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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL
AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

**ON THE EXECUTION OF THE MATTHAEUS-TAX PROGRAMME FROM
1 JANUARY 1996 TO 31 DECEMBER 1996**

(ARTICLE 11 OF THE COUNCIL DECISION OF 29 OCTOBER 1993)

1. INTRODUCTION

To ensure that the removal of frontier controls from 1 January 1993 did not encourage indirect tax (VAT and Excise duty) fraud, evasion and distortions of competition, a deep and enduring co-operation between national indirect tax administrations was required. To foster this co-operation, the Commission proposed an action programme for the training of indirect tax officials: "Matthaeus-Tax" which was adopted by the Council on 29 October 1993¹.

The objectives of the programme, as set out in Article 3 of the decision, are:

- to prepare indirect taxation officials of Member States for the implications arising out of the creation of the internal market and the development of administrative cooperation, and thus ensure a better application of Community law;
- to make national officials aware of the Community dimension of their work and to build mutual confidence between the indirect taxation administrations of Member States;
- to provide supplementary, adapted vocational training to indirect taxation officials;
- to utilise to the maximum advantage the knowledge of the indirect taxation services in the Community through greater mobility of staff and thus improve the management and the effectiveness of the internal market;
- to stimulate intensive and continuous cooperation at all levels of the relevant administrations with a view to them working together within the context of the internal market.

These objectives are to be achieved through four means: exchanges of officials; training seminars; co-ordinated vocational training programmes; and language training for officials likely to participate in exchanges.

These activities began on 1 July 1993. The Commission reports to Council and Parliament COM (95) 663 and COM (96) 543 covered the programme from 1 July 1993 to 31 December 1994 and 1 January 1995 to 31 December 1995 respectively.

¹ Council Decision of 29.10.1993, OJ n° L280 of 13.11.1993

2. ACTIVITIES IN 1996

2.1 Exchanges

2.1.1 Objectives

The main objective of the exchanges is to provide to indirect tax officials a better mutual understanding of the organisation, methods and procedures applied in different Member States. This understanding should be on both a practical and a theoretical level. This encourages better co-operation and the dissemination of best practice. Performing real duties in the host administration is an important method to meet these objectives.

2.1.2 Organisation

In 1996, for the first time, full discretion was given to the Member States to choose the destination of their exchange officials (in 1995 only 50% were chosen this way; the rest were agreed between the Commission and the Member States). Responsibility was further decentralised in that each Member State was allocated an exchange budget (rather than a number of exchanges as in the past) and encouraged to make maximum use of it. The effect of this reform was to encourage the Member States to prioritise their needs in relation to the budget available.

To ensure that the maximum use was made of resources, Member States reported at the half-year their predicted use of their budget. Funds were re-deployed from those Member States who predicted an under-spend (NL, UK) to those who predicted an overspend (F, FIN, B).

Finally to improve the preparation and execution of the exchange programme, the Commission collated a dossier of guides to each national tax administration in order to provide basic background for each exchange official before their visit. Coupled with this, 1996 saw a concerted attempt to move away from general exchanges (a general introduction to the host administration with a group of officials) to single exchanges (working alongside an equivalent) or targeted exchanges (a specific project).

2.1.3 Activities

218 exchanges took place in 1996 (116 in 1995, 95 in 1994, 88 in 1993). This increase was achieved through a better use of funds, and through a re-deployment of funds from seminars to exchanges. 34% of the exchanges were general, 25% single and 42% targeted. More details on the officials exchanged are set out in Annex A to this report.

2.1.4 Evaluation

The exchanges are monitored throughout the year by the Commission and the Member States. In addition officials (and from 1996, their line managers) provide feedback through questionnaires. National tax administrations were also asked for the first time in 1996 to give their impressions of the value of the exchange programme.

The comments from the national administrations, the officials and their line managers were overwhelmingly positive. B considered them to have been "crowned with success". D noted the great interest of its officials in the programme and the contribution to improving co-operation. The UK was very encouraged by the feedback from its officials, noting that other Member States had made real efforts to meet the needs of its officials. S noted that for one official acting as a host, the exchange had been one of their best experiences in the tax administration. The flexible new arrangements for organising exchanges and the greater emphasis on targeted exchanges were welcomed in particular by several Member States (I, F, B, UK, S, FIN).

This was supported by comments from officials: "renewed morale and real stimulus for career" (B); "As well as operational benefits, the exchange has broadened the officer's perspective" (UK manager); "combination of a visit to the central office and the regional office was ideal" (DK); "the result of the exchange was positive and led to real and palpable benefits" (L).

