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COMMUNICATION TO THE COMMISSION

**The Workplace of the Future
in the European Commission**

{SWD(2019) 675 final}

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

The European Commission must strive to be the most modern and effective public administration possible so that it can best serve European citizens and the European Union's Member States and make the best of its highly qualified staff. This Communication proposes to endorse a set of principles and recommendations that can help the Commission to reach its goals of being an example of excellence in how it works, and an even more attractive place to work. It builds on more than 2 years of analysis, consultations and exchanges. These are summarised in the report accompanying this Communication and which was prepared by a steering committee from several Directorate-Generals.

This Communication therefore highlights key principles and proposes concrete recommendations for the workplace of the future that can help modernise the Commission's working environment. Technology is changing fast and working practices are evolving. We are witnessing changes in where, when and how people work. We need to strive to create a working environment in the Commission that gives our highly qualified and engaged staff the best opportunities to work effectively, work collaboratively with colleagues and external stakeholders and that enables them to reconcile their personal and working life in a healthy, sustainable and balanced manner. The staff opinion survey shows the importance of these issues for staff engagement. Our staff should be able to embrace state-of-the-art technology and fully digital working practices. The working environment needs to combine 'behaviours', 'bytes' and 'bricks' in optimal and flexible ways that meet the Commission's operational needs and make it an attractive workplace for staff.

Decisions on the workplace are just as fundamental as organisational structures and can be even more long-lasting. They should not be taken lightly, but after due consideration, with support from experts in the field and in consultation with staff. This requires effective support for Commission teams who are going through changes in their workplace and a consistent application of the approach set out in this Communication.

CHAPTER 2 – PRINCIPLES FOR THE WORKPLACE OF THE FUTURE

The Commission's staff are its most important resource. As explained in the report accompanying this Communication, the Commission must respond to a fast-evolving environment. We must therefore optimise the way our work is done and managed, the technology used and the physical environment where the work takes place. This will enable us to optimise efficiency and agility and to deliver an attractive and fulfilling workplace. Taking advantage of the state-of-the-art practices, and building on the analysis started in 2016 as part of the Synergies and Efficiencies review ([1]), the following principles can be put forward. These principles should apply across the Commission including, to the extent relevant, to staff in Representations, Delegations and other locations.

A. MODERNISING BEHAVIOURS, BYTES AND BRICKS IN AN INTEGRATED WAY

PRINCIPLE 1. Modernising the Commission working environment should be based on a holistic approach, including consistent and coordinated change in:

- **behaviours – the way the work is done and managed;**
- **bytes – the technology that is used;**
- **bricks – the place where the work is done.**

The choice of bricks and bytes should support the desired changes in behaviours and not the other way round.

New technologies combined with new forms of office spaces offer a unique opportunity to **rethink how, when and where Commission staff work** so that they can be more effective and efficient and at the same time better able to balance different areas of their lives.

Office design and technology are key enablers, but change in the workplace should be centred on ways of working. Thinking about new workplaces as being mainly about changes in office spaces or technology misses the point and can lead to undesired results. At best, it will be a wasted opportunity for improvement; at worst, performance and morale will decrease.

For the Commission, there is no one-size-fits-all mix of ways of working, technologies and workspaces. Requirements will vary between Directorates-General and departments and teams within them. However, any future changes should fit into the wider strategic context and be guided by the same set of expected benefits.

B. STRATEGIC CONTEXT AND EXPECTED BENEFITS

PRINCIPLE 2. Steps to modernise the Commission working environment should be aligned with Commission-wide policies to make the organisation fit-for-future. They should therefore focus on achieving the following benefits:

- **contributing to increasing the attractiveness of the Commission as an employer;**

- **enabling more effective and efficient working practices, taking advantage of new technologies. We need to continuously challenge and improve our working practices so that we can save time and preserve our mental and physical energy;**

- **helping to make us more agile, increasing our adaptability to new priorities and**

([1]) Communication to the Commission, Synergies and Efficiencies in the Commission – New Ways of Working, Brussels, 4 April 2016, SEC(2016)170 final.

