

Policy Department on Budgetary Affairs

DECENTRALISATION FOLLOWING THE REFORM OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION: EVALUATION AND PERCEPTION

BUDGETARY AFFAIRS

25 July 2008

EN

This study was requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Budgets.

This paper is published in the following languages:

- Original: EN

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Manuscript completed in June, 2008

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Brussels, European Parliament, 2008

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Executive Summary

This study analyses the current system of decentralised administrative support and coordination functions within the European Commission, focusing particularly on organisational efficiency in HR Management as well as in External Communication and on staff perceptions in general. Not only the relative share of staff working in administrative support and coordination functions, but also its allocation of staff and responsibilities between central and decentral organisational levels is a topic of high attention within the European Commission, as well as a subject of discussion between the European Commission and the European Parliament.

The results of this study are based on two major sources: first, qualitative semi-structured interviews with managers within selected operational Directorates-General and central services in HR Management and External Communication to find out about organisational efficiency. The second source of empirical data consists of a survey of heads of unit with policy responsibilities outside the Resource Directorates to learn about their satisfaction as “consumers” of administrative support and coordination services provided.

The results of the study can be summarised as follows:

1. The decentralisation of administrative support and coordination functions predates the Kinnock Reform. Its origins can be traced back at least to the SEM 2000 and MAP 2000 initiatives – launched at the end of the 1990s. The Kinnock Reform amplified decentralisation efforts with regard to administrative support and coordination in HR Management and External Communication and spread it to virtually all other administrative support and coordination functions. The decentralisation of administrative support and coordination as a tool to improve organisational performance had appeal to reformers because of the perceived overall fit with other reform elements (i.e. responsabilisation of top managers and the new internal accounting system). However, no systematic ex-ante assessments or cost-benefits analyses had been conducted in advance.

HR Management and External Communication

2. In HR Management, a long-standing trend towards decentralisation can be observed, amplified by the recent administrative modernisation. The area of communication saw – especially during the 1990s – the establishment and expansion of decentral organisational capacities, namely the creation and upgrading of information and press units at the level of the individual Directorates-General. Currently, within the Commission, means to optimise the use of resources and the division of responsibilities within these functions are being considered. While the situation in HR Management appears relatively stable, the Commission recently decided to free up 10% of the staff affected to External Communication for redeployment to new communication priorities or other tasks.

3. Although top and middle managers of HR Management see room for improvement in the area of recruitment, they are generally satisfied with the current division of labour among decentral and central levels. The major problem appears to be the cumbersome procedure of filling vacancies. Together with decentralising some HR functions to operational Directorates-General, EPSO has been created as a central office responsible for organising competitions for personnel selection and producing reserve lists of successful candidates for all EU institutions. In addition, options are currently considered and partly explored to make use of synergies and share costs of administrative support and coordination in intermediate arrangements, such as service level agreements or searching for new ways of cooperation between smaller numbers of Directorates-General and services. DG ADMIN attempts to optimise the current system in several ways – one example being the conducting of staff opinion surveys. Apart from areas of little significance – like leave management – decentral units do not see any need for re-centralisation.

4. For the specific area of recruitment, decentral managers complain about cumbersome procedures (even compared to the time before decentralisation) and point to their own superior potential to manage more quickly and efficiently. This illustrates existing tensions between (decentral) swiftness and (centrally provided) legitimacy (namely to bring about a balanced stratification of officials from EU nationalities within and among the EU institutions). A second trade-off in HR management refers to tensions between the autonomy of decentral services and

central control by binding rules and regulations. Decentral levels are wary that central services may interfere too much in what they consider their daily responsibilities. While recentralisation is nowhere pursued as a practical option, central as well as decentral services are open to and occasionally practice solutions to optimise organisational efficiency via closer horizontal coordination mechanisms.

5. The differences between decentral and central level managers, with regards to the assessment of the performance of the function, are more pronounced in the area of External Communication than in HR Management. Managers at the decentral level within the operative Directorates-General are in accordance with the current system. However, central level managers point to the need for increased horizontal coordination and exchange of good practices. In the debate over the appropriate division of labour in External Communication, decentral units underscore the value of decentral potentials and the decentral closeness to the policy contents, while managers at the central level point to the need for a coherent and coordinated “voice” of the Commission to the outside world. In other words, in External Communication – especially with respect to what is referred to as communication to the general public as opposed to stakeholder communication – central level managers are wary of risks of fragmentation and thus wish to strengthen the corporate image and messages of the Commission as a whole. Decentral units, on the other hand, wish to maintain the status quo and point to what they see as their superior communication skills with relevant specific policy communities.

6. Lacking unobtrusive data for assessing objectively organisational efficiency, the statements of the managers working in decentral administrative support and coordination nevertheless provide important insights. They advocate increased manoeuvrability (recruitment in HR) or at least, they defend the current state-of-the-art (division of labour in communication). With its decisions not to ask for new posts to the budgetary authority for the period between 2009 and 2013 and to consider administrative support and coordination a source for redeployments, the Commission has committed itself to align increased personnel needs in priority areas by redeployment in particular from the administrative support and coordination functions.

Comparing staff numbers in administrative support across Directorates-General

7. As a matter of fact, our interlocutors within the European Commission professionally supported the research team, in particular by granting access to leading managers of Resource Directorates in the areas of HR Management and External Communication and also by allowing a comprehensive staff survey to be conducted. However, the research team had no access to internal staff data or documents other than those publicly available. Originally envisaged research strategies, such as participant observation and in-depth documentary analysis of standard working procedures within the area of administrative support and coordination in particular Directorates-General, could thus not be undertaken. To partly compensate for this, the research team estimated staff numbers in HR Management and External Communication across Directorates-General on the basis of an investigation of the annual activity reports and the online directory of the European Commission. Taken at face value, these estimates point to variation of staff numbers in administrative support and coordination between Directorates-General within and across so called “families” of Directorates-General. Some of this variation appears justified, particularly greater support and coordination staff in Directorates-General that deal with program management—which is known to be personnel intense. Other differences, namely between individual Directorates-General with similar tasks – like between DG AIDCO and DG ECHO – are less easily explainable.

Perception of staff

8. In the perspective of “clients” or “consumers” of services provided by decentral administrative support and coordination, i.e. those middle managers who need administrative support and coordination services in order to do their jobs, survey data clearly show that decentralisation has an important impact and that the vast majority of middle managers consuming administrative support and coordination services appreciates decentral management arrangements.

9. Among middle managers with policy responsibilities, decentralisation gets excellent approval rates. More than 80% in HR Management and 70% in External Communications respectively, assess the functionality of the current decentralised arrangement as very positive. The thrust of the answers is very consistent across

areas and across individual survey questions. Decentral units are those to whom they regularly address, as well as those which they see as most competent. In their opinion there is room for improvement, especially in the HR function; nevertheless, the division of labour between central and decentral units in HR Management and External Communication is by and large perceived to function adequately.

10. The survey impressively underlines something the research team encountered also during the talks with middle and top managers in the decentralised administrative support and coordination functions: a certain fatigue and scepticism with respect to organisational change. Asked about options of optimisation, the majority of line managers wishes to leave things as they currently are; 53% with regards to HR Management, and 56% with regards to External Communication. In other words, the clients and consumers of decentrally provided administrative support and coordination services want to preserve the status quo. 34% suggest further decentralisation for HR Management; although only 17% do so with respect to External Communications. However, only small minorities wish to see more centralisation in these areas in the future. The picture is clear: A majority wishes to leave things as they are, with perhaps increased decentralisation in specific areas, but without further organisational overhauls or any re-centralisation.

11. Representatives of the staff associations are considerably more critical towards recent administrative change within the Commission than middle managers. They support a stronger coordinating role for DG ADMIN – partly due to the fact that decentralisation means that they must now to interact in staff matters with virtually all Directorates-General, whereas in the past they could focus on DG ADMIN. Recent administrative modernisation has thus weakened staff associations' means to support rank and files. Staff representatives are thus clearly in favour of a re-centralisation of different administrative support and coordination functions, especially concerning HR Management. In their view, the Kinnock Reform augmented existing trends towards “compartmentalisation” in the Commission, i.e. that the application of rules and the evolving cultures of staff policy and career patterns increasingly diverge across Directorates-General. From staff representatives' perspectives this fragmentation leads to an unacceptably high level of

unequal treatment of staff. The decentralisation of administrative support and coordination is thus taken as a synonym for the Kinnock Reform writ large.

The research team derives the following recommendations from the analysis:

Recommendation 1: The European Commission should be encouraged to develop differential concepts for optimising the use of administrative support and coordination functions. In HR Management, the cooperation between decentral HR units, DG ADMIN, and EPSO should be reviewed in order to foster more efficient, swift and adequate recruitment procedures. Possibilities to consolidate the generally well working decentralised status quo by reducing frictions emerging from centrally demanded targets should be further explored. By contrast, given the risk of harmful consequences of fragmentation in External Communication, a greater need for centrally or horizontally organised coordination across Directorates-General exists in this particular area.

Recommendation 2: The European Commission should be encouraged to review the use of resources and the current division of responsibilities between decentral and central organisational levels in all areas of administrative support and coordination. Reviewing missions and definitions as well as operationalisations of the division of labour between central and decentral service provision in each area of administrative support and coordination appears necessary.

Recommendation 3: The European Commission should provide continuously a precise picture of staffing in all administrative support and coordination functions. In this context, the Commission's annual Screening Reports should comprise relative as well as absolute staff numbers of all administrative support and coordination functions respectively for each Directorate-General and Service. As this information has been already the basis on which to draft the respective sections in the recent Screening Reports, the Commission should be encouraged to present these numbers for the years 2007 and 2008, well in advance of the next screening exercise.

Recommendation 4: As comparability to any other public organisation will probably remain out of reach for some time to come, the Commission should be

encouraged to develop appropriate yardsticks for comprehensive and meaningful internal benchmarking exercises as a basis for assessing and eventually improving organisational efficiency and effectiveness in the areas of administrative support and coordination.

Recommendation 5: Fair and effective mechanisms to ensure the alignment of individual managers' incentives with that organisational objective are needed. That means, for example, that some of the efficiency gains from cooperative managers should remain in their unit or Directorate-General and not entirely in an anonymous organisational pool or purpose.

Recommendation 6: The approval of the current state of the art by internal consumers of decentralised administrative support and coordination functions deserves to be taken into due consideration. Maximising organisational efficiency should not reduce the achieved effectiveness of current solutions in this respect.

Recommendation 7: The Commission should be encouraged to regularly collect, and in more detail than is currently done in the staff opinion survey, the perception of the staff as to how effective and efficient the Commission staff conceives the system of administrative support and coordination to be.

Recommendation 8: If further reform of administrative support and coordination will be decided, staff – not only managers, but particularly rank and file – must be actively convinced of the need for further reform. Reform options and implementation decisions reached have to be communicated in order to enhance ownership among staff and thus the chances of successful implementation of a potential change agenda.

Résumé (en français)

Cette étude analyse l'organisation actuelle des fonctions de support administratif et de coordination décentralisées au sein de la Commission Européenne. Elle se concentre en particulier sur l'efficacité organisationnelle des fonctions de gestion des Ressources Humaines (RH) et de Communication Externe ainsi que sur leur perception par le personnel en général. La proportion relative du personnel affecté aux fonctions de support administratif et de coordination ainsi que la répartition du personnel et des responsabilités entre les niveaux centraux et décentralisés font l'objet de beaucoup d'attention au sein de la Commission Européenne, et sont des sujets débattus entre la Commission Européenne et le Parlement Européen.

Les résultats de cette étude se basent sur deux sources majeures: d'abord, des entretiens qualitatifs semi-structurés avec l'encadrement des Directions Générales (DG) opérationnelles sélectionnées et avec les services centraux en charge de la gestion des RH et de la Communication Externe, de manière à évaluer le degré d'efficacité organisationnelle. La deuxième source de données empiriques provient d'un sondage fait auprès des chefs d'unité ayant des responsabilités opérationnelles hors des Directions Ressources pour évaluer leur satisfaction en tant que «consommateurs» des services de support administratif et de coordination fournis.

Les résultats de l'étude peuvent être résumés comme suit:

1. La décentralisation des fonctions de support administratif et de coordination a précédé la Réforme Kinnock. Ses origines remontent au moins aux initiatives MAP 2000 et SEM 2000 lancées à la fin des années 1990. La Réforme Kinnock a cependant amplifié ces efforts de décentralisation dans la gestion des RH et la communication externe et les a étendus à presque toutes les autres fonctions de support administratif et de coordination. La décentralisation de ces fonctions, en tant qu'instrument pour améliorer le fonctionnement organisationnel, a séduit les instigateurs de la Réforme en raison de sa compatibilité avec les autres éléments de cette dernière (comme par exemple la responsabilisation de l'encadrement su-

périeur et le nouveau système comptable). Cependant, aucune évaluation ni analyse coût-bénéfice n'avaient été effectuées au préalable.

La gestion des ressources humaines et la communication externe

2. Dans la gestion des ressources humaines, la tendance à la décentralisation à pu être observée de longue date et a été amplifiée par la modernisation administrative récente. Concernant la communication, les années 1990 en particulier ont vu l'établissement et l'expansion d'entités organisationnelles décentralisées, à savoir des unités d'information et de presse au niveau des DG individuelles. Au sein de la Commission, on envisage actuellement les manières d'optimiser l'utilisation de ressources et la répartition des responsabilités pour ces fonctions. Alors que la situation pour la gestion des RH semble relativement stable, la Commission a décidé récemment de réaffecter 10% du personnel décentralisé en charge de la communication externe à d'autres priorités dans le domaine de la communication ou à d'autres tâches.

3. Bien que l'encadrement supérieur et intermédiaire en charge de la gestion des RH voit des possibilités d'amélioration dans le domaine du recrutement, il est généralement satisfait de l'actuelle division du travail entre les niveaux centraux et décentralisés. La lourdeur de la procédure pour combler les postes vacants apparaît comme le problème principal. Parallèlement à la décentralisation de certaines fonctions liées aux RH vers les DG opérationnelles, EPSO a été créé en tant qu'office central en charge de l'organisation des concours de recrutement et de la constitution, pour toutes les institutions européennes, de listes de réserves pour les candidats admis. De plus, certaines alternatives sont actuellement envisagées et explorées au sein d'arrangements intermédiaires tels que des contrats de niveau de service ("service level agreements") ou de nouvelles formes de coopération entre un nombre restreint de DG ou services, de manière à produire des synergies et partager les coûts du support administratif et de la coordination. La DG ADMIN cherche à optimiser l'organisation actuelle de plusieurs façons, au nombre desquelles les sondages auprès du personnel. Mis à part certains domaines peu significatifs comme la gestion des congés, les unités décentralisées ne voient pas de nécessité à recentraliser.

4. Pour le domaine spécifique du recrutement, le personnel d'encadrement au niveau décentralisé se plaint de procédures pesantes (y compris par rapport à la situation avant la décentralisation) et fait référence à sa capacité à gérer plus vite et de manière plus efficace. Cela illustre les tensions qui existent entre la rapidité de traitement (niveau décentralisé) et la légitimité (assurée centralement, en répartissant de manière équilibrée les agents par nationalités entre et au sein des institutions). Un deuxième arbitrage dans la gestion des RH concerne les tensions entre l'autonomie des services décentralisés et le contrôle central au moyen de règles et réglementations contraignantes. Les services décentralisés sont méfiants vis-à-vis d'une trop grande intervention des services centraux dans ce qu'ils considèrent leurs responsabilités quotidiennes. Si la recentralisation n'est considérée par personne comme une option envisageable, les services centraux et décentralisés envisagent et mettent parfois en pratique des solutions visant à optimiser l'efficacité organisationnelle par des mécanismes de coordination horizontale plus forts.

5. En ce qui concerne l'appréciation de l'exécution des fonctions examinées, la différence de perception entre niveaux centraux et décentralisés est plus marquée dans le domaine de la communication externe que dans celui de la gestion des RH. L'encadrement au sein des DG opérationnelles décentralisées est en faveur de l'organisation actuelle alors que celui du niveau central met en avant la nécessité d'une plus grande coordination horizontale et d'échanges de bonnes pratiques. Dans ce débat sur la meilleure répartition des tâches relatives à la communication externe, les unités décentralisées soulignent leurs capacités et leur proximité du contenu des politiques, tandis que les gestionnaires au niveau central mettent en avant la nécessité d'une "voix" cohérente et coordonnée de la Commission vis-à-vis du monde extérieur. En d'autres termes, pour ce qui concerne la communication externe - et en particulier par rapport au grand public plutôt que par rapport aux "parties prenantes" - le personnel d'encadrement au niveau central redoute les risques de fragmentation et souhaite par conséquent renforcer l'image et les messages globaux que renvoie la Commission. Au contraire, le personnel d'encadrement au niveau local souhaite le maintien du statu quo et renvoie à ce qu'il perçoit comme ses plus grandes compétences pour communiquer avec son public spécifique.

6. En dépit du manque de données quantitatives pour évaluer de manière objective l'efficacité organisationnelle, les jugements du personnel d'encadrement travaillant pour le support administratif et la coordination au niveau décentralisé fournissent néanmoins des indications utiles. Ceux-ci plaident pour des marges de manœuvre accrues (pour le recrutement) ou défendent au moins la situation actuelle (division du travail pour la communication). En décidant de ne pas demander de nouveaux postes à l'autorité budgétaire entre 2009 et 2013, la Commission s'est engagée à faire face aux besoins accrus en personnel dans les domaines prioritaires par des redéploiements à partir notamment des fonctions de support administratif et de coordination.

Comparaison entre Directions Générales des affectations en personnel pour le support administratif

7. De fait, nos interlocuteurs au sein de la Commission ont apporté un soutien professionnel à l'équipe de recherche, notamment en lui donnant accès aux responsables de la gestion des RH et de la communication externe des Directions Ressources et en permettant la conduite d'un sondage détaillé auprès du personnel. L'équipe de recherche n'a toutefois pas eu accès à des données ou documents internes autres que ceux à la disposition du public. Des stratégies de recherche initialement envisagées telles que l'observation participante ou l'analyse documentaire en profondeur de processus de travail type dans le contexte du support administratif et de la coordination dans des Directions Générales spécifiques n'ont ainsi pas pu être appliquées. Pour partiellement compenser ce manque, l'équipe de recherche a procédé à une estimation du personnel affecté à la gestion des RH et à la communication externe dans les DG sur la base d'une analyse des rapports d'activité annuels et du répertoire en ligne de la Commission européenne. En valeur absolue, ces estimations mettent en évidence des variations dans le nombre d'agents affectés au support administratif et à la coordination au sein et entre les différentes "familles" de DG. Certaines de ces variations semblent justifiées, et en particulier la plus grande quantité de personnel affecté au support administratif et à la coordination dans les DG qui gèrent des programmes, connues pour être intensives en emplois. D'autres différences, et notamment celles qui existent entre DG ayant des tâches similaires - comme entre les DG AIDCO et ECHO - sont moins facilement explicables.

Perception par le personnel

8. Du point de vue des "clients" ou "consommateurs" des services proposés par le support administratif et la coordination décentralisés, c'est-à-dire l'encadrement intermédiaire qui a besoin des fonctions de support administratif et de coordination pour faire son travail, les résultats des sondages montrent clairement que la décentralisation a un impact important et que la grande majorité de ceux ayant recours aux services de support administratif et de coordination apprécient le mode de gestion décentralisé.

9. Parmi l'encadrement intermédiaire ayant des responsabilités en termes de politiques, la décentralisation reçoit d'excellents taux d'approbation. Plus de 80% et de 70% d'entre eux évaluent la fonctionnalité du mode de gestion décentralisé actuel comme très positif pour respectivement la gestion des RH et la communication externe. La portée des réponses est confirmée par leur cohérence entre domaines et entre questions du sondage. Les unités de support décentralisées sont leurs interlocuteurs privilégiés et ceux qu'ils voient comme les plus compétents. De leur point de vue, des possibilités d'amélioration existent, notamment dans le domaine de la gestion des RH, mais la division du travail entre services centraux et décentralisées pour la gestion des RH et la communication externe est globalement perçue comme fonctionnant de manière adéquate.

10. Le sondage souligne également de manière impressionnante un aspect que l'équipe de recherche a également rencontré lors de ses entretiens avec l'encadrement supérieur et intermédiaire au sein des services décentralisés de support administratif et de coordination, à savoir une certaine lassitude et un scepticisme vis-à-vis du changement organisationnel. Interrogés sur les options possibles pour l'optimisation, la majorité des responsables opérationnels souhaite que les choses restent telles qu'elles le sont, à hauteur de 53% en ce qui concerne la gestion des RH et de 56% pour la communication externe. En d'autres termes, les clients et consommateurs des services de support administratif et de coordination fournis au niveau décentralisé souhaite le statu quo. 34% souhaitent une décentralisation plus poussée dans la gestion des ressources humaines et ils ne sont que 17% dans ce cas pour ce qui concerne la communication externe. Une plus grande centralisation de ces fonctions n'est perçue comme opportune que par une petite minorité. La situation est claire: une majorité souhaite que les choses restent en l'état, avec

peut-être davantage de décentralisation pour quelques domaines spécifiques mais sans restructuration majeure ni une quelconque recentralisation.

11. Les représentants des syndicats sont considérablement plus critiques vis-à-vis du changement organisationnel récent que les dirigeants intermédiaires. Ils plaident pour un rôle accru en termes de coordination pour la DG ADMIN - entre autres parce que la décentralisation signifie qu'ils doivent maintenant intervenir avec toutes les DG alors qu'ils pouvaient par le passé se concentrer sur la DG ADMIN. La modernisation administrative récente a donc réduit la capacité des syndicats à défendre le personnel de base. Les syndicats sont en conséquence clairement en faveur d'une recentralisation des différentes fonctions administratives et de support, en particulier en ce qui concerne la gestion des RH. A leurs yeux, la Réforme Kinnock a accentué la tendance à la "compartimentation" de la Commission, c'est-à-dire à ce que l'application des règles et les politiques du personnel et de carrière divergent de plus en plus entre DG. Du point de vue des représentants du personnel, cette fragmentation conduit à un niveau inacceptable d'inégalités de traitement. La décentralisation du support administratif et de la coordination est ainsi considérée comme l'essence de la Réforme Kinnock.