The exchange programme also led to real changes in national administrations. NL noted the improved understanding of how other Member States worked and the better informal communications which resulted. A noted several changes resulting from the programme: including the introduction of risk analysis; a great increase in the interest in language training; and co-operation in electronic data processing.

Officials also reported *inter alia*: improvements in control methods e.g. "selection of dossiers for control through use of computers" (B); use of IT and audit techniques (P, EL, L); audit of newly registered companies (FIN); better use of risk analysis (A, FIN); better control of cash traders (P, UK); better control of excise duty (spirits) (P); setting up of large trader audit (EL); improvements to recovery payment systems and working practices (F); "professionalisation of specific fraud investigation and prosecution areas" (IRL); improving assistance given to taxpayers (F); development of trader training programme to eliminate errors (P); improved administrative co-operation (A, D, F).

Improvements to the programme are however still possible: EL, S, F, DK thought individual and targeted exchanges were more valuable than general ones. D and EL emphasised the need for exchanges to be practical and related to the specific needs of the official. S emphasised the importance of a tailor-made programme for each exchange.

Officials reported that: exchanges need to be longer if real co-operation is intended (D, B, F, L, I, FIN, UK); more prior contact in preparation and more flexibility during the exchange (B, IRL, S, F, E.); greater efforts to meet objectives by the host administration needed (EL, F, S); more practical work together, in particular real control work in the office and in the field (B, EL, F, FIN, S, A, D, NL); More specialised exchanges less grouped with other officials (A, B, D, E, P, IRL, UK, EL).

These criticisms echo those made by exchange officials in previous years. Although real improvements in making exchanges more practical and more tailored to the needs of the official have been made, there is a need for more progress. In particular even greater efforts need to be made by host administrations to let officials from other Member States

perform real duties. A recurring problem for some Member States is that national legislation, usually that applicable to tax confidentiality, restricts the duties that can be performed. The precise nature of these restrictions and the possibilities for working within them will need to be considered by the Commission and the Member States in the future.

A quantitative evaluation of the exchanges, based on the questionnaires completed by officials and their line managers is set out in Annex A.

2.2 Seminars

2.2.1 Objective

The objective of the seminar programme is to provide the best forum for the structured exchange of ideas between officials from national administrations. The seminars provide the opportunity for: the dissemination of best practice among Member States; the analysis of common problems and solutions; the training of officials in the Community dimension of their work; and the enhancement of administrative co-operation. The seminars may also lead to suggestions for the improvement of the Community legal instruments in force.

2.2.2 Activities

Ten seminars were organised in 1996 (11 in 1995, 8 in 1994, 6 in 1993). Two of the seminars were financed from the 1995 budget and were covered in the 1995 report. About 300 officials attended. Brief descriptions of each seminar are set out in annex B.

2.2.3 Evaluation

Participants completed questionnaires at the end of each seminar. Six months later each Member State completes a further questionnaire designed to evaluate the medium term impact of the seminar. Detailed analysis of these questionnaires is set out in annex B. In general, according to the immediate evaluations, the 1996 seminars were marginally *less* successful than those in 1993-95. However the six month evaluations are more positive. As well as being useful overall and successful in deepening understanding of the issues, 11% of the seminars had led to changes in working practices, 33% to follow-up meetings and 51% to other forms of follow-up in national administrations.

2.3 Common training programme

2.3.1 Objective

The Matthaesus-Tax decision establishes the objective of developing a common core of training.

2.3.2 *Activities*

The Commission adopted a decision², following consultation with the Member States, setting out a common programme of vocational training as required by Article 4 (c) of the Matthaues-Tax decision in 1995. 1996 was the first full year of implementation. Details of this implementation are set out in Table 24 in Annex C.

2.3.3 *Evaluation*

Table 24 shows that, as for 1995, some Member States have had great difficulties in supplying data on the training given to their officials, despite efforts from the Commission to clarify the data required. The problem of this lack of data is addressed in the FISCALIS programme proposals. Given the incomplete nature of the data available both in 1995 and 1996, no reliable conclusions can be drawn.

2.4 **Language training**

2.4.1 *Objective*

The Matthaues-Tax decision stipulates that language training should be given to officials likely to participate in exchange activities.

2.4.2 *Activities*

Annex D sets out the details of language training and its results in 1996.

