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## ONE SIZE FITS ALL?

The costs and benefits of a common framework in the reform of the administration of the European Union

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### Summary

This paper takes a first step towards examining the application of the EU's common administrative framework – the staff regulation and the financial regulations – to the ever-growing range of EU institutions. The Commission's administrative reform programme carried out under Commissioner Neil Kinnock between 2000 and 2004 had implications for the administration of the other institutions which, despite a steadily growing literature on the process in the Commission,<sup>1</sup> have been little studied until now. Yet the reforms required by the new regulations were no less far-reaching for the Council and the Parliament than for the Commission. Against the background of the Kinnock reforms and their implementation across the EU institutions, this paper therefore considers the motivation for, and importance of, a single administrative framework, the inter-institutional mechanisms which underpin it, and the differential impact of the reform programme<sup>2</sup>. We conclude with some provisional reflections about the tailoring which may be required within institutions of varying size and scope when they have to don a one-size-fits-all garment, and the scope for such tailoring within the constraints of a law-based administrative regime.

### Background

Administrative frameworks did not loom large amongst the concerns of the founders of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), but the Treaty of Paris does provide that the number of its officials and their conditions of service should be decided by a Committee of the presidents of the four institutions of the Community – the High Authority, the Court of Justice, the Council of Ministers and the Assembly. The provisional regulation that resulted from the inter-institutional committee was initially applied only to officials of the Court and the Council, although the High Authority did in fact use its terms. In 1956 a definitive regulation was adopted. The development of the definitive regulation had in part been delayed to await the possible creation of a European Defence Community and the drafters were conscious that they were in fact moving towards the creation of a European civil service modelled on the

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<sup>1</sup> See the special issues of *Public Policy and Administration* 2004 (vol 19 no.5) and the *Journal of European Public Policy* 2008 (Vol 15 No 5) and also Cini 2001; Coull and Lewis 2003; Kassim 2004a; 2004b; Levy 2006a; Stevens and Stevens 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Much of the information contained within this paper comes from qualitative conversational interviews with members of the staff of the European Parliament, the Court of Accounts, the European Personnel Selection Office and the Economic and Social Committee, carried out in Brussels and Luxembourg in July and August 2008. In the interests of preserving the confidentiality of our interlocuteurs we have not referenced this information and all our statements represent our own interpretation of what we have been told. We are extremely grateful to those officials who agreed to see us.

national model but “whose nationality was supranationality” (Jacques Rueff quoted in (Stevens and Stevens 2001: 29). The national systems of the founder member states were all statutory systems, so once it became clear that a “civil service” system was to be adopted, a regulation naturally followed. When the then three communities (ECSC, European Economic Community and Euratom) were merged a common staff regulation was adopted, in 1968, to replace the separate regimes which had hitherto applied to them. Moreover, again on the basis of national models, the regulations which applied to the executive arm of the institution applied to the staff of its associated legislative, judicial and advisory bodies, including the Council of Ministers and the Assembly, later the Parliament. These have grown markedly since 1968. Indeed the numbers of staff serving both Council and Parliament have grown at a proportionately faster rate than the staff of the Commission whilst the number and range of EU institutions has also increased. In 1999 the Committee of the Regions succeeded in separating its own cadre of staff from that of the Economic and Social Committee (Stevens and Stevens 2001: 15 - 16), while recent years have also seen the development of EU Agencies, widely scattered across the member states. Since 1958 the only exceptions to the application of the general staff regulation have been the European Investment Bank and the European Central Bank. Similarly, since the budgets of all the institutions have since the merger been brought together for approval, it was natural that their implementation in the different institutions should also be subject to the application of the same rules. Differences in size, function and geographical location could all raise questions about the appropriateness of a single administrative framework, but in practice the concept of a single staff regulation and a single set of financial regulations has not been seriously challenged. In consequence the post 1999 reform of the regulations, whilst largely provoked by the state of the Commission’s services, equally affects the other institutions.