L'équipe de recherche émet les recommandations suivantes.

Recommandation 1: La Commission européenne devrait être encouragée à développer un cadre conceptuel en vue de l'optimisation des différentes fonctions de support administratif et de coordination. Dans la gestion des RH, la coopération entre les unités RH décentralisées, la DG ADMIN et EPSO devrait être revue de manière à favoriser des procédures de recrutement plus efficaces, rapides et adéquates. Les possibilités de consolider l'organisation décentralisée actuelle par la réduction des tensions résultant des objectifs fixés centralement devraient être explorées plus avant pour ce qui concerne la gestion des RH. Inversement, une coordination centrale ou organisée horizontalement entre DG est nécessaire pour la communication externe en raison des conséquences néfastes potentielles en cas d'une fragmentation de celle-ci.

Recommandation 2: La Commission devrait également être encouragée à revoir l'utilisation des ressources et le partage actuel des responsabilités entre les niveaux centraux et décentralisés pour tous les domaines de support administratif et de

coordination. Pour chacune des fonctions de support administratif et de coordination, la revue des missions et définitions concrètes ainsi que de la mise en pratique de la division du travail pour les services respectivement fournis aux niveaux central et décentralisé apparaît nécessaire.

Recommandation 3: La Commission devrait fournir de manière continue une image précise de l'affectation en personnel à chacune des fonctions de support administratif et de coordination. Dans ce contexte, la section du rapport de screening de la Commission relative aux fonctions de support administratif et de coordination devrait comprendre des données relatives et absolues sur le nombre d'agents en charge de ces différentes fonctions dans chacune des DG. Comme cette information a servi de base à l'élaboration des sections en question du rapport de screening, la Commission devrait être encouragée à présenter ces chiffres pour les années 2007 et 2008 préalablement au prochain exercice de screening.

Recommandation 4: Comme une comparaison avec d'autres organisations publiques ne semble pas être réalisable dans un futur proche, la Commission devrait être encouragée à élaborer des critères adéquats pour permettre des exercices internes de benchmarking visant à évaluer et au final améliorer l'efficacité et l'efficience organisationnelles dans l'exécution des différentes fonctions de support administratif et de coordination.

Recommandation 5: Des mécanismes justes et efficaces restent nécessaires pour assurer l'alignement des incitations de chaque membre du personnel d'encadrement avec cet objectif organisationnel. Cela signifie par exemple qu'une partie des gains en efficience résultant de la bonne coopération des dirigeants devrait rester dans leur service ou DG et non pas être entièrement transférés à une réserve organisationnelle anonyme.

Recommandation 6: L'appréciation positive de la situation actuelle en matière de support administratif et de coordination décentralisés par les consommateurs internes de ces services doit être dûment prise en considération. La maximisation de l'efficience organisationnelle ne devrait pas réduire l'efficacité atteinte à cet égard par l'organisation actuelle.

Recommandation 7: La Commission devrait être encouragée à recueillir régulièrement la perception de l'efficacité et l'efficience du système de support administratif et de coordination par le personnel, et ce plus en détail que cela est fait dans le sondage d'opinion du personnel.

Recommandation 8: Si de nouvelles réformes du support administratif et de coordination devaient être initiées, il serait nécessaire de convaincre activement le personnel, les agents de base et pas seulement leur hiérarchie, de la nécessité de réformer. Les options possibles et les décisions de mise en œuvre doivent être communiquées pour favoriser leur appropriation par le personnel et augmenter les chances de réussite pratique des changements.

Zusammenfassung (auf Deutsch)

Diese Studie untersucht das aktuelle System dezentral ausgeübter administrativer Unterstützungs- und Koordinationsfunktionen in der Europäischen Kommission. Im Fokus steht dabei die Effizienz und die Zufriedenheit der Mitarbeiter mit den Funktionen Personalmanagement und Externe Kommunikation. Der relative Anteil von Mitarbeitern, die in administrativen Unterstützungs- und Koordinationsfunktionen arbeiten, sowie deren Aufteilung zwischen zentralen und dezentralen organisatorischen Einheiten ist sowohl Gegenstand höchster Aufmerksamkeit in der Europäischen Kommission, als auch Objekt stetiger Diskussion zwischen Europäischer Kommission und Europäischem Parlament.

Die Ergebnisse dieser Studie basieren im Wesentlichen auf zwei Quellen: erstens wurden qualitative halb-standardisierte Interviews mit Abteilungsleitern und Direktoren in den für Personalmanagement und Externe Kommunikation zuständigen ausgewählten Generaldirektionen und zentralen Diensten geführt, um den Effizienzaspekt zu eruieren. Zweitens wurde eine Befragung von Abteilungsleitern aus sogenannten „Policy-Direktoraten“ durchgeführt, um die Zufriedenheit dieser „Konsumenten“ von administrativen Unterstützungs- und Koordinationsfunktionen zu ergründen.

Die Ergebnisse dieser Studie können wie folgt zusammengefasst werden:

1. Die Dezentralisierung administrativer Unterstützungs- und Koordinationsfunktionen reicht weit vor die sogenannte Kinnock Reform zurück und können auf die Ende der 90er Jahre durchgeführten Initiativen SEM 2000 und MAP 2000 zurückgeführt werden. Die Kinnock Reform hat die schon bestehende Dezentralisierung von Personalmanagement und Externer Kommunikation ausgeweitet und auf fast alle administrativen Unterstützungs- und Koordinationsfunktionen ausgeweitet. Die Dezentralisierung dieser Funktionen als Instrument der Steigerung organisationaler Performanz erschien den Reformern deswegen als probates Mittel, weil sie passgenau zu anderen Reformelementen (z.B. der Responsabilisierung von Generaldirektoren und dem neuen internen Prüfungssystem) implementiert wer-

den konnte. Eine systematische ex-ante Bewertung oder Kosten-Nutzen-Analyse der Dezentralisierung hat im Vorfeld der Reformen jedoch nie stattgefunden.

Personalmanagement und Externe Kommunikation

2. Im Bereich Personalmanagement kann ein schon länger andauernder und durch die Reformen noch verstärkter Prozess der Dezentralisierung beobachtet werden. Im Bereich der Externen Kommunikation wurden besonders in den 90er Jahren dezentrale organisatorische Kapazitäten in den jeweiligen Generaldirektionen aufgebaut und verstärkt. Die Europäische Kommission wägt zurzeit verschiedene Optionen ab, wie der Ressourcenverbrauch und die Verteilung von Verantwortlichkeiten bei der Ausübung administrativer Unterstützungs- und Koordinationsfunktionen verbessert werden kann. Während die Situation im Bereich Personalmanagement relativ stabil erscheint, hat die Kommission jüngst entschieden 10% der Mitarbeiter im Bereich Externe Kommunikation umzugruppieren (redeployment) und neuen Kommunikationsprioritäten oder anderen Aufgaben zuzuordnen.

3. Obwohl Direktoren und Abteilungsleiter dezentraler Organisationseinheiten Verbesserungsbedarf im Bereich der Rekrutierung neuer Mitarbeiter für ihre Generaldirektion sehen, sind sie mit der Arbeitsteilung zwischen dezentralen und zentralen Diensten generell zufrieden. Das größte Problem erscheint das sehr aufwändige Verfahren im Zuge der Besetzung offener Stellen zu sein. Parallel zur Dezentralisierung bestimmter Funktionen im Personalmanagement wurde als zentrale Behörde EPSO gegründet, das im Auftrage aller EU-Institutionen für die Durchführung der Auswahlverfahren (concours) und die Erstellung von Reservelisten erfolgreicher Kandidaten zuständig ist. Es ist darüber hinaus anzumerken, dass zurzeit Optionen zur Schaffung von Synergien und Kostenteilung bei administrativen Unterstützungs- und Koordinationsfunktionen erwogen und zum Teil auch bereits erprobt werden – etwa durch sogenannte „service level agreements“ und andere Kooperationsformen zwischen verschiedenen Generaldirektionen und Diensten. DG ADMIN versucht die momentane Situation auf verschiedenen Wegen zu optimieren wie z.B. durch die Durchführung von Surveys über die Mitarbeiterzufriedenheit. Bis auf Gebiete von eher geringer Bedeutung wie die Urlaubs- und Abwesenheitsverwaltung sehen dezentrale Einheiten keinen Bedarf zur Rezentralisierung bestimmter Bereiche des Personalmanagements.

4. Bei der Besetzung offener Stellen in den Generaldirektionen beklagen sich dezentrale Manager über (sogar im Vergleich zu der Zeit vor der Dezentralisierung) schwerfällige Prozeduren und weisen auf ihre potentielle Fähigkeit hin die Besetzung von Stellen schneller und effizienter zu gestalten. Dies veranschaulicht die bestehenden Spannungen zwischen (dezentraler) Schnelligkeit und (zentral intendierter) Legitimation eine ausgeglichene und angemessene Verteilung von Beamten aus allen EU-Staaten innerhalb und zwischen den EU-Institutionen zu garantieren. Ein zweiter Zielkonflikt im Personalmanagement bezieht sich auf das Spannungsverhältnis zwischen der Autonomie dezentraler Dienste und zentraler Kontrolle durch bindende Regeln und Dienstvorschriften. Dezentrale Einheiten sind besorgt, dass sich zentrale Dienste möglicherweise zu viel in ihr Tagesgeschäft einmischen. Während Rezentralisierung von niemandem als Option in Erwägung gezogen wird, sind sowohl zentrale als auch dezentrale Dienste offen bzw. praktizieren bereits Lösungen um die organisatorische Effizienz durch enge horizontale Koordinationsmechanismen zu verbessern.

5. Im Bereich Externer Kommunikation sind die Unterschiede zwischen dezentralen und zentralen Führungskräften bei der Bewertung der organisatorischen Performanz größer als im Bereich des Personalmanagements. Führungskräfte in dezentralen Einheiten der operativen Generaldirektionen befürworten das momentane System prinzipiell. Führungskräfte in den zentralen Diensten hingegen verweisen auf die steigende Bedeutung und Notwendigkeit horizontaler Koordination und des Austausches von bewährten Praktiken. In der Debatte über die angemessene Arbeitsteilung im Bereich der Externen Kommunikationen unterstreichen dezentrale Organisationseinheiten den Wert ihres Potentials und ihre Nähe zu den Politikgehalten, während Führungskräfte zentraler Dienste auf die Notwendigkeit einer kohärenten und koordinierten Außendarstellung der Kommission verweisen. Mit anderen Worten: Führungskräfte zentraler Dienste sehen im Bereich der externen Kommunikation insbesondere bei der Arbeitsaufteilung zwischen Kommunikation mit der Öffentlichkeit auf der einen Seite und der Kommunikation mit Stakeholdern von Generaldirektionen auf der anderen Seite das Risiko einer Fragmentierung und wollen das Bild und die Nachrichten, die transportiert werden, insgesamt stärker im Lichte einer „corporate identity“ kommunizieren. Dezentrale Organisationseinheiten möchten hingegen an der momentanen Arbeitsaufteilung festhalten und verweisen auf ihre Erfahrung und Überlegenheit bei der Kommuni-

kation mit spezifischen Gruppen, die sich für einen bestimmten Politikinhalt interessieren

6. Auch wenn es an eindeutigen Zahlen über die Stellenbesetzung in den einzelnen Generaldirektionen mangelt um objektiv die Effizienz zu beurteilen, können die Aussagen der Führungskräfte in dezentralen administrativen Unterstützungs- und Koordinationsfunktionen dennoch wichtige Aufschlüsse geben. Die Führungskräfte treten für mehr Handlungsspielraum (Rekrutierung im Bereich Personalmanagement) oder wenigstens für die Beibehaltung des Status Quo (Arbeitsteilung im Bereich Externer Kommunikation) ein. Die Kommission hat sich selbst dazu verpflichtet erhöhten Personalbedarf in prioritären Politikbereichen durch Umgruppierungen (redeployment) zu erreichen, indem keine neue Posten mehr im Zeitraum 2009 bis 2013 angefordert werden und administrative Unterstützungs- und Koordinationsfunktionen als primäre Quelle von Umgruppierungen identifiziert werden.

Vergleich der Personalausstattung in administrativen Unterstützungsaufgaben in den Generaldirektionen

7. Es bleibt festzuhalten, dass unsere Gesprächspartner in der Europäischen Kommission das Untersuchungsteam professionell unterstützt haben, indem Kontakte zu Führungskräften in den Abteilungen für Personalmanagement und Externe Kommunikation in den dezentralen Direktoraten ermöglicht und die Erlaubnis ein Survey zur Mitarbeiterzufriedenheit durchzuführen erteilt wurde. Das Untersuchungsteam hatte jedoch nur Zugang zu jenen internen Dokumenten oder Stellenbesetzungsplänen, die auch öffentlich zugänglich sind. Ursprünglich angedachte Untersuchungsstrategien wie etwa teilnehmende Beobachtung und eine detaillierte Dokumentenanalyse von üblichen Arbeitsprozeduren und -abläufen im Bereich der administrativen Unterstützungs- und Koordinationsfunktionen in bestimmten Generaldirektionen konnten daher nicht durchgeführt werden. Um dies teilweise auszugleichen, hat das Untersuchungsteam die Stellenbesetzungspläne für Personalmanagement und Externe Kommunikation in den jeweiligen Generaldirektionen geschätzt, indem die jährlichen Tätigkeitsberichte und die Angaben des online verfügbaren Handbuchs der Dienststellen analysiert wurden. Nimmt man diese Zahlen zur Grundlage, so sind Unterschiede in der Stellenbesetzung im Bereich Personalmanagement und Externe Kommunikation in Generaldirektionen

der gleichen so genannten „Familie von Generaldirektionen“ als auch zwischen Familien zu konzedieren. Einige dieser Unterschiede erscheinen gerechtfertigt, wie etwa die höheren Zahlen für administrative Unterstützungs- und Koordinationsfunktionen in Generaldirektionen, die sich mit dem als personalintensiv geltenden Programmmanagement beschäftigen. Andere Unterschiede jedoch, besonders jene zwischen Generaldirektionen mit ähnlichen Zielen und Aufgaben, z.B. zwischen DG AIDCO und DG ECHO, sind ad hoc schwerer zu erklären.

Mitarbeiterzufriedenheit

8. Aus der Perspektive der „Klienten“ oder „Konsumenten“ von dezentral zu Verfügung gestellten administrativen Unterstützungs- und Koordinationsfunktionen, d.h. aus der Perspektive jener Führungskräfte, die diese Funktionen in Anspruch nehmen, um ihre Arbeit als Manager zu erfüllen, zeigen die Surveydaten eindeutig, dass Dezentralisierung einen wichtigen Einfluss hat und dass die weitaus große Mehrheit der Führungskräfte die dezentrale Bereitstellung von administrativen Unterstützungs- und Koordinationsfunktionen positiv beurteilt.

9. Unter Führungskräften mit Verantwortung für Politikinhalt erhält die Dezentralisierung exzellente Zustimmungsraten. 80% Zustimmung für den Bereich Personalmanagement und 70% für den Bereich externe Kommunikation impliziert, dass die Befragten die Funktionalität der dezentralen Bereitstellung dieser Aufgaben sehr positiv beurteilen. Diese positive Tendenz ist über alle Bereiche und individuellen Surveyfragen konsistent. Dezentrale Organisationseinheiten sind jene, an die sich die Kunden regelmäßig wenden und die sie für kompetente Ansprechpartner halten. Zwar gibt es auch nach Ansicht der Kunden Verbesserungsbedarf im Bereich Personalmanagement; nichtsdestotrotz wird die Aufteilung zwischen zentralen und dezentralen Organisationseinheiten im Bereich Personalmanagement und Externe Kommunikation auch aus Kundensicht als adäquat eingestuft.

10. Der Survey unterstreicht auf beeindruckende Weise etwas, was das Forschungsteam auch während der Interviews mit den für die dezentralen administrativen Unterstützungs- und Koordinationsfunktionen zuständigen Führungskräften herausgefunden hat: eine gewisse Ermüdung und Skepsis in Bezug auf Verwaltungsreformen. Befragt nach möglichen Optimierungsoptionen, möchte die Mehr-

heit der Führungskräfte die Dinge so lassen, wie sie sind; 53% in Bezug auf Personalmanagement und 56% in Bezug auf Externe Kommunikation. Die Konsumenten der dezentral zu Verfügung gestellten administrativen Unterstützungs- und Koordinationsfunktionen wollen also am Status Quo festhalten. 34% sprechen sich für eine weitere Dezentralisierung von Personalmanagement aus, nur 17% tun dies für den Bereich Externe Kommunikation. In beiden Bereichen ist es jedoch nur eine kleine Minderheit, die sich für eine Zentralisierung dieser Bereiche ausspricht. Das Bild ist klar: Eine Mehrheit wünscht sich, dass die Dinge so bleiben wie sie sind, vielleicht mit verstärkter Dezentralisierung spezifischer Bereiche aber ohne weitere organisatorische Umwälzungen oder eine Rezentralisierung.

11. Vertreter der Gewerkschaften sind bedeutend kritischer in Bezug auf Verwaltungswandel in der Europäischen Kommission als die befragten Abteilungsleiter im Survey. Die Gewerkschaftsvertreter propagieren eine stärker koordinierende Rolle von DG ADMIN – zum Teil auch deswegen weil Dezentralisierung impliziert, dass Gewerkschaften in Personalangelegenheiten mit jedem Generaldirektor interagieren müssen, während in der Vergangenheit DG ADMIN alleiniger Ansprechpartner war. Die zurückliegenden Verwaltungsreformen haben so die Mittel der Gewerkschaften beschnitten ihre Mitglieder in Personalfragen zu unterstützen. Gewerkschaftsvertreter sind daher eindeutig für eine Rezentralisierung verschiedener administrativer Unterstützungs- und Koordinationsfunktionen, besonders beim Thema Personalmanagement. Aus ihrer Sicht hat die Kinnock Reform den bestehenden Trend zur „compartmentalisation“ in der Kommission verstärkt, d.h., dass die Anwendung von Regeln und die sich entwickelnden Kulturen von Personalpolitik und Karrieremustern zunehmend über die Generaldirektionen hinweg divergieren. Aus Sicht der Gewerkschaftsvertreter führt diese Fragmentierung zu einer unakzeptablen Ungleichbehandlung von Mitarbeitern der Kommission. Die Dezentralisierung der administrativen Unterstützungs- und Koordinationsfunktionen gilt so als Synonym einer durch die Kinnock Reformen noch verstärkten Fragmentierung.

Das Forschungsteam leitet die folgenden Empfehlungen aus der Analyse ab:

Empfehlung 1: Die Europäische Kommission sollte darin bestärkt werden, unterschiedliche Konzepte zur Optimierung administrativer Unterstützungs- und Koordinationsfunktionen zu entwickeln. Im Bereich des Personalmanagements sollte

die Kooperation zwischen dezentralen Personalabteilungen, DG ADMIN und EPSO einer genauen Überprüfung unterzogen werden, um effizientere, schnellere und passgenauere Personalbeschaffungsmechanismen zu fördern. Möglichkeiten, den im Allgemeinen gut funktionierenden Staus Quo durch eine Verringerung von aus zentralen Anforderungen resultierenden Reibungsverlusten zu festigen, sollten näher sondiert werden. Auf der anderen Seite besteht im Bereich der Externen Kommunikation – angesichts des Risikos nachteiliger Konsequenzen einer Fragmentierung in diesem Feld – ein größerer Bedarf an zentraler oder horizontal organisierter Koordination zwischen den Generaldirektoraten.

Empfehlung 2: Die Europäische Kommission sollte darin bestärkt werden, die Nutzung von Ressourcen und die gegenwärtige Aufteilung der Verantwortlichkeiten zwischen der dezentralen und der zentralen Organisationsebene in allen Bereichen administrativer Unterstützungs- und Koordinationsfunktionen einer Überprüfung zu unterziehen. Eine Überprüfung von Aufgaben und Definitionen, sowie die Umsetzung der Arbeitsteilung zwischen zentraler und dezentraler Dienstleistungsbereitstellung in jedem Bereich administrativer Unterstützungs- und Koordinationsfunktionen erscheinen geboten.

Empfehlung 3: Die Europäische Kommission sollte fortlaufend eine exakte Darstellung der Personalausstattung in allen Bereichen administrativer Unterstützungs- und Koordinationsfunktionen vorlegen. In diesem Zusammenhang sollte der jährliche „Screening Report“ der Kommission relative und absolute Mitarbeiterzahlen in allen administrativen Unterstützungs- und Koordinationsfunktionen gesondert für jedes Generaldirektorat und jeden Dienst ausweisen. Da diese Information die Grundlage der entsprechenden Abschnitte der letzten „Screening Reports“ war, sollte die Kommission ermuntert werden, diese Zahlen für die Jahre 2007 und 2008 deutlich vor der nächsten Durchführung eines Personalscreenings darzulegen.

Empfehlung 4: Da die Vergleichbarkeit der Kommission zu anderen öffentlichen Organisationen wohl auf absehbare Zeit außer Reichweite bleiben wird, sollte die Kommission ermuntert werden, geeignete Maßstäbe für ein umfassendes und aussagekräftiges Benchmarking als Grundlage einer Bewertung und schließlich Verbesserung der organisationalen Effizienz und Effektivität in den Bereichen administrativer Unterstützung und Koordination zu entwickeln.

Empfehlung 5: Es werden faire und effiziente Mechanismen zur Angleichung der Leistungsanreize der einzelnen Führungskräfte mit den organisationalen Zielsetzungen benötigt. Dies bedeutet zum Beispiel, dass ein gewisser Anteil der Effizienzgewinne kooperativer Führungskräfte in deren Referat oder Generaldirektorat verbleiben sollte und nicht einem anonymen Topf auf der Ebene der gesamten Organisation zugeführt werden sollte.

