

European and External Affairs Committee

Date: 14 October 2004
Time: 09:00 am
Venue: Committee Rooms 3 and 4, National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff Bay
Title: Cabinet Office Review of the Civil Service 'Fast Stream' Scheme

Purpose

This paper to note follows a request by the Committee for information on the UK Government European Fast Stream and the development of Welsh Assembly Government civil servants to work on areas related to the EU.

Consideration

1. [The European Fast Stream](#) (EFS) is for graduates with a particular interest in Europe, the European Union and its institutions. European Fast Streamers are British civil servants working in a UK government department whose work is focused on European policy issues, how the EU machinery works, and how member states interact with Brussels. EFS members generally have the opportunity of a stage at the Commission. It is an experience designed to give European Fast Streamers a valuable insight into the workings of the EU. It can also give a competitive edge in the institutions' selection processes. The UK Government notes that while joining the European Fast Stream doesn't guarantee success in these, it could improve the candidate's chances. If successful, the civil servant would be expected to resign from the British Civil Service and become an employee of one of the EU institutions. Other European Fast Streamers remain in the UK, helping the Civil Service to be more effective in its EU work.
2. To get through an EU recruitment competition requires a thorough working knowledge of another official EU language. New recruits to the European Fast Stream must generally have at least an A-level - or equivalent - in another official EU language.
3. With an appropriate qualification, graduates can apply to join the European Fast Stream as an economist. Economists must have a 2:2 degree or postgraduate degree in economics. Joint or mixed degrees are acceptable, provided the major element of the degree is economics.
4. The Welsh Assembly Government does not currently participate in the European Fast Stream or operate its own "version". Two of its generalist fast streamers are, however, in Brussels at present – one working in the Assembly Government's own EU office, one at UKREP. The Assembly also has a stagiaire at the Secretariat General of the European Commission, a post which has been

held by Welsh Assembly Government officials on a rotating basis for some time, and two more senior managers (Damien O'Brien and Nick Batey) are currently seconded to the Commission as National Experts.

5. The commitment to ensuring staff have a better awareness of the EU saw the development earlier this year of specific European Awareness sessions included in the portfolio of training and development courses available to staff.
6. The Assembly is currently reviewing its fast stream policy alongside a wider review of career management, secondments and interchange, as part of its Public Sector Management Initiative (PSMI).
7. The PSMI, led by a small team in the Welsh Assembly Government, embraces the whole of the public sector in Wales. This initiative is being jointly developed by the public sector and designed to enhance the capacity of public sector managers in order to improve the quality of public services. The focus will be on improving leadership, management and joined up working across the public sector. PSMI is still under development, but programmes will be aimed at fast track recruits as well as top leaders and middle managers.

Divisional Contacts

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