2.4.3 *Evaluation*

As for the common training programme, the figures provided by some Member States on the language training given to their officials are, as for 1995, too incomplete to permit reliable conclusions to be addressed. Under FISCALIS, it is proposed to tackle this data problem. However the data supplied by officials participating on the exchanges does provide a sample of taxation officials which can be evaluated. Whilst officials still feel able to communicate in their host country fairly well, the level of proficiency in the host country language appears to have fallen. The number of exchange officials attending language courses remains static at about 20 per cent.

3. **MANAGEMENT AND FINANCIAL ASPECTS**

3.1 **Management**

The programme is run by a co-ordinator in each Member State (usually two where the Excise and VAT administrations are separate) and the Commission services. The Commission and the co-ordinators met four times in 1995 in the Matthaues-Tax

² Commission Decision 95/279/EC of 12 July 1995 - OJ No L 172 of 22.7.95, p 24

Committee. The main business of the Committee was the planning and monitoring of the 1996 exchange and seminar programme and the elaboration of the 1997 programme.

In 1996 a manual of procedures was adopted by the Commission, codifying the best practice accumulated over previous years. This has considerably simplified the management of the programme. To focus the efforts of the Commission and the Member States, the Committee also adopted performance targets (based on the questionnaires set out in the Annexes). Broadly speaking, the targets were to better the 1995 performance, which was itself an improvement over 1993-94. A further evaluation form was also introduced: the six-month line managers form, the results of which are set out in this report.

3.2 Budget

For procedural reasons, Budget line B5-3051 covers both the Matthaesus (Customs) and the Matthaesus-Tax programme. In 1996 3,200,000 ecu was allocated to this budget line and of this the Commission allocated 825,000 ecu to the Matthaesus-Tax programme (712,000 in 1995, 600,000 in 1993 and in 1994). Of this, 520,000 ecu was allocated to exchanges and 305,000 to seminars. Of this 87 per cent of the exchange budget was spent and 92 per cent of the seminar budget.

The underspend for the seminars is within an acceptable margin, given that budget allocated was on the basis of average costs per seminar per participant. The underspend for exchanges is disappointing. Six Member States (D, EL, E, NL, P, UK) accounted for 80 per cent of this underspend. The Commission believes that this was largely due to the transition to the de-centralised budget procedure. The results from 1997 will need to be examined to see if there is any underlying problem.

3.2.1 Financial Management

As mentioned under 2.1.2, management of the exchange budget was fully de-centralised, to encourage a more efficient use of budgetary resources by the Member States. Financial control procedures were also de-centralised and modernised in 1996, as foreseen in the 1995 report.

4. OPENING OF THE PROGRAMME TO ASSOCIATED COUNTRIES

The Matthaesus-Tax programme was open to the ten Central and Eastern European associated countries (and Malta and Cyprus) as part of the Community's commitment³ to these countries. This opening in 1996 was a pilot programme financed by the Customs 2000 programme through the framework for the Matthaesus-Tax programme. A report on the 1996 pilot has been prepared by the Commission services. Even though the associated

³ Set out in the White Paper on the preparation of the associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe for integration into the internal market of the Union, COM(95) 163 final.

countries' participation is not fully part of the Matthaesus-Tax programme, a synopsis of the fuller report is set out here and in the annexes.

4.1 Exchanges

22 exchanges took place, most of the associated countries sending one VAT and one Excise official to a Member State. Details are set out in Annex A. The associated countries, participating at a meeting of the Matthaesus-Tax committee to evaluate their participation, expressed a high regard for the exchanges. This is also borne out by the positive assessment of their officials. The most important lesson learned was of the urgent need to raise the language skills of officials from the associated countries.

4.2 Seminars

One official from each of the associated countries was invited to three of the eight seminars (two VAT and one excise). The questionnaires completed by the officials show that they valued the seminars even more than officials from the Member States. On the downside, it was noticeable that the full participation of the officials was hampered by a lack of language skills. Further details are set out in Annex B.

4.3 Conclusion

Participation in the programme on a pilot basis in 1996 was an essential element in the Community strategy for assisting the associated countries in their preparation for accession. Thanks to the efforts of the officials themselves and the host Member States the experience proved valuable, not least in identifying the tasks ahead. A second and third year of the pilot programme will therefore take place in 1997 and 1998. Beyond that, the needs of the associated countries are covered by the FISCALIS proposal (see 5.1 below).