#### The concept of a common service

If the case for a single financial regulation rests largely on the need for common standards of financial discipline within a common budgetary regime, the continuing case for a single staff regulation is more complex. In this “post-vision” era (Peterson 2008: 762 and footnote 763), the Commission, always a complex blend of national cultures (Stevens 2006) may, as Peterson argues, be seen to be less self-absorbed, less “missionary”, more modest and more “intergovernmental” (Peterson 2008). At the

same time the services of the Council of the European Union have absorbed or acquired a range of new functions, some of which might, because of their military and security implications, *prima facie* suggest the need for distinctive arrangements. All the other institutions have seen the very substantial enlargement of their scope as the consequence of the admission of 12 new member states since the turn of the millennium. However, although we understand that the idea of separate statutes for each institution was in fact raised by some staff representatives during the process of negotiation of the new regulations, and briefly entertained, the case for a common framework prevailed. First, the need for a staff regulation, as opposed to the more flexible procedures and codes of practice characteristic of the exercise of executive privilege under the Crown prerogative in the United Kingdom, has its roots in the ‘continental’ model of civil service governance, to which the founders of the European Community institutions naturally turned in the 1950s. In France, for example, the civil service in which Emile Noel was trained embodies the State in a way which is distinct from that of the executive (i.e. Ministers) who direct it at any one time. This autonomous status is reflected in and buttressed by the statutory basis of the regulations under which civil servants operate. Second, the case for a distinctive staff regulation for the European Communities, and now the European Union, rests on the conviction that the staff themselves have a part to play in the construction of the European project. In this vision the staff of the European institutions are not simply a secretariat, or a set of secretariats, established to carry out the limited agreements reached among the member states, but a body of men and women whose distinctive European status is symbolic of the European Union which it is their task not merely to serve but to create and to carry forward. Finally, a single staff regulation can be thought to have the practical benefit of facilitating the movement of staff between the different institutions, thus reducing the risk of their growing apart from one another, and further symbolizing the coherence and unity of the European project as a whole.

#### A common service and the reform programme.

The need for the administrative reform programme which Commissioner Kinnock carried into effect between 2000 and 2004 was experienced mainly, though not exclusively, in the Commission. Although it was financial mismanagement that provoked the crisis which caused the Commission to resign in March 1999, the

inadequacies of the staff management regime had been apparent since at least the Spierenburg Report of 1979. That these should have been particularly apparent in the Commission is hardly surprising since the Commission is the largest of the EU institutions, and growth in itself generates the need for improved administrative systems. Moreover the Commission was also the first of the major EU institutions to experience a major change in the balance of its functional responsibilities, from a policy-making secretariat to a regulator and an executive body with extensive grant-giving and project-managing responsibilities. By contrast, secretariat functions continued to dominate the work of the Council and the Parliament, long after they had become only one function among many for the Commission. In fact reform of both financial management and personnel management was already under way in the Commission in the late 1990s, under Commissioner Liikanen, when the resignation crisis made reform a top priority for the new Commission, making it possible to move on from relatively modest piecemeal reforms to the root-and-branch reforms of both the financial regulations and the staff regulation which Kinnock and his team were able to drive through.

Whilst the political pressure under which the Commission was obliged to act was enormously beneficial to the reformers, enabling them to limit (if perhaps not totally overcome (see Levy 2006a) the foot-dragging of traditionally-minded officials as well as staff representatives, which had greatly reduced the effectiveness of all previous reform initiatives, it also meant that the reformers within the Commission had to focus almost exclusively on the difficult task of getting agreement on the measures needed to deliver their own Commission-centred reform objectives. The White Paper which set out the programme of reform was produced very rapidly. A task force of Commission officials, backed by working groups from across the Commission undertook the necessary drafting and Kinnock announced his objectives in December 1999, only three months after the Prodi Commission's first meeting. A consultative document was produced within a month and the detailed white paper in March 2000 (Kassim 2004a: 42). Although there was a clear attempt to spread the involvement of Commission officials, and a vigorous programme of consultation within the institution, the Council and the Parliament were only marginally involved, at political level, and all the institutions were involved via their Secretaries – General (Bearfield 2004: 21). They were in any case inclined to the view that it was the Commission that was in trouble and where action should be taken.

Whilst a considerable number of reform measures could be put into place without amendment to the Staff Regulation – for example the Commission’s procedures for setting annual strategic programmes – the main structural reforms did require legislative change. The Commission’s main priorities here were to get this agreed by the unions, and then to ensure that the Council of Ministers would accept the package without too much alteration. By the time they were ready formally to consult the representatives of the other institutions within the Staff Regulations Committee, there was very little time for meaningful consultation or room for manoeuvre. In effect the other institutions were faced with a *fait accompli*, and all they could in the main hope to achieve was a few minor changes of special significance for themselves, for example the provisions safeguarding the employment of Parliamentary ushers (*huissiers*). One institution, which had been arguing for some time that it would be desirable to set up a beneficial and budgetarily neutral early retirement scheme within the legislation was able to put up a detailed and reasoned case that was accepted, albeit modified at the Council of Ministers stage.