> **external challenges. While maintaining our ability to ensure business continuity, we need to be able to rapidly reinforce existing teams, and create new task forces or temporary project teams to respond to changing needs or to take advantage of windows of opportunity;**
>
> - **enabling more effective collaboration and communication, knowledge-sharing, teamwork and project work across the organisation. We live in an increasingly complex and inter-linked world. Building effective responses to complex challenges often requires intensive collaboration among several units or Directorate-Generals;**
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> - **optimising the financial costs of running the organisation by rationalising office space and moves. We need to take a proactive role to adapt to increasing pressure on the budget, and to ensure optimal use of office space. Depending on how, when and by whom they are used, some spaces might need to be decreased and some increased. Part of the cost savings should be reinvested to improve the physical, digital and well-being aspects of the workplace;**
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> - **increasing sustainability by reducing the ecological footprint of our working practices, for example through less travelling or paperless working, in line with the Commission's long-standing commitments under its eco-management and audit scheme (EMAS).**

Over the last years, a significant number of Commission-wide policies, strategies and initiatives have been successfully initiated to make the organisation fit-for-future. Steps to modernise the Commission's working environment should be aligned with and complementary to them. This will help the Commission to be more agile, collaborative and engaging, in line with the recent Communication on Synergies and Efficiencies ([2]), as well as more environmentally friendly.

C. BEHAVIOURS: DEFINING FUTURE WAYS OF WORKING

> **PRINCIPLE 3. Future ways of working should enable the organisation, its teams and its staff to deliver results more effectively and efficiently. In increasingly complex and unstable contexts this will require:**
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> - **activity and team based flexible working;**
> - **management by results;**
> - **culture of trust and empowerment;**
> - **collective intelligence, through collaboration, communication and knowledge-sharing;**
> - **openness to change and commitment to continuous improvement.**
>
> **However, the increased organisational effectiveness and efficiency must not be achieved at the cost of staff health and well-being, the Commission's greatest resource.**

Traditional ways of working defined by a single place of work and standard working hours, emphasis on individual jobs, explicit procedures, and strong managerial control can be suitable for work areas characterised by a high degree of stability and predictability. In more dynamic work areas, they will not suffice. Consequently, traditional ways of working may

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([2]) Communication to the Commission, The Synergies and Efficiencies Initiative: stock-taking and way forward, Strasbourg, 26 March 2019, C(2019)2329 final.

need to be complemented with a new set of working and management practices that are better suited for complex and uncertain situations where greater flexibility, collaboration and staff engagement might be needed.

Activity and team-based flexible working

The majority of Commission staff perform knowledge work. New technologies enable much of the knowledge work to be carried out from many locations besides traditional offices. Being able to work anytime from anywhere depending on the tasks at hand should be an available option for Commission staff whenever appropriate and needed. Greater individual flexibility in the place and time of work can be achieved together with cohesive and effective teamwork or the needs of the service.

The most important conditions for effective flexible working are that:

- Flexibility in the time and place of work need to be based on the tasks to be done. There needs to be a shared understanding of factors that genuinely constrain the flexibility and mobility of work activities, for example security / safety requirements, critical service delivery needs, critical face-to-face collaboration needs, and clients / stakeholder preferences. Teleworking formulas should be flexible and adjusted to the needs of the team and the work;

- Flexibility should support teamwork, for example the work of task forces or project teams. There are many occasions when there is a substantial benefit to bringing people to work together in the same space. Consequently, teams should agree together on how to use opportunities for more flexible working. Rather than flexibility being seen as an arrangement for only some individuals, it should meet the needs of the team and take into account the interest of the service in the specific circumstances. The working arrangements needed are often best specified by developing team agreements about how best to work together, often called 'team charters' (see the box below);

- Staff should always feel welcome to work in the office, which remains the principal workplace. They should not feel forced to work remotely or outside core hours. Each individual's balance between personal and working life must be protected. Being 'always on' can undermine staff well-being.

Team charters

A team charter is a document that clarifies expectations and rules regarding working as a team. It should be developed when a new team is established and updated as necessary, for example when the team's composition changes. All relevant actors should be part of the process of developing such agreements, including managers, staff and potentially also important clients and stakeholders. Key elements of a team charter should be:

- where and when we work;
- how we work together as a team;
- how we work with our clients and stakeholders;
- how we use new technology to work more effectively and efficiently;
- how we share space in the office (relevant if a team is located in collaborative spaces).

Management by results

Granting staff greater autonomy in choosing the time and place of work, within the applicable legal framework, follows the logic of basing the value of work on actual results rather than the time spent in a location or on a task. Managers already have the duty to set annual objectives

for staff. Management by results should be enhanced in the Commission to support new ways of working.

