Chapter Nine

The General Secretariat

The General Secretariat is the backbone of the party; it delivers indispensable support for the political leadership of the European People’s Party (EPP). The activities of the General Secretariat cover a great variety of tasks: administrative, financial, material and organisational support (particularly for meetings of the Presidency, the Political Assembly, the Summit and the Congress), as well as policy advice in a wide range of areas (competences and countries). It also maintains the EPP’s contacts with its member parties and plays an important role in European election campaigns. Based in Brussels, the General Secretariat is composed of a multinational staff and is led by the Secretary General.

Staff

The EPP’s General Secretariat began very modestly. For the first few years of its existence, the team consisted of only two people, Josef Müller and Trudi Lücker. It was not until 1981 that two additional members joined the staff. They were Guy Korthoudt, who had previously been Secretary General of the youth organisation of the Flemish Christian Democrats (Christelijke Volkspartij, CVP), and Monique Poket. It soon became clear that the increasing demands made on the Secretariat by member parties were too great for such a small staff. As early as 1979, the electoral campaign for the first direct elections of the European Parliament (EP) had demonstrated the usefulness, for both the leadership and the apparatus of national parties, of having someone to represent their interests at the European level. Thus, the rudimentary structures had to be developed further. The advantages of the Secretariat’s existence for the member parties and for the
EPP Group could be demonstrated by the fact that the EPP proved good at organising communications and forming opinion inside the party.

Over the years it became possible, in stages, to double the Secretariat’s staff. As a result, the General Secretariat was able to carry out its work, namely the preparation, practical organisation and follow-up of meetings of party bodies in a more satisfactory manner. In particular, the member parties could now receive documents in the languages most important for the EPP’s work (German, Italian and French), and it became possible to correspond in a few more languages (Dutch, English and Spanish).

In recruiting new staff, special attention was paid to hiring individuals fluent in several languages and representing a mixture of nationalities. However, for practical reasons, in particular because the office was in Brussels, there was a numerical dominance of Belgians. Over the years the number of staff grew from fewer than 10 to more than 20. As a result of the growing number of member parties, and especially the direct financing from the European Union (EU) budget that began in 2004 (with an important increase since 2007), the EPP was finally able to appoint a significant number of new people. This gave the General Secretariat a new dynamic, particularly since the backgrounds of these new officials varied greatly. In sum, around 25 people currently work in the EPP headquarters. They include the Secretary General, two Deputy Secretary Generals, officials dealing with press and communications, assistants, political advisers and other support staff.

**Location**

In contrast to the secretariats of the Social Democrat and Liberal European party organisations, the EPP’s headquarters have never been based in the offices assigned to the European parliamentary groups in the EP. Instead, the EPP Secretariat was housed in an ‘autonomous’ location in the centre of Brussels, first on the Rue de la Madeleine, then from 1978 on the Place de l’Albertine, and later (until 1995) on the Rue de la Victoire, where a building was made available by a sympathetic organisation, the Fondation

---

200 Number of employees as of 1 January 2011, including interns. The number of employees of the Centre for European Studies (CES) is 15, including interns.