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FLASH Special on mobilisation

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EDITORIAL

TIME TO ACT – GENERAL MOBILISATION

The European Public Service is suffering its worst attack ever against its employment and work conditions.

Against the backdrop of the economic crisis and under Member States' pressure, the Commission is poised to hand over to the Council the dismantlement of our Statute. In that way, it can hide behind its decisions, maintain that it only wants minimal reforms and lean on public opinions that consider us "privileged".

Nothing obliges the Commission to open Pandora's box with yet another revision of the Statute! U4U within the Trade Unions Majority demands that the College does not set in motion this fatal spiral of events.

Are we going to passively wait to lose our **expatriation allowance and our travel time**? Are we going to sheepishly watch the **suppression of 10% of planned jobs**? Are we going to accept to **work 40 hours per week until we are 65 or 67**? Are we going to settle for another **reduction of our pensions and an increase in our retirement contributions; to see our career prospects shrink even more**, and to have insecurity formalised as a human resources management method at the mercy of a consolidated hierarchy's "good" will?

No. Staff showed its determination at the General Assembly last Wednesday 22 June, when all categories of personnel from all institutions voted for the **resolution below**. We call for an even stronger unified action at the **next General Assembly on Wednesday 29 June**.

At this point, **it is up to each one of us to do his and her bit in the approaching combat, and reinforce the impetus of self-defence**.

To defend the European Public Service is above all to strive for a citizens' model of building Europe **efficiently, ambitiously and in solidarity**.

THE EUROPEAN PUBLIC SERVICE SERIOUSLY UNDER THREAT

We are not mere participants in the European Public Service, we are that service. We are not just European officials, temporary or contract agents but citizens above all. We are citizens of that Europe whose founders intended it to be one of solidarity guaranteeing the common interest.

In this context, U4U reiterates its commitment to an independent European public service, one with strong competencies and at the service of the common European interests.

A strong European public service is not only a means for jointly responding to current challenges; it also guarantees solidarity of the coordinated response when addressing the challenges of the future.

Consequently, U4U firmly opposes any measure, global or per category, budgetary or institutional, that aims to question and weaken that independence which is indispensable given the interests of the national and work force categories.

Danger for the Statute

Our Statute is the object of claims for reassessment and modifications on the part of the Council (see below) under Member States' pressure, touching on pensions, various allowances, early retirement, promotions, etc.

U4U considers reopening the "Statute" issue useless and dangerous as the European public service has been sufficiently under attack, reformed and weakened in its role as such in 2004 (the "Kinnock" reform).

The Commission will be presenting its proposal to the Member States on 29 June without consulting the syndicates representing staff. The Commission intends to pass the measures over the summer holiday period, so that everything is locked in place by September and staff would no longer be able to act.

The argument supporting the "urgency" of the never-ending Statute revisions is that the "adaptation method for the salaries" must be replaced. That does not hold water apart from the hidden agenda; from the opaque reasons linked to expiring electoral mandates in many Member States; from the pressure of movements whose xenophobe and anti-European slogans evoke the 1930s with their frenzied search for scapegoats.

Where is the presumed "urgency" if the current method continues to apply until 2013? We have all the time on our hands to negotiate its adjustment in a more tranquil political and economic setting. Why all the haste to review the Statute when at the same time, the systemic defence of the Euro is being postponed indefinitely – crisis after crisis, and month after month?

This time gap between the emergencies and the priorities speak louder than words about the lack of vision and European solidarity of many (overly) national decision-makers. It would be regrettable that such attitudes find sympathetic and zealous intermediaries within the European institutions, especially within the one that is the Guardian of the Treaties, the guarantor of our independence in the service of the common interest: the Commission.

If the reason that is invoked is indeed the search for immediate economies, is it not more profitable to look for them in rationalising the functioning of the European machinery. The different seats of the European Parliament, the mushrooming agencies and other bodies, the duplication and overlap of mandates between Directorates General dealing with similar issues, the hyper-inflated hierarchy of the External Service, the rental costs of dozens of buildings, etc.: these are the sources of instant and useful savings!

But what are the real reasons for the Commission's initiative, especially the one leading the Commission to "drown" the request for reforming the Statute and the Adaptation Method in the Financial Framework ... as if the independence of the European public service and our living and working conditions were not but an adjustable variable?

The budget for the functioning of the institution: Endangered

In the context of the forthcoming financial perspective 2014 – 2020, the pursuit of the European project depends on maintaining and increasing a European budget that sufficiently allows the fulfilment of its goals.

