



Bruxelles, 12 December 2022

**Note for the attention of Ms Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission**

Subject: Building policy of the Commission: the continued push towards hot-desking in open space environment poses a major risk to the health of staff and the attractiveness of the Commission

Dear Ms von der Leyen,

All Trade Unions and staff associations (OSPs) together with the Central Staff Committee, had already expressed their serious concerns about the implementation of the new open space/hotdesking working environment at the European Commission in a common letter addressed to you in May 2021. Since then and despite a number of warnings, the number of buildings offering hot-desking has been increased steadily, to the extent that in Brussels around 6 000 staff are at present in hot-desking in an open space environment. Moreover, further movements of DGs to this type of environment are already planned for the near future.

We strongly deplore the indiscriminated movement towards hot-desking in open space that follows a “one-size-fits-all” logic, in stark contrast with the spirit and the letter of the 2019 Communication on the future working environment at the Commission¹.

In addition, we remind you that there is still no legal basis for the implementation of hot-desking and the consolidation of the three housing manuals - concerning respectively individual offices, shared offices, and open spaces - is still ongoing.

We remain firmly convinced that Social dialogue must be re-established as a matter of urgency in order to correct the consequences of the administration’s unilateral decision to move staff in this type of working environment, which constitute a significant shift away from the Commission rules currently in force and poses a threat to the physical and mental health of the staff.

We demand that the results of the 100-day assessment, which is now very long overdue, for the building L107 (the One), and all other buildings concerned by hot-desking, be made available to all relevant counterparts, including all trade unions and staff associations (PSOs),

¹ Communication C(2019) 7450 "The future working environment in the European Commission"

central and local staff committees and the CPPT/CSHT. Additionally, we request to receive clear information on staff consultation - both *ex ante* and *ex post* - for all the DGs that were and are going to be moved into hot-desking/open space, including the issues raised and the solutions that were proposed and implemented. We also request to receive the risk analysis performed for all the buildings where a hot-desking/open space environment is or will be in place.

The shortcomings of this building policy are further worsened by the “policy” applied by OIB for its implementation: OIB does not listen, does not take seriously the arguments and figures put forward, ridicules the objections raised, imposes its decisions and forces its way through, claiming to have the Commission's endorsement...and even changes its plans along the way...always without the slightest consultation, as it has been the case for the relocation of the executive agencies to the North Light building !

It is therefore clear that this disastrous building policy is jeopardizing the attractiveness of the Commission, at a time when reaching geographical balance is an increasing challenge, especially as the other European institutions do not apply the same policy and offer their staff better working conditions.

We remain firmly convinced that any decision implying radical changes to the working environment, with possible repercussion on the physical and psychological health of staff, its productivity and the attractiveness of the Commission, must be taken at the highest political level.

We therefore urge you to invite your services to:

- 1) show that the Commission, at the highest political level, is seriously committed to promoting concretely the health and well-being of staff, and to fostering a workplace where the human being is at the center - and not sacrificed because of costs cutting;
- 2) remind all services and DGs that the health of staff is a top priority and cannot be put at risk by purely economic considerations;
- 3) ensure the re-establishment of a real and fair dialogue with the staff and its representatives;
- 4) make sure the CPPT/CSHT committees of the Commission can carry out their mission, namely protecting the health and safety of staff, by receiving well-prepared files in a good time, so that they to be able to formulate an opinion *ex-ante*, and are not simply “informed” *ex post*;
- 5) guarantee that, before any decision is made on major changes to the working environment, such as hot-desking/open space, staff and DGs are adequately consulted and the needs of the different types of jobs are appropriately taken into account, including by offering differentiated environments (including individual and shared offices, assigned and non-assigned offices, etc);
- 6) ensure that all facilities that are an essential part of the working environment - such as canteens and cafeterias - are available for all staff and provide an varied and healthy offer at an affordable price for all, especially those in the lowest salary range.

Finally, we would like to draw your attention to the negative consequences of this building policy.

Indeed, it would be good to evaluate its undesirable effects on:

- the motivation of colleagues in the face of a new working environment imposed without consultation or compensation and the resulting psycho-social risks ;
- the decrease of “a strong esprit de corps” and of interaction between the Commission's staff ;
- staff productivity.

We reiterate our demand, formulated in our letter of May 2021, to meet you as soon as possible to discuss these crucial issues for all staff.

C. Sebastiani /
R. Trujillo
Alliance
(signed)

E. Lieber
Generation 2004
(signed)

N. Mavraganis
USF
(signed)

G. Vlandas / H.
Conefrey
RS- U4U/USHU
(signed)

Athanasios Katsogiannis
Central Staff Committee
(signé)

CC:

Ms G. Ingestad, Director-General DG Human Resources and Security

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