Managers should establish clarity around the goals of the work being undertaken, and should be clear on deliverables and on the allocation of resources needed to achieve results. It is important that the goals set are achievable and deliverable in the given timeframe.

Culture of trust and empowerment

To make best use of the Commission's highly educated, experienced and engaged workforce, staff should also be trusted more to decide how to do the work, in addition to making decisions about where and when to do the work. For trust to endure, people have to take the responsibility for delivering the output according to the agreed expectations. The culture of trust thrives when the right balance between empowerment and responsibility is struck and an environment of psychological safety is created. Staff should be encouraged and empowered to 'own' their work – take responsibility for maintaining quality, report progress and highlight any issues as they arise rather than waiting to be asked. This should also be recognised in the way performance is assessed.

Collaboration, communication and knowledge-sharing

The challenges faced by the EU today require fast and effective solutions from the Commission, often involving multiple policy areas and departments. Consequently, team-based collaborative working and knowledge-sharing should become the norm in the Commission, drawing on the science on collective intelligence. A prerequisite is that staff are able to collaborate, communicate and share knowledge across organisational boundaries, in networks inside and outside the Commission. Staff should be encouraged to contribute their skills and knowledge whenever most needed. Within the limits of data protection and confidentiality, communication and knowledge-sharing should have no organisational boundaries. We should be open by default as decided by the Communication to the Commission on Data, Information and Knowledge Management [3].

Openness to change and continuous improvement

Central to building the workplace of the future at the Commission should be a constant quest to improve our working practices and business processes as new opportunities emerge. We should strive to create a culture of collective responsibility for improving the way the organisation functions. Everyone should be empowered and responsible to propose improvements, including managers, staff, internal and external clients, and partners. It should become part of our culture to challenge assumptions around traditional or habitual ways of working (see box below).

Box: The CAN test – to challenge assumptions of necessity around traditional or habitual ways of working.

It involves asking questions such as:

- why are we doing *this* (at all)?
- why are we doing this *here*?
- why are we doing it *in this way*?
- why are we doing it *at this time* (rather than another time)?

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[3] Communication to the Commission on Data, Information and Knowledge Management, Brussels, 18 October 2016, C(2016)6626 final.

Having identified practices and processes that could be done differently, the next question to ask should be whether there are ways of doing these things that are:

- less time-consuming?
- more flexible?
- lighter (i.e. less heavy on resources – time, energy, physical resources)?
- more in line with client/stakeholder needs?
- more in line with employee aspirations, a better work/life balance?

D. BYTES: DEFINING TECHNOLOGY FOR THE FUTURE

PRINCIPLE 4. Technology choices should enable Commission staff to work and collaborate anywhere, anytime with fit-for-purpose security and optimised work experience and productivity.

New technologies are central to modernising the Commission's working environment, both for staff at Headquarters and outside, such as in Delegations and Representations. The right IT tools, platforms and services will enable people to work and collaborate more effectively both in the office and away from it. New technologies bring environmental benefits by reducing the need to travel.

A number of ongoing IT modernisation projects are creating a digital working environment that is making it possible for Commission staff to work anywhere and anytime, and to collaborate across organisational boundaries, in networks inside and outside the Commission.
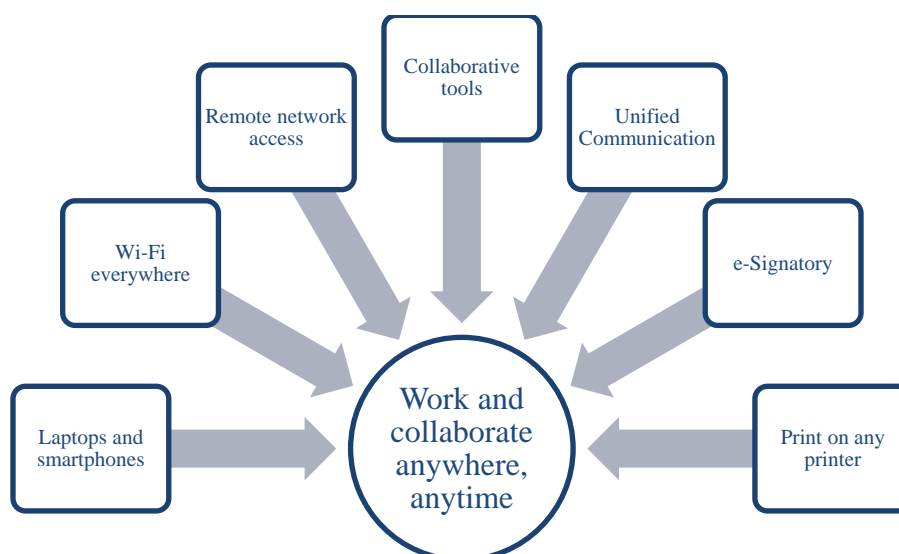