Empfehlung 6: Die Wertschätzung des Status Quo dezentraler administrativer Unterstützungs- und Koordinationsaufgaben durch die Kunden bedarf gebührender Anerkennung. Die Maximierung organisationaler Effizienz sollte die erreichte Effektivität der gegenwärtigen Dienstleistungsbereitstellung nicht beeinträchtigen.

Empfehlung 7: Die Kommission sollte ermuntert werden, regelmäßig – und mit größerer Detailliertheit als der gegenwärtige „Staff Opinion Survey“ – die Sichtweise der Mitarbeiter auf die Effektivität und Effizienz des Systems der administrativen Unterstützungs- und Koordinationsfunktionen zu erheben.

Empfehlung 8: Sofern weitere Reformen der administrativen Unterstützung und Koordination beschlossen werden, müssen die Mitarbeiter – nicht nur Führungskräfte, sondern besonders die „normale Belegschaft“ – aktiv von der Notwendigkeit weiterer Reformen überzeugt werden. Reformoptionen und Entscheidungen über deren Implementation müssen ausreichend kommuniziert werden, um die Beteiligung der Mitarbeiter zu erhöhen und somit auch die Chancen auf eine erfolgreiche Umsetzung eines möglichen Wechsels der Reformagenda.

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List of Abbreviations

ABM	Activity-Based Management
CDR	Career Development Review
cf.	confer
DECODE	“Designing the Commission of Tomorrow”
DG(s)	Directorate(s)-General
ECN	External Communication Network
HR	Human Resources
IT	Information Technology
MAP 2000	“Modernization of Administration and Personnel Policy”
NA	not available
SEM 2000	“Sound and Efficient Management”

Directorates–General

ADMIN	Personnel and Administration
AGRI	Agriculture and Rural Development
AIDCO	EuropeAid Cooperation Office
BUDG	Budget
COMM	Communication
COMP	Competition
DEV	Development and Relations with African, Caribbean and Pacific States
EAC	Education and Culture
ECFIN	Economic and Financial Affairs
ECHO	Humanitarian Aid
ELARG	Enlargement
EMPL	Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
ENTR	Enterprise and Industry
ENV	Environment
EPSO	European Personnel Selection Office
ESTAT	Eurostat
MARE	Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
IAS	Internal audit service
INFSO	Information Society and Media
JLS	Justice, Freedom and Security
JRC	Joint Research Centre
MARKT	Internal Market and services
PMO	Office for administration and payment of individual entitlements
REGIO	Regional Policy
RELEX	External Relations
RTD	Research
SANCO	Health and Consumer Protection
SG	Secretariat General
TAXUD	Taxation and Customs Union
TRADE	Trade
TREN	Energy and Transport

1 The Mission

“The study should identify the impact in terms of efficiency of the decentralisation of the Commission's organisation in the context of the Kinnock Reform and its perception by staff and middle management within the Commission. It should also present recommendations to address any shortcomings identified”.

Recent administrative modernisation, i.e. the so-called Kinnock Reform, has changed the European Commission as an organisation and as a workplace. One central element of this change was the decentralisation of administrative support and coordination functions, which meant to concede to the operational or line Directorates-General (DGs) more autonomy in areas such as Human Resource (HR) Management or External Communication.

In the course of the 2007 budgetary procedure, the European Parliament requested the Commission to conduct a comprehensive stock taking exercise of its entire staff.¹ In response to subsequent requests for higher organisational transparency, but also as a consequence of administrative modernisation, the European Commission produced a report known as “Planning and Optimising Commission Human Resources to serve EU Priorities”², hereafter referred to as the “Screening Report”. This Screening Report was the first of its kind since more than a decade and it was more inclusive and more systematic than any of its forerunners.

According to the 2007 Screening Report, more than a third of Commission staff works as “administrative overhead”, i.e. in what can be called administrative support and coordination functions. In this regard, one can distinguish between administrative overhead staff working in central services or in top-level administrative offices (“corporate overhead”) on the one hand, and staff working in operational DGs (“departmental overhead”) on the other.³ Another 9% of the officials work in the areas of Budget and Audit and an additional 7.5% for translation and

¹ All categories of staff means here: permanent and temporary posts, as well as external staff (including contractual agents, interim staff and seconded national experts).

² Cf. SEC (2007) 530.

³ Note that staff working in operational DGs is not counted as “departmental” if they fulfil functions for the whole institution (e.g. organisation of traineeships, visitor service, and library). They are then classified as “corporate (equivalent)” staff.

interpretation. By contrast, around 50% of the Commission's staff is directly involved in the production of legislation, policy making, monitoring, enforcement, programme management and programme development.

The proportion of the so-called administrative overhead reflected by these figures was not only criticised by the European Parliament⁴, but also within the Commission. When assessing these numbers, the Commission – among other things – pointed to problems of precisely defining and delineating the category of “administrative overhead”. Moreover, the Commission underlined that its organisational features, especially the politically enforced physical split to various locations, the obligation to operate in a multilingual context and the need to manage a high number of complex policies, render comparisons with administrative overhead figures in national public services or other international organisations difficult.

In reaction to the Commission's 2007 Screening Report, the European Parliament has put EUR 5 million for salaries in reserve and the Commission committed, first, to further pursue the possible rationalisation of activities in the area of External Communication and, second, to present by April 2008 a follow-up on its 2007 Screening Report due to include in particular a detailed breakdown of staff.

Moreover, the Commission committed to zero growth with respect to its staff between 2009 and 2013. Staffing numbers shall be kept stable once enlargement related personnel are integrated. Further, the Commission committed to lower the proportion of human resources assigned to administrative support and coordination. In other words, the Commission itself identified the areas of administrative support and coordination as “negative priorities”, i.e. as potential sources for internal redeployment of staff. These circumstances have led to anxieties among rank and file and managers working within the administrative support and coordination functions. They fear that with internal redeployment being the main instrument to transfer staff to changing political priorities, decentral administrative support and administration capacities will come under pressure.

In the context of the inter-institutional debate on administrative overheads in the Commission, though not formally related to it, Directorate-General Internal Poli-

⁴ Cf. (PE 392.252v02-00, PE 393.886v01-00, PE 393.887v01-00) for the results of the Public Hearing of the European Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control, 3 to 4 October 2007.

cies of the Union – Directorate D – Budgetary Affairs of the Secretariat General of the European Parliament asked the Chair of Comparative Public Policy and Administration of the University of Konstanz to conduct the present study on “Decentralisation following the Reform of the European Commission: Evaluation and Perception”. The study has been conducted between January and June 2008. In agreement with the European Parliament, the study concentrates on HR Management and External Communication as two important areas of decentralised administrative support and coordination within the European Commission.

2 Historical Background

“Decentralisation within the Commission” was a central element of the Kinnock Reform. The importance of decentralisation of administrative support and coordination functions emerges primarily from the fact that other features of the organisational modernisation, as for example the strategic planning and programming cycle or the new personnel policy, depend highly upon “local”, i.e. “decentral” capacities at the level of Directorates-General, in these areas. Decentralisation also appears to be a logical corollary of the “responsibilisation” as the major thrust of the Kinnock Reform, whose most visible outcome is the annual assurance declaration of the Directors-General on sound financial management and the regularity and legality of all activities of their respective Directorate-General.

In the context of the Kinnock Reform, however, the decentralisation of administrative support and coordination functions received less systematic attention than other more contentious reform proposals – a fact that becomes apparent when taking a closer look at the respective reform documents.

“The advantages of decentralisation both in terms of financial savings and increased responsibility for the services, is not questioned. In particular, support services should only be provided centrally where added value can be demonstrated. However, the decentralisation of management-related activities should be based on an appropriate cost-effectiveness analysis. Before moving further, it is necessary to carry out a wide review of internal decentralisation and assess benefits and costs, tools and quality of service delivered”.⁵

However, the details of decentralisation of administrative support and coordination functions and their potential implications for other reform chapters have yet to be treated at great length. As many of our interviewees confirm, “decentralisation” has been agreed upon early on in the Kinnock Reform process and has subsequently been implemented almost “mechanically” as the appropriate organisational solution for many administrative support and coordination problems. However, to our knowledge, no “appropriate cost-effectiveness analysis” or “a wide review of internal decentralisation and assess benefits and costs, tools and quality

⁵ European Commission: Reform White Paper, COM (2000) 0200.

of service delivered” – as demanded by the Reform White Paper – has been carried out.

One explanation for the rapid application of decentralisation of administrative support and coordination functions might refer to the fact that the decentralisation concept – like other reform proposals on the Kinnock agenda – was developed long before Neil Kinnock took over the administrative modernisation portfolio. Particularly in the areas of HR Management and External Communication, as many of our interviewees highlighted, some form of decentralisation was already adopted during Jacques Santer’s presidency.

Internal decentralisation initiatives in the areas of HR and technical resource management can indeed be traced back to the 1980s.⁶ As a result, the Directorates-General had been given more responsibility in the area of financial management and also several decentralised electronic information support systems were introduced. However, it was only during the presidency of Jacques Santer (1995-1999) that ideas of organisational decentralisation received more systematic attention.⁷

The expectation was that decentralisation would help the Commission to bring changing political priorities in line with a better allocation of organisational resources and staff. The reform blueprints “Sound and Efficient Management 2000” (SEM 2000) and “Modernization of Administration and Personnel Policy” (MAP 2000) – which were merged into the DECODE (Designing the Commission of Tomorrow)⁸ exercise – recommended decentralisation as a means to achieving greater levels of organisational efficiency and effectiveness (European Commission 1999). The resignation of Jacques Santer and his colleagues under allegations of fraud, nepotism and mismanagement made administrative reform a top priority.⁹

⁶ The main mechanism was a five-year rolling programme for the use of staff resources. Decentralisation of responsibility and delegation did not only play an important role in staff and resource management, but also in simplifying working procedures and introducing informatics systems. The individual Directorates-General assumed more responsibilities for activities, especially concerning procedures in the areas of financial delegation. The informatics programme introduced new technology to each Directorate-General, allowing them to review their administrative structures in order to simplify their work procedures (Hay, R. (1986)).

⁷ Bauer, M.W. and Heisserer, B. (2008).

⁸ Cf. 10.08.16 DES 99.

⁹ Kassim, H. (2004); Spence, D. and Stevens, A. (2006).

Another reason for the swift adoption of decentralisation of administrative support and coordination functions lies in the influential reports of the Committee of Independent Experts. Their first report not only triggered the crisis that led to the resignation of the whole College of Commissioners; in their subsequent analyses, the Independent Experts also made a persuasive case for the decentralisation of financial control within the Commission in order to prevent financial scandals and nepotism.¹⁰

“Decentralisation plays an important role in enhancing the sense of responsibility felt by staff. However, the tasks that are decentralised must be clearly defined and effective. Decentralisation should not become synonymous with confusion. The process of decentralisation must be accompanied by a reinforcement of programming and internal coordination and genuine leadership must be exercised”.¹¹

The decentralisation of administrative support and coordination functions has a long history within the European Commission and its origins can be traced back prior to the start of the recent modernisation of internal administration known as the Kinnock Reform. The Kinnock Reform amplified the comprehensive application of decentralisation as an organisational solution for optimising administrative support and coordination within the Commission to previously unknown extensiveness and intensity.

The Kinnock Reform has been adopted and to large parts put into practice until the end of 2004. However, ever after 2004, implementation has been an ongoing process – and often a learning process. This holds true for administrative modernisation in the post-Kinnock phase in general, but also for administrative support and coordination in particular.

¹⁰ Committee of Independent Experts (1999b) 'Second report on reform of the Commission. Analysis of current practice and proposals for tackling mismanagement, irregularities and fraud, 10 September 1999'. Available: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/experts/default_en.htm [2008, 03/27].

Committee of Independent Experts (1999a) 'First report on allegations regarding fraud, mismanagement and nepotism in the European Commission, 15 March 1999'. Available: http://www.europarl.eu.int/experts/report1_en.htm [2008, 03/27].

¹¹ Committee of Independent Experts (1999b), Recommendation 66. Available: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/experts/default_en.htm.

To appreciate the context in which optimising administrative support and coordination functions is currently attempted, the following documents or decisions are of particular relevance:

- To ensure the necessary flexibility in HR allocation, the Commission has systematically redeployed around 1% of available posts through a central pool every year. In most cases, these posts become vacant through natural mobility of staff and are then reassigned to other services.
- The 2007 Screening Report the Commission committed to zero growth of staff between 2009 and 2013 and to lower the proportion of staff working in administrative support and coordination, implying that personnel will have to be redeployed from administrative support and coordination to operational functions.
- The 2008 Screening Report re-emphasised the Commission's commitment to decrease staff in administrative support and coordination and reports that actual staff numbers within administrative support and coordination decreased from 31.8% in 2007 to 31.7% in 2008.¹² Support and coordination functions shall be treated as sources for redeployments and will not receive any net reinforcement.
- A revision of the External Communication function led to the decision to free up 10% of staff working in External Communication for redeployment to new communication priorities or other tasks.

¹² As no absolute numbers are given and considering the fact that the overall Commission staff has still been growing from 2007 to 2008, this reduction does not appear highly significant.

3 Research Design

The European Parliament asked the Chair of Comparative Public Policy and Administration at the University of Konstanz to cover two essential issues in the study about decentralisation: First, the Parliament wanted more information on the extent to which “the decentralisation of the Commission’s organisation” works efficiently; i.e., to explore what we call the organisational level perspective of administrative support and coordination within the European Commission. Second, the Parliament wanted to know how staff and middle management perceive the reality of decentralisation in practice. This aspect refers to the individual level perspective of administrative support and coordination within the European Commission.

Table 1: Staffing in administrative support and coordination functions

Function	Departmental staff	Corporate staff	Total staff
Administrative support	3959 (50%)	3925 (50%)	7884
Documents/Logistic/Security	1778 (50%)	1744 (50%)	3522
Budget/Audit	¹³	403 (12%)	403
IT	1275 (65%)	671 (35%)	1946
HR Management	738 (41%)	1040 (59%)	1778
Internal Auditing	168 (71%)	67 (29%)	235
Coordination	1275 (48%)	1409 (52%)	2684
(External) Communication ¹⁴	604 (35%)	1140 (65%)	1744
Policy Coordination	201 (60%)	134 (40%)	335
Inter-Institutional Relations	168 (63%)	101 (37%)	269
Evaluation	168 (100%)	0 (0%)	168
ABM	134 (79%)	34 (21%)	168

Source: SEC (2007) 530, European Parliament (2007a, 2008)

From the various areas of administrative support (i.e. logistics, budget & audit, information technology, internal auditing, etc.) and administrative coordination (i.e. inter-institutional relations, ABM, evaluation, etc.), two functions have been singled out for a more detailed empirical investigation: Human Resource Management as an administrative support function and External Communication as an

¹³ In the Screening Exercise, the European Commission does not consider the 2915 employees working in operational DGs for Budget and Audit as “administrative support”, since they are considered as intrinsic part of operational processes.

¹⁴ Including the functions Information and Publication.

administrative coordination function. Both functions represent strategically important and personnel intense areas.

Soon after starting our study, namely when preparing the empirical data collection and conducting background talks, the research team had to realise that it would not be possible to carry out a comparative investigation focused on objective and validated organisational data (basically detailed staff numbers) combined with an assessment of standard operating procedures in the areas of interest inside the Commission.

There are several reasons for this limitation. First, it quickly became clear that the research team would not be able to obtain adequate and exact staff numbers – at least not with the needed precision. Second, the research team had no access to staff data or documents other than those publicly available. Originally envisaged research strategies, like participant observation and in-depth documentary analysis of standard working procedures within the area of administrative support and coordination, and in particular Directorates-General, could thus not be applied. Third, readily available international benchmarks against which to measure the standards of decentralised administrative support and coordination within the European Commission do not exist. The only way to benchmark organisational efficiency of administrative support and coordination within the Commission is internally, i.e. by comprehensive comparisons across all Directorates-General and forming “clusters” of Directorates-General with similar mission, resource base and contextual requirements.

From our communication with administrative support and coordination functions managers inside the Commission, we know that such numbers, which are needed to engage in an internal benchmarking exercise with respect to the efficiency of administrative support and coordination functions across the Directorates-General actually do exist. Moreover, in its attempt to improve the efficiency of the use of resources – as expressed by the 2007 and 2008 Screening Reports, among other documents – the Commission is already considering at working levels the implications of conducting internal benchmarking exercises. However, our research team has neither been made familiar with the details of this internal and apparently still ongoing debate nor have we obtained access to the numbers that constitute the basis of the internal Commission discussion.

Under these circumstances, the second-best way to investigate the organisational level of administrative support and coordination within the European Commission was to focus on the crucial stakeholders inside the Directorates-General whose daily work is to deliver administrative support or coordination. After considering our request, many directors of Resource Directorates agreed to meet with our research team and also allowed heads of units responsible for HR and External Communication matters of their Directorates to be interviewed by us.

In April and May 2008, the research team interviewed directors and heads of units in the European Commission's operational Directorates-General. The sample covers representatives from one to four Directorates-General from each internal policy "family", i.e. internal policy DGs 1 (policy, legislation, enforcement), internal policy DGs 2 (policy, legislation, enforcement, programme management, research), internal policy DGs 3 (shared management policies, legislation, programme management) and RELEX DGs (policy and programme management).

Our selected DGs are DG AGRI, DG COMP, DG EAC, DG ENTR, DG ENV, DG ESTAT, DG MARKT, DG SANCO, and DG TRADE. They were sampled on the basis of their affiliation to the respective "families" and willingness to participate in our study, as articulated by the respective Resource Directors. We conducted interviews with nine Resource Directors of the selected DGs¹⁵, eleven heads or deputy heads of HR units, six heads of communication units, and four other heads of units.¹⁶ The results of these interviews are reported in Chapter 4.

¹⁵ In addition, we also had interviews with officials from Resource Directorates of JRC and RELEX. As we only talked to single representatives, these are not listed here. However, we are very grateful for the opportunity to have been able to talk with them and we have of course included the results of our interviews into our considerations presented in Chapter 4.

¹⁶ Among those were heads of Training, Planning and Budget units.

Table 2: Selection of DGs

DG	Number of directorates	Number of units	Number of administrative support and coordination units	Total DG staff
Internal policy DGs 1				
COMP	10	37	3	678
ENV	7	29	4	556
MARKT	8	29	4	430
SANCO	6	36	6	708
Internal policy DGs 2				
EAC	5	27	6	585
ENTR	10	46	4	864
ESTAT	7	40	6	639
Internal policy DGs 3				
AGRI	12	52	6	971
RELEX DGs				
TRADE	9	28	3	446

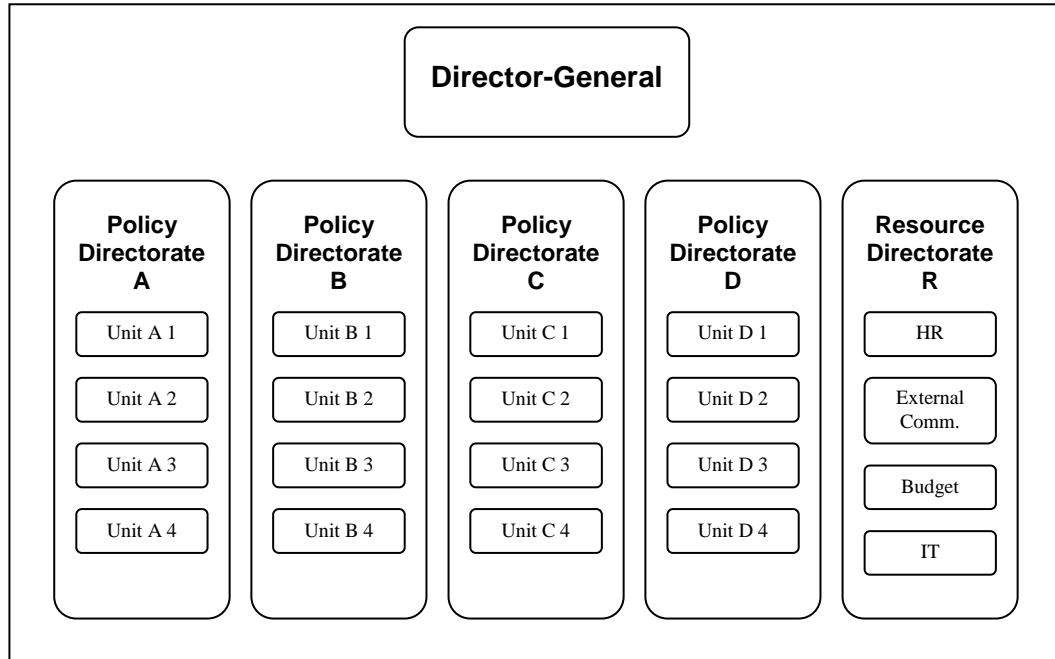
Source: own compilation based on http://ec.europa.eu/dgs_de.htm

The gathering of empirical data as a basis to investigate the individual level perspective of recent decentralisation of administrative support and coordination has been rather straight forward. The task was to ask normal staff and middle managers outside the areas of administrative support and coordination how they personally perceive the quality and efficiency of the current practice of administrative support and coordination within their individual working environments. To this end, the research team interviewed elected representatives from staff unions. Moreover, a survey has been conducted among heads of unit with policy responsibilities in May and June 2008. The staff union perspective and the results of the survey are reported in Chapter 5 of this study.

In sum, this study is based on a simple mixed-methods research design. The qualitative section addresses organisational insiders and consists of a content analysis of available documents and interviews with representatives of decentralised administrative support and coordination functions, as well as background talks with officials from DG ADMIN, DG BUDG, from the Secretariat General (SG) and other bodies (like EPSO). The quantitative section consists of a survey of middle managers and thereby addresses individual perceptions on how administrative support and coordination run in practice.

