

Principles behind the establishment of the structure of the Secretariat of the ECSC Council of Ministers (Luxembourg, 22 October 1954)

Caption: This internal memorandum of 22 October 1954 sets out the principles behind the establishment of the structure of the Secretariat of the ECSC Special Council of Ministers and, in particular, the principles behind the organisation of its administrative functions.

Source: Archives historiques du Conseil de l'Union européenne, Bruxelles, Rue de la Loi 175. Fonds CECA, CM1. CM1 1954. Structure du Secrétariat du Conseil et questions relatives au personnel du Secrétariat du Conseil, CM1/1954-53.

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I. The task of establishing a structure for the Council Secretariat was driven by the need to achieve smooth and efficient operational capability at limited cost.

II. The first step was to analyse the Secretariat's remit and activities — determined essentially by the powers and responsibilities attributed to the Council.

Under the terms on which the ECSC came into being, the Council has dual responsibility: on the one hand exercising its own powers in the areas and the manner prescribed by the Treaty (see Annex 1) and, on the other, coordinating the activities of the High Authority with those of the Member States' governments, who are responsible for their own general economic policies. It is this second responsibility that distinguishes the Council's role from that of the other Community institutions.

The Council's special defining characteristic is thus the scope of its activities, ranging over both the Community's sphere of responsibility and those areas that remain under the responsibility of the Member States, one of its tasks being, as it were, to stitch the two spheres together. That is why its meetings involve not only the Ministers for Economic Affairs of the Member States but also other ministers, such as the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Transport and Social Affairs. The Council is thus a permanent forum for ministerial activities at Community level.

The next step was to identify the specific areas of activity in question.

The ECSC operates on the basis of a set of measures that are provided for in the Treaty and concern areas including commercial policy (negotiations with third countries, customs duties, imports and exports, etc.), transport policy (transport conditions, etc.), social policy (wages and working conditions, the movement of workers between Member States, the redeployment of available labour, etc.) and general economic policy (financial matters and investments, output levels, agreements, concentration of ownership, etc.). In the course of its work the Council is also required, on the one hand, to deal with legal matters and, on the other, to maintain various types of links (with international organisations, the press, etc.).

The areas in which the Council was required to operate thus being clear, the structure of its Secretariat could be determined.

The thinking here was guided by a number of principles generally recognised as making for sound organisation, namely simplicity, standardisation, continuity and stability.

1. Simplicity

The unity-of-command principle was implemented through the appointment of a Secretary-General.

The staff were grouped into operational units (1) known as divisions, each headed by a director. Purely administrative activities, however, were centralised and combined within a single department under an administrator with head-of-department status.

As well as the operational units, a system of staff grading was introduced in order to effect a chain of command throughout the Secretariat (see grades and salaries in Annex 2).

It was felt that the grade structure should facilitate both operational management and consultation. The directors thus function both as line managers, reporting to the Secretary-General, and as advisors to their colleagues.

Tasks are distributed among the directors as follows:

Director 1: General affairs division

This division deals with social and institutional affairs and documentation, press and information matters.

Director 2: Commercial, customs and transport affairs division

This division deals with commercial, customs-related and transport matters.

Director 3: Economic affairs division

This division deals with economic and financial matters.

Director 4: Legal affairs division

This division deals with legal matters.

2. Standardisation

The denomination of the various organisational units was standardised insofar as possible, as were job specifications for posts on the same level of authority: this is clear from the table in Annex 3.

3. Continuity

As the table in Annex 3 indicates, the principle of permanence of command is assured.

4. Stability

With regard to innovation and change, the Secretary-General is guided by widely accepted principles for reconciling performance with organisational stability in the Secretariat.

III. Having outlined the principles on which the Council of Ministers' Secretariat was structured, we need to describe in greater detail those which determined the organisation of its purely administrative activities.

IV. In structuring the Secretariat one of the principles followed was that its administrative activities should be centralised (see diagram of the administration department in Annex 4 and description of the tasks of its staff in Annex 5). It was therefore decided to combine them in a single department with one official in charge.

This principle of centralisation has proved most appropriate to the needs of an organisation where steady ongoing administrative activity has to quicken its pace around the time of meetings. It is worth noting here that these intensely busy periods entail many hours of overtime and the tight restriction of staff numbers in the Secretariat makes it very hard to accommodate the resulting requirements for time in lieu, so there is virtually no leeway.

The work of the administration department was divided among four staff groups or units, each reporting to an official who reports in turn to the administrator. This arrangement has succeeded in avoiding the problems, particularly in terms of output, that would almost certainly have resulted from a more narrowly work-related division of tasks. The units, known as sections are as follows:

1. Language section;
2. Internal section;
3. Archives, mail and copying section;
4. Financial section.

1. The Language section operates on the principle of comprehensive translation into German and French. The Council currently has too great a workload to allow for comprehensive translation into Italian and Dutch without expanding the Language section.

2. The Internal section is in charge of:

- (a) practical arrangements for meetings;
- (b) managing, taking delivery of, documenting and maintaining equipment and office supplies;
- (c) buildings management;
- (d) typing services;
- (e) the switchboard.

These activities are the responsibility of two offices, each headed by an official who reports, in turn, to the section head.

(i) Equipment and related services office

This office carries out activities (a), (b), (c) and (e) above. Its staff are also seconded as necessary to assist with other work, including that of the Archives office (in charge of mail delivery) and the Copying office (responsible for photographic reproduction and copying, etc.). The official driver is also a member of the Equipment office team and helps out with the work of the office when not required for driving duties.

(ii) Typing pool

Optimum use of typing capacity was an important consideration. The Council Secretariat therefore adopted the following principles:

- limiting the number of staff assigned to the directorates;
- setting up a central typing pool;
- recruiting staff who could work in at least two of the Community languages.

Application of the first principle, which is the key to the system, involves direct assignment of just one staff member (a secretary/shorthand typist) to each directorate and indirect assignment of up to two more (shorthand typists) to certain directorates. (2) The indirectly assigned staff are responsible not to the directorates but to the administration department, which can thus redeploy them in busy periods, as such periods do not normally affect all the directorates to the same extent. The system is thus an optimal one for coping with bursts of intense activity, while ensuring that ongoing needs are also met.

3. The Archives section carries out the following tasks:

- (a) receiving and despatching mail;
- (b) sorting and distributing mail;
- (c) sorting and distributing documents;
- (d) document storage;
- (e) document reproduction using stencil duplication;
- (f) photographic reproduction.

The work of the Archives section is centralised and the section is thus responsible for the whole process of reproducing documents from the moment they are typed.

The system of sorting documents and mail, i.e. the work of archiving, is professionally organised in accordance with a standard method.

Activities (a), (b), (c) and (d) above are carried out by an Archives office, while activities (e) and (f) are the

responsibility of the Copying office.

The Copying office provides photographic reproduction services for all the Community institutions. This arrangement was instituted under an agreement between the High Authority and the Council. The agreement provided for an exchange of equipment in order to set up a photographic reproduction workshop and an offset workshop for joint use by the two institutions. The workshops have the capacity to meet all the needs of the other institutions and have been made available to them.

4. The Financial section, which has a staff of three, an accounts officer, a cashier and a shorthand typist, deals with all matters concerning accounts and finance; it also carries out the administrative reviews that are necessary for budgeting and financial purposes.

[...]

1. The number of divisions was confined to four in order not to compromise coordination and supervision.
2. The administration department itself and its various sections are subject to the same arrangement.