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UK's influence in Brussels sprouting

There has been a marked shift towards a more "Anglo-Saxon" approach in Brussels, according to a report published by Business for New Europe (BNE) today.

BNE's report "The changing character of Brussels: Charting the UK's Influence" highlights the changes in the EU's personnel and working culture which have served to increase the UK's influence in Brussels. Developments include UK nationals occupying key positions in the Commission, the prevalence of the English language and a general move towards more reformist attitudes in economic policy.

The report highlights the following specific trends:

- A vastly increased importance of the English language within the EU bureaucracy over the last 15 years. English has effectively become the *lingua franca* of Brussels.
- The UK has become very well represented at the higher levels of the European Commission, including in key Directorates General and the *cabinets* (private offices) of Commissioners.
- The founding six countries of the original EEC still play major roles within the EU, yet their share of staff within the European institutions has noticeably diminished (from 63% to 58% between 2001 and 2006), and is set to weaken further.
- Overall, these changes have brought positive and tangible benefits for the UK and for the prospects of a liberal, reform-minded EU.
- However the UK cannot be complacent about its position as it is generally under-represented in the European Commission overall. The shortage of Britons at the lower levels of the Commission is a cause for concern, particularly for the future.

In the light of these findings, BNE makes the following recommendations:

- UK business should promote engagement with and placements within the EU institutions.
- There should be expansion of the European Fast Stream programme, and greater promotion of European careers by the UK government.
- A more concerted effort should be made to increase language skills in the UK education system.
- The volume and range of EU secondments should be increased, particularly from outside government.

BNE Vice-Chair Stephen Wall, who worked in Brussels as the UK's Permanent Representative to the European Union from 1995-2000, said:

"There has been a lazy stereotype which regards Brussels as stuck in a bygone era in the grip of the founding members of the European project, with France and Germany in the driving seat. However I do not recognise this picture. The culture of the EU has been evolving very rapidly, and there have been some notable trends which show increasing UK influence. The complaints in the French press about the Anglo-Saxonisation of the EU are a caricature but caricatures reflect perception and the perception is not a million miles from reality."

Lord Christopher Tugendhat, member of the BNE Advisory Council, and a Member of the European Commission from 1977 to 1985, said:

"These changes upset those among our partners who prefer the old habits of mind and philosophical assumptions. Nor is it surprising that that they are opposed by those who wish to see the UK marginalized and our influence diminished. What is, however, weird is the

disappointment of Euroseptics in this country who would rather see the EU falter and fail than move in the direction we in Britain have so long been calling for.”

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. BNE’s aim is to support the UK’s active engagement in Europe, and a reformed, enlarged and free-market EU.

2 . BNE’s principles are as follows:

- We support the UK’s membership of the EU and oppose withdrawal to the margins; we support positive and constructive engagement with the EU as the only sensible approach and as vital to our national interests.
- We support a vision of a prosperous free-market Europe able to compete in a globalised world.
- We support economic liberalisation and oppose excessive EU regulation, centralisation and red tape.
- We support institutional reform, further cooperation between EU member states where it is in Britain's interests and oppose old-fashioned federalism.
- We support the enlargement of the EU including Turkey, and recognise the benefits that the recent wave of enlargement have brought.

3. BNE is run on a day-to-day basis by Zaki Cooper (Director), whom is supported by Roland Rudd (Chairman) and Sir Stephen Wall and Sir Michael Jay (Vice-Chairs).

4. For further information about Business for New Europe, see www.bnegroup.org or contact +44 (0) 207 256 6575, +44 (0) 7787 513 864 press@bnegroup.org