#### The mechanisms supporting the common framework

One of the consequences of the need to apply the reform programme to all the institutions has been the development of a much more substantial network of communication between the institutions than was the case in the past. Prior to 1999 there was very little provision for co-ordination, beyond the rather gentlemanly clubs of Secretaries-General, and below them Heads of Administration, meeting 3-4 times a year. However, the new regulations include provisions that specifically require consultation between the institutions about the arrangements for their implementation (for example, article 1d 3). The College of Heads of Administration has therefore found it necessary to establish three working groups – the *comité de préparation des questions statutaires* (CPQS), the *comité de préparation des questions budgétaires et financières* (CPQBF), and the *comité de préparation des affaires sociales* (CPAF) to agree means of implementation which, if not identical, are at least compatible with one another, and do not risk fragmenting the common European public service.

#### The impact of a common framework

The main elements of the reform programme were so firmly embedded in the amendments to the staff and financial regulations that they could not be ignored; all

the EU institutions were obliged to apply them. In that sense it was the case that ‘One Size Fits All’. That size had been designed with the Commission in mind, and when the other institutions found themselves obliged to try it on, they were quite shocked, or so we have been told, by the magnitude of the changes they would have to introduce in administrations which had not been so evidently in need of reform as was the case at the Commission. In the European Parliament, for example, there had been minimal forward planning, so that when in June 2002 it became apparent that the reformed financial regulation had become law and new systems would apply to the EP as well as the Commission from 1 January 2003, a project group involving the legal and the financial service and the *cabinets* of the President and Secretary General had to make urgent decisions about how to operate the system. This section of the paper looks briefly at some of the consequences of the reform changes, in the light of the effect that they have had outside the Commission.

The reforms fell into three categories: 1- those required by the financial regulation and the detailed implementation rules, which, although formulated by the Commission, are binding also on the other institutions, 2 - those required by the staff regulation, and 3 - those introduced as management reforms within the Commission which were in a number of cases emulated by the other institutions.

#### 1. Financial management changes

- The changes in financial management demanded a fairly substantial overturning of very long-established practice which was the more ingrained because it echoed the habits of several national administrations (for example those of France and Spain). The reform was intended to enhance the sense of personal responsibility of the person initially authorising expenditure by abolishing the centralised financial control function, which had previously checked the legality and procedural regularity of the proposed spending. There was to be a concomitant increase in the scope and role of internal audit. The implementing rules require at least “four eyes” – an initiator and a verifier – before expenditure can be authorised.

- Similarly the Commission's chief accountant issues accounting rules which all the other institutions are obliged to follow, and which are resulting in all the institutions moving, if gradually, towards accrual accounting.

Despite the commonality of the rules there is no total uniformity of practice across the institutions. Some, as in the Parliament and the Court of Accounts, have decentralised the authorisation of expenditure to the level of the directorate general, and the Parliament, naturally concerned to be beyond reproach in financial matters, given the critical stance of MEPs to errors elsewhere, has instituted a "six-eyes" system which in effect retains elements of the old financial control system as well as the new, but locates it within the DG. The Court of Justice, on the other hand, has located verification and authorisation at a central level.

## 2. The changes to the Staff regulation

The Staff Regulation, covering issues such as grading, career structures, pay and pensions, was longer in gestation than the Financial Regulation, not least because there were substantial conflicts of interest to be resolved. Amongst the key changes

- A unified grading structure replaced the four distinct categories of staff, which had been separated by the level of education required for entry. In addition new definitions of temporary "contractual" staff were also developed, with most such contracts restricted to three years. This has posed problems in some cases, for example in the Parliament, where the staff of the political groups are contractual employees of the Parliament, but three-year non-renewable contracts pose problems when the Parliamentary term is five years.
- Existing staff are moved across to the new grades and onto the revised salary scales, but with exceedingly complex calculations through multiplication coefficients to ensure that they retain their previous salary level and pay expectations. This has posed very substantial problems, especially for some of the smaller institutions, not least because the legal provisions outlining what is to be done are far from crystalline in clarity. It is therefore the case that in the various institutions somewhat differing practices have been adopted.

