Reforming the Commission: action plan, aspects concerning the Committee on budgets. White Paper

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This is a consultative paper presented by the Commission outlining its reform of the Commission. It is being published for consultation with the staff and their representatives, the European Parliament and Council, and for the information of the wider public. In compiling the White Paper for consideration by the College on 1 March, account will be taken of the responses made through those consultations. The objective of the Reform Strategy is clear. It is to make changes which will ensure that efficiency, accountability, transparency, responsibility and services are applied as working conventions everywhere in the Commission. The document details the actions needed to make provision for that, the timescales over which those actions will be taken, and the arrangements for monitoring and pursuing progress in what must be, inevitably, a sustained process of improved performance. The proposals made in this document consist of numerous proposals. First of all, it prescribes radical and urgent changes in financial manangement and control to secure better informed decisions, greater value for money, and a new level of accountability. The Commission recognises the urgency of progress and will, consequently, set up the key building blocks, including, crucially, an Internal Audit Service, by 1 May 2000 at the latest. Second, the proposals identify the ways to efficiently integrate decisions on positive and - crucially - negative priorities with an assessment of resources. And thirdly, the proposals outline a comprehensive Human Resources policy that will enable the people who work for the Commission to develop their careers through improvements in recruitment and promotion systems, training provision, management and social infrastructure. The comprehensive reform programme will start in March 2000 and run over the period up to the second half of 2002. By the end of 2002, the Commission expects to have made significant progress with implementing many of the key priorities identified in this paper. This will continue in 2001, under existing legislative arrangements. Provided the Commission legislative proposals can be agreed quickly by Council and Parliament, by the middle of 2002 the Commission intends to have implemented a comprehensive strategy and planning process under which priorities and resources would be matched and the Commission could know how it will carry out existing and future tasks. In conclusion, the publication of this paper is only a start. THe hard work begins with the implementation of the 84 actions set out here. For this to be successful, everyone from Commissioners downwards will need to be fully involved in the greatest internal challenge for the organisation since its inception: delivering an international public service that is truely worthy of the current and future European Union.