



Part-time working

What is happening with the implementation of the decision of December 2015?

VP K. Georgieva communicated extensively in 2015 on the subject of Fit@work, informed HR departments of all DGs about the need to develop offers for staff and, the highlight of her campaign, very quickly implemented the review of the decision on part-time working. It was necessary to adapt to a modern management system that allows for a true reconciliation of work and private life while guaranteeing better performance by the Institution. This decision had to be adopted quickly so that it could enter into force in January 2016 and be part of the managerial changes needed to develop the somewhat archaic organisation of the Commission. The decision was therefore adopted at the beginning of January 2016.

What is the situation regarding the implementation of this decision a few weeks after it was approved?

Implementation: a slow start

As U4U feared, and as we said during negotiations with the administration, this decision required the proactive support of DG HR and compensatory human resources, in order to ensure a genuine change of culture among managers and to enable it to fulfil its role as offering flexibility and reconciliation. As the incidents reported to us show, in the context of job cuts and the process of restructuring DGs and how they are organised, the decision on part-time work is proving difficult to apply. In reality, the hierarchy discourages the use of part-time workers (and the taking of leave on personal grounds – CCP) so as not to send DG HR the signal that the unit/management/DG would be in a comfortable position regarding staff resources. In other words, too many part-time staff would make us a target for more serious cuts.

Another reality of the use of part-time workers is that once their activity is reduced by 10 or 20%, the volume of work of those concerned remains constant and they find themselves doing the same thing for less pay. Many workers have given up a part-time post to their complete disadvantage. We should also recall that since the move to a 40-hour week, numerous colleagues have wanted to "buy" half-hours of work to continue to reconcile their working and private lives, suffering a double financial penalty.

The complaints of the services

The DGs continue to complain that the unused portion of the salary of those working part time does not come back to the DG to hire replacements, and to our knowledge, there is no mechanism to enable the DGs to compensate for the shortfalls where they occur. U4U asked for this during the negotiations with the administration on part-time working. The administration replied that such compensation already existed (governed by a decision of 2008 that was to be reassessed and updated, which has not been done, effectively making it obsolete). In practice, the reality seems different. The allocation of additional posts made available by part-time workers would be converted to the recruitment budget for contract agents or temporary workers to strengthen the units suffering from a severe shortage of staff, and not used to compensate for time lost where they worked. This allocation would in any case be less than the part-time work lost in view of the real fluctuations in part-time working (in that employees may "return" their part-time status).

Much ado about nothing?

These two cumulative negative effects, the lack of compensation where it is needed and the fear of appearing well off in terms of staff, effectively prevent the implementation of the decision, which was announced with great fanfare:

"Working part time, telework, and flexible working arrangements through flexitime are all key components of addressing such individual needs, while enabling us to perform our work to the best of our abilities for the organisation and ultimately for Europe's citizens".

We cannot accept the existence of a decision that cannot be put into practice. We have to ensure that DG HR provides a real framework for its implementation. As U4U also demanded during the negotiations, managers must be made to explain their refusals in writing, although in practice the negotiations between management and staff are carried out behind closed doors, where the staff are under pressure from a management whose default position is to refuse whenever the Staff Regulations and procedures make it possible to do so. And this continues to be the case, in spite of the warnings from U4U during the negotiations. Indeed, with the decision not requiring managers to provide an explanation and not providing any avenues of appeal, staff remain helpless in the face of a refusal.

DG HR undertook to prepare guidelines for the DGs for the implementation of this decision: what is the situation with that?

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