

Civil Service Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme

General Council Report 1303

(Meeting/s of 28 June 1995, 25 September 1996)

Claim that in the context of the Irish Presidency of the European Union and the EU Intergovernmental Conference in 1996, advance arrangements be sanctioned across Departments for the payment in appropriate cases of : (a) special EU Presidency extra attendance allowances in respect of consistent after-hour attendance's, and (b) special EU Presidency acting -up allowances where higher level responsibilities are consistently required to be carried out and that these arrangements apply in respect of work directly arising from the EU Presidency and Intergovernmental Conference or indirectly from staff shortages brought about by the transfer of other staff to EU Presidency work.

1. The Staff Side claimed that, in the context of the Irish Presidency of the European Union and the European Union Inter-Governmental Conference in 1996, advance arrangements should be sanctioned across Departments for the payment in appropriate cases of

- (a) special EU Presidency extra attendance allowances in respect of consistent after-hour attendances, and
- (b) special EU Presidency acting-up allowances where higher level responsibilities are consistently required to be carried out

and that these arrangements apply in respect of work directly arising from the European Union Presidency and Inter-Governmental Conference or indirectly from staff shortages brought about by the transfer of other staff to European Union Presidency work.

2. The Staff Side stated that the Presidency and Inter-Governmental Conference were events of the utmost importance for the Government. These would involve increased pressure of work for the civil service requiring considerable extra commitment. All that was being sought was that officers should be treated fairly. It was essential that members of the AHCS, who would be the main group involved with the Presidency, should know in advance how they stood in relation to the issues covered by the claims.

3. Staffing at the appropriate levels should be adequate to successfully

discharge the responsibilities arising out of the up-coming Presidency. This would involve temporary assignments to higher duties which had to be remunerated accordingly. Members also needed to know what arrangements would be made for compensating extra attendance required by the EU Presidency. In this connection, the Staff Side referred to the Taoiseach's recent remarks regarding rewarding performance in the civil service..

4. The Official Side acknowledged the importance of the European Union Presidency and stated that an integrated package of measures was being put in place to ensure that the Presidency had all the necessary resources available to it. These measures covered the areas of staff resources and compensation for extra attendance. In addition, agreement has been reached on an increase in delegates/chairperson's allowance which was the subject of a separate agreed report.

5. In relation to staff resources, the Official Side outlined a package of redeployments and secondments to deal with the requirements of the EU Presidency. Acting up allowances will be paid in the appropriate circumstances.

6. As regards compensation for extra attendance during the period of the European Union Presidency, the Official Side stated that the payment of extra attendance allowances would not be suitable for officers at higher grades. However, it referred to the provision in the Administrative Budget Agreements entitled 'Recognition of Exceptional Performance by Staff' allowing Heads of Departments to utilise 0.1% of the Sub-head A.1 allocation for exceptional performance. This provision dealt specifically with the question of payment for extra attendance by non-overtime grades. However, the Staff Side felt that the amount of funds available would be inadequate to deal with the level of extra attendance envisaged. This allocation would need to be increased. The Staff Side also stated that it would be preferable if ex-gratia payments could be made for this purpose, as occurred during the previous Presidency.

7. The Official Side considered that Departments were in the best position to make decisions on the question of compensation for extra attendance. The facility to deal with such cases had, therefore, been deliberately included in the Exceptional Performance arrangement being delegated to Heads of Departments in the Administrative Budget Agreements. The Official Side saw no reason why this mechanism, which was not available on the occasion of the last Presidency, should not now be used to deal with claims for remunerating extra attendance arising out of the EU Presidency.

8. The Official Side undertook to draw the attention of Departments to the arrangements referred to in the preceding paragraph, specifically indicating that the question of ex-gratia awards for extra attendance during the European Union Presidency should be determined by heads of Department, and paid in appropriate circumstances, under this provision. In assessing the comparative merits of cases, it would not be unreasonable for Heads of Departments to take into account any other extra payments e.g. acting-up allowances, being made on foot of the Presidency.

9. The Official Side indicated that if in order to meet the extra demands arising from the presidency, the allocation of 0.1% of Sub-head A.1 proved inadequate, Heads of Departments would be enabled to exceed that limit within the overall Administrative Budget allocation.

10. The Staff Side stated that this was acceptable to them and it was agreed to draw up a report recommending acceptance of the Official Side response.

11. This report, which records agreement, was adopted on 25 September 1996.

This report was adopted on 25 September 1996