



Brussels, 27.04.2020

Note for the attention of Ms Gertrud INGESTAD, Director-General, DG HR and
Mr Mario CAMPOLARGO, acting Director-General, DG DIGIT

Subject: IT Support during the COVID-19 mandatory teleworking and cost related aspects

Dear Ms Ingestad and Mr Campolargo,

With this letter, we would like to draw your attention to certain consequences of mandatory teleworking for most Commission staff, which is now in force for several weeks and will most likely continue for weeks if not months to come. We fully support this measure in the interest of public health and the protection of staff, but we are concerned that the measure may place a disproportionate burden on some staff. This burden results from both the difficulties faced by many staff to align work with other domestic requirements such as the home-schooling of children, and – the often related – problem of insufficient IT equipment.

We have already addressed the issue of home-schooling as well as other important aspects in our two separate notes to Mr Ingestad on 23 March and 03 April 2020. I would be grateful for coming back to us on them as well.

Based on complaints we received we estimate that a large part of staff working from home has to do so using private IT equipment. Such equipment is often not fully suitable for the tasks staff has to perform and given the constraints under which the work has to take place:

- IT equipment has to be shared with children for home-schooling and/or other household members who are also teleworking, while specific software needed for the job may not be available on private computers due to licensing limitations, insufficient computing power or connectivity.
- Broken private equipment such as chargers etc. cannot easily be replaced considering that many shops are closed and online delivery takes much more time than usual, while for corporate equipment it is not possible to go to IT proximity teams.
- In addition, some colleagues may also have to bear higher telecommunication costs since they have to use their private phones or are forced to upgrade internet connections in order to cope with the need for greater bandwidth.

As Generation 2004, we are convinced that it is the responsibility of the European Commission as employer to help staff working from home by all possible means and provide appropriate support, in particular under these exceptional circumstances. Against this background, we would like to ask you to consider the actions and measures proposed below:

- Urgently acquire additional corporate laptops and distribute them to all those not yet equipped with such systems.
- For a limited period, staff should be allowed to take home IT equipment other than corporate laptops such as screens or keyboards or docking stations if these are needed for their work. A simple self-declaration sent by email to the HoU should suffice.
- Since IT units have spare parts and other equipment in store such as chargers, computer-mice, etc., wherever possible, collection points should be set up at each site where such items can be retrieved in case something is broken or not readily available at home. Especially for the Luxembourg site, where around 10% of the Commission staff is based, collection spots should be created across its borders in France, Germany and Belgium; many colleagues live in these countries and cannot cross borders to go to the Mercier building where one such spot is located.
- In the meantime, consider the possibility of allowing staff to buy IT or other equipment necessary for working at home, including software licenses, with the possibility for reimbursement depending on their income situation and within reasonable limits. We should not forget that this is mandatory telework for which many colleagues were not prepared.
- Additionally, consider measures similar to those taken by the European Parliament (see annex), at least for staff in lower income categories.

While we are aware of the resources required to implement these measures, we are convinced that the money would be well spent to improve the productivity of staff. At the same time, it should also be taken into consideration that most missions have been canceled and basically no missions are likely to take place in the foreseeable future, implying substantial savings in the mission budget. These savings should be used in our view to finance the improvement of working conditions for staff. It is also our view that these challenging times could be a golden opportunity for the Commission to accelerate the overall project of replacing desktop computers with laptops and, in the process, modernize its IT infrastructure.

We would therefore greatly appreciate a careful consideration of the above measures and we are ready to engage in a more in-depth discussion any time soon.

Kind regards,

Łukasz WARDYN



Chair of Generation 2004

CC: SAKKERS Ewoud (HR)