- The number of grades within the now linear career structure has been increased, with a requirement for at least two years service in each grade before promotion is possible (Article 45). Before the first promotion officials must demonstrate an ability to work in three languages (two are required for appointment). The career entry point for graduate administrators has been set rather lower than was the case before 2004. While these provisions were intended in fact to produce a more flexible and meritocratic structure, when combined with the provision for at least bi-annual staff reporting (article 43), some of the institutions have found that these provisions in fact hinder their ability to offer rapid career advancement to high-fliers,
- Conditions of work have been modernised, for example to allow for parental leave and part-time working, and increase the salience of equal opportunities measures. The Commission has long had a programme for equal opportunities between men and women, if with slow and rather limited results (Levy and Stevens 2006b). Other institutions have lagged behind, although in the rather recent past the last to do so has now adopted such a programme. The regulations (following EU legislation) extend the principle of equal opportunities to race and ethnicity and age and other factors, but these are issues which have yet to emerge to any significant extent at all upon the agenda of any of the institutions.

### 3. Non-statutory changes

- It did not require a change in the staff regulations to allow the setting up of executive agencies to handle a number of routine functions: estate management in Brussels and Luxembourg (Offices for Infrastructure and Logistics) and payroll, pensions etc (Office for the Administration and Payment of Individual Entitlements). The smaller institutions are glad to avail themselves of these services.
- The regulations require staff reporting at least every two years (article 43). In fact almost all the institutions have instituted an annual appraisal. The linkage to promotion was initially ensured, in the Commission, through a system of points allocation, moderated by provisions designed to avoid grade inflation. Merit points were to be allocated, with progress through the grades to be determined by

merit, as measured mainly by the accumulation of merit points, rather than seniority. The outcome was both complex and unsatisfactory, and failed to result in managers being willing to make potentially invidious distinctions among their staff. The system is in consequence being changed within the Commission, as from 2009. It will in fact move closer to the system already implemented in the Parliament even if not quite as far as in the Court of Accounts, where no numerical points at all are applied to annual reports.

- The importance of management skills was emphasised by reinforcing the scope for heads of unit, whatever the grade they occupied, to exercise management responsibility, which had previously been reserved to those at Director level and above. This change has gone some way towards undermining the separation of grade and function, which the European public service had adopted from the French model, placing much more emphasis on function, and especially the successful discharge of management responsibilities, as grounds for promotion.. It is clear that there has been a concomitant reinforcement of the management role in the services of the other institutions as well as the Commission. In part this is a consequence of the regulatory changes – decentralisation of financial control and the requirement for careful career development review inevitably cause management tasks to bulk relatively larger in the tasks of officials of all the institutions. The setting and monitoring of well-defined objectives, whether strategic objectives for the directorate or individual objectives for the official, now also seems to play a larger role in all the institutions.

Recruitment is a key function, whose general principles are laid down in the regulations. Each institution had, however, conducted this process individually and independently. It was generally acknowledged that such a system was already ineffective and could not withstand the burden of the 2004-7 enlargement. A European Personnel Selection Office was established, at arm's length from the Commission, to be responsible for the recruitment of staff for all the major EU institutions. It is overseen by a board incorporating the heads of administration of the various institutions, chaired by the representative of the Court of Accounts. The institutions are in some cases facing difficulties in recruiting the staff they need in what has been a competitive market – for example for persons with financial and accounting expertise, who were much needed as financial management was

decentralised and audit strengthened. Now that the challenge of enlargement has been met, EPSO has plans to reform steady-state recruitment, which has for many years been cumbersome, slow and unpredictable, with the result that some of the best candidates have been discouraged from applying. EPSO is now seeking to ensure that better manpower planning takes place within the institutions to identify their needs in good time, specifying more clearly than in the past the profile and competences required, as well as the likely number of vacancies. On this basis EPSO would then aim to establish a regular cycle of annual competitions for the main recruitment grades, reforming the competition procedures themselves to reduce the time taken, and to reflect current best practice in the profession. Thus, in this respect too, functional requirements are driving all the institutions towards a more strategic management approach.

#### Common framework, different outcomes

We have argued above that in addition to the changes that were more or less mandated by reformed regulations into which the institutions had little input, there have been other changes which have arisen from the general thrust or ethos of the reforms which the other institutions could not ignore. However, we have noted that, despite the common statutory framework and the political impulse, there have been differences. We can categorise these as arising from the three different factors mentioned earlier – size, function and geographical location.

