Recommendation 1226 (1993)[1]

Improvement of Council of Europe staff careers

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly devotes special attention and attaches particular importance to the working conditions and career situation of the Council of Europe Secretariat, as evidenced by its positions previously expressed inter alia in Recommendations 944 (1982), 1000 (1984) and 1102 (1989) and in several resolutions, opinions and orders.

2. It considers that the Council of Europe's efficiency and image partly depend on the staff in the Organisation's service, and that it is important to have high quality staff, highly motivated in the performance of their duties, which remain very much a vocation. Careers are a highly significant attraction during the recruitment of new staff and play a very important part in staff motivation.

3. It has to be said, however, that, although some progress has been made, some problems, which have worsened as time has gone by, still arise, and may be further aggravated as Secretariat staff numbers increase and might even jeopardise the Organisation's harmonious operation at a crucial point of its development.

4. As the present career system and regulations are too rigid, there is every reason to revise them and shape them as appropriate to the current situation. This will have to be done by mutual agreement between the parties concerned, the Administration and staff representatives. The participation of representatives of other organisations in the groundwork might make a positive contribution to the debate.

5. Any reform undertaken should be based upon the principle of officials' merit, an element which has to be neutrally and objectively assessed and must be the point of reference for any new careers policy and for improved staff management.

6. This being so, certain difficulties and some measures having discriminatory effects might be provisionally palliated through limited reforms enabling some of the present obstacles to be eliminated, especially where advancement and promotion are concerned.

7. With this in mind, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers make the changes described below at the earliest opportunity:

a. In respect of duties and grades:

   1. twin the first three grades in categories B, C and L, as has already been done for category A posts. In category L, identical duties are performed in all three grades. In categories B and C the duties differ, but in so far as candidates meet the required conditions, promotion should not depend on a post becoming vacant;

   2. twin the higher grades (4 to 6) in categories B and C, for the same reasons as set out at i. above;

   3. extend the twinning of the first three grades in category A to grade A4, the duties performed being virtually identical;

1. See Doc. 6955, report of the Committee on the Budget and the Intergovernmental Work Programme, Rapporteur: Mr Strimitzer. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 4 November 1993.

4. allow any staff member meeting the required conditions to apply for any vacant post, even those to be filled from within the Organisation, irrespective of the category of the post. The present rule, according to which upper B grade staff may not apply for category A posts to be filled from within the Organisation unless the Secretary General expressly decides to make use of a special procedure, does not seem to need to be retained;

5. make more flexible, in any case, the over-strict conditions currently applied to movements from category B to category A (ten years' service, four of them in grades B4 to B6), using the procedure referred to at iv. above;

6. give consideration to the awarding by the Secretary General of merit steps and, where applicable, of promotions ad personam, in accordance with objective conditions to be mutually agreed between the Administration and the staff representatives;

7. invite the Secretary General to pursue the policy of equal representation of women and men in each category and grade, paying special attention to directorates and decision-making posts in which women are under-represented. As well as improving officials' promotion prospects, these measures would have the advantage of simplifying staff management (simplified careers and fewer, simpler promotion procedures, reduction in numbers of temporary staff) and greater efficiency (fewer vacant posts).

b. In respect of staff assessment:

1. speedily adopt new staff assessment regulations, providing for a provisional period of application and a system of review prior to final adoption and avoiding the obstacles which have prevented the regulations on assessment from being implemented;

2. involve in the groundwork not just representatives of the Council of Europe staff, but also those of other international organisations (United Nations, OECD, European Community) having useful experience in this field;

3. make provision for staff members undergoing assessment to play an active part in the evaluation procedure, including periodical discussions with their superiors, and giving them the opportunity to complete their training for the posts held;

4. make a system of this kind universal and applicable to all staff, whatever their grade and category;

5. make provision for an arbitration procedure to settle any disputes arising between officials undergoing assessment and their superiors and for an ad hoc joint committee comprising representatives of both the Administration and the staff.

c. In respect of transfers and promotions panels, it seems necessary to alter their composition in order to achieve:

1. greater flexibility in the light of the posts to be filled;

2. more balanced participation by staff representatives;

3. equal representation of female and male members in panels;

4. participation without vote of the staff member responsible for implementation of the equal opportunities policy within the Secretariat so as to guarantee effective application of Article 22 bis of the regulations on appointments (preference, in the event of equal merit, to the candidate of the gender which is under-represented in that grade).

d. In respect of training, increase the funding available, giving officials, in the interest of the Organisation, opportunities to add to or update their qualifications. Training is one of the items taken into account in assessments of candidates' merit, which is to be the central element of the proposed reforms.

e. In respect of recruitment, invite external candidates to apply only for start-of-career posts and, where applicable, for posts of director (A7).