

# *EU Personnel Politics:*

*On the way to creating a positive image of Slovakia and advocating its interests in the European Union.*

Before the pre-accession period, European affairs management was more or less a political issue; currently, its management requires a thought-out professional approach and coordinated realization. One of the most important issues we must focus on is the impact evaluation of our membership in EU state personnel politics.

**I**t is essential to create and maximize a strategic and effective human capital management strategy that will enable leaders and their talents to be well versed in European affairs and to assert them in the Eurozone, thereby representing Slovakia on official and unofficial platforms. Not only are superior human resources a basis for success in any field, but it can also serve as a complex and very effective tool for creating Slovakia's positive image in the Union and lobbying for its specific needs and interests.

## **SETTING UP THE PRIORITIES**

Recognizing the strongest element of effective state personnel politics in European affairs is one of Slovakia's European priorities. This means creation of medium- and long-term goals as a tailored response to critical strategic challenges that Slovakia, via EU membership, would like to achieve.

The recent nomination of candidates for Slovak Commissioner and ensuing assignment of the portfolio in the new Commission proves that the underestimation of these does not pay, mainly for new and small countries like Slovakia.

Less powerful members must be focused on several selected areas via activities coordination, which include a thought-out and focused search and selection of human capital.

## **FOLLOWING ESTONIA'S EXAMPLE**

In the case of Estonia, we are able to observe that new and small countries, which would like assimilate into a New Europe and get the most possible benefit from Membership, must use not just local but also foreign human capital. This serves as a focal point for the lobbying base of their advanced and lucidly defined strategic EU priorities. This Baltic country, similar to Slovakia, is creating for itself an image of a pro-reform tiger with a flat tax

rate, but this initiative requires a conscious effective application of EU personnel politics.

They are making an effort of placing "the most qualified leaders and talents on the market" in European Institutions and other open positions related to EU issues. Permanent and intensively managed communication includes outcomes and deliverables of local ideas and opinions, which they subconsciously advocate and incorporate into their decision-making process.

## **BRUSSELS MONITORING**

In common practice, it is required to identify "Brussels' Positions" which are in accordance with the defined priority areas, and where permanent monitoring of positions in European institutions is one of the key success factors. This must be done constantly and without any reference to the positions' nationality requirements. Other than official numbers dedicated to individual EU members, there are also so-called "unofficial quotas". Some member countries, such as Great Britain or Germany, have permanent problems placing their "own" positions, not only because of an unattractiveness from a financial point of view, but also because of a predominant EU approach. Thus, candidates must fill these positions, even if the countries are not interested in them. That is the opportunity for new and small countries, Slovakia included: to get as much as possible in their defined priorities. This process must be coordinated by the state or from the outside by an advisor in personnel matters of European affairs.

## **AN INTEGRATED APPROACH AND PROFESSIONAL SOLUTION**

The successful placement by the mother country of open positions in EU institutions requires a professional approach at a local level. It must be understood that our most important asset is people.

An essential base for this "Talents and Leaders Campaign" is to be permanently informed about "hot" topical EU issues and opportunities that the Eurozone offers.

It is necessary to break the current information embargo and try to attract mainly young talent, who assume that Brussels jobs are inaccessible, even though they fulfill all position requirements.

## **SOURCING DATABASE**

State or outsourcing partners/advisors must build and manage a long-term and conceptually (at least more than one electoral period) personnel database (DB) of candidates suitable for achieving European priorities of Slovakia. This DB includes not just applicants who have already applied, but also targeted acquisition of Talents and Leaders who might not apply, but have the best prerequisites to succeed and help their country in lobbying for its interests.

## **COALITION BUILDING**

In this period, state personnel politics dedicated to EU does not end.

The first step is to create a database of optimal candidates for fulfillment of official and unofficial state quotas. The second is permanent contact with people already active in European issues.

The state should know who and where these contacts are and manage communication with them, even if their professional portfolio is not primary linked to national matters.

Several communication forms are available, such as emailing of selected information and news in Slovakia, organization of events or topic discussions, etc. Even the state should know of this need. There is an insufficient use of the tenet "Every person living away from his mother country feels a stronger loyalty to her and thus he willingly and often subconsciously advocates the interests of his country in day-to-day life."

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