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

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The European Commission adopted a report in which is specifies that nearly all the necessary changes needed in order to achieve the majority of commitments made in the White Paper Action Plan have been made in less than three years. To be exact, 87 of the 98 actions have been implemented. The areas in which progress has already been achieved are as follows: 1) Creating a culture based on service : substantive progress in building up a service culture has been achieved. The Commission must ensure that the remaining scope for increased performance is fully used. By May 2004 the Commission will have: - improved its document management system; - improved the efficiency and quality of information provided to the public by having implemented a new editorial approach for its internet site (Europa 2nd generation.) This site better reflects the priorities and daily activities of the Commission, increases visibility and access to the President and other Commissioners and is arranged thematically. Furthermore, the Commission will sustain its vigorous efforts further to increase the speed of payments. The average in 2002 was 43.7 days, compared with 54 days in 1999. 2) Priority setting and the efficient use of resources : the Commission has significantly increased the efficiency, transparency and accountability of its operations. These changes will continue to bear fruit over the coming years. By 2004 the Commission will have realised the following through reform: - through the implementation of Activity Based Management, the Commission will have ensured transparency of its tasks and resources. Activity Based Management enables the Commission to ensure that political priorities are sufficiently resourced and to determine the degree to which resources have been used for their intended purpose. - through Annual Activity Reports, following their fine-tuning during 2003, the Commission will have implemented a system where the administration - and in particular senior managers - are accountable for ensuring the use of resources at their disposal for the intended purpose. - a new generation of Executive Offices will have been established and the Commission will have all the necessary legal and practical means to realise further efficiency gains and focus resources on core activities. The Offices will allow for potential savings through reinforced inter-institutional co-operation and increased use of contract staff once the new Staff Regulations are agreed, and will enable the Commission further to focus its resources on its core activities. 3) Towards a modernised human resources policy : the Commission considers the successful implementation of the reforms to staff policy that have already been agreed, to be of paramount importance during 2003 and the years to come. Further progress on the reform of personnel policy depends greatly on the conclusion of negotiations on the Staff Regulations in the Council in mid-2003 - the key milestone remaining for the reform of personnel policy, and an important landmark for Commission reform as a whole. A priority for the Commission in 2003 is the successful conclusion of these negotiations. It will be for the Commission to secure an outcome which ensures that staff support this reform of staff policy. As a result of the reform of personnel policy, by May 2004: - provided the necessary support from the other institutions is forthcoming, new officials will be recruited from the new Member States into a new career system with 2 function groups and a more linear pay structure. In this system, strong incentives will be available for high performing officials through the annual appraisal system. - the Commission will have implemented a policy of mobility and life-long learning for officials to ensure a motivated, highly capable and flexible staff where excellence is standard throughout an official's career. - all senior officials will be covered by a system of appraisal as well as structured mobility to ensure that posts are not occupied by a single individual for longer than 5 years apart from exceptional cases. 4) The overhaul of financial management, control and audit : with the entering into force of the recast Financial Regulation in January 2003, the remaining major milestone of reform in the financial field has been attained. The further implementation of reform will consist of fine-tuning and improving the working level functionality of the systems already in place, as well as ensuring a high level

of training for the financial actors. - the major project that the Commission must implement by 2005 in the financial field concerns the modernisation of the accounting system. On 17 December 2002 the Commission mapped out the major tasks to be fulfilled, and called for Commission-wide co-ordination and resource mobilisation. - as was made clear in the readiness assessment the Commission adopted on 17 December 2002, while internal control has improved and become fully transparent, further and continuing efforts, in particular training, will be needed throughout 2003. - at the end of 2003, a full cycle of in-depth audits will have been carried out to provide the Commission with reasonable assurance regarding its internal control systems. Further fine-tuning of the system will take place through the Annual Activity Report process which itself serves to identify and correct any shortcomings in financial and resource management within Directorates General.