

THE COMMON FRONT

All TU together

Brussels, 12 February 2021

Opinion survey on flexible collaborative spaces ("hotdesking") imposed on colleagues, the first DGs and departments to be subjected to this being: DG HR, EPSO, DIGIT and SCIC; the others will follow.

The statement of the Director-General of DG HR, following the management meeting of January 18, 2021, regarding the move of the colleagues from DG HR to the new building "The One" (107 rue de la Loi), organized in the working environment model of a "dynamic office space" (hotdesking), surprised all the trade unions and professional organizations and all the colleagues, this being all the more worrying as no announcement or even negotiation was communicated to staff representatives.

Listen from minute 10:

<https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/DG/HR/news/Pages/DG-HR-management-meetings-debrief-18-January-2021.aspx>

"We cannot consult our staff on where we are going, the decision is beyond our reach."

This unilateral decision by the Director-General of DG HR is unacceptable not only for all trade unions and professional organizations, but also for all the staff of this Directorate-General. It should also be pointed out that making a decision of such magnitude in the midst of a pandemic, is far from being the most appropriate in terms of calm reflection on the future of our institution.

All unions are in favour of an approach based on dialogue and the involvement of the personnel concerned.

At this stage, we can only note a total dissonance between the words of Commissioner Hahn during the meeting he had with all the trade unions and professional organizations, as well as with the local staff committees and the central staff committee (LSC / CSC), on 12 January 2021 and the actions / positions of DG HR (see below).

During this meeting, in his introductory speech, he confirmed to us: "... ***understands the needs for an effective social dialogue...***" but also "***... and reassures the concern of the Institution to care about people.***"

Actions / positions of DG HR:

<https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/DG/HR/Staff/Pages/faq-hr-on-the-move.aspx>

"Will the unions be consulted about the move?"

Formally, unions do not need to be consulted when DGs move to new buildings. It is important to note that DG HR is committed to making this new model of working a success and it has therefore prepared a range of workshops to involve staff in the change management process. ” (<https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/DG/HR/Staff/Pages/faq-hr-on-the-move.aspx>)

We all agree that a change in the working environment appears necessary in the context of the development of teleworking (a HR's decision that is still awaited to this day) and certain budgetary restrictions.

That being said, this development cannot be done without consulting the staff concerned and let alone without taking into account the well-being of the staff.

If we base ourselves on the Communication from the **Commission on the working environment of tomorrow of the European Commission on 16 October 2019** [C (2019) 7450 final], this one affirms *“We need to strive to create a working environment in the Commission that gives our highly qualified and engaged staff the best opportunities to work effectively, work collaboratively with colleagues and external stakeholders and that enables them to reconcile their personal and working life in a healthy, sustainable and balanced manner”*

As a reminder, “the dynamic or flexible office is a concept whereby the number of people in the service concerned exceeds the quantity of workstations normally available, and which are not assigned by name. (...) In fact, the dynamic office can be converted in a landscaped office layout as well as in an individual or shared office, completely or in part. Each day the employee chooses his position, according to availability and / or his needs and / or according to the operational needs of the service. [1]”. In the current case, the administration is planning to set up a dynamic collaborative office (open plan office), therefore without individual offices and without assigning workstations by name. This also entails a “clean desk” policy, that is to say, the obligation to clear the table completely before leaving, and the elimination of storage spaces (drawers, cupboards, etc.), replaced by a small locker at the entrance. Therefore, no customization of the space would, in principle, be possible.

We can note that two important principles particularly stated in this communication on the workplace of the future:

- PRINCIPLE 8. Before deciding on a particular office set-up, Directorate-Generals, departments and teams should receive help and advice and help to look at options and decide what the best office arrangement is for their work.
- PRINCIPLE 9. Staff affected should be involved throughout the process of conceptualising and implementing the new workspace.

Unfortunately we sadly remark that neither DG HR nor the other DGs concerned have consulted their staff, or / and the joint body responsible for defending the interests of the staff in such situation, that is to say, the Committee for Prevention and Protection at Work. This is all the more regrettable as it is in violation not only of the commitments of the Commission but also of Belgian law relating to the code for prevention and protection at work (Articles II.8-1 to II.8-3 : http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi_loi/change_lg.pl?language=fr&la=F&table_name=loi&cn=2017042827).

Therefore, the common front trade unions and professional organisations propose to you a staff consultation in order to verify the enthusiasm, announced in particular by the Director General of

DG HR, of the colleagues from the Directorates-General who will be affected by this new project of flexible collaborative spaces. This exercise will also be offered to colleagues from other Directorates-General who will be faced with a “done job” and who will also be affected by such a project. We will analyse your answers and use them to defend your rights during the negotiations with the administration.

Colleagues from DG "HR, EPSO, DIGIT and SCIC" will receive an EUsurvey link in the next few hours so that they can participate in the survey. In the coming days, the colleagues from the DGs for which a switch to Flexidesking is announced, will also receive a link. With each new move announcement, we will send an EUsurvey location so that all colleagues can express their thoughts on the situation and share their experiences.

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Protection of personal data

Responses to this survey are voluntary and will be collected anonymously. No link will be established between the responses and any information that could possibly lead to the identification of their origin.

[1] Draft Housing Conditions Manual (HCM) for Commission services - Part 3, 30 March 2015, page 3