To illustrate the organisational structure of the DGs, Figure 1 presents an overview of the “typical” and most common arrangements that we found empirically:

Figure 1: Exemplary DG chart



The “normal” HR unit is typically located in the Resource Directorate of the respective DG. From our sample, DG ENTR, DG ESTAT, and DG SANCO have single HR units. DG AGRI and DG ENV combine the HR function with other administrative tasks. DG COMP, DG EAC, DG MARKT and DG TRADE combine HR responsibilities with functions such as financial resources, strategic planning and general management support. Among them, there are in most cases units responsible for Budget or Programming, Information Technology and Document Management.

The constellation is more complex for External Communication. As in our ideal example, many communication units are located in Resource Directorates. However, some DGs directly attach them to the Director-General, or even to policy Directorates. Across the DGs under study, the organisational structures and concrete affiliation of decentral communication units vary strongly. In DG ENTR (“Communication and Information”), DG ESTAT (“Communication”), and DG MARKT (“Internal and External Communication”) the communication units are located in the Resource Directorates. The communication units of the other six examined DGs are attached to other directorates than the Resource Directorate. In

DG AGRI, the External Communication function is assigned to Directorate K (“Relations with other institutions, Communication and Documentation”). In DG COMP (“Communications Policy and Inter-institutional Relations”) and DG TRADE (“Policy Coordination”), the Communication unit is directly attached to the Director-General, as their policies are rather sensitive. In DG EAC, the communication unit (“Communication and Valorisation”) is located in an Operational Directorate (Directorate C: “Culture, Multilingualism and Communication”).¹⁷ In DG ENV, the communication unit (“Communication and Governance”) is located in the Directorate A (“Communication, legal affairs and civil protection”). In DG SANCO, the communication unit (“Institutional Relations and Communication”) is located in Directorate A (“General Affairs”). However, several media officers have recently been moved to line directorates (mainly attached to the Deputy Director-General “Science and Stakeholder Relations” and to Unit B6 “Consumer Strategy, Representation and International Relations”). The results of our investigations are presented in the following two chapters.

¹⁷ This arrangement was implemented only a few months ago, especially to reinforce the “Culture” section in DG EAC and in light of the EAC-led campaigns “European Year of Intercultural Dialogue” (2008) and the “European Year of Creativity and Innovation” (2009).

4 The Organisational Level Perspective

4.1 Theoretical background

Decentralisation and centralisation can be understood as alternative models of organising a public administration. As different modes to structure intra-organisational relationships they are means to an end, i.e. to optimise organisational capacities. Seen from a technical perspective, decentralisation implies the delegation of responsibilities and the provision of appropriate means to fulfil them to organisational units at lower levels in the hierarchy.¹⁸ Decentralisation thus transforms the classical bureaucratic organisation of the public service and decreases hierarchical authority. If optimising functionality alone would be the yardstick, decentralised organisational tasks or functions should be operated on the basis of complete congruence of responsibilities, resources and decision-making powers.

However, seen from the perspective of an organisation as a whole, decentralisation must be accompanied by strengthening horizontal or vertical coordination mechanisms.¹⁹ If no appropriate means for coordination are established, decentralisation may put what has been the very objective of its introduction at risk, namely, the provision of the basis for a better achievement of organisational goals.²⁰

The obvious tension between organisational centralisation and decentralisation in public administrations is complicated by the fact that executive agents naturally operate in a political context. In classical democratic theory, the parliament controls the government and its means to execute public affairs. However, the more the actual tasks of public administrations shift from the visible provision of public goods and services to the planning and coordination of political programmes and policies, the more difficult the wielding of both external (by parliaments or other external actors) and internal control (by managers or politicians at the top) of ad-

¹⁸ Hungenberg, H. (1995).

¹⁹ Lasar, A. (2001).

²⁰ Bullinger, H., et al. (2003).

ministrative behaviour becomes. In sum, decentralisation makes external control as well as internal coordination and management of complex public organisation more difficult.

At the same time, organisational decentralisation has important advantages. The provision of services close to users allows for an unproblematic exchange of complex information. The fast production of more differentiated solutions becomes possible. All this adds to a more efficient use of (decentral) organisational resources. Moreover, the job satisfaction of users and providers of services is thought to be higher at relatively autonomous decentral levels than in strict hierarchical organisational environments. At the same time, the organisational top management is liberated from routine decision taking and information exchange tasks and is thus able to focus on important strategic problems and priorities.

Table 3: Decentral and central organisational solutions in comparison

	Decentral organisational solutions	Central organisational solutions
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flexibility - Differentiation - Swiftness - Optimal use of decentral potentials - Higher motivation of staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integration - Equality - Ease of internal and external control (hierarchy) - Responsibility at the top
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fragmentation - Segregation and isolation of parts of the organisation - Overcharging decentral units - Increasing requirements of horizontal and vertical coordination - Diffusion of responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rigidity of procedures - One-size fits all solutions - Slowness - Wasting resources of decentral units - Frustration of staff

Applied to the present study, one should expect that in HR Management and External Communication trade-offs between decentral and central organisational solutions exist. The following analysis is intended to highlight such trade-offs in the management of these functions as perceived by the central and decentral

stakeholders. The empirical evidence is based on semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the top managers of decentral entities, namely the directors of nine Resource Directorates and the heads of unit responsible for HR Management and External Communication, as well as nine representatives from the Secretary-General, DG COMM, and DG ADMIN. The interviews were conducted on the basis of a standardised questionnaire with mainly open questions during April and May 2008 (cf. Annexes 1-3). The managers were asked to assess their room of manoeuvre in terms of being able to work effectively and efficiently. Moreover, both central and decentral units were asked to assess the quality of current working arrangements and of the division of labour, as well as whether and where they see the need for centralisation of current decentralised management areas.

4.2 Staff allocation in decentral administrative support and coordination

Exact numbers of decentral staff in HR Management and External Communication as located in the Directorates-General have not been made available to the research team. In this respect, the Screening Report also remains inconclusive, as it only allows for conclusions about the numbers of staffing either at an aggregated central or decentral level to be drawn (cf. Table 2).

We nevertheless attempt to provide an estimation of staffing numbers in the areas of HR Management and External Communication across Directorates General. To this end, the research team consulted the annual activity reports of each DG and the directory of the European Commission. Each Directorate General reports the annual number of staff working for “administrative support” on the basis of the activity-based budgeting nomenclature. There is no guarantee that the Directorates-General use “administrative support” in precisely the same definition like “administrative support and coordination” as studied in this report or as reported by the Screening Report. Nevertheless, in our view, these numbers can be taken as a fair first indication.

Based on the short post descriptions that can be found in the directory (e.g. “HRM Assistant” and “HRM officer” or “Press and Media Officer” and “Information and Communication Assistant”), it was thus possible to roughly count the staff in the

areas of HR Management and External Communication. However, it has to be emphasised that an individual post description may be ambiguous or may not mirror the task the respective official currently exercises. This is the main difference from the Commission's own Screening Report which was based on an analysis of current job descriptions and not merely publicly available post descriptions.

Despite this caveat the following table provides a rough picture and enables initial relative comparisons. The research team compiled the numbers of administrative support staff in general from the activity reports from each Directorate General. Our own compilations of HR and Communication staff numbers were then added. To better compare the numbers, the Directorates General are grouped along with their affiliation to a certain DG family (as the Commission itself suggests) in order to compare relative shares of administrative support across DGs with similar missions and tasks.

The numbers point to considerable variance regarding staffing for administrative support in operational DGs. The highest share of staff assigned to administrative support can be detected in the families "RELEX DGs 2" and "Internal policy DGs 3". A possible explanation is that DGs in these families are dealing with programme management that may be quite personnel-intensive.

More interesting are comparisons between the DGs of the same family. In the family RELEX DGs1, for example, DG TRADE has only 9% of its staff assigned to administrative support, whereas in DG DEV, 25% of staff work in administrative support. DG EAC's administrative support staff is 6% above the average of its family – most likely due to the fact that DG EAC fulfils services for the entire Commission (library, organisation of traineeships, etc.). With regards to HR Management numbers, the differences within the family "Internal policy DGs 2" appear greatest. In DG TREN only 2.3% of the staff works for human resource management, while DG ESTAT has twice as much. The staffing in External Communication varies quite considerably across DGs and families. In DG ELARG, 7.3% of the DG staff deals with External Communication, but only 1.4% of the staff in DG TRADE. These discrepancies might be justified as DG ELARG has a clear product and clear target group, i.e. communicating Europe to candidate countries' citizens, which DG TRADE has not. DG ECHO, as another example, has more than twice as much staff assigned to external communication than DG AIDCO.

As DG ECHO operates in humanitarian aid and DG AIDCO in aid to development, these differences might also be explainable considering their different management plans.

In sum, if one takes the compiled numbers at face value, there is significant variation of staff numbers working in administrative support between Directorates General. In some cases, differences can be easily explained. For example, if a DG like EAC provides administrative functions on behalf of the Commission as a whole, it is understandable that it might need more staff working in administrative support. For other differences it is more difficult to find ad hoc explanations. Nevertheless, Table 4 underlines the importance of analysing administrative support and coordination within the Commission and also suggests the usefulness of conducting internal benchmark exercises. What is needed, however, are better validated staff numbers and their precise distribution among areas of administrative support and coordination and Directorates General, respectively.

Table 4: Staffing in administrative support and coordination functions (estimates)

DGs	DG staff	Admin. sup- port	as % of DG staff	HRM	as % of DG staff	External Comm.	as % of DG staff
RELEX DGs 1 (policy)							
DEV	270	65	24.1	12	4.4	12	4.4
ELARG	246	34	13.8	12	4.9	18	7.3
RELEX	654	77	11.8	18	2.8	13	2.0
TRADE	440	40	9.1	14	3.2	6	1.4
Family total	1610	216	13.4	56	3.5	49	3.0
Internal policy DGs 1 (policy, legislation, enforcement)							
COMP	682	76	11.1	14	2.1	16	2.4
ECFIN	509	80	15.7	18	3.5	16	3.1
ENV	545	75	13.8	16	2.9	24	4.4
JLS	424	61	14.4	12	2.8	12	2.8
MARKT	421	69	16.4	11	2.6	16	3.8
SANCO	696	110	15.8	17	2.4	11	1.6
TAXUD	415	40	9.6	10	2.4	9	2.2
Family total	3692	511	13.8	98	2.7	104	2.8
Internal policy DGs 2 (policy, legislation, enforcement, programme management, research)							
EAC	523	110	21.0	10	1.9	20	3.8
ENTR	848	123	14.5	22	2.6	23	2.7
ESTAT	626	87	13.9	29	4.6	12	1.9
INFSO	892	126	14.1	25	2.8	31	3.5
RTD	1328	198	14.9	41	3.1	25	1.9
TREN	914	133	14.6	21	2.3	13	1.4
Family total	5131	777	15.1	148	2.9	124	2.4

Decentralisation following the Reform of the European Commission

DGs	DG staff	Admin. support	As % of DG staff	HRM	HRM as % of DG staff	External Comm.	Ext. Comm. as % of DG staff
Internal policy DGs 3 (shared management policies, legislation and programme management)							
AGRI	997	184	18.5	32	3.2	29	2.9
EMPL	633	99	15.6	22	3.5	19	3.0
MARE	296	69	23.3	6	2.0	15	5.1
REGIO	597	134	22.5	16	2.7	19	3.2
Family total	2523	486	19.3	76	3.0	82	3.3
RELEX DGs 2 (programme management)							
AIDCO	612	115	18.8	42	6.9	15	2.5
ECHO	163	41	25.2	10	6.1	10	6.1
Family total	775	156	20.1	52	6.7	25	3.2

Source: “Administrative support” numbers are extracted from the 2007 “Annex 3 to the Annual Activity Reports - Human and Financial resources by ABB activity” (http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/synthesis/aar/index_en.htm). These numbers do not include coordination functions such as communication and are thus lower than the ten administrative support and coordination functions referred to in the Screening Exercise (Table 2). The numbers for HR Management and External Communication are only “guesstimates”. Numbers were counted on the basis of post descriptions in the European Commission's Online Directory (http://ec.europa.eu/staffdir/plsql/gsys_page.display_index?pLang=EN). As only staffing in decentral HR and External Communication units were taken into consideration, the total number of people assigned to these functions may be even higher if part of the staff for HR management and external communication is placed in another unit of the DG. Note that as other definitions had to be applied, these numbers are not compatible with the Commission's 2007 and 2008 Screening Reports.

4.3 Human Resource Management

4.3.1 Actors and their role and task

Staff working in HR Management are both employed at the central level, i.e. DG ADMIN and administrative bodies like EPSO and PMO, and at the decentral level in the HR units of the different DGs.

As central service, DG ADMIN oversees HR Management in the European Commission and monitors the compliance of the DGs with staff regulations. DG ADMIN is responsible for the design and coordination of the overall HR policy of the Commission covering the internal mobility policy, the training strategy, the promotion procedure and other staff policies. Moreover, DG ADMIN has the central leadership and responsibility for systems and tools related to HR administration and the performance appraisal.

Attached to DG ADMIN are the administrative offices EPSO and PMO who are also dealing with aspects of human resource management. PMO is responsible for the calculation and payment of the financial entitlements of the European Commission's staff. These entitlements include salaries and allowances, reimbursement of experts and mission expenses, health insurance and accident coverage, and pensions and unemployment.²¹ Since 2003, EPSO is the recruitment office for all EU institutions.²² It was set up in order to organise and implement all open recruitment competitions for administrators and assistants as well as contract agents. EPSO provides lists of successful candidates that are available for recruitment to the institutions and closely cooperates with the EU institutions to assess future staff needs. Furthermore, it develops sophisticated selection methods and techniques.²³

²¹ Cf. http://ec.europa.eu/pmo/accueil_en.htm.

²² The European Parliament, the European Council, the European Commission, the Court of Justice, the Court of Auditors, the Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Ombudsman.

²³ Cf. 2002/621/EC.

The decentral HR units at the DG level fulfil a wide array of tasks. The main areas include helping identifying good candidates for all appointments in the DG, organising recruitment processes for vacant positions of contractual agents, overseeing and assisting the performance appraisal exercises (CDR) in the DG, developing certain tailor-made training courses, reporting staff numbers for statistical purposes, and helping to implement Commission-wide HR innovations like flexi-time and telework.

Though precise figures of staffing in decentral HR units over time are not available, it is generally assumed that the Kinnock Reform led to a considerable absolute increase of HR staff in all DGs because HR Management figured as one of the main pillars of the reform. The budget for training was more than doubled with the goal of a more fine-tuned analysis of what each department or official needs and how training can help to deliver that by coaching, internal consultancy or paying external training.²⁴ Thus, each HR unit has now officers for training, organizational development or local guidance in career and mobility matters of the DG staff. The decentral HR units are the access point for other DG units or officials in HR matters. One head of unit summarised the mission of decentral units as follows:

“We act as a channel and facilitator between our operational units and DG ADMIN, we are the first entry point for questions, we prefer to be informed first. If we can’t help, we act as a go-between”.

4.3.2 Empirical findings

4.3.2.1 General findings

How do decentral HR units assess their current room of manoeuvre? The answers differ along the various tasks to be fulfilled. Almost all interviewees appreciate the amount of freedom (and resources) they currently have at their disposal such as tailor-made training or decentral career guidance programs for the staff in their DGs. “*It’s near to an ideal situation*”, one official said regarding this aspect. The majority of decentral HR units is, however, rather dissatisfied with the room of manoeuvre in the area of recruitment. Seven out of nine heads of HR units pointed

²⁴ COM (2005) 668; cf. also Knill/Balint (2007).

out that they are not able to fill vacant posts in their DGs as quickly and as efficiently as they were prior to the Kinnock Reform. In their view, this is mainly due to the fact that competences for pre-selecting external staff (now called contract agents) were centralised to EPSO. As one official put it, “*DG ADMIN as appointing authority is formally deciding, but EPSO is the bottleneck*”. Furthermore, a balanced distribution of officials from the new member states and an appropriate amount of highly qualified staff for each EU institution have to be assured by EPSO, thereby further limiting the autonomy decentral units have to recruit quickly the staff they wanted.

With regard to the assessment of the division of labour between decentral units and DG ADMIN, all interviewees said that responsibilities are clear cut. There is no evidence of overlapping missions and tasks between decentral and central services. “*I know what I can expect from DG ADMIN and I know what they want me to do*”, one official summarised. Neither DG ADMIN nor the decentral units are in favour of centralising certain functions. There are efforts, however, to create a stronger professional exchange of best practices on the basis of horizontal coordination mechanisms. Only leave management was mentioned by a majority of interviewees from decentral units as an area that could better be fulfilled centrally by DG ADMIN. Additionally, most DGs would prefer that DG ADMIN provided central guidance by developing innovative ideas and concepts rather than binding rules. In essence, the interviews indicated that the reporting procedures between decentral units and DG ADMIN are a matter of discussion among both.

In sum, the responses of our interviewees point to two crucial trade-offs. In recruitment, the objective to increase decentral flexibility interferes with centrally coordinated organisational objectives, such as the equal representation of different nationalities and highly qualified staff among DGs and institutions. A second trade-off refers to functional tensions between the autonomy of decentral services and central control by binding rules and regulations.

Statements at a glance:

“There is no point in setting a framework and then being present all the time” (head of decentral HR unit).

“Increasing reporting is not necessarily increasing the information reported” (head of decentral HR unit).

“It is a miracle that EPSO could handle the enlargement the way it did” (director of Resource Directorate).

“When you have more players, you need a stronger captain” (representative of trade union).

4.3.2.2 The trade-off between swiftness and equality

Since 2003, EPSO pre-selects candidates (officials and contract agents) in the aftermath of personnel selection competitions. These (reserve) lists are open to all EU institutions. As soon as a vacant post is published and no suitable candidate can be found internally, decentral HR units consult these lists. Once the HR units identify several candidates they would like to invite for an interview, it is, however, by no means clear whether this person is actually available for hire. The reason behind this is the “flagging procedure”. EPSO “blocks” candidates for certain institutions in order to ensure that first, candidates from the new member states are sufficiently represented among DGs, and second, that all EU institutions have access to the same amount of highly qualified candidates as – obviously – the attractiveness of the EU institutions varies in view of the candidates.

4.3.2.2.1 Lacking swiftness

The flagging procedure is a rather complex process. Only if the candidates get a “yellow flag”, are decentral HR units allowed to contact them. Otherwise, the units have to wait at least three months – in the past often even up to one year – before they can again check if a yellow flagged person has been recruited or not. Sometimes, as one official claimed, units choose ten people from the lists and only three are actually available. Decentral HR units thus have to wait until they receive respective information about the flagging status from DG ADMIN. The flagging procedure was judged by the majority of the interviewees as highly inefficient, arbitrary and frustrating both for them and the candidates. This all leads to a very time-consuming and rigid recruitment exercise.

Rather similar assessments are given about the recruitment of contract agents. Since 2003, contract agents also must pass competitive exams and are then listed by EPSO. Before the Kinnock Reform, each DG dealt with recruitment itself. Nearly all interviewees judged the new formalised procedure as inefficient for recruiting “white collar” contract agents for the purpose they are intended for: to quickly overcome “acute staff shortages at times of intense work” and to “provide additional capacity in specialised fields”.²⁵ Many decentral HR units claimed that they often do not get contract agents with the necessary skills and competences because they had been “flagged” or are no longer available. As a consequence, in the view of the interviewees, working on new policy priorities becomes complicated when neither the internal personnel situation nor the lists provided by EPSO allow for adequate appointments within a reasonable timeframe. According to the interviewees, it can take between six months and four years until a vacancy is filled. “*The recruitment process in the European Commission is by far the most inefficient process I have ever seen in my whole life*”, one official complained.

The situation with respect to the recruitment of “blue collar” contract agents, such as secretaries, is similar. Here decentral HR units must also consult the EPSO lists if they want to fill a vacancy in their DG. As the selection of well-qualified secretaries is highly competitive among DGs, secretaries on the list are usually contacted by various DGs. Consequently, EPSO sends respective candidates for job interviews around on one single day, however, “*with the result that the DG at the end of the agenda does not see any of them*”.

4.3.2.2.2 Equal representation of nationalities and skilled candidates among the institutions

The interviewees acknowledged that EPSO was successful in quickly recruiting officials from the recently acceding member states across all institutions. There is an overall perception that DG ADMIN is well aware of the problems individual DGs have with the flagging procedure. This general assessment notwithstanding, only one official from a decentral HR unit supported the flagging procedure as being “*in the interest of everyone*”, underlining that the disincentive for candidates who probably applied to work in a particular EU institution was exaggerated since

²⁵ Cf. http://ec.europa.eu/civil_service/job/contract/index_en.htm.

candidates, once they start working, in principle can move between institutions at a later stage of their career.

For recruiting contract agents, the representatives of staff associations pointed out that the new selection procedure led to a more equal treatment of this category of staff in comparison to other staff groups. In their view, the selection procedure more explicitly relies upon on scientific techniques and competences and is thus more systematic and professional than before. As every contract agent has to go through the same selection procedure, chances and possibilities to make “a quick deal” were reduced. In sum, the new recruitment procedures are perceived as providing equal treatment and a fair selection of contract agents throughout the Commission and the other EU institutions.

4.3.2.3 The trade-off between differentiation and coordination

When it comes to the question whether DG ADMIN should provide more or less binding guidance, decentral HR managers appear wary. Whereas all interviewed decentral HR managers are in favour of DG ADMIN as a body with advisory guidance, they remain sceptical about DG ADMIN to restrict them in their operational functions. Comments like “*guidance is always welcome in terms of good ideas and best practice*” or “*DG ADMIN should trust the people and let the DGs organise things themselves: give rules and guidance, but no fine-tuning*” reflect this position.