Among the differences related to the smaller size of some EU institutions, we have come across the following.

- The Court of Justice, which has very little expenditure, has retained a single authorising officer for all expenditure, thereby in effect preserving the centralised financial accounting system which in larger organisations led to loss of effective control; and the European Parliament is considering whether the departments which service Parliamentary Committees (and therefore have very little expenditure to control) could similarly share financial functions.
- We understand that the Council of Ministers has not found it necessary to establish an internal audit function
- There is less scope in smaller institutions such as Ecosoc for the control of expenditure to be managed on a sampling basis, with the result that the

implementation of the financial regulation has raised costs proportionately even more sharply than has been the case in larger organisations (on the cost of the FR, see below)

- The complexity of the transitional arrangements for pay on promotion has led the EP to decide that all promotions will entail immediate transfer to the new grading scales

Among differences related to the different functions of the several institutions, we have noted the following.

- Because so many EP staff have to rotate regularly with the Parliament itself through Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg, it has been decided to retain a system of flat rate travel allowances for these journeys.
- Special provision was made for the continued permanent employment of the Parliamentary ushers.
- The EP is continuing to wrestle with the particular problem of terms of employment for MEPs' assistants
- The 3-year maximum for staff on contract terms is problematic for the Parliament, which operates on a 5-year electoral cycle.

Differences related to geographical location would include the fact that in Luxembourg the basic rate for a contract agent was below the national minimum legal wage. In Cologne the European Aviation Safety Agency has difficulty attracting well qualified British aviation experts because it cannot pay enough in a high-wage industry to compensate for either the costs of a split family or the loss of second family income. In many other countries, however, EU Agencies in fact benefit from the fact that contract agents and other staff can be employed at local rates considerably below those which would have been required under the regulations which applied before the reforms.

Other differences between the institutions have a political rather than a functional explanation. For example, since the European Parliament was so directly involved in focussing the crisis which led to the resignation of the Commission in 1999, its own administration has had to be particularly careful to follow the rules. This has led to a major growth in the numbers of staff engaged in financial administration. However, in more recent years the focus of political attention has

shifted towards concern for small business (SMEs – small and medium-sized enterprises), and this has led the EP to revise and simplify its procurement procedures to allow negotiated contracts up to €60,000, in place of competitive tendering.

Other differences again are probably more related to the views and personal agendas of those in positions of responsibility. For example, Julian Priestley, as Secretary-General of the European Parliament introduced in 1998/99 many of the staff management reforms which Kinnock adopted for the Commission a year or two later. Annual reporting was introduced from 1998, and compulsory mobility at senior levels from 1999. We were told that promotion had in practice been linked to change of function for many years, and that these changes had together established a culture of mobility which did not need to be reinforced. It is interesting to note that the abolition of the Head of Division grade, which the European Parliament perceived as an opportunity to develop management responsibility not least amongst women at the level of head of unit (200 heads of unit, compared to only 70 heads of division), was perceived in another organisation as a problem, since those Heads of Division that could not be promoted would find their careers frozen if not actually put into reverse.

#### Explaining the differences.

Handley Stevens has argued elsewhere that the direction and intensity of policy change is the product of a four-dimensional model, which may be conceived as like a triangle of forces – functional, political and institutional – any or all of which may change direction or intensity over time, the fourth dimension, (Stevens 2003: chapter 11). Change is most likely to occur when they all point in more or less the same direction for a sufficiently long period of time for change to take place. Kassim (Kassim 2008) points out that the experience of the Commission refutes the argument of many theories of institutional change in that reform was largely generated from within the organisation. In relation to the Kinnock reforms, the financial management systems had been under strain for some time before 1998, and so had the Commission's capacity to undertake its burgeoning tasks, which made management, especially personnel management, particularly salient. It was these functional failures that precipitated the resignation crisis and generated a political pressure in favour of reform, which, for at least the period of the Prodi Presidency 1999-2004, was sufficient to overcome the institutional resistance to change which had frustrated earlier attempts to reform the administration of the EU in general and the Commission

in particular. The institutional climate was generally benign, since both Parliament and Council recognised the necessity for reform, and intervened only to reinforce its principles, or, in the case of the Council to attempt to limit its costs.