Putting on the same scales the required rationalisations of national budgets and the refusal to increase the European budget (a mere 1,1% of the EU-27's GDP) to forge anew the European solidarity, is equivalent to **subjecting an overweight person to the same treatment as an anorexic one**: preventing the latter to gain weight because the former must necessarily lose weight ... Who would trust a doctor that acts like that?

The financing of the institutions and their staff represents **5.7% of the EU's budget i.e. 0,0006% of GDP**. If the Commission does not guarantee the necessary amounts in its June proposal, our Statute, salaries and downright existence of the independent European public service will be under the serious threat of budget cuts.

Consequently, **U4U within the Trade Unions Majority firmly demands that President Barroso bring transparency to the Commission proposals and to the genuine motives behind them, as well as to guarantee the adequate financing to maintain the purchasing power of all colleagues.**

U4U appeals to the department of personnel that the Commission do not propose the Council a review of the statute on 29 June to be made

If we really want to establish reforms, we need to concentrate on what has to be improved in order to save money without having to change the Statute to a great extent!

It is for this purpose that we call all personnel, in all institutions for a general mobilization.

The Commission should not provide a review of our Statute, that would seriously affect our working conditions and employment and would again be detrimental to the civil service's loyalty, competence and interest of the general welfare.

BERLAYMONT, 22 JUN 2011: A GENERAL INTERINSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE TRADE UNION'S MAJORITY

Upon the call of the **trade unions'**, who had gained the majority a general interinstitutional assembly was convoked on Wednesday, 22 June at the Berlaymont.

More than 500 people, from all categories and institutions, gathered **against the serious and imminent threat impending on the civil service and our Statute.**

Since the general assembly was organized one day before the summit, it makes thus **more than 1000 colleagues** who are mobilized in Brussels with one day's interval within relatively short, because **we are aware of the urgency and gravity of the situation.**

The representatives of **all the trade unions** took the floor one after the other to ask the Commission **not to introduce in the Communication of 29 June the foreseen modification of the Statute.**

They also insisted on the need of establishing a personnel unit and trade unions. This unit should take into account the interest of all the staff and at the same time answer their expectations.

RÉSOLUTION VOTED UNANIMOUSLY BY THE GENERAL STAFF 22 JUN 2011

The staff of the European institutions at the interinstitutional General Assembly:

- **condemn** the absence of accord regarding the Communication on the modification of the Statute and the financial perspectives of the near future;
- **refuse** that one tries again - 7 years after the reform of 2004 - to weaken the European civil service by modifying its Statute;
- consider that the adaptations and indispensable reforms, in particular those aimed at finding a solution vis-à-vis the precarious employment conditions of certain colleagues can be realized **without touching the Statute;**
- **ask** that the Commission take all necessary measures that a **real social dialogue** can take place;
- **ask** that chapter 5 of the financial perspectives 2014-2020 provide **enough financial means** so that the European institutions can fulfill all their tasks;
- **ask** that the Commission renounce the provision of modifications regarding the Statute;
- ask the Commission not to envisage the introduction of a demand for a new method within short;
- consider that a strong European civil service be part of the solution to responding to the topical challenges;
- **demand that a strike is being announced in order to safeguard our rights, and to convoke another General Assembly on 29 June at the Berlaymont.**

THE MEMBER STATES DEFINE THEIR THREAT

The Council distributed the **projects of attack against our Statute** on 20 June, which were made by the Austrian, Danish, Finnish, French, German, Dutch, Swedish and British delegations.

And here are **some of the passages, which are particularly severe and telling**:

- "**very substantial reductions** in [EU administrative] spending, including **salaries, pensions and benefits**, are required over the next Multiannual Financial Framework";
- "a few key areas that we would like to see, **as a minimum**, covered within the formal proposal on the Staff Regulations";
- "**allowances should not be adjusted annually**"; "**the expatriation allowance [...] would naturally diminish over time**";
- "**separation** of the pensions and allowances adjustment **from the salary adjustment**";
- "**Given the high level of EU remunerations and pensions, significant pension reforms are needed to reduce future costs**"; "**further pension rights cannot be accumulated at the current rate**";
- "linking the standard retirement age to life expectancy, a **reduction in the rate** by which pension rights are accumulated, a **review of the base for calculating the pension**; a removal of the bonus accumulation system, a phase out of the future partner pension rights, **abolishment in the use of the early retirement scheme**";
- "Any proposal should **increase the Special Levy** and should be **applied to pensions as well**".

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