4.3.2.3.1 Coordination

“Functional reporting lines” are currently a matter of discussion between the central services and the DGs in order to reorganise working procedures, or more substantially, reporting procedures among the two. Such “dotted lines” between decentral and central services are a proposal of DG ADMIN in order to foster at decentral levels “professional support and back office services” by central services. One cornerstone of these functional reporting lines is to give “professional advisory capacity” from DG ADMIN to decentral HR units with regard to joint training involvements, professional exchange across Directorates-General. In this context it is thought to establish and encourage the emergence of professional communities within the Commission in view to the communication of good practices. The other pillar of functional reporting lines is that DG ADMIN would act as a

”process owner”, implying “a more pro-active professional leadership role”; DG ADMIN would take ownership for working methods, technical assistance, tools and performance measurement.

Trade unions also favour a stronger role of DG ADMIN in HR management. They point to the Career Development Review and criticise that DG ADMIN lacks sufficient powers to intervene if the CDR is implemented inconsistently across DGs. As a result of these inconsistencies, they have to cope with many complaints about rising inequality of opportunities for individual career developments across the DGs and services. In this context, trade unions rather pointed to the difficulties of the implementation of Human Resource Management policies across the Commission, which was, however, beyond the scope of this study.

4.3.2.3.2 Differentiation

As became clear when conducting interviews, decentral HR units conceived functional reporting lines as a possible asset with respect to the communication of best practices, advices or peer reviews. They are wary, however, that the creation of such lines leads to doubled internal hierarchies because decentral HR units would report to their DG superiors and, at the same time, to DG ADMIN. At the moment, decentral HR units already feel overcharged by reporting requirements – in particular with respect to staff statistics, new appointments and the adherence to Commission-wide standards like the EU-10 criteria and the aim of better gender balance.²⁶ To monitor compliance, DG ADMIN created a respective database. Some decentral heads of unit criticise the bureaucratic workload emerging from these procedures. Although these officials did not question their reporting duties as such, they demand tools for better data management. HR managers, however, also acknowledged that DG ADMIN has already simplified respective procedures to some extent and disburdened decentral managers from red tape.²⁷

4.3.2.4 Tasks that could be centralised

Three out of nine heads of unit did not see any tasks that would better be handled at the central level. At least five interviewees were in favour of recentralising

²⁶ The EU-10 criteria refer to the aim that officials from the ten new member states are sufficiently represented among grades and DGs.

²⁷ Cf. for examples of these actions European Commission (2004), SEC(2007)530.

leave management, while one official was strictly against its centralisation. Leave management, decentralised to the DGs' HR units in the course of the SEM 2000 initiative, was however also the only area where the majority thought that it could be partially recentralised and/or further standardised with the appropriate tools.²⁸ One interviewee saw leave management as *“the biggest problem where we lose a lot of time”*. In his opinion, DG ADMIN could fulfil this task for all DGs with less staff and – in case of appropriate tools to report data from the decentral to the central level – far more efficiently. *“We never understood why it was decentralised”*, he said. The official who was strictly against the centralisation of leave management pointed out that he would miss the contact with the people, as he actually benefits from seeing the whole picture of any reason for leaves directly so that he can contact absentees and take action immediately.

4.4 External Communication

4.4.1 Actors and their role and task

The objective of the Commission's External Communication policy is to provide accurate information and to raise awareness with the European citizens about the European Union's policies and activities. External Communication staff is centrally employed by DG COMM, the Commission's Spokesperson's Service and the representations in member states. At the same time, each DG employs staff in its respective communication units.

In 2006, the central service responsible for External Communication was renamed from DG PRESS (Directorate-General for Press and Communication) to DG COMM (Directorate-General for Communication). Its main task is to inform the media and the general public about the activities of the Commission.²⁹ DG COMM centrally coordinates all contacts with the public and the media in close cooperation with the Spokesperson's Service formally attached to DG COMM. Typically, spokespersons represent particular policy fields and thus must interact

²⁸ This may be due to the fact that at the time when the present study was conducted there was a debate in the DGs on leave management in the aftermath of a questionnaire on that issue sent by DG ADMIN.

²⁹ Cf. http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/communication/index_en.htm

with the responsible DG and its cabinet. DG COMM also coordinates the communication activities of decentral communication units in order to ensure a coherent approach to communication and information throughout the Commission.³⁰ Moreover, DG COMM is responsible for providing web tools, technical support, audiovisual services and communication guidelines for DGs. Further activities comprise the assessment of communication means and contracts, ensuring a better visual communication and shifting the internet strategy emphasis more towards communication (including facilitation of navigation, multilingual websites and a powerful search engine).

Important elements in the coordination process with decentral units are the External Communication Network (ECN) and task-related project teams which foster coordination and cooperation and the exchange of best practices on communication plans, tools and evaluation methods.³¹ The project teams bring officials of DG COMM with officials from operational DGs on single issues and policies together.

Decentral units at DG level who are responsible for External Communication exist for a long time.³² They contribute to the activities in their DG by providing information to interested stakeholders and the general public. They also inform and brief “their” spokesperson. The decentral communication units are thus the “interface” between the operational units in their respective DG on the one hand, and the spokesperson in DG COMM on the other. Communication units also organise events and campaigns and manage the content of different websites, portals and publications.³³ Furthermore, the communication units provide the technical information for the websites. The division of labour here is that DG COMM deals with a news site and the DGs with thematic sites to address a more specialised

³⁰ Cf. http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/communication/index_en.htm

³¹ Cf. also http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/synthesis/amp/doc/comm_amp.pdf (European Commission 2005, European Commission 2007c). The aim of the ECN is twofold: the “exchange of best practices on preparation and implementation of communication plans as well as on current communication practices, and facilitate DG Communication’s assistance to other DGs on technical issues and a more effective and cost-efficient use of tools (...) The ultimate aim is to have clear contact points between DG Communication and DGs” (COM (2005) 985: p. 16).

³² COM (2001) 354: p. 15.

³³ Publications are prepared and ordered by local Communication units and finished in cooperation with the Publications Office OPOCE. Special printing formats and brochures, as one interviewee stated, sometimes have to be done externally if OPOCE is not able to manage every specific request. The area of publication, however, was not the focus of our study.

audience. The feeding of the websites is mainly done from within the DGs, where External Communication units in most cases have webmasters at their disposal. The technical side of websites is very often administered by DG DIGIT. Although DGs are responsible for the content of their website, some of the interviewees stated that they often refer to DG COMM in general issues and cross-DG topics to ensure a coherent communication.

4.4.2 Empirical findings

4.4.2.1 General findings

The assessment of the room of manoeuvre and the division of labour in the area of External Communication differs along the tasks. All interviewees expressed their appreciation of how DG COMM, the Spokesperson's Service and the decentral units communicate to the media. DG COMM does not really interfere and the spokespersons that are formally attached to DG COMM work in close cooperation with decentral communication units and are provided with material by them.

At the same time, however, all interviewees fear that their room of manoeuvre might be cut in other areas. Such concerns emerge from two developments: First, DG COMM strives for a new division of labour where the DGs are responsible for stakeholder communication, whereas DG COMM is responsible for communication to the general public. This would imply that decentral communication units – in particular in larger DGs – lose what they perceive as part of their “traditional” tasks. Second, the Secretariat General and DG COMM push for a concept known as “going local”. This concept implies a strengthening of the representations of the European Commission in the member states by allocating more resources and qualified staff for External Communication to them. Against the background of zero personnel growth until 2013, it is highly likely that this new staffing plan will be realised by allocating existent staff from decentral units to the representations. The College recently decided to free up 10% of decentral staff dedicated to External Communication for reallocation to corporate communication priorities, to the representations and to the general redeployment pool of the Commission. Finally, some decentral units identified areas that could be better fulfilled by DG COMM (namely the webmaster function).

In sum, both the current room of manoeuvre of decentral communication units and the division of labour point to the crucial trade-off between central fragmentation and integration.

Statements at a glance:

“We will not take part in a division of labour where DG COMM communicates for the broad public and we only communicate with stakeholders” (head of decentral Communication unit).

“We need DG COMM for tools, but the content is ours!” (head of decentral Communication unit).

“DG COMM should be more attached to general public, the communication units in the DGs more to the stakeholders of the DG” (DG COMM).

“DGs like to drop off the infrastructural part, but don’t want us to interfere with other tasks. We have to make clear that we are no rivals, but we are in charge of the synergies” (DG COMM).

4.4.2.2 The trade-off between fragmentation and integration I: division of labour

Unlike in other areas of the decentralisation of administrative support and coordination functions in the Commission, the communication function already had strong decentral features. The changes brought about by recent administrative modernisation must therefore rather be seen as efforts to make the communication approach of the Commission more professional, coherent and consistent by providing central guidance.

Three interviewed heads of unit in External Communication frankly criticised DG COMM as being too ambitious in its plans to monopolise the communication to the general public. “*We are the specialists, we should talk to citizens, but DG COMM doesn’t want us to*”, one official complained. Local communication managers welcome a coherent approach to communication but see the role of DG COMM rather as one of an “umbrella” providing guidelines and technical tools and also setting communication priorities for the whole Commission together with the Secretariat General. However, decentral communication managers want to keep what they see as one of their major tasks, i.e. communicating to the general public. They claim that shifting this function to the central level would further increase rather than narrow the distance between DG activities and European citi-

zens. Visibility and transparency would become lost. While another three interviewees accepted the envisaged division of labour in theory, they pointed out that in practice no clear line can be drawn between communication to stakeholders and communication to the general public and thus a sound delineation of decentral and central communication competences has been difficult. DG COMM should restrict itself to service provision for decentral units and basically bring in its process knowledge (organising conferences and events, audiovisual services, running contracts, etc.).

Interviewees were principally in favour of DG COMM providing a common, consistent and coherent editorial approach to External Communication. This implies, for instance, that DG COMM should develop a common graphic framework for websites, a good search engine for the whole Commission and technical guidance for the server of the European Commission's website. Three interviewees would like DG COMM to act as a "service provider" or back office for (technical) web support and the provision of infrastructure giving the websites a "*general public flavour*", i.e. a corporate identity. Yet, political messages of the DGs and contacts to the people (public) interested in the activities of the DG should remain close to the services. "*If the communicator is too far away from what is being done, nobody is able to communicate*", one official summarised his point. Officials from DG COMM agree with DGs keeping the leading role in the communication of policy contents. There is no doubt that decentral units have better knowledge of the particularities of "their" policies as a central unit. However, they point out that in the project teams, the coordination between DG COMM and decentral units functions well – implying that sound mechanisms of transferring decentral information in sufficient quality to central level is possible. "*We (DG COMM) try not to be too directive vis-à-vis the DGs, we try not to formalise too much*", one official said.

However, DG COMM emphasised that it sees its role in anticipating the priorities of External Communication for the European Commission and to channel communication activities more coherently. In this regard, it refers to the 2001 "White Paper on European Governance"³⁴ that emphasised that "the institutions and member states need to communicate more actively with the general public on

³⁴ Cf. COM (2001) 428.

European issues”.³⁵ DG COMM’s demand for a greater role has recently been underlined by the Communication on “Communicating Europe in Partnership”.³⁶

In sum, the set-up of DG COMM has brought about a moderate specialisation which sets DG COMM against decentral External Communication units that want to keep their traditional comprehensive communication function. This implies a challenge for the division of labour between the new DG COMM and the External Communication units.

4.4.2.3 The trade-off between fragmentation and integration II: resource allocation

The decision to free up 10% of decentral communication staff to corporate communication priorities, to the representations in the member states and to the general redeployment pool has been met with resistance from some managers of the decentral communication units. One official pointed out that, if implemented, 10% less communication staff in his unit would mean that policy units would have to fill the gap, thus reducing the Commission’s abilities in these areas. Another official commented:

“The 10% cuts are dishonest: first, we are encouraged to increase our communication personnel, and then, those DGs who increased their personnel have to face the heaviest cuts. That’s not fair”.

In this context, he underlined that his DG was engaged in pursuing the strategy “to create a European public sphere”³⁷ as a response to the failed referenda in the Netherlands and France. This meant re-allocating personnel from within the DG to the communication function. Another official said that he supports the efforts of DG COMM to provide technical guidance and to set overall priorities. DG COMM, by contrast, stressed that the 10% cut would not mean re-centralisation, but simply implies better use of the available resources. In this context, one official emphasised the strong need to reinforce the representations with communication specialists, particularly in the new member states.

³⁵ Cf. COM (2001) 428: p.11, emphasis in original.

³⁶ Cf. COM (2007) 568 and 569.

³⁷ Laid down in the “Plan D for Democracy, Dialogue and Debate”, COM (2005) 494: p.2.

4.4.2.4 Tasks that could be centralised

In the opinion of three out of six heads of unit in External Communication, DG COMM should take over the webmasters and provide all technical, logistical, graphics services and audiovisual media centrally. As a consequence, all websites should be run by DG COMM. Additionally, officials said that DG COMM could even take over technical tasks DGs are forced to outsource for a lack of resources, e.g. website construction, web righting and maintenance. One official of a decentral unit said, however, that the centralisation of webmasters would mean huge administrative efforts, for DG COMM cannot possibly know the policy fields as well as the decentral DG webmasters. For him, it made more sense to have the webmasters in the DG, *"because they reflect on the topics and don't just type them in. In DG COMM the error ratio and the resulting coordination efforts would be higher"*. Another official emphasised that if one eliminated the webmasters in the DGs, one will have difficulties in keeping the websites up to date. In his opinion, *"it would be more difficult for somebody in DG COMM to know what's important as opposed to webmasters attached to the content units of the DGs"*.

Officials from DG COMM were rather critical about centralising webmasters. They see the fact that it is not easy to harmonise the external appearance and changing *"the strange practice to have as many web appearances as DGs"* with webmasters in the DGs. However, if DG COMM had to take over the webmasters from the DGs, it would overstrain their capacities. *"The result would be (the then DG COMM's) webmasters sitting in the DGs and detracting their business continuity"*, one official said.

4.5 Comparing Human Resource Management and External Communication

The preceding analysis of perceived trade-offs in the management of Human Resources and External Communication indicates crucial similarities and differences between these two functions.

In both cases, decentral units do not feel overburdened by their tasks and the amount of freedom they have to fulfil them. They advocate for even more room of manoeuvre (recruitment in HR) or, at the very least, they defend the current state-of-the-art (division of labour in communication). In both areas, guidance of the central services is welcome in terms of circulating good ideas and professional techniques but beyond this, greater roles of the central Directorates-General, i.e. DG ADMIN or DG COMM, are opposed. Surprisingly, in both functions there are special tasks decentral units want to hand over to the central services. However, these are technical, routine operations like leave management and the management of websites (webmaster).

In contrast to the positive assessments of the current state of the art at decentral levels, central services are not satisfied to a similar extent with the current division of labour. In HR Management, the set up of EPSO can be seen as a successful strengthening of the central HR functions vis-à-vis the decentral units and equal representation of nationalities via the recruitment process has been strengthened. In External Communication, DG COMM continues to strive for more tangible influence and resources and for a clearer division of labour as regards the communication to the stakeholders and the general public.

In essence, the trade-offs in HR Management and External Communication point in two different directions for the allocation of staff between central and decentral units. Allocating further External Communication staff from central to decentral units is out of question. This, as it is seen, would certainly lead to a further fragmentation of communication activities in the Commission. Allocating staff from the operational DGs to DG COMM and the representations is, however, one possible evolution. While decentral units will try to defend the status quo, DG COMM will strive for a further integration of communication activities.

A possible reallocation of staff from the decentral to the central level or vice versa must, however, be seen in the *context of zero growth* of personnel until 2013 to which the European Commission has committed itself in the 2007 Screening Exercise. Accordingly, in the document the Commission

“[...] endorses the decision to maintain stable staffing once all enlargement-related personnel are integrated, with no requests for new posts for the period 2009-2013 and commits to meet new staffing needs in key policy areas exclusively through redeployment within and between departments”.³⁸

Thus, the special and atypical situation of setting up new posts due to the EU-10 and EU-2 enlargement will come to an end in 2009. The SG and DG BUDG will undertake a new allocation of resources against the background of highly prioritised policies like, for example, energy policy and climate change, migration, as well as the Lisbon agenda and its consequences. Consequently, the SG and DG BUDG will demand DGs to reallocate staff and resources on operational activities in compliance with the new priority areas. The areas of administrative support and coordination have already been singled out for areas where “rationalisations” will be conducted and staff redeployed.

Within the DGs, managers are aware of the implications emerging from these needs. Only two Resource Directors were rather optimistic with regard to the challenges to come: The situation in their DGs is different due to the fact that their DGs are likely winners because they are coping with issues of high political priority. The other seven out of nine Resource Directors emphasised that redeployment from administrative support and coordination functions to policy functions will be a challenging exercise, as the workload of their Resource Directorate is – at the same time – unlikely to decrease. Some directors said that they will try to save posts by streamlining internal working procedures or by reducing currently vacant positions. Others pointed to the trade-off that cutting staff would imply a recentralisation of functions to the disadvantage of delivering service locally in the DGs. “*We have to be consequent: you can’t decentralise and responsabilise DGs and then cut staff at the same time*”, one director added.

³⁸ SEC (2007) 530: p.3.

5 The Individual Level Perspective

This chapter investigates individual level effects of the decentralisation of administrative support and coordination functions in the European Commission. The focus is how middle managers in policy units and representatives of staff associations perceive and assess recent organisational change – in particular within the areas of HR Management and External Communication.

5.1 Method

Chapter 4 reported results of interviews with directors and heads of unit responsible for administrative support and coordination within the Commission in selected Directorates-General, i.e. the “provider” side. In the present chapter, the focus is on the “clients” of administrative support and coordination. Therefore, we sampled heads of unit who have policy responsibilities according to the organisational charts of the Directorates-General. The idea behind such a focus is simple. To assess how decentralisation works in practice, the perception of those who “consume” administrative support and coordination services in their daily work is of crucial importance.

In order to construct a representative sample, we used a Probability Proportional to Size (PPS) Cluster Sample method.³⁹ In a first stage, we identified twenty-three DGs⁴⁰ broadly concerned with policy-making. Among these DGs and services, we selected all policy-related Directorates as clusters. From these clusters, we identified units of analysis by calculating the median of the number of units per Directorate, which equalled four. The number of units per Directorate ranged from two to eight. Thus, for each Directorate with four units or fewer, we randomly selected

³⁹ Cf. Schnell, Rainer / Hill, Paul B. / Esser, Elke (2005): *Methoden der empirischen Sozialforschung*. Munich: Oldenbourg. p. 279ff; and Yeo, Wee Teck (2005): *Probability Proportional to Size (PPS) Cluster Sampling: Application in the Military Setting*. International Military Testing Association Papers. www.internationalmta.org/Documents/2005/2005134P.pdf

⁴⁰ AGRI, AIDCO, COMP, DEV, EAC, ECFIN, ECHO, ELARG, EMPL, ENTR, ENV, INFSO, JLS, JRC, MARE, MARKT, REGIO, RELEX, RTD, SANCO, TAXUD, TREN, and TRADE.

one head of unit from the Internet Database of the European Commission.⁴¹ For each Directorate with five or more (up to eight) units, we randomly selected two heads of units for our interviews.⁴² 193 heads of unit were sampled and received our request to participate in a survey on the practice of administrative support and coordination functions within the Commission via E-Mail between 23 May and 15 June 2008. Eventually, 88 interviews were conducted, implying a response rate of 45.6%.

We used a questionnaire of seven closed and two open questions (cf. Annex 4). Most questions were about HR Management and External Communication. In order to control for potential differences between HR Management and External Communication and other administrative support and coordination functions, we also included IT support and Programming as well as Budgeting in our questions.

We basically asked three types of questions: (1) scaled questions where interviewees were asked to indicate intensities or impacts on a scale from one to ten, (2) categorical questions where interviewees could choose among answer options, and (3) qualitative questions where interviewees were asked to indicate important changes or functions. Type 1 questions are analysed on the basis of means and median values, type 2 questions are analysed with frequency distributions.⁴³

41 Cf. http://ec.europa.eu/staffdir/plsql/gsys_page.display_index?pLang=EN

42 In some cases, more heads of unit were willing to participate than those randomly selected. We included these interviews in our descriptive analysis. When it comes to inferential statistics, however, those interviews would have to be excluded to guarantee representativeness.

⁴³ Although type 1 questions could also be analysed with frequency distributions (grouped frequencies along the scale scores from 1 to 10), we focus on Means and Medians because we consider those measures as clearer and more transparent. For all results presented in this Chapter, 'n' refers to the number of interviewees who answered the question, the 'Mean' indicates the average of all scores given, the 'Median' indicates the number separating the sample in two halves of the same size (with 50% of the responses in the higher, and the other 50% in the lower half). Thus, a median of e.g. 7 indicates that 50% of all interviewees termed a score higher than 7, while the other 50% termed a score lower than 7. The 'Variance' (Var) refers to the dispersion of the scores given, averaging the squared distance of the observed scores from the mean. High values indicate a high degree of dispersion, while low values indicate a low degree of dispersion and thus a greater accordance of interviewees in scores given. The 'Standard Deviation' (StD) is defined as the square root of the variance, thus also indicating the dispersion but with the advantage of having the scores in the same units as the original variable and therefore being easier to interpret.

5.2 Survey results

5.2.1 Assessment of the impact of decentralisation on daily work

Question 1: Throughout the last decade, administrative modernisation has led to a decentralisation of management functions like HR Management and External Communication or IT support. They are now fulfilled within special units of your DG and at central level. For example, in HR many issues are now tackled quite autonomously by colleagues “locally” in your service. Similar divisions of labour exist in the other administrative support and coordination areas.

How would you assess the impact of this decentralisation of management support functions on your own work in the following areas?

Interviewees were asked to evaluate on a scale from 1 to 10, thereby indicating whether decentralisation had not affected their own work (score 1) or decentralisation had affected their work to a large extent (score 10). The higher the scores, the larger the perceived effect of decentralisation on the work of heads of unit is. The rationale behind this starting question is to find out about the perceived importance of administrative support and coordination functions for the heads of unit.

