



Union for Unity

Open letter to President J.C. Juncker

11/01/2016

Mr President,

We were concerned to learn of the recent Communication from the Commission announcing a further reduction in posts for 2016, exacerbating the reduction already involved in the 2014 reform. We have also read the declaration by V.P. K. Georgieva in *The Times* newspaper which criticises our institution and recommends measures that weaken our civil service, despite the fact that these do not result from a Commission decision or in particular from a social dialogue. This is the third time in less than a year under your presidency that some of the most senior members of the College have made concerning statements to the media.

In two cases, the explanations unofficially given to staff after the event are not convincing. The first case concerns staff cuts in 2016 to compensate for the budgetary under-valuation of the 2015 wage adjustment using the method. This unexpected staff reduction is apparently due to an "error" in estimation committed by the services of the DG BUDG and the DG HR. The general impression among staff is that the Commission considers the salary adjustments to be unfounded and is seeking to offset them through staff cuts. Let us not forget that salaries have been frozen for four years. We are astonished that, following this belated discovery, the DG BUDG and DG HR have been identified as being responsible for this situation despite the fact that this well-established procedure is under the political responsibility of V.P. K. Georgieva. This additional reduction will worsen the working conditions for staff, affect the opportunities for mobility and make it more difficult to carry out the institution's tasks, already threatened by the annual staff cuts, budget cuts and numerous reorganisations. In a significant number of units, the capacity of the staff in place to achieve their targets has already been exceeded.

In the second case, the explanation given is that the journalist from the *Times* misunderstood the V.P.'s proposals. We find it surprising that neither the V.P., her office, the spokesperson services or those responsible for communication appear to have taken the time to read the article before publication to make sure that the V.P.'s words were accurately transcribed. Indeed, this article draws some inaccurate parallels and calls into question the national and Community politicians responsible for managing Community funds. It states some blatant untruths, for example regarding pensions and a second wage rise. In our opinion, the Commission must demand a right to correct this, as well as a response in *The Times* and in all media using all or part of this article.

In the explanations provided after the event, the simple reference to staff management in the context of the future British referendum leads us to conclude that the reference to a possible Brexit seems to be an excuse justifying all the abandonments related to the

European project, apparently including the pledge not to upwardly revise the European financial framework in its mid-term. The Times article presents the cuts in jobs and pensions and the instability of the Commission's staff as a necessary and worthy process. This is precisely the view of those Member States most hostile to the European Civil Service and the consolidation of the European project. In our opinion, this is directly contrary to your own political guidelines: "*A New Start for Europe: My Agenda for Jobs, Growth, Fairness and Democratic Change*". If the European Union is in danger of being rejected by its citizens, this is because of its failure to act on those subjects of most concern.

Finally, and once again, we do not understand why certain individuals at the highest level of the Commission systematically use as an example, and always to our detriment, international institutions such as the World Bank, for example, whose responsibilities and structure bear no relation to those of the European Union.

It is essential that the College supports its workforce, on whom it relies to meet the challenges and successfully implement its policies. We must stop feeding the anti-European sentiment, defend the European construction and defend and motivate the staff.

The European construction is under threat, and you yourself have said that this Commission of which you are the president is the "last chance Commission". All the more reason to improve cohesion within the Commission and move forward together, with a strong team spirit.

We are therefore asking you for increased vigilance, systematic use of the right to make an official response when the Institution is attacked and the definition of communication principles to serve as a guide for members of the College when they have dealings with the media.

Thank you for your attention. Yours sincerely,

Georges Vlandas
President U4U