



Brussels, 23.03.2020

Note for the attention of Ms Gertrud INGESTAD, Director-General, DG HR

Subject: Welcome message and invitation to meet with Generation 2004 and discuss various arrangements during the COVID-19 crisis

Dear Ms Ingestad,

Generation 2004, the largest individual staff organisation in the Commission, which is deeply committed to a modern, efficient and fair EU staff policy, would like to congratulate you on your recent appointment as Director-General for Human Resources and Security.

Your start in your new position is overshadowed by the COVID-19 crisis which has far-reaching consequences for the good-functioning of the Commission and also the staff. It is an enormous challenge in these times of closed schools and IT-related problems to combine both work- and family-related obligations.

We would be extremely pleased to have the possibility to meet you urgently via videoconference to discuss the current measures in place in relation to the COVID-19 crisis. In this regard you will find attached our proposals to be implemented in order to better accommodate the working conditions of the Commission staff.

At a later stage we would like to meet you to highlight a few of the most urgent staff issues and the key HR priorities our membership cares deeply about. For further information and context, please find here also [our welcome letter to Commissioner Hahn](#), sent to him on the occasion of his appointment as the Commissioner in Charge of Budget and Human Resources.

We are looking forward to cooperating with you on the many different topics falling under your new responsibility, which are of the utmost importance to staff, and we hope to hear from you soon,

Łukasz WARDYN

Chair of Generation 2004

CC: SAKKERS Ewoud (HR)

ANNEX

Generation 2004's concerns regarding conditions or work during the COVID-19 crisis

The European Commission has taken unprecedented measures to protect its staff against infection and to contribute to the efforts of Member States to slow down the spread of the virus. While we fully endorse these measures, we would like to highlight in this document a number of practical issues and problems which should be addressed urgently to reduce the burden on staff and facilitate as much as possible their life and work.

- As the European Schools started a remote learning program for students, there is a need by parents to maintain regular contact with teachers. This amounts to up to 3 hours per day and, as a consequence, many Commission staff members are overwhelmed with taking care of their children and providing them with education as well as performing their professional duties. Especially, enormous pressure falls on families with several children or on sole parents. Generation 2004 proposes that during this difficult period, the Commission counts as work time a certain amount of time devoted to child-care.
- Help should be provided for parents designated as performing critical functions and who do not have access to any childcare. In line with the measures taken in some Member States, emergency childcare facilities should be provided for staff working in critical functions and not having the possibility to work from home instead of shutting down the childminding facilities operated by the EU Institutions.
- Online training opportunities should be ramped up to provide colleagues with training addressing the specific needs of the current situation, for instance on teleworking, and helping them to reconcile as best they can the conflicting professional and private demands.
- Specific remote-team-management training should be provided to help managers to identify and cope with the particular challenges and constraints posed by mandatory teleworking of an unprecedented scale.
- While the new teleworking guidelines offer a sensible and flexible approach that, by and large, suits the current situation, there are some elements which should be reconsidered:
 - The requirement to be able to reach the workplace in a reasonable time should be suspended as the increasing number of restrictions on travelling, together with the reduced availability of public transport, and necessity for cross-border colleagues to supply certificates, make it increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to comply with this rule.
 - The requirement to telework at the place of residence should also be temporarily lifted on a case by case basis. This restriction may lead to difficulties for some colleagues with a partner or direct family members living in a different country or far from the workplace, where they may commute to.
 - Generation 2004 is also concerned that the current rules are difficult to apply for staff in Delegations and Commission Representations and we would like to discuss with you the situation of this group of staff and have assurances from DG HR that all colleagues are able to work while remaining safe.
 - The requirement to register working hours in Sysper (unlike under normal teleworking arrangements where this is not the case) should be lifted. Fulfilling the requirement consumes additional IT resources without any added value while forcing colleagues, who have to work early in the morning or late at night

(be it for family reasons or to ensure IT connectivity), have to make false entries to avoid a negative daily balance.

- Extend the contracts of all temporary staff members (TA, CA) in order to assure uninterrupted business continuity until the end of the crisis.
- Any CA 3B contracts expiring during the current crisis should automatically be conducted into a 1-year TA contract (7-year rule) in order to assure business continuity.
- Keeping statutory legal deadlines (eg. Art. 90 request/complaints, accident reports, submission of medical claims, applications for the preventive medicine programs etc.) may pose problems due to recurring issues with access to email and other IT services (SYSPER, JSIS, etc.). DG HR should make sure that these problems do not lead to disadvantages for staff.