

# Staff matters - Guidelines on leave

## Guidelines for the implementation in the interpreting services of Article 4(5) of the Internal Rules governing leave

The present guidelines are intended to implement the provisions of Article 4(5) of the Internal Rules governing leave adopted by decision of the Secretary-General of 5 September 2014, in order to ensure, in the interest of the service, that as much as possible of the annual leave entitlement of staff interpreters is taken during periods of light workload.

### A. Definitions

"Periods of light workload" are those outside core business days.

"Core business days" are all working days, except Monday morning (8:30-12:45) and Friday, which fall in weeks with at least one of the following activities, according to the calendar adopted by the European Parliament for its sittings and meetings for each year:

- ▶ Strasbourg Plenary weeks,
- ▶ Brussels Plenary weeks,
- ▶ Committee weeks,
- ▶ Group weeks.

"Weeks with announced deadlines" are weeks for which the Directorate for Organisation and Planning and the Directorate for Interpretation have set a specific deadline for the submission of leave requests.

### B. General principles

1. Leave requests shall be granted in priority for periods of light workload.
2. The Heads of Linguistic Units shall organise their departments in such a way as to enable staff interpreters to take their annual leave during periods of light workload.
3. A refusal of a request for leave for core business days cannot, as such, be considered a valid reason for a carry-over beyond the limit fixed by Article 4 of Annex V to the Staff Regulations, neither can such a refusal result in an increase of the number of days foreseen in paragraph C.1 for the following year.
4. The two consecutive weeks of Article 2 of Annex V to the Staff Regulations shall be taken during the summer recess, unless two consecutive weeks have already been taken for the year concerned, in which case the two weeks concerned do not have to be consecutive.
5. Cancellation of leave can only be accepted if the approved leave request has not already generated a replacement by a Conference Interpreter Agent ("ACI"), except in cases where the cancellation would also meet the interest of the service (for example, the interpreter concerned can still be assigned in an efficient way).

### C. Exceptional leave during core business days

The Heads of Linguistic Units shall endeavour to duly take into account, at all times, the balance between the interest of the service and the interest of the official.

In particular, leave requests for core business days shall be dealt with under the following framework:

**1. For 3 ½ days of leave during core business days per staff member for the period from 1 July until 31 December 2016 and for 5 days of leave during core business days per staff member from 1 January 2017 onwards per calendar year:**

- ▶ leave requests shall be introduced (for full days only, with the exception of Monday) in Streamline at the latest six weeks before the start of the requested leave period;
- ▶ these requests shall be refused only in presence of imperative service reasons;
- ▶ there is no increase in the number of core business leave days granted under this paragraph where an interpreter has not taken the full number of core business days under this paragraph in the previous year
- ▶ in case of refusal, leave requests can be resubmitted for assessment under point C.2.

**2. For extra leave requests during core business days:**

- ▶ leave requests shall be introduced (for full days or half days) in Streamline at the earliest on the Monday of the week before the week concerned; the decisions on these requests shall be taken at the latest on the Friday of the week before the week concerned.
- ▶ furthermore, leave requests can still be submitted during the week concerned.
- ▶ in both cases, such extra leave requests shall be granted unless they result in the recruitment of an additional ACI or are otherwise in conflict with service interest.

#### **D. Weeks with announced deadlines**

1. Irrespective of the deadlines set under Points C.1. and C.2 above, Directorate for Organisation and Planning and the Directorate for Interpretation determine, in the interest of the service and in cooperation with the Programming Unit, weeks with specific deadlines, which shall be announced on EPIweb.
2. Leave requests concerning weeks with announced deadlines submitted after the expiration of the deadline may be resubmitted for approval to the Director for Interpretation from Monday to Wednesday of the week before the week concerned. Upon a technical opinion of the Programming Unit, the Director for Interpretation shall approve the leave request unless resulting in a recruitment of an ACI.

This note is intended to guide the Heads of Linguistic Units in the process of validating leave requests for their respective Units, while serving our core business in providing interpretation services as much as possible relying on staff interpreters.

In any case, as the well-being of our staff is of utmost importance to our Directorate-General, the Director General may grant exceptions to the present guidelines in duly justified cases where a leave refusal would result in undue hardship for the colleague concerned.

These guidelines will be applied with immediate effect to the assessment of all leave requests concerning leave which falls into the period as from 1 July 2016.

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