member States and the Commission, the competitions will be as demanding as they are for EU wide competitions. There will be no dilution of abilities. Just to be absolutely clear, I make two points for purposes of emphasis: we are setting "targets" to assist incoming Member States in a first phase. But,

These are targets and not national quotas.

These are targets and not maxima. Nationals from the new Member States will obviously be able to enter any of the EU-wide concours in which they have interest. There will be no "glass ceiling".

Thirdly, the special measures for the recruitment of officials from new Member States will apply during a transition period of seven years. That is necessary for two basic reasons:

First, and very obviously, the realities of the Financial Perspectives mean that several thousand officials cannot be recruited at once.

Second, it is in the interest of the Commission and of the new Member States to adopt a reasonably, gradual approach, in order to ensure effective integration of the new officials in the Commission and to sustain stability of operations in the administrations of incoming countries. It is in no one's interest to have a "brain drain".

Clearly, recruitment of officials is a central element in the administrative preparations for enlargement. But justified recognition must be given to the sustained efforts which have gone into other essential activities such as ensuring that the Commission can continue to offer high quality multilingual services despite the 82% increase in official languages. I am glad to say that the strenuous efforts of the translation and interpretation services over some years past mean that we are confident that the integration of the new languages will take place smoothly.

Finally, two points on the political prerequisites for enabling the Commission to be to apply this approach adopted today:

Clearly, the targets have been set on the understanding that the budgetary authority will confirm the financing of the additional resources. If that confirmation is not given, and only a smaller number of posts is granted, the indicative targets would naturally and regrettably have to be lower.

Secondly, the application of the Commission's approach requires completion of the most important elements of reform well before the date of accession of the ten new Member States. Taken all together, the reforms will facilitate savings on administrative expenditure of more than one billion euro over the first fifteen years.

That positive development can only be achieved, however, if the Council and Parliament approve the Commission's proposal for the modernisation of the Staff Regulations and do so as both intend by the middle of this year so that the changes can take full effect at the beginning of 2004. Achieving and applying the new Staff Regulations is basic to ensuring that the ceilings set by the Financial Perspectives will not be breached and to providing staff with the security necessary to sustain their confidence and commitment.

In short, with the new Staff Regulations, the Commission will be able to guarantee successful integration of the officials from the new Member States. Without those new Regulations there would be a very serious risk of greater complications and substantial extra costs. The Council therefore has a natural interest in adopting the necessary amendments in good time. We will continue our discussions on that basis.

Thank you for your attention.