5. CONCLUSION

The success of the exchange programme, the biggest part of the programme financially, stands out in 1996. The near doubling of the programme was achieved together with a significant improvement in quality. Most of the credit for this should go to the officials and their hosts. However it is clear that the improvements in management of the programme and the continued focus on better preparation and execution of exchanges (and the prevalence of more targeted and practical exchanges) permitted this increase in activity and quality. For this the efforts of national co-ordinators deserve special mention.

In contrast, the seminar programme did not repeat the significant improvements made in previous years. Even though the impressions of the participants were only slightly less positive than in 1995 (and the six months evaluations were in many cases better than for 1995), some conclusions can be drawn. Ten seminars in a year probably represented too great a strain on the Commission services, to whom a large part of the burden falls. There was also on occasion a mismatch between the subjects tackled by seminars and the

participants sent by Member States. There is a role both for academic policy seminars and for more practical methodological seminars.

In future, the Commission needs both to focus resources on a smaller number of seminars and to make greater efforts to ensure that the right participants attend. In general however the Commission is convinced that the seminar programme has provoked a real debate among national tax administrations that was simply non-existent before.

5.1 FISCALIS

The experiences of the programme in 1996 played a significant part in influencing the drafting of the proposal for the FISCALIS programme (COM (97) 175), due to come into force in 1998. In particular the success of the exchange programme and the level of demand among national officials influenced the decision to propose a programme which could begin to satisfy this demand and need. The FISCALIS proposal also integrates Matthaeus-Tax-type activities with wider Community policy on co-operation. Finally, the FISCALIS proposals on training and the associated countries were strongly influenced by the Matthaeus-Tax experience. The problems encountered on training and language training were especially influential.

Annex A: Exchanges

In 1996 Member States had the most freedom of choice ever on the host Member State for their officials. Comparing the number of officials sent with those received (see tables 1-3), the UK, NL, S and B were especially popular. D and I were less popular hosts. This breakdown may reflect the relative use of vehicular languages in the tax administrations of these countries. It would be unfortunate for this development to continue: those officials who did go to D gave consistently high ratings for their exchange. The profile of exchanged officials (tables 4-8) was largely unchanged.

Tables 9-11 show that in 1996 efforts to improve the preparation and execution of the exchanges (better candidate profiles, more targeted exchanges) had a small positive effect, according to the officials themselves. Unexpectedly, their line managers, when asked the same questions, were significantly more positive.

Tables 12-18 give a picture of the broader impact of the exchanges. The figures for 1996 were broadly more positive than for 1995, although line managers were slightly more sceptical of the impact than their officials. Most noteworthy was that 40% of the officials (table 14) could foresee administrative changes as a result of the exchange. This figure has risen consistently over the programme (although it was even higher for the associated countries.)

Table 1: Breakdown of exchanges in 1996

Home Member State	Number of officials sent	Host Member State														
		B	DK	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	L	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK
		Number of officials received														
B	15		1		4	1			1	1		2	1	2	2	
DK	14	1		1	1			4			1		1			5
D	17	1			1		1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	2	3
EL	12	1	1				2	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1
E	13	2					2		3		2		1		1	2
F	21	2		3		2		1	1	2	2			2	2	4
IRL	11		1				1			1	1	1	1	3	1	1
I	20	2	1	2	1	2	3	1			2	1	1		2	2
L	8	1			1	1	2		1						2	
NL	10	2			1		1	1				1	1		1	2
A	15	2	1	1	1	1		1	2		3		1	1		1
P	12	2			1	2	2			2				1	1	1
FIN	14		1		1			2			2	2			4	2
S	17	2			1	1	2	1	2	1	3		2	1		1
UK	19	2	3	1	2	1	3		1		2	1		1	2	
TOTAL	218	20	9	8	15	11	19	13	13	8	20	12	11	13	21	25

Table 2: Breakdown of exchanges 1993-96

Home Member State	Number of officials sent	Host Member State														
		B	DK	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	L	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK
		Number of officials received														
B	39		3	3	5	3	3	2	2	1	2	3	3	3	2	4
DK	35	2		2	2	2	3	6	2	1	4		1		1	9
D	46	4	2		3	2	3	5	5	2	3	4	2	2	3	6
EL	35	2	3	2		2	5	1	6		4	1	2	1	2	4
E	37	4	1	3	2		5	1	5	1	5		1		2	7
F	47	6	3	5	2	5		3	3	2	4	1	2	2	3	6
IRL	29	1	3	3	2	1	2		2	1	3	1	2	4	2	2
I	51	4	2	6	4	4	7	3		1	5	2	6	1	2	4
L	19	3	1	2	1	1	2	1	1		1	1	1		2	2
NL	31	4	1	2	2	1	3	2	3	1		1	3	2	2	4
A	22	2	1	4	1	1	1	2	2	1	3		1	1	1	1
P	30	5	1		1	3	5	2	2	2	2			1	1	5
FIN	20	1	2	2	1			2			3	2			4	3
S	24	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	1	4	1	2	1		2
UK	52	5	5	4	4	4	8	1	4	1	6	1	3	2	4	
TOTAL	517	45	29	39	32	30	49	33	39	15	49	18	29	20	31	59