Figure 2: Results Question 1

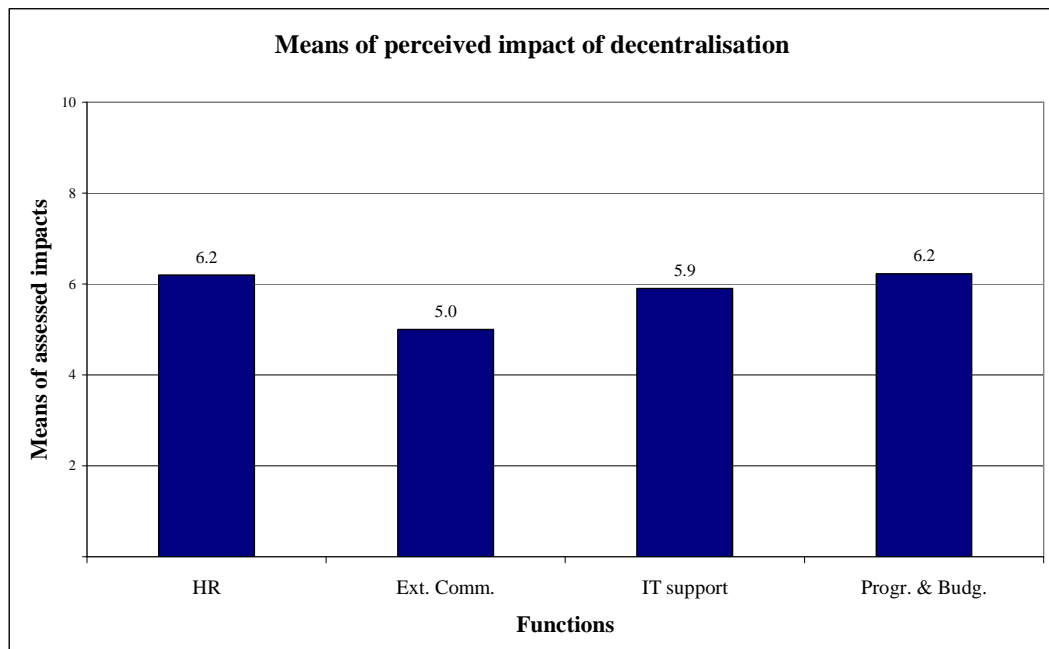


Table 5: Results Question 1

Measure	HR	Ext. Comm.	IT support	Progr. & Budg.
n	78	80	79	79
Mean	6.2	5.0	5.9	6.2
Median	7.0	5.0	6.0	7.0
StD	2.3	2.5	2.8	2.6
Var	5.3	6.4	7.6	6.9

The result is clear as the values above 5 indicate the heads of unit perceive the impact of recent decentralisation of administrative support and coordination in the areas of HR Management, communication, IT support and programming and budgeting as very important for their work. The highest scores (and the lowest variance) are measured for the HR function. The median of 7 indicates that 50% of all interviewees scored 7 or higher. This general judgement, however, is to some extent weakened by the fact that – as our interviewees report – some heads of unit have not been in their current position long enough to be able to judge developments over time. This problem of long-term assessments notwithstanding, our findings underline the overall importance heads of unit generally attribute to the decentralised administrative support and coordination functions for their individual work.

5.2.2 Importance of local management support units

Question 2: In your experience as manager of your unit, how important is it for you to have local management support units within your own DG as opposed to have these management functions carried out only in a centralised body or at a central level?

Interviewees could choose among four options:

0= “It is very important to have officers in my own DG”

1= “I prefer to have them at the central level”

2= “Neutral”

3= “Don’t know”

Figure 3: Results Question 2

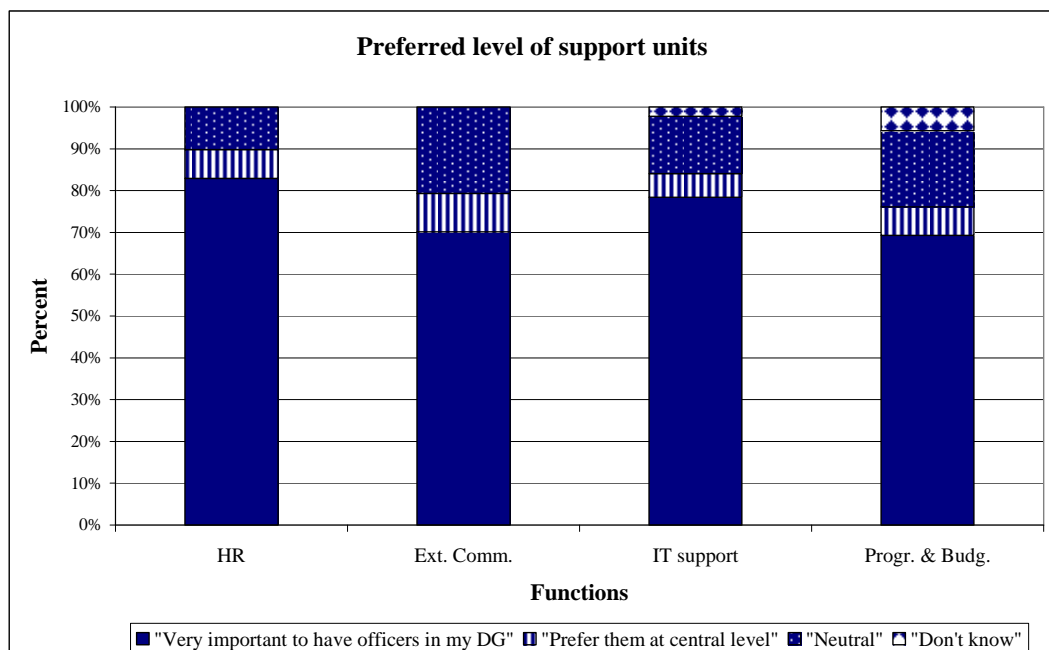


Table 6: Results Question 2

Categories	HR	Ext. Comm.	IT support	Progr. & Budg.
n	88	87	88	88
0 (very important to have officers in my DG)	83.0%	70.1%	78.4%	69.3%
1 (prefer them at central level)	6.8%	9.2%	5.7%	6.8%
2 (neutral)	10.2%	20.7%	13.6%	18.2%
3 (don't know)	0.0%	0.0%	2.3%	5.7%

The answers to this question reveal a clear tendency. Middle managers attach a high value to having administrative support and coordination services provided at the decentral level. Frequencies vary across the functions. However, a vast majority of heads of unit prefers service provision within their DGs. It is important to note that the decentral provision of HR Management services receives the highest score. In comparison, the provision of local services of External Communication is judged to be of lower importance. This lower support, together with high scores in the category “neutral”, indicates that not all policy units interact to the same intensity with External Communication as it is the case for HR Management, i.e. the numbers mirror the fact that the salience of the HR function is higher than that of External Communication.

5.2.3 Intensity of contact with local and central services

Question 3: In your experience as manager of your unit, how would you assess the intensity of your professional and direct contact with responsible LOCAL services of management support on a scale from 1 (hardly ever contact) to 10 (intense contact)?

Question 4: In your own experience how would you assess the intensity of your professional and direct contact with responsible CENTRAL services in the areas of management support on a scale from 1 (hardly ever contact) to 10 (intense contact)?

Interviewees were asked to choose on a scale from 1 to 10, thereby indicating whether they have hardly ever contact with their decentral (Q3) or central (Q4) support services (score 1) or whether they deal intensively with the services (score 10). The higher the scores, the more intense the contact with the respective service is.

Figure 4: Results Questions 3 & 4

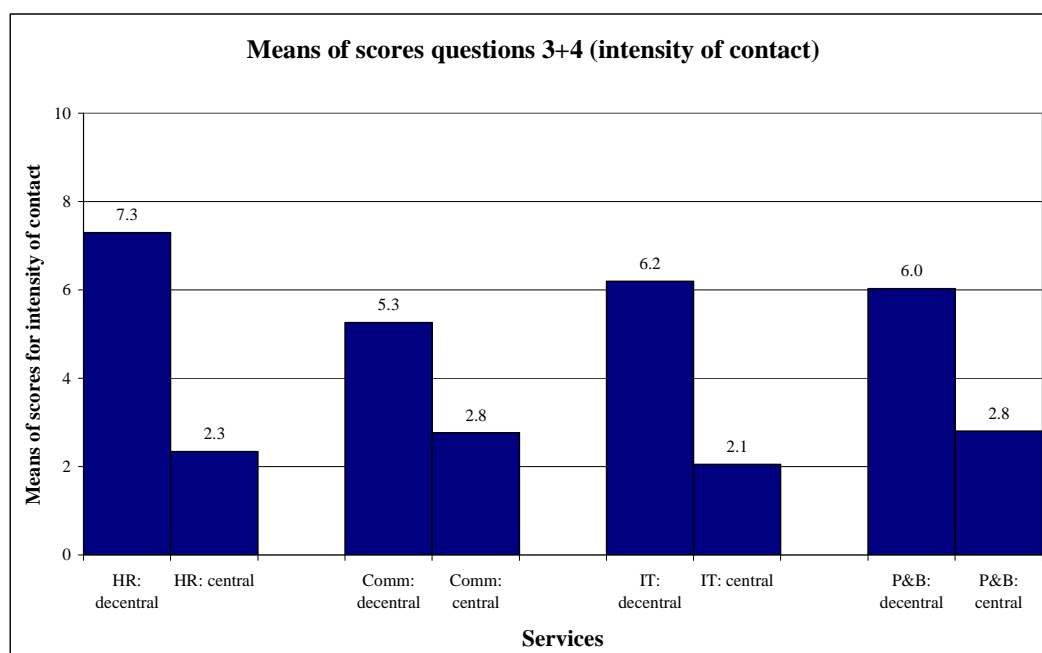


Table 7: Results Questions 3& 4

Measure	HR		External Communication	
	Decentral	Central	Decentral	Central
N	88	88	88	88
Mean	7.3	2.3	5.3	2.8
Median	8.0	1.5	6.0	2.0
StD	1.9	2.0	2.1	2.0
Var	3.6	3.9	4.4	3.8

Measure	IT Support		Programming and Budgeting	
	Decentral	Central	Decentral	Central
N	87	87	87	87
Mean	6.2	2.1	6.0	2.8
Median	7.0	1.0	6.0	2.0
StD	2.2	2.0	2.6	2.2
Var	4.9	4.1	6.3	4.7

The results indicate that across all functions, middle managers perceive the intensity of contact with decentral units as very high and very low with central units (cf. Medians of 6 and 8 for the decentral units versus Medians between 1 and 2 for the central services). The results support promoters of decentralisation insofar as the established system seems to work as envisaged. Higher scores in working intensity with central units would have to question the practicability of the present division of labour between decentral and central levels in administrative support and coordination functions.

5.2.4 Trends in perceived efficiency

Question 5: If you compare the current way the division of labour between central and local services concerning management support is organised in the Commission with the situation some years ago: In your personal opinion, have standard operating procedures become more efficient than in the past?

Try to distinguish between the various areas of management support.

Interviewees could choose among the following options:

0= "More efficient"

1= "Less efficient"

2= "About the same"

3= "Don't know"

Figure 5: Results Question 5

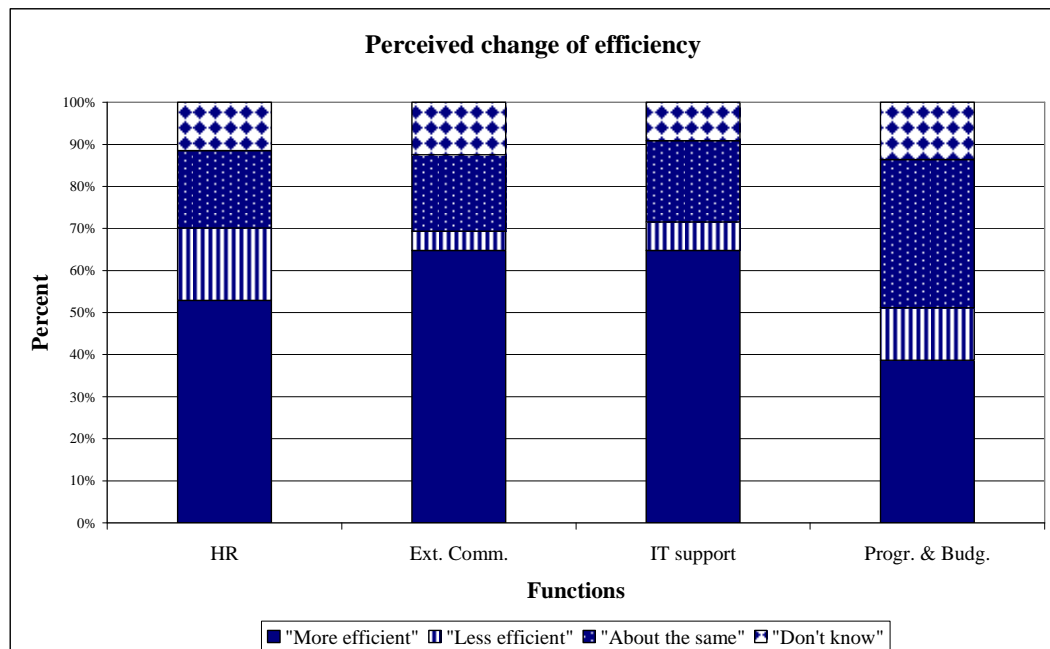


Table 8: Results Question 5

Categories	HR	Ext. Comm.	IT support	Progr. & Budg.
N	87	88	88	88
0 (more efficient)	52.9%	64.8%	64.8%	38.6%
1 (less efficient)	17.2%	4.6%	6.8%	12.5%
2 (about the same)	18.4%	18.2%	19.3%	35.2%
3 (don't know)	11.5%	12.5%	9.1%	13.6%

Question 5 taps into how heads of unit perceive recent changes with regard to administrative support and coordination functions. Have ways of doing things become more or less efficient from their perspectives? For HR, External Communication and IT support, the majority of interviewees perceive standard operating procedures to have become more efficient. However, in the area of Programming and Budgeting, those who see the present as more efficient than the past are in the

minority. Reform promoters may see it as a consolation that in the area of Programming and Budgeting about 35% of the interviewees perceive neither progress nor regression.

The division of labour between decentral and central level and the resulting efficiency of standard operating procedures in all functions appear to leave considerable room for improvement. Slightly worrisome are the almost 20% who say things in HR management have gotten worse. Furthermore, that the HR function received – relatively – the worst marks indicates that the clients of HR services appear to be not completely satisfied with the current state of the art.

5.2.5 Overall opinions on decentralisation

Question 6: The opinions about the effects of the recent decentralisation of management and support functions are divided. Some think this kind of decentralisation was very positive since it brings necessary support services closer to where they are really needed. Others fear that the dispersion of technical expertise and resulting higher coordination needs between the services and central units offset these advantages. What is your personal opinion?

Interviewees could choose among the following options:

- 0= “I see Decentralisation rather positive”
- 1= “I see Decentralisation rather negative”
- 2= “Neutral”
- 3= “Don’t know”

Figure 6: Results Question 6

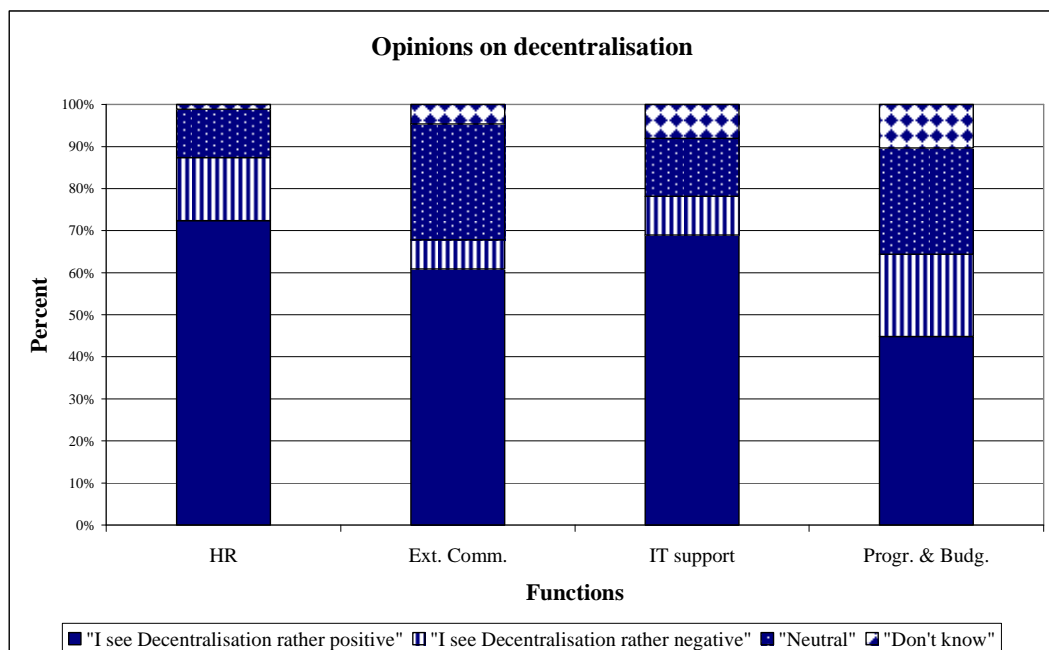


Table 9: Results Question 6

Categories	HR	Ext. Comm.	IT support	Progr. & Budg.
N	87	87	87	87
0 (I see Decentralisation rather positive)	72.4%	60.9%	69.0%	44.8%
1 (I see Decentralisation rather negative)	14.9%	6.9%	9.2%	19.5%
2 (neutral)	11.5%	27.6%	13.8%	25.3%
3 (don't know)	1.2%	4.6%	8.1%	10.3%

The overall trend emerging from the assessment of the value of decentralised administrative support and coordination functions is clear: Managers see decentralisation as a positive development. In particular, HR Management decentralisation is judged positively by more than 70% of the interviewees. The lower support for the decentralisation of the communication function may point to some problems there but can also be explained by the fact that the intensity of interaction is less pervasive – as almost 30% of neutral opinions indicate. From the four functions used as stimuli for the survey, Programming and Budgeting again appears, in relative terms, to be the most problematic. Nevertheless, more than 40% see decentralisation in these areas also as positive.

5.2.6 Proposals for change

Question 7: If you were to reorganise management support, how would you change the current system in the HR management and External Communication?

In which area should then your local unit or a central services play a greater role?

We asked this question on HR Management and External Communication functions separately. Interviewees were asked how, if they could, they would change the current system in HR Management and External Communication, respectively.

Interviewees could choose among the following options:

- 0= “Further decentralisation”
- 1= “Re-centralisation”
- 2= “Leave it like it currently is”
- 3= “Don’t know”

If interviewees chose the options 0 or 1, they were asked in which area their local support unit (if they had answered 0) or the respective central services (if they had

answered 1) should play a greater role. This part of the question was qualitative, i.e. interviewees should simply name the specific areas or tasks.

The results for the first – the quantitative question – are as follows:

Figure 7: Results Question 7

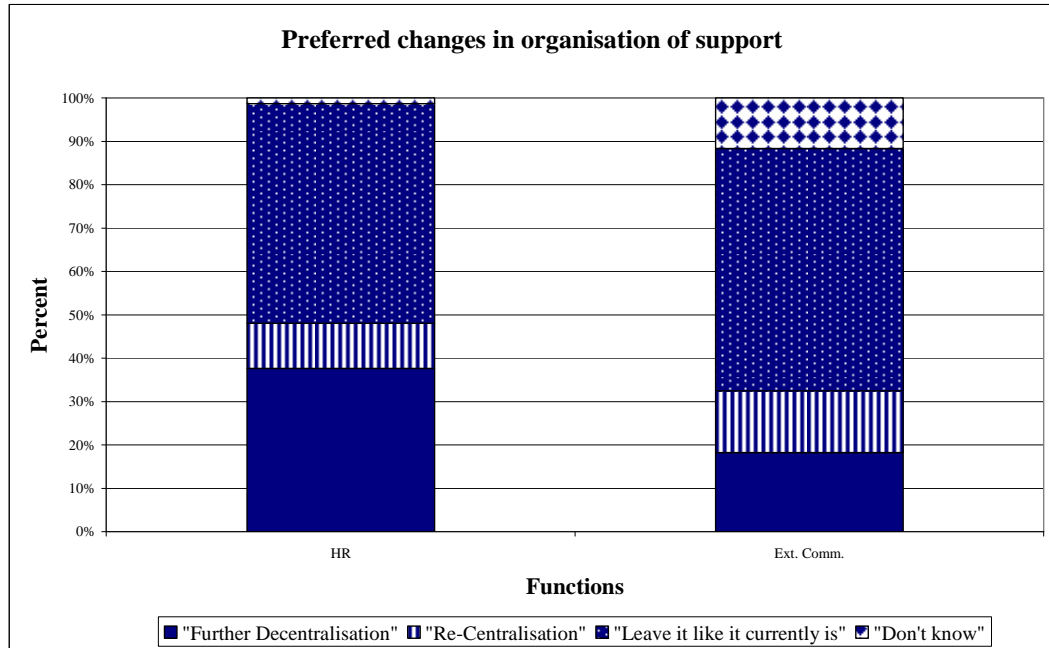


Table 10: Results Question 7

Categories	HR	Ext. Comm.
N	77	77
0 (further decentralisation)	37.7%	18.2%
1 (Re-centralisation)	10.4%	14.3%
2 (leave it like it currently is)	50.7%	55.8%
3 (don't know)	1.3%	11.7%

In HR Management and in External Communication, a clear majority of interviewees wants to leave things as they currently are; they neither want further decentralisation nor a re-centralisation. However, in HR Management, more than 35% of our interviewees have a preference for further decentralisation, while for communication only 18% prefer this option. Only a small group, by contrast, wants to re-centralise HR Management or External Communication (10% or 14%, respectively).