Since 2005, there has been essentially a period of consolidation, during which the Kinnock reforms have had time to be implemented and take root, while the main political focus was on enlargement and its aftermath. The Barroso Commission has not prioritized the administrative agenda, although it has, as Michelle Cini shows, driven forward a transparency initiative which has, in two of its three major aspects, more to do with the Commission's particular relations with the outside world (lobbying and information on recipients of EU funds) than with internal organisation or management (Cini 2008). The appetite for internal reform which may affect all the institutions has not totally disappeared as is shown by the appointment of a well-known reformer to head the European Personnel Selection Office, and the inter-institutional endorsement of his far-reaching reform programme..

If that is an outline of the big picture, there is room within the model for differences to emerge at the level of different institutions. The forces which determine the big picture have delivered changes to the financial and staff regulations which have to be complied with. But there is room for differences to emerge at the level of the different institutions, depending on their particular circumstances. We should not be surprised to observe that the administration of the Parliament, which precipitated the political crisis driving the reform agenda, was itself ahead of the game under a reforming Secretary-General, even if the extent of reform required in financial management came as something of a shock. Nor should we be surprised if the administration of the Council of Ministers, which experienced the crisis as a serious embarrassment, but could not oppose it, has been less enthusiastic in its response.

## Conclusion

The alignment of political and functional pressures, and the institutional factors resulting from the common administrative framework meant that major administrative change was inevitable in all the institutions. Such changes went beyond the alterations to pay, pensions, and conditions of service, and to financial procedures that are embodied in the legislation. The definition of strategic objectives, and the greater salience of management have to some extent taken root across all the EU bodies. The common framework, combined with the opening up of the methods

of appointment to senior posts means that there are genuinely opportunities for movement between the institutions, for example between the Commission and the Parliament or the Court of Accounts. However, in each institution the configuration of the triangle of forces has differed. Emmanuelle Schön-Quinlivan argues that even within the Commission the reforms have been differently translated into action in different Directorates-General and practical change is hence “uneven”(Schön-Quinlivan 2008: 740). This is even more the case across the various bodies other than the Commission.

The functional issues seem to have been differently experienced. For example in the Parliament a reforming Secretary General was already moving, alongside the Commission, in the direction of reform before 1999, and the Court of Accounts had been making a case for an improved early retirement scheme before the opportunity of the revision of the Staff Regulation presented itself. Similarly in 2002 the Council of the Regions came under pressure in relation to its hiring practices (Spence and Stevens 2006: 196) On the other hand the administration of the Council, despite considerable expansion in functions, seems to have been aware of little pressure: it is likely that the implications of the legislation took them temporarily aback, as was the case in the European Parliament.

Political pressures also impinged differently: for example both the Parliament and the Court of Accounts were aware of the necessity to be “above reproach”. Equally, while one of the unions did threaten a strike in the service of the Committee of the Regions, pressure from the unions seems to have fallen most heavily on the Commission, who were rightly perceived as the main agents in the reform. By the time implementation reached the other bodies the main framework was settled, and there was little that the unions could do about it.

The various bodies are also differentiated by their constitutional and institutional positions. The Parliament and the Council are the budgetary authority, and have long operated a quiet understanding not to interfere in each other’s administrative costs. As a consequence their staff numbers have increased proportionately faster than those of the other bodies. They were and are therefore not subject to the same intense patterns of overload as the Commission in the 1990s, overload which, Roger Levy argues, the reforms have only exacerbated (Levy 2006a).

This paper has argued that the tailoring of the reform has indeed required a number of fitting adjustments in each institution. Size, geography and functions have

all proved relevant variables. Functional, political and institutional factors have been differently configured and have shifted with time. The reforms have resulted in an unprecedented focus on organisational, procedural and managerial matters. However, the Commission is now well past its period of intense introspection, which indeed the other bodies never felt was required of them (see for example Commission 2005). Adaptation is likely to be an ongoing process, and one outcome of the reform process seems to be enhanced communication on these matters between the Secretaries General and the heads of administration of the various bodies. A common desire to simplify where possible and to ensure that the bureaucratization that was in fact necessary to ensure legitimacy (See Ellinas and Suleiman 2008; Stevens 1999) is not disproportionately burdensome is likely to result in some dissemination of good practice. There is no suggestion that the key features of the financial reform – the assumption by DGs of full responsibility for financial management – will be reversed, but there are already signs that the institutions will be looking for ways to reduce the staff costs of the reform, and this could well receive political and institutional backing in a period of post-enlargement retrenchment. The clock is not going to be turned back, but with the passage of time the triangle of functional, political and institutional forces is showing signs of changing direction

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