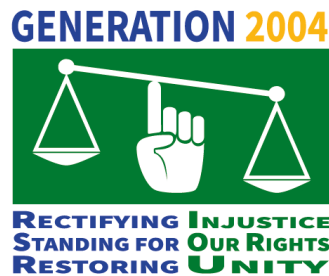


Petition for a part-time coronavirus special leave for Commission staff with young children

Fields marked with * are mandatory.



Let's face it. The Coronavirus lockdown is a nightmare for staff with children that need to be cared for, entertained and home schooled, while parents have to be constantly available (at least in theory) to satisfy their employer's teleworking requirements. Moreover, very often, those staff do not have other family members around to help. It's mission impossible, in particular for lone parents as well as where both parents work.

Until now, the Commission hierarchy, starting with President von der Leyen, has repeatedly heaped praise and recognition on the effort Commission staff have made during these extraordinary circumstances. However, in practice, not much has been done to alleviate the burden for parents of young(er) children. On the contrary, it appears to rely on the continuing understanding and extraordinary efforts of these families. Working 8 hour days and, on top of that, having to school their children, do child minding and, as usual, housekeeping chores is just too much even for super-mums and super-dads.

Extraordinary efforts can be maintained only in the short term. The longer the situation continues, the greater the need for structural solutions to support adapting to the new 'normal'. For the time being, [New Guidelines on Teleworking](#) by DG HR – work flexible hours, but only as agreed with your manager, use your leave days or take parental leave – clearly places the entire burden on the staff.

That is why we ask Commissioner Hahn and DG HR to urgently provide for parents with at least one child under 12 years of age, with the possibility to take special part-time Coronavirus leave in Sysper2 until their children are able to rejoin their school or day-care facilities. This special leave should be granted to lone parents and to one parent in families where both parents are working. Parents should be able to take this part-time special leave for up to 50% of their usual working time on a weekly basis. We observe that full-time special leave is

already granted to Commission employees whose work is not suitable for telework.

Please support this petition by signing it below

B a c k g r o u n d :

Life can be unfair, but the European way of life should try to reduce this unfairness through all sorts of social measures. Therefore, if the Commission wants to lead by example, and claim that they care for their staff, and their work-life balance, they should do better than just send around some guidance and instead take measures that actively alleviate the burden.

In its recent guidelines on 'Teleworking with Children', DG HR, while recognising the double challenge staff with children currently face, does not offer any true relief to parents. Instead, it provides well-meant suggestions that may read well on paper but make little sense in practice.

It is not possible to stay all the time with young children inside the apartment and work. You cannot lock them away because you have the supervisory obligation and they do not have an o n / o f f b u t t o n .

At the same time, staff whose tasks are not suitable for teleworking – such as educators in the interinstitutional children's centre (CPE) – have been granted special leave and it is the parents who have to carry the burden for their sensible absence – without any compensation s o f a r .

Here are some examples, with reactions as recorded by some of the working parents among u s :

“Allocate each family member their specific place (mum’s working desk/ kid’s play corner)”

- Easy to do in a big apartment/house, but how should more challenging situation be dealt with, if, for instance, there’s not enough space? There are plenty of families living with several children in small apartments or houses, which are just not designed for all residents to stay constantly inside and work at the same time.

“It might be easier for everyone if you work in different rooms”

- But what to do with small children? Can we really go into a different room if we have small children and leave them alone? Either for the safety of the children, or because the children

will just follow us. Children just don't have an on/off or pause button, nor sensors to automatically react to red and green signs we would put on our home (virtual) office door; yet another great piece of advice, especially for smaller children, thank you!.

“Work when it suits you best: for some of us, the brain works best in the mornings and for others later in the day. Becoming an early riser is an option, if your children sleep well. But if that's not the case, you could choose to have some work done later in the evening, when young children are in bed for example; with the agreement of your manager in case of working outside core time”.

- Great advice. Each day I should ask my boss, if I could work a bit like from 7.30 to 9.00 and from let's say 20.00 to 21.30? Knowing that the next day it will be for sure different. This is just nonsense and doesn't show any understanding of the fact that, even with your best will, when you have small children it is just impossible to plan ahead and know in advance what each day will look like.

- And has anyone considered that working outside of normal working hours increases the chance of burnout? Some people might experience a lack of sleep, as they have to wake up earlier or work until late and then the child-minding work starts (and yes, it is real work), participating in teleconferences and cooking the meal at the same time. People are working more than usual. This is not sustainable in terms of physical and mental well-being.

“If this does not work for you, consider other possibilities at your disposal: agree with your manager on working half a day and taking half a day annual leave, agree on different core hours, and use part-time working formula or parental leave. If you need it, take some days off to “recharge batteries””.

- Now that's really helpful. I can just take all my annual leave until mandatory telework is no longer necessary (whenever that may happen). Then I will have to work 6-7 months straight without any days off. If I miss my family in my home country, I would just have to wait until the next year!

☐ I have read and agree with the petition.

Personal data protection is of the utmost importance to Generation 2004. Any personal data gathered by signing this petition will remain confidential and no other data except the number of participants will be shared.

