



**Union
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des services publics européens et internationaux

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Brussels

23 April 2025

OPEN LETTER

Ms Baerbock (Germany) and Ms Rosencrantz (Sweden)
Messrs Bettel (Luxembourg), Byrne (Ireland), Dvorák (Czech Republic), Kogler (Austria),
Rangel (Portugal), Strand (Finland), Veldkamp (Netherlands) and Wammen (Denmark)

Copy to: Mr Serafin, Commissioner for Budget, Anti-Fraud and Public Administration

Subject: Your letter of 21 February to Commissioner Serafin

Honourable Ministers,

Thank you very much for the initiative you put to the European Commission concerning the geographical balance of Commission staff.

Union Syndicale Fédérale, the most representative trade union federation in international civil service in Europe, and notably in European civil service, shares your ambition to attain a balance of this nature – this is essential for the European civil service to be able to act in the common interest of the Member States and citizens of the European Union.

It is a well-established fact that nationals from your Member States are under-represented amongst European Commission staff. First of all, however, it bears mentioning that the same phenomenon can also be observed in the other European institutions, notably the Council of the European Union, for which you have direct responsibility. Your focus should therefore be broadened to include all of the institutions.

We fully agree with your conclusion that the ‘soft’ measures implemented to date have been entirely insufficient to achieve the goal of attaining geographical balance amongst institution staff and that new, more effective measures need to be taken.

The real reasons behind this imbalance were not mentioned in your letter. Union Syndicale Fédérale invites you, and the European Commission, to analyse these reasons in depth:

1. The institutions’ extensive use of insecure posts (temporary and contract staff) significantly diminishes the attractiveness of a European career, especially for nationals from your countries.

By way of example, 80 % of external staff recruited to the General Secretariat of the Council over the past three years were temporary or contract staff.

The wage level (of contract staff) is significantly lower than that of officials; career progression is also significantly limited in comparison to that of officials; and above all, their contracts are fixed term. Do you truly believe that these conditions are sufficiently attractive for nationals from your countries to leave their country, given that their prospects are far from

certain? Do you think that this problem can be resolved by your proposal to simplify and harmonise the selection processes for these members of staff?

2. The reforms to the Staff Regulations in 2004, and above all in 2014, have drastically reduced the attractiveness of a career in the European institutions:
 - a. a lowering of the initial wage level for all categories;
 - b. a substantial reduction in pension rights;
 - c. an increase in weekly working time by 2.5 hours, without any compensation in terms of salary;
 - d. the introduction of a new AST/SC category, which reduces the salary of these staff by 13 % at the beginning of their career and by more than 50 % at the end;
 - e. career capping for administrators and assistants alike, resulting in almost all staff finishing their career at a grade two grades lower than they could have achieved.

The Court of Auditors' Special Report No 15/2019 on the effects of these reforms with regard to budget and the decreased attractiveness of careers in the European civil service comprehensively describes the mechanics of this phenomenon.

The fact that there are not enough laureates from your countries in competitions organised by EPSO is because

- for years, EPSO has been unable to organise competitions in a legal manner, notably by guaranteeing equal access to the European civil service for all citizens and without discrimination;
- and above all, because the reforms you decided on in recent decades have meant that the European civil service has become less attractive to nationals from your countries in particular.

Organising competitions based on nationality would not resolve the problem, it would merely introduce discrimination in terms of access to the civil service.

The insufficient number of laureates from some Member States – in particular yours – is above all due to the fact that not enough nationals from those countries take part in competitions. There is a well-known reason for this low level of turnout: the working conditions, notably but not limited to the remuneration conditions offered by the European institutions, are not sufficiently attractive for them.

In our view, steps should be taken to:

- reduce and strictly limit the use of temporary and contract staff;
- refrain from any further attempt to once again lower the wage level and erode employment conditions for European civil servants;
- reconsider the elements which were introduced previously, as described in point 2 above, and negotiate effective measures with the trade unions to increase the attractiveness of careers;
- improve social support measures, notably for families.

Union Syndicale Fédérale invites you to take these points into consideration and we are ready to engage in in-depth discussions with you and the Commission regarding specific measures.

USF
President Nicolas Mavraganis


Vice-Président (Bruxelles) Conseil
Bernd Loescher