In the second part of Question 7 we asked those who wanted further decentralisation to specify where exactly they see the need to do so. Those interviewees who opted for re-centralisation were also asked where exactly they see the necessity to

do so. As we asked these questions in both areas – HR Management and External Communication – we can now compare the answers in four fields.

Table 11: Reform options

HR Management	Option 1 Further decentralisation	Option 2 Re-centralisation
External Communication	Option 3 Further decentralisation	Option 4 Re-centralisation

Option 1: Further decentralisation in HR Management

28 heads of unit want further decentralisation in HR. 17 indicate the area of recruitment. They want more flexibility to handle resources for personnel. 10 wanted more flexibility and independence from DG ADMIN in general terms. One head of unit indicated training as an area of further decentralisation.

Option 2: Re-centralisation in HR Management

Eight heads of unit want more centralisation. Three want DG ADMIN more closely involved in staff matters. Three indicate recruitment for an area of re-centralisation. One head of unit wanted the harmonisation of CDR centralised, another training and leave management.

Option 3: Further decentralisation in External Communication

11 heads of unit want further decentralisation in External Communication. Five of them stated that they would like their DG to communicate more specific, DG-related topics because of the expertise located there. Three heads of unit would in general prefer more autonomy for their DG in communication tasks. Two heads of unit want more decentralised competences with respect to external users, another one wants to decentralise IT support completely.

Option 4: Re-centralisation in External Communication

10 heads of unit see the need for re-centralisation in External Communication. Eight say the coherence of communication (speaking with one voice) has to be improved. One head of unit points to the need that contracts should be managed

centrally, one head of unit refers to cross-cutting issues which should be recentralised.

In sum, with respect to HR Management, 17 of 28 interviewees who preferred further decentralisation opt for a greater role of their decentral support unit in recruitment and wish for more flexibility in personal resources. 10 of 28 interviewees also opted for more flexibility and independence from DG ADMIN in general. From those interviewees preferring re-centralisation, three out of seven would prefer DG ADMIN being closer to staff, while two wanted a stronger role of DG ADMIN in terms of recruitment.

Concerning the External Communication functions, five out of 11 interviewees preferring further decentralisation wanted their local communication unit to have a greater role in communicating specific topics. Of those in favour of recentralisation, eight out of 10 want DG COMM to foster the coherence of communication, having the Commission “speak with one voice”, as many indicated.

5.2.7 Assessment of changes due to reforms

Question 8: Thinking over your time in the Commission, what have been the most important changes that you have experienced in the area of management support?

One or two most important POSITIVE changes:

One or two most important NEGATIVE changes:

This question was designed to give interviewees not only the opportunity to articulate general assessments of the reform processes (as in Questions 5 and 6), but also to state one or two major changes they view as positive, as well as those they view as negative due to the reform process. This question resulted in a vast list of mentioned tasks of which the most frequently named are presented here.

As most important positive changes, 30 of 73 interviewees who responded to this question named Human Resources, and here especially training. 17 of 73 respondents see the IT support as another positive change due to the decentralisation. 12 of 73 are satisfied with the additional responsibility they and their DGs gained in the process of decentralisation, as well as 10 of 73 who expressed their contentment with the transparency assigned to the budget and programming cycle.

Among the most important negative changes, 17 of 75 complained that the administrative effort in general has grown bigger than in the past. 10 of 75 are unhappy with the reports and control standards established due to the decentralisation processes. Two groups of respectively eight and seven interviewees, mention the recruitment process and the “Career Development Review” as most important negative changes.

These results confirm observations from our qualitative interviews presented in Chapter 4, but support also implications of other questions in this survey. Overall, we can state that the HR and External Communication function indeed pose certain problems (e.g. recruitment) but are perceived on the whole as rather unproblematic, with middle managers being relatively satisfied with the decentralisation in this field with respect to the impact in their own working environments (30 of 73 mentioned HR and training as a whole as the most important positive changes, the highest score of all nominations). Decentralisation of IT support is also perceived as a positive development by many interviewees. However, there are complaints about the administrative efforts in total as well as reporting and control standards.

5.3 The position of staff representatives

We also wanted to provide information about what is the perception of “normal” staff about the decentralisation of administrative support and coordination functions. For this purpose we interviewed representatives of staff associations under the assumption that staff representatives have an intimate knowledge about the actual concerns of rank and files in the context of administrative modernisation. We conducted semi-structured interviews with staff representatives from different unions.⁴⁴

Staff representatives are deeply concerned about the in their view negative effects of the Kinnock Reform in general. They complain that their influence has been reduced and that staff representatives are sidelined and not properly consulted in staff matters or even when rules concerning staff are modified. One representative

⁴⁴ Including Renouveau et Democratie, Union Syndicale, the European Civil Service Federation (FFPE) and the Association des fonctionnaires indépendants (TAO-AFI).

complained about the reforms as a “jump into the unknown”. In addition, almost every interviewee was concerned about the loss of power of DG ADMIN in staff-relating processes and matters. In this context, the staff representatives complain that the Kinnock Reform has, in their view, augmented existing trends towards “compartmentalisation” in the Commission, i.e. that the application of rules as well as the evolving cultures of staff policy and career patterns increasingly diverge between DGs. From staff representatives’ perspectives, this fragmentation leads to an unequal treatment of staff across DGs – in particular with regard to the chances of career planning and promotion. On the one hand, staff mobility, particularly across DGs, is an essential condition for promotion. On the other hand, those employees who switch across DGs are penalised, as they “are the last in the queue” in their new DG. All representatives underline the negative effect the Kinnock Reform has on the motivation of administrators and assistants.

5.3.1 Recruitment and EPSO

Most of our interviewees were rather satisfied with the installation of EPSO and welcomed it as an institution to ensure equal treatment of candidates. As one representative indicated, EPSO put an end to the practice of recruiting “friends of friends” as contract agents and brought more transparency into the recruitment process. In addition, some representatives underline the need for a European Civil Service rather than institution-specific staff. However, most of our interviewees also acknowledge problems and limitations in the work of EPSO. The “flagging procedure” is perceived by most of them as intransparent and problematic for candidates, as they are not informed of being flagged.

5.3.2 Role of DG ADMIN

Staff Associations are unified in their complaints about a declining importance and power of DG ADMIN due to the decentralisation process. They emphasise that they have major problems identifying responsible managers they can address in staff matters. They criticise the lack of mechanisms to force HR staff in DGs to take the opinions of staff associations into account. They consider the current situation, in which they are typically referred to DG ADMIN, as highly subopti-

mal because as a result of the decentralisation, DG ADMIN – in their view – plays a rather marginalised role in many matters of interest to staff representatives.

5.3.3 Decentralisation in general

Representatives of the staff associations support a stronger coordinating role for DG ADMIN – also because decentralisation means that staff associations have to interact in staff matters with virtually all Directorates-General individually, whereas in the past they could focus on DG ADMIN as their principal interlocutor. The new diversity has thus weakened staff associations' means to support rank and files because they do not have the organisational potential to keep up an intensive and comprehensive dialogue with a variety of Directorates-General.

“Our social dialogue is with DG ADMIN, but they lost importance; often don't have time and means to control. Decentralisation relies very much on fair minds. The Kinnock Reform has clearly led to a shift of power: the views of Staff Associations tend to be less consulted”.

“We would wish a mechanism for Staff Associations which would keep HR people in DGs from not talking to us. DGs say “You talk to DG ADMIN, not to us”: we are lacking the counterparts”.

Staff representatives are thus clearly in favour of a re-centralisation of different administrative support and coordination functions, especially concerning HR Management. In their view, the Kinnock Reform augmented existing trends towards “compartmentalisation” in the Commission, i.e. that the application of rules and the evolving cultures of staff policy and career patterns increasingly diverge across Directorates-General. From staff representatives' perspectives, this fragmentation leads to an unacceptable level of unequal treatment of staff. The decentralisation of administrative support and coordination is thus taken as a synonym for the Kinnock Reform writ large. In line with their preference for a stronger role of DG ADMIN, representatives of staff associations perceive decentralisation largely as negative. They support the re-centralisation of different functions, especially concerning HR, but also budgeting and programming.

5.4 Interpretation

While managers see a rather substantial impact of decentralisation on their daily work, they also perceive the division of labour between central and decentral service and support units as clear-cut. In addition, a majority is rather pleased with the way these administrative support and coordination arrangements are currently organised. Moreover, middle managers prefer to interact with decentral administrative coordination and support service providers.

Middle managers perceive current standard operating procedures in all administrative support and coordination functions focused in the survey as more efficient than in the past – except for the programming and budgeting function. Consistent with this assessment, the general esteem for decentralisation is also high in HR Management, External Communication and IT Support, but significantly lower in Budgeting and Programming.

One explanation for this variance may be that decentralising HR Management, External Communication and also IT Support provides middle managers of operational units mainly with the tools and support to better fulfil their daily work. By contrast, although the decentralisation of Programming and Budgeting decentralises more responsibilities, it also brings along stronger accountability duties in terms of ex-ante impact assessments, monitoring and ex-post evaluations. Obviously, consequences of the decentralisation of administrative support and coordination functions and the more widespread consequences of the Kinnock Reform cannot always be differentiated in a strict way.

6 Interpretation and Recommendations

6.1 Contextual interpretation

The decentralisation of administrative support and coordination functions has a long history within the European Commission. Its origins can be traced back before the start of the recent modernisation of internal administration known as the Kinnock Reform. In particular, the SEM 2000 and MAP 2000 initiatives – launched at the end of the 1990s – partly decentralised HR Management. Various initiatives to strengthen organisational capacities to communicate with the public – intensified in the context of accession negotiations and as a reaction to the rejection of the Treaty of Maastricht and the Treaty of Nice – also led to the expansion of press and information units at the level of DGs over the 1990s. However, the Kinnock Reform amplified the already existing trend of decentralising administrative support and coordination in HR and External Communication and spread it to other administrative support and coordination functions.

6.1.1 Decentralisation as a panacea?

At first sight, it is a puzzling question why decentralisation as a principle to reorganise administrative support and coordination functions within the Commission has been so pervasively applied. The answer lies in time pressures and the ambitious agenda pursued by the reformers around Neil Kinnock. Put simply, decentralisation of administrative support and coordination emerged as a standard principle of reorganising the European Commission because it was considered linked to the individual empowerment and accountability of each Director-General.

Despite little systematic reflection about possible side effects of using decentralisation as a comprehensive mode of organisational reorganisation, one reason why decentralisation of administrative support and coordination had such irresistible appeal can be seen in the fit of this option with other central elements of the Kinnock Reform, for example the responsabilisation of the Directors-General and the new internal accounting system. This overall fit appears to have prevented re-

formers from asking questions and seeking systematic ex-ante assessments of the pros and cons of specific decentralisations in the areas of administrative support and coordination.

Despite such contingencies in the context of its introduction, top civil servants in HR Management are satisfied with the current division of labour among decentral and central levels. However, they see deficits in the area of recruitment. Managers at the decentral level would like to have greater room of manoeuvre, in particular with respect to filling vacancies with new staff from the reserve lists and with contract agents. As the single most problematic area managers point to “flagging” requirements, i.e. the reduction of availability of candidates on the reserve lists due to considerations of balanced representation of nationalities and highly-skilled staff across and within individual EU institutions.

6.1.2 Decentralisation and its trade-offs

Two trade-offs emerging from decentralisation could be identified. First, decentral managers complain about cumbersome procedures (even as compared to the time prior to decentralisation) and point to their own superior potential to manage more quickly and efficiently. This illustrates existing divergent opinions of managers with respect to the value to be attached to (decentral) swiftness and (centrally provided) legitimacy (namely to bring about a balanced stratification of officials from EU nationalities within and among the EU institutions). The second trade-off in HR Management refers to decentral differentiation abilities and central attempts to foster horizontal coordination.

Considering organisational and also contextual change in the two areas in more detail, the picture gets more complicated. With the creation of EPSO and PMO, the general decentralisation trend is cushioned also in HR Management. Moreover, the Kinnock Reform itself is based on concepts from the New Public Management movement. Attempts to centralise steering potential at the top of the organisation thus come as no surprise. A major instrument to provide clear-cut lines of internal responsibility and accountability is the “responsibilisation” of the administrative top management, i.e. the Directors-General. The enhanced and more visible responsibilities also brought greater powers to top-level bureaucrats. The

Directors-General are responsible for whatever happens in their DG. The corollary of this pervasive administrative responsibility is that the individual Director-General has at the same time become the ultimate organisational authority within a particular service. With respect to the administrative support and coordination sectors, this means that functional decentralisation goes hand in hand with the further strengthening of the powers of the Directors-General, i.e. in a further centralisation at the level of DGs in all but in word.

6.1.3 Decentralisation and efficiency

A central yardstick to assessing the quality of current decentral arrangement in the areas of administrative support and coordination is organisational efficiency. Lacking objective data to establish an assessment, the perceptions of the managers working within administrative support and coordination nevertheless provide valuable insights. It is important, for example, to underline that none of the managers interviewed pledged to require more personnel in their decentral units. Quite the opposite, some managers frankly admitted that the current system of decentralisation in the area of administrative support and coordination is probably more costly and more resource-intensive than the more centralised status quo ante. However, they point to the added value of decentralisation in terms of client satisfaction and staff motivation. “Diseconomies of scale” – especially within small- and medium-sized Directorates-General – can nevertheless be suspected. It remains impossible however, to locate them precisely because the Commission refrains from sharing its internal information on the exact distribution of personnel in the area of management support and decentralisation.

Another important observation is that managers in decentral HR Management and External Communication expect that current internal debates on how to handle the commitment for zero growth in Commission personnel after 2009 will lead to demands to cut and redeploy staff from the administrative support and coordination functions in general. Within the Commission – with the obvious exception of those actually working in the administrative support and coordination functions at decentral level – the view that decentralisation went too far and that slack in the decentralised support and coordination functions is to be slashed and redistributed to priority areas is even more popular.

Turning from the perspective of the insiders to the “clients”, i.e. those middle managers who need administrative support and coordination services in order to do their job, the picture is very uniform and stable. Our survey data show that decentralisation has important impacts on the professional life of middle managers occupied with policy responsibilities. Decentralisation of administrative support and coordination is thus an objectively important feature in the internal life of the Commission as an organisation.

In this regard, it is important to highlight that a vast majority of middle managers consuming support and administrative services appreciates having decentral management arrangements. Among middle managers, decentralisation gets excellent approval rates. More than 80% of the managers in HR and more than 70% of those in External Communication assess the functionality of the current decentralised arrangement as very positive. The thrust of the answers is very consistent across areas and across individual questions. Decentral units are those to whom they regularly address and they are those which they see as most competent. In their opinion, there is room for improvement, especially in the HR function, however, the division of labour between central and decentral units in HR and External Communication by and large works satisfactorily.

It is important to note that the survey data paints a less positive picture in what we summarised under “programming and budgeting”. That the survey data is actually able to show consistent variation in the answers of our interviewees is, first and foremost, important because it underlines that the individuals taking part in the survey distinguish between the given stimuli. Our results thus cannot be rebuked as artificial effects. Posing questions about “programming and budgeting” together with “IT” as areas of decentralised administrative support and coordination services outside the focus of this study thus helps us to learn something about relative differences.

Despite legitimate objectives to increase organisational efficiency and actively seek a comprehensive rationalisation in the areas of administrative support and coordination, it must be underlined that a basic target of decentralisation has been achieved: Clients appear generally very satisfied with the service provision of the decentral units. Those focusing efficiency gains via redeployment of staff in decentral administrative support and coordination units have to place an appropriate

value on the approval rates of those consuming decentrally provided management support services.

6.1.4 Reform scepticism

The survey impressively underlines something the research team encountered also during the talks with middle and top managers in the decentralised administrative support and coordination functions: a certain fatigue and scepticism with respect to administrative change. Asked about options of optimisation, the majority of middle managers wishes to leave things as they currently are; 53% with regards to HR Management, and 56% with regards to line managers in External Communication. In other words, the clients and consumers of decentrally provided administrative support and coordination services want to preserve the status quo. 34% suggest further decentralisation for HR Management; although only 17% do so with respect to External Communications. However, only small minorities wish to see more centralisation in these areas in the future. The picture is clear: A majority wishes to leave things as they are, with perhaps increased decentralisation in specific areas, but without further organisational overhauls or any re-centralisation.

6.1.5 The bottom-up view

The decentralisation of administrative support and coordination functions are matters of intra-organisational re-structuring. The point here is that, in theory, the HR function may be completely reorganised but an individual official who wants to participate in training or looks for a professional leave may still fill out the same forms and hand them over to the same desk as before the reorganisation. Organisational changes may be bold but may remain barely visible to the rank and file. Such considerations led us not to interview rank and files directly on issues of administrative support and coordination, for it would be highly arbitrary whether or not an individual would be in a position to meaningfully answer our questions – at least if a sample logic is applied.⁴⁵ The alternative, which is practicable and yet provides meaningful data, was to address to representatives of staff associations.

⁴⁵ The methodological solution would be to construct samples or to increase the potential numbers of individuals to be included in a sample. Given restrictions in time and resources, such strategies could not be applied.

The logic behind this selection is simple, as rank and files with problems can be assumed to address to “their” representatives in order to seek more favourable decisions. Representatives of staff associations can thus be assumed to be quite familiar with problematic issues of internal organisational importance. To be sure, staff representatives are usually only addressed by staff in the case of problems, but hardly ever when things run smoothly. This special role of staff representatives should be taken into account.

Staff associations support a stronger coordinating role for DG ADMIN because they perceive the effects of decentralisation of administrative support and coordination within the Commission as negative. Staff representatives are clearly in favour of a re-centralisation of different administrative support and coordination functions, especially concerning HR Management. Staff representatives complain that recent administrative modernisation has weakened the means to support staff, for general associations’ possibilities to influence organisational decisions were generally reduced. In their view, the Kinnock Reform augmented existing trends towards “compartmentalisation” in the Commission, i.e. that the application of rules and the evolving cultures of staff policy and career patterns increasingly diverge across Directorates-General. From staff representatives’ perspectives this fragmentation leads to an unequal treatment of staff, thereby increasing the influence of pure chance (i.e. in which DG one happens to work) on officials’ careers. Despite a few exceptions, our interviewees from staff associations generally considered decentralisation of administrative support and coordination to be a synonym for the responsabilisation, i.e. for the empowerment of Directors-General, and thus for Kinnock Reform writ large.

6.1.6 Administrative change and changes in inter-departmental resource competition

In general, the Kinnock Reform sought to turn the Commission from a classical Weberian administration into an administration coined by the New Public Management agenda, i.e. oriented towards a business administrative culture. Prior to this, internal organisational management was a matter of distributing resources among the Directorates-General in order to implement political priorities. The focus can be classified as input steering. Today, objectives are agreed upon in

advance, the Directorates-General commit to fulfil them and on the basis of an interactive exercise, resources are ideally allocated accordingly – with objectives and processes being subject to a variety of ex-ante appraisals, monitoring reports and ex-post evaluations. Essentially, the current procedure is designed as output steering.

We do not make any claim based on our empirical data on how the new procedure works in practice. It appears, however, that based on a fair summary of observers' comments that the programming and planning cycle currently not lives up to its ideals (Levy 2006; Bauer 2008). In principle, the change from input steering (the classical Weberian bureaucracy) to output management (the New Public Management mode) disproportionately affects the administrative support and coordination functions.

This is so because according to the new “activity-based” resource allocation system, the link between internal administrative activities and policy outputs has to be made clearer. When this link is clearer and when the resources come closer to essential policy outputs, it is easier to justify them, as well as to keep or even expand them from one programming cycle to another. In other words, the change from input management to output steering – brought about by the Kinnock Reform – changed the incentive structures inside the Commission services.

This inflicts a new logic of resource competition across Directorates-General and also between central and decentral units in the area of administrative support and coordination. Administrative routine work has thus (further) lost esteem, as such tasks are often difficult to “sell” as essential in the activity-based management approach. This bears the danger of a suboptimal division of labour between central and decentral units because managers are disincentivised to take on such routine tasks.

This consideration points to an explanation for a puzzling result of our empirical investigation. While decentral units are generally wary to lose competences and resources to central units, they seem to be happy to give up some specific tasks like web management or the organisation of leave management. However, the central services sometimes appear to have little interest in taking on such purely technical tasks of low salience.

From this it follows that according to the logic of input steering, those watching over crucial organisational resources, in essence over personnel, are in a pivotal position to influence organisational politics. In the era of output steering, those responsible for the budgetary process are the crucial actors.

6.1.7 The current room for reform

The status quo enjoys great overall support. As a remedy for current organisational stress in the area of decentralised management support and coordination, neither centralisation nor the creation of more formalised horizontal cooperation between DGs of the same family appear to be realistic in the context of the current regime of responsabilisation of Directors-General. Although operational problems are not denied, the clients of decentralised services in the DGs, as well as the managers of the decentralised services themselves, support the current state of affairs. The “clients” appear very satisfied with the status quo and some even recommend further decentralisation. The managers are aware of overcapacities on the one hand and coordination problems on the other. The organisational issues at stake, however, would, in the opinion of the manager, not easily be solved even if a complete centralisation were to be implemented. DG ADMIN pushes for the so-called DG families’ solution. That would mean that service level agreements would have to be fostered and implemented in specific areas of coordination in order to reap potential synergies among (probably small to medium sized) DGs. However, how exactly such a “softer” coordination could be organised in the “hard” organisational hierarchy of the Commission is still an open question. Currently, only voluntary agreements between DGs seem to be a feasible option. However, having to stick to such purely voluntary agreements will probably limit the potential benefits in terms of reliable horizontal coordination. The overall high support for the status quo suggests only smooth reform developments as a realistic option to improve the current state of affairs.

