

Editorial:

Council of Ministers, *that's enough!* Commission, European Parliament, stop waiting and start from scratch!

Despite the positive opinion of the European Parliament, the Council is dithering and refuses to give its opinion on the Statutes reform proposal presented by the Commission. Even worse, this refusal to take responsibility is accompanied by some of Member States making maximalistic and unrealistic proposals, some of which would lead to the end of the European Civil Service.

At the same time, on questions linked to the Statutes, the Council ceased to act as a union law-abiding institution. In fact, it refuses to repay overpayments relating to pension contributions, although it recognises them, in the same way it refuses for two years now, soon to be three, to apply the method. Finally, the remarks made by the Members of the Council are insulting to the European Civil Service.

Enough is enough!

This destructive delay has lasted too long! It prevents the proper functioning of the services, namely in the Commission, which already implements the downsizing planned in the proposed reform, often 10% instead of the 5% foreseen at the end of 5 years. This worsens working conditions further. In addition, colleagues are harassed by constant restructuring, not to mention the announcement of a new large-scale reform scheduling transfers to implement agencies, involving no less than 10 Directorates General.

Meanwhile, the necessary reforms, those that would stop with marketing type announcements of which the staff has had enough, have not still been implemented; especially those related to career development, talent recognition, implementation of an equal opportunities policy to reduce precariousness and, those aiming at reducing

the growing disparities within the institutions, by-products of the 2004 reform and its flawed implementation for which the administration bears the main responsibility.

This is damaging to the European construction at this precise moment when the European Union is in the middle of a political, economic, social and moral crisis and when there is more than ever need for a properly functioning civil service.

Start from scratch!

The Commission, with the support of the European Parliament, must publicly challenge the Council's refusal to undertake its responsibilities and stop its irresponsible practices, as the president of the Parliament has already done with the Brussels' Permanent Representations.

It looks like the Commission is losing its bet on the original plan to reform the Statutes before the discussions on the financial perspectives so that the latter could not serve as a pretext for attacks against salaries, pensions, etc. The Council procrastinated and now it is not happy reaping the one billion savings contained in the Commission's proposal, at the staff's expense, but also aims to obtain at least three times this sum using the upcoming discussions on the EU budget.

Consequently the Commission should withdraw its proposal for the Statutes Reform.

By withdrawing its proposal, with the support of the Parliament, the Commission starts from scratch a new battle. By withdrawing its Reform Proposal, the Commission would also prevent the large-scale social conflict towards which we are heading. This would avoid sterile discussions in the Council and unnecessary provocations which would demotivate everyone. This would calm the waters, including within the Council, and will help focus on the tasks at hand. The European citizens expect Europe to be 100% focused on the crisis now.

The proposal, nevertheless, contained some positive elements for the most fragile staff. It is still possible to address the most painful issues. Reform careers, among other ideas proposed by the unions, for once united, would allow savings which will not be at the expense of staff and would correct any injustices resulting from the

2004 reform. The transfer of tasks to the agencies may also allow the much expected permanent contracts for Contract Agents.

By withdrawing its proposal before the November Council, the Commission would take again the political initiative while demonstrating its resilience and defence of the European Civil Service. Does the current College want to go down in history as the one who destroyed the European Civil Service?