



Report of the 236th meeting of the GAC on 18.11.2011 in Munich

Summary

The 236th meeting of the GAC (General Advisory Committee) was the ninth GAC meeting of 2011. The meeting was the second of two extraordinary meetings of the GAC which were arranged in order to avoid overloading the remaining planned meeting with proposals which the administration had not been in a position to present earlier in the year. The agenda comprised a document claiming to set out the Human Resources Roadmap 2012 - 2015 and, for the second time this year, a proposal for the introduction of Office wide online staff reporting.

HR Roadmap

The administration has drawn up a so-called "HR Roadmap", presenting the topics which the President wishes to tackle during the next four to five years. This has been the subject of discussions with the CSC. It seems that the President wishes to agree with the CSC on the content of the roadmap. However, in parallel to this, the President wants to present the roadmap to the December meeting of the Administrative Council for information. He also presented it to the 236th meeting of the GAC for opinion. In itself, this is unusual.

Firstly, the document does not actually contain any concrete proposals (as opposed to ideas) affecting staff. In the recent past, the administration has only presented documents to the GAC for opinion when they contained such proposals. However, Article 38 ServRegs allows that the President may request the GAC's opinion on "any question of a general nature". This is what the President has done here.

Secondly, it seems that the document submitted does not necessarily reflect the final version of the roadmap. Indeed, it seems that the President is still willing to take on board comments that the CSC might have. This is a problem for the GAC since the GAC can only

give an opinion on a document as it finds it, that is to say, in the version that existed at the time that the document is submitted to the GAC, and not on the document as it might look in the future.

The document was presented to the GAC by Ms Elodie Bergot, who was apparently in charge for drafting this document. Ms Bergot currently occupies a post reporting direct to PD HR, Mr Förster.

It is, of course, very positive that the Office wants to establish a strategy for its human resources activities for the coming years. It is also positive that the President wishes to consult the Staff Committee and the GAC at an early stage when drawing up proposals. However, in our view, before drawing up an HR roadmap, the Office needs firstly to perform an in-depth study (e.g. similar to the IT study) in order to determine the current HR situation and secondly to establish an Office-wide HR policy. Neither of these has yet been done.

Moreover, a map is a visualisation of a landscape which can be used to plan a route from a known starting point to a known destination, both of which can be derived from the map. However, (to our best knowledge) there was no prior evaluation of the current HR

situation. This means that the document has no "visualisation of a landscape" or starting point. Furthermore, the lack of an explicit HR policy means that the document lacks a destination. We thus concluded that the document presented to the GAC was not a map. Rather, it is a plan for action, that is to say a list of all the things that the current administration wishes to achieve over the coming years.

Moreover, the form of the document was seriously deficient. It provided no background and there was no consistent logic in the document. For example it presented a list of key objectives, but then failed to address them again (at least, not using the same terms). It failed to analyse the capacity of the HR department to perform the huge number of tasks outlined. The document was intended for the Council, but was not in the form of a Council document. Finally, it had not even been sent to the language department for an English check.

Thus although we consider that an HR roadmap would be a useful tool for the Office, especially if it is agreed with the CSC, we saw no alternative but to give a negative opinion on the proposal.

In our written opinion, we stressed that the form of the document was inadequate. It will thus cause serious embarrassment if it is submitted to the Council without major modifications. Moreover, with regard to the content, we gave a long list of concerns. We also stressed that the resources available to the HR department had to be taken into account, particularly in the light of the unrealistic deadlines given in the document.

The members nominated by the President gave a positive opinion on the proposal. However, in their opinion they also pointed out a number of deficiencies in the document.

Online staff reporting

For more details on this topic see our report of the 233rd meeting of the GAC. In that meeting of the GAC, the Office demonstrated an early version of the electronic tool. However, the GAC's opinion was only requested on a revised version of Circular 246 (the Staff Circular regulating reporting at the Office), which had been amended (mainly) so to bring

it into conformance with online reporting. As set out in our earlier report, we gave a negative opinion on the Circular as amended. Following the 233rd GAC, the members nominated by the President gave a positive opinion on the proposal. However, they also made observations similar to our own and suggested resubmitting a re-drafted version of the Circular to the GAC for opinion at the same time as the tool and workflow later in the year.

To this meeting of the GAC the administration submitted a workflow chart, samples of staff reports and a re-drafted Circular. In the meeting, HR staff gave a presentation, including screen shots of the workflow.

The HR staff involved had obviously made a serious effort to address all the concerns raised previously in the GAC. In particular, all our concerns with the draft Circular were attended to. The GAC thus gave a unanimous positive opinion on the proposal. However, one problem with introducing such an electronic system with complicated workflows is that problems often only become apparent after the system has been rolled out. The GAC thus also suggested that in time for the following reporting period, a report should be compiled of experiences gained with the system. This should be done early enough that suggestions for improvements can be incorporated in time for the reporting period 2012-2013. The report should not only take into account the experience of the HR department but also of the users of the system, be they staff being reported on, reporting officers or counter-signing officers.

The members of the GAC nominated by the CSC.