Table 3: Breakdown of exchanges in 1996 - Associated countries

Associated country	Number of officials sent	Host Member State														
		B	DK	D	EL	E	F	IRL	I	L	NL	A	P	FIN	S	UK
		Number of officials received														
Bulgaria	2							1							1	
Czech Rep.	2		1								1					
Cyprus	2				1			1								
Estonia	1													1		
Hungary	1							1								
Latvia	2			1							1					
Lithuania	2		1													1
Malta	2							1					1			
Poland	1								1							
Romania	4	2					2									
Slovakia	1		1													
Slovenia	2			1											1	
TOTAL	22	2	3	2	1	0	2	3	2	0	2	0	1	1	2	1

NB: Indicators marked with an * do not have comparable figures for 1993-94.
 "MS" denotes Member States. "AC" denotes Associated countries. "VAT" denotes VAT officials. "Ex" denotes Excise officials.

Table 4: Gender

	1996 MS	1996 AC	1996 VAT	1996 Ex	1995 MS	1993-94 MS
Male	69%	61%	67%	76%	70%	77%
Female	31%	39%	33%	24%	30%	23%

Highest Female %: FIN (71%), EL (58%), S (56%), AC (56%)

Lowest Female %: B (8%), IRL (9%), A (14%), UK (17%)

Table 5: Average Age

1996 MS	1996 AC	1996 VAT	1996 Ex.	1995 MS	1993-94 MS
41	39	41	42	41	39

Table 6: Work Area

	1996 MS	1996 AC	1995	1993-94
VAT	69%	61%	79%	80%
Excise	26%	28%	18%	20%
Both	5%	11%	3%	0%

Table 7: Grade Code

	1996 MS	1996 AC	1996 VAT	1996 Ex.	1995 MS	1993-94 MS
Officials with directing responsibilities	20%	22%	18%	23%	23%	24%
Officials having management and controlling responsibilities, possibly with some operational duties	44%	39%	42%	48%	48%	40%
Officials having only operational responsibilities but who may take decisions on the ground	37%	39%	40%	29%	30%	36%

Table 8: Why do you believe you were you selected?

	1996 MS	1996 AC	1995 MS	1993-94 MS
volunteered	30%	5%	28%	26%
technical knowledge	23%	27%	22%	24%
linguistic skills	20%	30%	18%	25%
function in administration	24%	35%	26%	23%
other	3%	3%	5%	2%

Table 9: Did you set specific objectives for your administration, in advance, for the exchange*

	1996 MS	1996 AC	1995 MS
Yes	82%	71%	74%
No	18%	29%	26%

Table 10: If yes, were you able to meet these objectives ?*

	Yes, completely	Mostly	Partly	No, not at all
1996 MS ⁴	27%	59%	13%	0%
1996 AC	8%	75%	17%	0%
1995 MS	26%	61%	9%	4%

Table 11: How closely was the exchange related to your work ?*

		36%	42%	19%	3%	0%	
1996 MS ⁵	Very Closely	36%	42%	19%	3%	0%	not at all
1996 AC		17%	56%	28%	0%	0%	
1995 MS		36%	42%	18%	5%	0%	

Table 12: How useful was the experience gained from the exchange ?*

		50%	40%	10%	1%	0%	
1996 MS ⁶	Very Useful	50%	40%	10%	1%	0%	not at all
1996 AC		44%	50%	6%	0%	0%	
1995 MS		50%	37%	12%	1%	0%	

Table 13: How much of this experience were you able to apply in your own administration ?*

		6%	23%	48%	19%	3%	
1996 MS ⁷	All of it	6%	23%	48%	19%	3%	none of it
1996 AC		6%	67%	6%	17%	6%	
1995 MS		11%	26%	47%	15%	1%	

Table 14: As a result of your exchange, can you foresee any administrative changes?

