



## Open letter to the EP Secretary General – TIME TO LIBERALISE TELEWORKING in the EP

Brussels, 5 June 2023

Dear Secretary General,

**Union Syndicale Parlement Européen (USPE)** is writing to you in order to request **liberalisation of teleworking rules, including by allowing teleworking from abroad, in order for the European Parliament to meet the standards of a modern employer and to remain an attractive workplace.**

During the strict lockdown period in the wake of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, all staff eligible to telework did so 100% of time, proving beyond doubt that they are mature and prepared: all parliamentary activities were taking place without interruptions and new technologies and working methods were readily applied by all Colleagues. **We successfully passed the test.**

It was in this optic that the first teleworking decision of the late Secretary General Klaus Welle was issued, which featured three teleworking regimes: standard, moderate and maxi, allowing for flexibility and an average monthly calculation of the respective percentage of office presence. To our great disappointment, this decision was changed by Secretary General Welle on 29 November 2022, after consulting the Staff Committee. **The availability and flexibility of teleworking were reduced** (required minimum office presence per each week and more difficult access to maxi-teleworking). This happened **despite an overwhelming majority of 86% of Colleagues speaking in favour of keeping the then-existing flexible rules, according to a survey done by USPE.**

Since then the new rules have worked **simply badly**. Surely they contribute to increased absenteeism. For example, somebody who is suffering from a short-lived, but infectious illness, under the old rules, would have been able to telework during that illness and then increase their office presence over the next weeks, but now is obliged to take sick leave for at least a week, otherwise they will have to show up in the office in order to comply with their mandatory weekly presence. Their work will have piled up or will have been charged onto other Colleagues – all of this in a general situation of excessive workload, which – in turn – leads to burnout. Another example of the new rules working badly is life emergencies when a person is obliged to take leave unexpectedly. If that person had teleworked on the days preceding such an emergency (according to the planning) they simply cannot take leave in order to attend to unforeseen life circumstances.

**Teleworking from abroad** is a topic, on which the European Parliament – who aspires to be a modern employer – **is lagging behind virtually all other Institutions and agencies.** The argument that allowing for such teleworking is not in line with article 20 of the Staff Regulations just does not hold (as mentioned on numerous occasions by **USPE**

representatives in the Staff Committee over the last five years), the best proof of it being the prevalence of teleworking from abroad in other Institutions and agencies. Most importantly – **forbidding teleworking from abroad works, in particular, against Colleagues in lowest grades with modest salaries, especially those living in remote locations**. Those Colleagues, if faced with difficult family situations back at home, just cannot afford to fly there for weekends, **because the air travel prices have become prohibitive!** For the same financial reasons these Colleagues cannot afford the luxury of family leave.

Additionally, the European Parliament wishes to attract young people, to the point that – in its Bureau decision of 21 November 2022 – it makes a reference to people under 40 years of age for the purpose of determining significant geographical imbalance. But **young people want a modern place of employment where the achievements of technology are used to benefit their work-life balance and well-being**. Yet this is not the case when – in a digital era, where none of us has a fixed computer on our desks any longer – rigid and fixed rules are imposed on weekly office presence, and teleworking from abroad, even for limited period, is prohibited. All the more so that the Parliament itself is functioning in its **three places of work**. **The EP cannot seriously aspire to be an attractive employer if this is not addressed.**

Finally, lack of flexibility of teleworking in the European Parliament is paired with a **push towards shared offices**, which – as evidenced by numerous studies – impair concentration, lower productivity and generate conflicts.

**Therefore, USPE is calling for an overhaul of the existing teleworking rules, allowing for their modernisation by returning to previous flexible arrangements and allowing for teleworking from abroad for at least a limited period of time for all Colleagues eligible to telework. We are confident that the new Staff Committee will support such overhaul. USPE will do.**

Yours sincerely,

**Union Syndicale Parlement Européen (USPE)**  
[us-pe.eu](http://us-pe.eu)

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