The new decentralised structures are affected by growing burdens of control, justification, and possibly new forms of horizontal coordination and reporting procedures. In this situation, managers in decentralised management support and coordination, and in particular the responsible top management, have incentives not to play entirely with “open cards”. Rather, they are encouraged to “overprotect” by

hiding and waiting. This new culture is highly rational, for in this time of dynamic and unpredictable organisational change, openness might be penalised (by losing resources). While from the perspective of the organisation such penalisation might be logical and efficient, the individuals see them as denigration of their efforts and work and thus try to avoid them. Therefore, sensible and fair mechanisms for the reallocation of resources have to be designed – along the lines of the systematic redeployment every year of around 1% of available posts through a central pool which has been put into place – in order to accommodate individual with organisational incentives.

6.1.8 The impact of the status quo ante

A central feature of the decentralisation of administrative support and coordination functions in the areas of HR and External Communication is the fact that the status quo ante coins the nature of some of the inter-service differences which we could detect. For example, even before the Kinnock Reform the services were told to invest more personnel into External Communication. In particular, the bigger DGs have been assembling relatively large decentral communication units. With the transformation of DG PRESS into DG COMM and the redefinition of its role, these personnel resources were put into the spotlight – although they have been results of demands in the past. To put it bluntly, if a DG complied with past demands and “invested” more in its decentral communication function, perhaps sacrificing other priorities, and as a result of such painful decisions, the same DG is now asked to give up personnel in order to be re-allocated to a other service (or the missions abroad) because of a relative “overweight”, this may create tension and mistrust.

However, one thing is obvious. Precisely because the Kinnock Reform has increased the danger of a “pillarisation” (“silo problem”) as it strengthened organisational autonomy at the level of individual Directorates-General, a new culture of trust and an overarching sense of a common mission and vision is needed if organisational deficits deriving from differentiation, segregation and delineation are to be overcome. Good examples are the created networks of HR managers and communication managers (RRH and ECN) that foster horizontally the exchange of good organisational practices.

Not to be misunderstood, the quickly changing tasks and their complexity require differentiation and decentralisation. The challenge therefore is not to exaggerate internal competition between parts of the organisation. At the end of the day, such internal competition, its organisation and the monitoring do come at a high price. The challenge that lies in the finding of a new balance between decentral and central provision of services in the area of administrative support and coordination may well be a test case. Whether or not the Commission is able to strike the right balance and to creatively and productively accommodate the diverging interests involved is of greater importance than merely sorting out problems of decentralised administrative support and coordination. It may provide answers to the pending question whether the Kinnock Reform has enabled the Commission to rationally manage its internal organisational challenges, or, as critics have it, whether the Kinnock Reform has set the stage for organisational paralysation and disintegration.

6.2 Recommendations

Before presenting recommendations, a qualifying remark appears to be in order. The topic of this study – organisational efficiency in the decentralised administrative support and coordination functions within the Commission – is one where the Commission itself has become active. With the exception of those interviewed as consumer of service provision from administrative support and coordination, all involved actors – our main source of information – have thus understandable interests in the issues at stake and their individual assessments have to be treated with due caution. The point is that before this study started, the agenda within the Commission – also encouraged by the European Parliament – had already been set for identifying potential for “rationalisation” within the Commission’s administrative support and coordination functions. Thus, our data collection was conducted while options for reorganising the administrative support and coordination function were being internally discussed and decisions were being prepared within the European Commission. It is difficult to analyse the internal functions of a public administration without the agreement and support of the organisation in question. This reality has implications for the assessment of the reliability of the data collected as the basis for our interpretation. The particular circumstances of conduct-

ing this study have thus to be kept in mind when assessing the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1: The European Commission should be encouraged to develop differential concepts for optimising the use of administrative support and coordination functions. In HR Management, the cooperation between decentral HR units, DG ADMIN, and EPSO should be reviewed in order to foster more efficient, swift and adequate recruitment procedures. Possibilities to consolidate the generally well working decentralised status quo by reducing frictions emerging from centrally demanded targets should be further explored. By contrast, given the risk of harmful consequences of fragmentation in External Communication, a greater need for centrally or horizontally organised coordination across Directorates-General exists in this particular area.

In a complex organisational environment, neither complete decentralisation nor comprehensive centralisation appears to be a viable option to reach optimal performance in areas of intra-organisational interdependence. Decentralisation is no one-size-fits-all solution for all administrative support and coordination functions. The trade-offs at stake have to be analysed in view of the very different operational logic and organisational need of each function. It depends on the exact nature of a task or part of a task – like in the case of recruitment procedures compared to training arrangements in HR Management –, at which level, or in which horizontal arrangement an optimal balance between effectiveness and efficiency can be reached. Therefore, the Commission should be encouraged to continuously look for ways of optimising the system. Different organisational concepts of decentralised service provision with respective hierarchical or technical assignments should be further explored.

Recommendation 2: The European Commission should be encouraged to review the use of resources and the current division of responsibilities between decentral and central organisational levels in all areas of administrative support and coordination. Reviewing missions and definitions as well as operationalisations of the division of labour between central and decentral service provision in each area of administrative support and coordination appear necessary.

In this study two administrative support and coordination functions, i.e. HR Management and External Communication, have been reviewed in closer detail. The division of labour in HR Management appears to work satisfactorily; more problems in terms of an open struggle over competences and resources between decentral and central service providers prevail in the area of External Communication. Casual information about problems in other support and coordination functions – in particular Logistics and Programming and Budgeting in combination with the Commission's own intention to pursue further the possibility of rationalisation of activities in the administrative support and coordination areas – suggest to review the allocation of resources and staff in all administrative support and coordination functions.

As an essential part of this review and before engaging in a debate on whether or not levels of resources or staff are justified in specific functions at specific organisational levels, the Commission may want to clarify missions, definitions of tasks and responsibilities, and provide consistent operationalisations as yardsticks to measure performance within the particular administrative support and coordination functions at decentral and central levels.

Recommendation 3: The European Commission should provide continuously a precise picture of staffing in all administrative support and coordination functions. In this context, the Commission's annual Screening Reports should comprise relative as well as absolute staff numbers of all administrative support and coordination functions respectively for each Directorate-General and Service. As this information has been already the basis on which to draft the respective sections in the recent Screening Reports, the Commission should be encouraged to present these numbers for the years 2007 and 2008, well in advance of the next screening exercise.

Optimising the internal organisation of a public administration is only possible in close cooperation with the institution in question. A common understanding of current organisational deficiencies and an accurate analysis of risks and chances of various options are thus necessary. However, in the case of administrative support and coordination functions within the Commission, the informational basis appears either not available or the Commission is not inclined to share it because such information are considered as of purely internal character. A precondition for

open debate is, however, the exchange of available information about the issues at stake – inside the Commission and also in view of the Commission’s relationship with the European Parliament. In this context, more transparency on behalf of the Commission would be helpful.

Recommendation 4: As comparability to any other public organisation will probably remain out of reach for some time to come, the Commission should be encouraged to develop appropriate yardsticks for comprehensive and meaningful internal benchmarking exercises as a basis for assessing and eventually improving organisational efficiency and effectiveness in the areas of administrative support and coordination.

Conducting internal benchmarking exercises with a focus on internal comparisons across all Directorates-General or across comparable Directorates-General appears an indispensable element of any sustainable strategy to continuously improve the existing system of administrative support and coordination. Also central services like DG ADMIN and its offices or DG COMM and the representations should be included in such internal benchmarking exercises in order to validate comprehensively the efficiency of current working arrangements in the European Commission.

Recommendation 5: Fair and effective mechanisms to ensure the alignment of individual managers’ incentives with that organisational objective are needed. That means, for example, that some of the efficiency gains from cooperative managers should remain in their unit or Directorate-General and not entirely in an anonymous organisational pool or purpose.

In the given organisational context of zero personnel growth after 2009, it becomes essential to be able to prioritise resources allocated to the administrative support and coordination functions. In order to do so, central and decentral services engaged in the provision of administrative support and coordination should cooperate to clarify responsibilities and set negative priorities. Overall targets – like the 10% cut in the area of decentral services responsible for External Communication, as the Commission itself is suggesting – may be a suitable way to set appropriate incentives.

However, appropriate incentives have to be given to the Directorates-General and to individual managers in the areas of administrative support and coordination so that they positively and actively support optimising processes. Managers at central and decentral levels have to be convinced of the legitimacy of the exercise so that they do not “hide” important information and “wait for the next organisational reform wave”. Fair but effective mechanisms for creating synergies and for re-allocating resources across Directorates-Generals have to be developed. “Effective” means that flexible and changing demands in administrative support and coordination must be met. “Fair” means that those who once followed organisational decisions to “invest” more in administrative support and coordination are now not penalised by a cut in resources without compensation. Fairness and effectiveness must also be provided in the future. To prevent Directorates-General from exploiting informational asymmetries, there must be appropriate incentives for those who cooperate. That means for example that “economies” made within an administrative support and coordination function in a particular DG should not be completely distributed somewhere else but, to a considerable extent, should remain within the respective Directorate-General. Otherwise, managers and top management of administrative support and coordination within a particular Directorate-General have little motivation to cooperate sincerely.

Recommendation 6: The approval of the current state of the art by internal consumers of decentralised administrative support and coordination functions deserves to be taken into due consideration. Maximising organisational efficiency should not reduce the achieved effectiveness of current solutions in this respect.

Consumer or clients of decentralised administrative support and coordination functions show high esteem for the current state of the art. This is a very positive achievement of the decentralisation of administrative support and coordination. It deserves to be taken seriously as a real asset which has to be preserved in the upcoming revisiting of the division of labour and delineation of responsibilities between decentral and central providers of administrative support and coordination.

Recommendation 7: The Commission should be encouraged to regularly collect, and in more detail than is currently done in the staff opinion survey, the perception of the staff as to how effective and efficient the system of administrative support and coordination is conceived.

Staff opinion surveys can detect differences across individual functions and are an important element in permanently optimising administrative support and coordination. If taken seriously, such differences – as could be detected in the survey conducted for this study – pose important question as to why this may be so. The survey conducted in this study has shown how much useful comparative information can be quickly assembled. Survey questions have to be constructed so as to allow the collection of meaningful information. As such, the survey can provide insight into how things can be improved. At any rate, the survey can be used as antennae to detect dissatisfaction and disengagement. Insofar as dissatisfaction and disengagement are interpreted as indicators for underlying deficits, the Commission may want to make greater use of it also in the area of administrative support and coordination.

Recommendation 8: If further reform of administrative support and coordination will be decided, staff – not only managers, but particularly rank and file – must be actively convinced of the need for further reform. Reform options and implementation decisions reached have to be communicated in order to enhance ownership among staff and thus the chances of successful implementation of a potential change agenda.

Any revision of the administrative support and coordination functions must seriously consider that Commission staff – regardless of whether directly working within administrative support and coordination or whether merely consuming administrative support and coordination services – expressed what can be called a “reform fatigue”. Recent administrative changes have been comprehensive and are not yet “digested”. Particularly the rank and files – not only the middle and top management – must be convinced of the importance of improving administrative support and coordination functions, hence to improve the internal communication on these issues.

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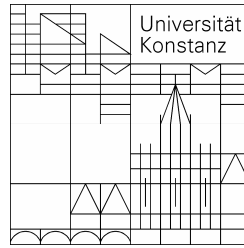
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Annex 1: Questionnaire for Resource Directors



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Questionnaire

RESOURCE DIRECTORATE

Resource Director

Interview Number:	
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- I. Introduction
- II. Role and tasks of your Directorate
- III. Your views and experiences concerning work-sharing arrangements
- IV. Looking forth: actual discussions and prospects
- V. Conclusion

II. Role and tasks of your Directorate

1. How would you define your role as Resource Directorate in your DG?
2. Where do you see the role of your Resource Directorate in the administrative governance of support functions vis-à-vis the central DGs?

III. Your views and experiences concerning work-sharing arrangements

3. When you consider the different ASCFs in your Directorate, can you differentiate between areas where responsibilities are clear, and areas where they are rather ambiguous?
4. When you consider the different ASCFs in your Directorate, can you differentiate between areas where your room of manoeuvre is big enough, and areas where you probably wish more room of manoeuvre?

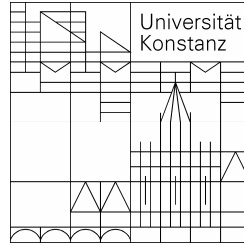
IV. Looking forth: Actual discussions and prospects

5. The Commission is committed to zero personnel growth until the year 2013. Against this background, what does this limitation imply for your Resource Directorate?
6. In your Directorate-General as a whole, do you see or discuss certain strategies to compensate for this budgetary pressure on the staffing in the DG?
7. What do you think of the idea of having DG Families and a joint management of certain ASCFs?
8. Do you see any function currently exercised by your Directorate that could be better fulfilled by central services?

V. Conclusion

9. Is there anything you would like to remark additionally?

Annex 2: Questionnaire for heads of HR units



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Questionnaire

RESOURCE DIRECTORATE

HoU Human Resources

Interview Number:	
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- I. Introduction
- II. Role and tasks of your unit
- III. Your views and experiences concerning work-sharing arrangements
- IV. Suggestions for the future
- V. Conclusion

II. Role and tasks of your unit

1. Could you shortly outline the main tasks of your unit?
2. Recruitment
 - 2a. What is your role and what is the role of DG ADMIN?
 - 2b. Is there any area in recruitment, where you wish more room of manoeuvre?
 - 2c. Is there any area in recruitment that could be better fulfilled by DG ADMIN?
3. Staff appraisal
 - 3a. What is your role and what is the role of DG ADMIN?
 - 3b. Is there any area in staff appraisal where you wish more room of manoeuvre?
 - 3c. Is there any area in staff appraisal that could be better fulfilled by DG ADMIN?
4. Other tasks (please name)
 - 4a. What is your role and what is the role of DG ADMIN?
 - 4b. Is there any area where you wish more room of manoeuvre?
 - 4c. Is there any area that could be better fulfilled by DG ADMIN?

III. Your views and experiences concerning work-sharing arrangements

5. How would you define the current role of DG ADMIN in HR Management?
6. How appropriately does DG ADMIN fulfil this role in your view?
7. Do you have the impression that the responsibilities for HR Management of both DG ADMIN and your unit are always clear or rather ambiguous? In which areas?

IV. Suggestions for the future

8. In sum, is there any area where you wish more guidance by DG ADMIN or more room of manoeuvre on the other hand?

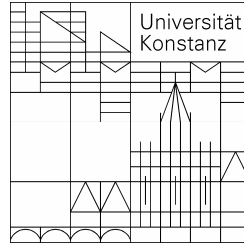
9. In your experience, are there tasks currently exercised by your unit that could better be fulfilled by DG ADMIN? Which ones? Why?

10. Do you see any area where you could intensify the cooperation with the HR units in other DGs?

V. Conclusion

11. Is there anything you would like to remark additionally?

Annex 3: Questionnaire for heads of communication units



Universität Konstanz

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Questionnaire

RESOURCE DIRECTORATE

HoU Communication

Interview Number:	
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- I. Introduction
- II. Role and tasks of your unit
- III. Your views and experiences concerning work-sharing arrangements
- IV. Suggestions for the future
- V. Conclusion

II. Role and tasks of your unit

1. Could you shortly outline the main tasks of your unit?
2. Media Contacts:
 - 2a. What is your role and what is the role of DG COMM?
 - 2b. Do you wish more room of manoeuvre in this area?
 - 2c. Is there any task concerning media contacts that could be better fulfilled by DG COMM?
3. Web tools (portals):
 - 3a. What is your role and what is the role of DG COMM?
 - 3b. Do you wish more room of manoeuvre in this area?
 - 3c. Is there any task concerning web tools and portals that could be better fulfilled by DG COMM?
4. Organisation of events & campaigns:
 - 4a. What is your role and what is the role of DG COMM?
 - 4b. Do you wish more room of manoeuvre in this area?
 - 4c. Is there any task concerning the organisation of events and campaigns that could be better fulfilled by DG COMM?

III. Your views and experiences concerning work-sharing arrangements

5. How would you define the current role of DG COMM in External Communication Management?
6. How appropriately does DG COMM fulfil this role in your view?
7. Do you have the impression that the responsibilities for External Communication Management of both DG COMM and your unit are always clear or rather ambiguous? In which areas?

IV. Suggestions for the future

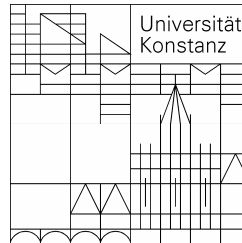
8. Coming back to the different areas of External Communication. Is there any area where you wish more guidance by DG COMM or, on the contrary, more room of manoeuvre?
9. In your experience, are there tasks currently exercised by your unit that could better be fulfilled by DG COMM? Which ones? Why?
10. Do you see any area where you could intensify the cooperation with the External Communication units in other DGs?

V. Conclusion

11. Is there anything you would like to remark additionally?

Annex 4: Questionnaire for heads of policy units

Questionnaire



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Policy Units

Interview number:	Position and DG:
Date of Interview:	Beginning (Time):

1. Throughout the last decade, administrative modernisation has led to a decentralisation of management functions like Human Resources Management and External Communication or IT support. They are now fulfilled within special units of your DG and at central level – for example, in HR many issues are now tackled quite autonomously by colleagues “locally” in your service. Similar divisions of labour exist in the other management support areas.

How would you assess the impact of this decentralisation of management support functions on your own work in the following areas? Please indicate on a scale from 1 (Decentralisation has not affected my own work) to 10 (Decentralisation has affected my own work to a large extend).

1.1 Human Resource Management											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Decentralisation has not affected my own work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Decentralisation has affected my own work to a large extend

1.2 External Communication											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Decentralisation has not affected my own work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Decentralisation has affected my own work to a large extend

1.3 IT support											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Decentralisation has not affected my own work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Decentralisation has affected my own work to a large extend

1.4 Programming and Budgeting											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Decentralisation has not affected my own work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Decentralisation has affected my own work to a large extend

2.	In your experience as manager of your unit, how important is it for you to have local management support units within your own DG as opposed to have these management functions carried out only in a centralised body or at a central level?	
2.1 Human Resource Management		
	It is very important to have officers in my own DG	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I prefer to have them at a central level	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>
		No Answer
2.2 External Communication		
	It is very important to have officers in my own DG	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I prefer to have them at a central level	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>
		No Answer
2.3 IT support		
	It is very important to have officers in my own DG	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I prefer to have them at a central level	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>
		No Answer
2.4 Programming and Budgeting		
	It is very important to have officers in my own DG	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I prefer to have them at a central level	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>
		No Answer

3. In your experience as manager of your unit, how would you assess the intensity of your professional and direct contact with responsible **LOCAL** services of management support on a scale from 1 (hardly ever contact) to 10 (intense contact)?

3.1 Human Resource Management											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Hardly ever contact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I deal intensively with the respective unit in my DG

3.2 External Communication											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Hardly ever contact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I deal intensively with the respective unit in my DG

3.3 IT support											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Hardly ever contact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I deal intensively with the respective unit in my DG

3.4 Programming and Budgeting											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Hardly ever contact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I deal intensively with the respective unit in my DG

4.	In your own experience, how would you assess the intensity of your professional and direct contact with responsible <u>CENTRAL</u> services in the areas of management support on a scale from 1 (hardly ever contact) to 10 (intense contact)?										
4.1 Human Resource Management											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Hardly ever contact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I deal intensively with DG ADMIN
4.2 External Communication											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Hardly ever contact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I deal intensively with DG COMM
4.3 IT support											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Hardly ever contact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I deal intensively with DG DIGIT
4.4 Programming and Budgeting											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Hardly ever contact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	I deal intensively with DG BUDG

5.	<p>If you compare the current way the division of labour between central and local services concerning management support is organised in the Commission with the situation some years ago: In your personal opinion, have standard operating procedures become more efficient than in the past?</p> <p>Try to distinguish between the various areas of management support.</p>
5.1 Human Resource Management	
More efficient	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less efficient	<input type="checkbox"/>
About the same	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>
No Answer	
5.2 External Communication	
More efficient	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less efficient	<input type="checkbox"/>
About the same	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>
No Answer	
5.3 IT support	
More efficient	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less efficient	<input type="checkbox"/>
About the same	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>
No Answer	
5.4 Programming and Budgeting	
More efficient	<input type="checkbox"/>
Less efficient	<input type="checkbox"/>
About the same	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>
No Answer	

6.	<p>The opinions about the effects of the recent decentralisation of management and support functions are divided. Some think this kind of decentralisation was very positive since it brings necessary support services closer to where they are really needed. Others fear that the dispersion of technical expertise and resulting higher coordination needs between the services and central units offset these advantages. What is your personal opinion?</p>	
6.1 Human Resource Management		
	I see Decentralisation rather positive	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I see Decentralisation rather negative	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>
		No Answer
6.2 External Communication		
	I see Decentralisation rather positive	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I see Decentralisation rather negative	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>
		No Answer
6.3 IT support		
	I see Decentralisation rather positive	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I see Decentralisation rather negative	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>
		No Answer
6.4 Programming and Budgeting		
	I see Decentralisation rather positive	<input type="checkbox"/>
	I see Decentralisation rather negative	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Neutral	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>
		No Answer

7.	If you were to reorganise management support, how would you change the current system in the HR management and External Communication?	
7.1 Human Resource Management		
	Further decentralisation	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Re-centralisation	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Leave it like it currently is	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>
		No Answer
In which area should then your local unit or a central DG (depending on answer) play a greater role?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 		
7.2 External Communication		
	Further decentralisation	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Re-centralisation	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Leave it like it currently is	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>
		No Answer
In which area should then your local unit or a central DG (depending on answer) play a greater role?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • 		

8.	Thinking over your time in the Commission, what have been the most important changes that you have experienced in the area of management support?
One or two most important POSITIVE changes:	
One or two most important NEGATIVE changes:	

9.	Finally, thank you for responding to our survey. Please share any views you may have on the topics covered or on the questionnaire itself.

10.	IDENTIFICATION	
	AGE:	
	NATIONALITY:	
	EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND:	
	TIME OF SERVICE IN COMMISSION:	

End of Interview (Time):	Beginning (Time):