	1996 MS	1996 AC	1995 MS	1993-94 MS
Yes	40% ⁸	53%	27%	12%
No	60%	47%	73%	88%

⁴ Line managers reported equivalent figures of 36%, 53% 11% and 0%

⁵ Line managers reported equivalent figures of 42%, 37%, 16%, 5% and 0%.

⁶ Line managers reported equivalent figures of 32%, 36%, 23%, 8% and 2%.

⁷ Line managers reported equivalent figures of 7%, 20%, 35%, 21% and 17%.

⁸ Line managers reported the equivalent figure of 28%.

Table 15: Did you complete a report of your visit

	1996 MS	1996 AC	1996 VAT	1996 Ex.	1995 MS	1993-94 MS
in writing? ⁹	59%	11%	55%	67%	52%	64%
orally?	7%	50%	8%	8%	11%	10%
both?	32%	39%	34%	23%	37%	26%
TOTAL	98%	100%	97%	98%	100%	100%

Table 16: Was the length of the exchange *

1996 MS	too long	3%	13%	61%	14%	9%	too short
1996 AC		0%	0%	82%	12%	6%	
1995 MS		0%	7%	70%	12%	10%	

Table 17: Overall, how would you rate the value of the exchange for your administration ?*

1996 MS ¹⁰	very high	21%	48%	27%	3%	1%	very low
1996 AC		44%	56%	0%	0%	0%	
1995 MS		28%	39%	27%	6%	1%	

Table 18: Do you think the programme should be continued?

	1996 MS	1996 AC	1995 MS	1993-94 MS
Yes, as it is	60%	82%	58%	26%
Yes, with some changes	40%	18%	42%	74%
No	0%	0%	0%	0%

In response to the question of whether they would be happy for one of their officials to participate again on an exchange, 98% of line managers said yes.

⁹ According to the line managers' questionnaire, 17% of these reports were circulated throughout the national administration; 37% within the central administration; 15% within the region and 32% within the workplace.

¹⁰ Line managers reported equivalent figures of 24%, 43%, 23%, 8% and 3%.

Annex B: Seminars

Namur (Belgium) 25-26 April 1996: "Recovery of VAT debts"

The aim of the seminar was to identify the optimum legal framework for and administrative approach to VAT recovery. Delegates compared the various powers available to national administrations and different national strategies of recovery through prioritising claims.

The Hague (The Netherlands) 25-26 June and Dublin (Ireland) 26-27 September 1996: "The relationship between the taxable person and the administration"

This large subject was split between two seminars, with broadly the same participants. The aim was to identify amongst current practice the ideal balance between the rights and obligations of the taxable person. Delegates from the associated countries participated for the first time. The first seminar looked at the process of registration, accounting and invoicing, the second at audit, collection and appeals.

Helsinki (Finland) 1-2 July 1996: "Ensuring performance in VAT administrations"

The aim of the seminar was to identify the key elements of organisation and management for ensuring good performance in tax administrations. The seminar looked at overall management, including the establishment of objectives, work programmes and priorities and the evaluation of individuals and their career development.

Athens (Greece) 30 September - 2 October 1996: "Control of Excise goods"

The aim of this seminar was to consider the value of fiscal markers and fiscal stamps for excise control. The seminar was conducted with representatives of the trade and with participants from the associated countries. The seminar also compared road control and stock-taking control procedures.

Vienna (Austria) 9-11 October 1996: "Heads of CLO"

This seminar brought together the heads of each Member States' central liaison offices (CLOs) to examine recent problems in the management of administrative co-operation request and plan for future growth in information exchange. The seminar also examined the relationship between CLOs and their wider tax administrations.

Bad Honnef (Germany) 6-8 November 1996: "Limiting fiscal risk through guarantees and technology"

The aim of the seminar was to evaluate new and existing methods of limiting the fiscal risk borne by national administrations through the Excise system. The seminar looked at the operation of guarantees; the process of recovery and the possible use of satellite technology as a control tool.

Madrid (Spain) 2-3 December 1996: "Invoice control and invoice related fraud"

The aim of the seminar was to identify the main problems related to invoice control, to examine methods used by fraudsters and to examine ways of improving the control of invoices.

Evaluation

Table 19 shows that participants immediate reaction to the utility of the seminar and the extent to which it had met their expectations was slightly down from 1995 (although not dramatically: there were more "mostly" than "yes" answers). Conversely tables 20-23 show that, six months after the event, Member States felt more positive about the 1996 seminars than they had felt subsequently about the 1995 seminars. The paired seminars in Dublin and the Hague appeared initially to have suffered from their conceptual nature but this was not borne out on reflection. The level of follow-up indicated by table 23 is particularly encouraging.

Table 19: Participants' evaluation of seminars (all figures are in percentages)

	Yes				Mostly				Partly				No			
	94 MS	95 MS	96 MS	96 AC	94 MS	95 MS	96 MS	96 AC	94 MS	95 MS	96 MS	96 AC	94 MS	95 MS	96 MS	96 AC
1. Did the seminar meet (or exceed) your expectations?	74	67	51	64	22	27	39	33	4	6	10	3	1	0	0	0
2. Did the seminar cover the subjects you expected it to?	67	72	58	71	25	23	34	29	9	5	8	0	0	1	0	0
3. Were there too many presentations?	19	4	12	0	4	2	5	12	8	7	8	7	68	87	75	81
4. Was there enough time for discussion?	70	60	53	57	16	21	20	26	9	12	16	14	5	7	10	3
5. Was there enough time to talk to delegates from other Member States?	71	63	61	57	16	21	22	27	9	11	11	13	4	5	3	3
6. Were there enough documents available?	85	63	72	63	7	16	16	26	7	14	8	7	0	7	3	4
7. Would you say that overall the seminar was useful to your administration?	74	72	61	78	17	21	30	22	9	6	9	0	0	0	0	0
8. Was it a good environment for the seminar?	82	87	84	100	15	12	12	0	3	1	3	0	0	0	0	0
9. Were the translation facilities satisfactory?	69	56	71	83	17	21	19	14	7	14	7	6	6	9	3	3

Above average seminars: Helsinki, Bad Honnef, Athens, Vienna, Madrid

Below average seminars: Namur, The Hague, Dublin

Table 20. Did the participants prepare a written report following the seminar?

	1996 MS	1995 MS
Yes	73%	75%
No	26%	25%

Table 21: As a result of attending the seminar, did your administration gain a deeper understanding of the issues discussed?

1996 MS	greater understanding	16%	52%	23%	5%	1%	not a greater understanding
1995 MS		17%	50%	29%	2%	1%	

Above average: Bad-Honnef, Athens

Below Average: Helsinki, Madrid

Table 22: Overall, would you say that the seminar was useful to your administration?

1996 MS	very useful	22%	49%	22%	5%	1%	not useful
1995 MS		21%	42%	33%	3%	0%	

Above average: Dublin, Athens, Bad-Honnef

Below Average: Madrid, Namur

Table 23: As a result of the seminar, has your administration

	1996 MS	1995 MS
changed its working procedures in any way? ¹¹	11%	17%
organised meetings/seminars within your own administration?	33%	28%
considered other ways of applying the experience gained from the seminar?	51%	49%
organised exchanges in the area covered by the seminar?	8%	18%
established links with other Member States?	4%	16%

¹¹ Above average: Namur (20%), Vienna (23%), Madrid (38%)
Below average: Dublin, Athens

Annex C: The Common training programme

Table 24: Initial and continuing training in the Member States.

1996	INITIAL TRAINING		CONTINUAL TRAINING ON SUBJECTS OF COMMON TRAINING PROGRAMME	
	TOTAL NUMBER OF OFFICIALS HAVING RECEIVED TRAINING	OFFICIALS TRAINED UNDER THE COMMON TRAINING PROGRAMME	OFFICIALS ELIGIBLE	OFFICIALS HAVING RECEIVED TRAINING
B	165 Ex., 597 VAT	762	3,137 Ex., 2,040 VAT	475 Ex., 2,040 VAT
DK	145	145	about 4,000	420
D	3,523	3,523	about 53,500 ¹²	-
EL	150 VAT	150 VAT	1960 VAT, 4006 Ex.	280 VAT
E	252	252	10,421	872
F	1,438 Ex., 357 VAT	1,438 Ex., 357 VAT ¹³	2,500 ¹⁴ Ex., 7,800 VAT	2,500 ¹⁵ Ex. 1,665 ¹⁶ VAT)
IRL	61 VAT	61 VAT	400 VAT	311 VAT
I	19 VAT, 3,940 Guardia	19 VAT	-	0 VAT, 757 Guardia
L	13 VAT, 8 Ex.	7 VAT, 0 Ex.	90 VAT, 4 Ex.	32 VAT, 2 Ex.
NL	246	246	about 2,000	0 ¹⁷
A	270 VAT; 53 Ex.	270 VAT, 53 Ex.	5,366 VAT, 210 Ex. ¹⁸	1,695 VAT, 173 Ex.
P	340 VAT	340 VAT	2,430 VAT, 1,655 Ex.	86 VAT
FIN	120 VAT, 5 Ex.	120 VAT, 5 Ex.	500 VAT, 100 Ex.	180 VAT, 60 Ex.
S	116	116	4,000	337
UK	-	-	-	-

¹² About 3.500 Ex., about 50.000 VAT

¹³ 286 officials complete programme, 71 parts of the programme only

¹⁴ Officials primarily concerned with excise duties. 20,000 Customs officers deal with VAT or Excises from time to time.

¹⁵ All customs and excise officials receive some continuous training once a year.

¹⁶ Figures from 1994

¹⁷ Continuous training not needed, as the content has been covered in previous training

¹⁸ Officials primarily concerned with Excises. About a further 3,000 Customs officers do so from time to time.

Annex D: Language training

Profile of linguistic abilities of exchange participants

Whilst the ability to communicate on the exchange (table 28) has held up well, it is disappointing to see the level of those with basic proficiency and those having language training in advance have fallen slightly. This contradiction may have been supported by the increasing choice of host Member States where vehicular languages are widely spoken.

Table 25: Could you speak the language of the host country?

	1996 MS	1996 AC	1996 VAT	1996 Ex.	1995 MS	1993-94 MS
Yes, fluently	47%	44%	47%	44%	45%	66%
Basic level only	15%	22%	12%	23%	26%	13%
No	38%	33%	41%	33%	29%	21%

Above average language skills of own exchange officials: DK, E, F, NL, FIN
Below average language skills of own exchange officials: B, IRL, L, A, S

Table 26: Did you follow a language training course to participate in the Matthaues-Tax programme ?*

	1996 MS	1996 AC	1996 VAT	1996 Ex.	1995 MS
Yes	19%	24%	21%	15%	21%
No	81%	76%	79%	85%	79%

Above average language courses by own exchange officials: DK, L, A, FIN, UK
Below average language courses by own exchange officials: B, D, EL, F, IRL, I, NL

Table 27: If you did follow a language course, how useful was it to your exchange ?*

1996 MS	very useful	45%	34%	14%	2%	5%	not at all useful
1996 AC		50%	25%	25%	0%	0%	
1995 MS		52%	26%	4%	15%	4%	

Table 28: To what degree did you feel you were able to communicate in the host country ?*

1996 MS	very well	56%	34%	9%	1%	0%	not at all
1996 AC		56%	33%	11%	0%	0%	
1995 MS		54%	33%	12%	1%	0%	

Above average ability to communicate in host country: B, EL, NL, A
Below average ability to communicate in host country: DK, I

Table 29: Overall language training in the Member States

1996		B	DK	D	EL ¹⁹	E	F ²⁰	IRL ²¹	I	L	NL ²²	A ²³	P	FIN	S	UK
English	number of officials	124			10	45	106	0	26	3	0	713	41	25	62	0
	hours/official	67				40	35	0	12	350	0	50		80	22	0
French	number of officials	146			3	1	0	33	19	0	0	11	41	5	5	12
	hours/official	74				12	0	118	12	0	0	30		60	50	59
German	number of officials	35			1	1	2	4	5	0	0	0	1	6	3	3
	hours/official	56				55	47	118	16	0	0	0	66	40	30	35
Spanish	number of officials	29			0	0	3	5	1	7	0	1	0	0	0	3
	hours/official	77			0	0	70	118	81	308	0	36	0	0	0	39
Other	number of officials	38			5	0	2	3	0	1	0	3	0	2	0	0
	hours/official	65				0	47	118	0	45	0	32	0	40	0	0
Total	number of officials	372	300 ²⁴	1,200 ²⁵	19	47	113	45	51	11	0	728	83	38	70	18
	hours/official	69			0	40	37	118	14	295	0	50		69	24	51

¹⁹ Ex. only

²⁰ VAT only. All customs and excise officials receive language training during their initial training period (English, German, Italian or Spanish, 2 hours weekly). Subsequent training is on a job-specific basis, for which no figures are available.

²¹ VAT only

²² No language training necessary: All officials who have international contact are required to speak and read English and German and/or French

²³ VAT only

²⁴ Estimate, exact figures are not available

²⁵ Estimate for Customs and Excise administration only. No data available from Länder for VAT.

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