PRINCIPLE 5. Whenever new IT tools, platforms and services are rolled out, managers and staff should be trained on how to use them to perform their tasks in a more effective and efficient way.

Providing staff with the right, user-centric IT tools, platforms and services is only one side of the coin. Helping people to use them to perform their tasks in a more effective and efficient way is even more important. When new technologies are rolled out, training is usually available so people can understand their features and how to use them However, to unleash the real potential of new technologies, training should not be limited to a 'how does it work' manual, but should encourage and help staff to question the way they currently work and to find better ways of performing their tasks. For example, in rolling out virtual meeting

technologies, it is not enough to know how to join meetings remotely. Instead, staff should be invited to rethink the way they meet, to enable a more flexible approach to collaboration. Key IT tools, platforms, and services should be accompanied by user support and regularly updated in line with user needs.

E. BRICKS: DEFINING THE FUTURE WORKSPACE

PRINCIPLE 6. A one-size-fits-all office set-up is not suitable in the Commission's highly diverse context. Various office arrangements should be available to match the demands of different types of work performed by Commission staff.
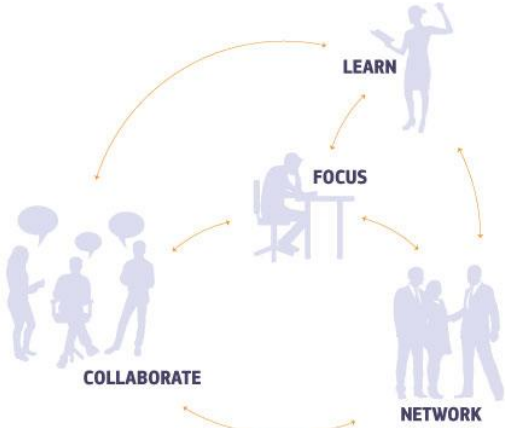
It should become a common practice to decide on what office set-up should be offered to Commission staff based on the nature of the work undertaken by them. The objective should be to accurately match the demands of the specific work type with the features of the physical working environment.

As knowledge workers, the work Commission staff do every day can be grouped into four generic types of activities. Staff do focused work, they collaborate, learn and network. Office space should therefore cater for all four activities. However, the time spent on focused and collaborative working varies substantially across the areas of work. Time spent on learning and networking is similar across work areas as it is mostly an expression of individual needs and preferences.

Consequently, a one-size-fits-all office set-up is not suitable in the Commission's highly diverse context. Office requirements vary across domains, between Directorates-General and across departments and teams within them.

This principle does not mean that all services will now need to move to different office set-ups. However, it should become the practice that whenever a Directorate-General, department or a team is planning to move offices, they should receive advice and help to look at options and decide what the best office arrangement is for their work (see Principle 8 and Recommendation 7). Dialogue is also critical to the success of such a change project (see Principle 9).

The layout of offices should be decided based only on the interests of the service, the nature of tasks, staff well-being (e.g. control of noise, temperature and lighting) and the attractiveness of the Commission as a workplace. In a single Directorate-General, there may therefore be variations in the layout of offices depending of the work profiles of different groups of staff, with some teams using individual offices while others use collaborative space. There will also be variation in collaborative space layouts between different teams, with some teams needing more quiet rooms, for example, and others more project space or meeting rooms. In this context, it is recommended that team leaders and managers should lead by example and be accommodated in the same type of office space as their staff.

Individual offices: highly focused work

Individual offices are the best match for work on complex tasks requiring a high degree of concentration or work requiring remote collaboration with frequent use of audio- and/or personal video-conferences. With the roll-out of online collaborative tools, this latter mode of

collaboration might become more popular as some routine face-to-face meetings will be replaced with virtual interaction.

Collaborative spaces: different degrees of focused and collaborative work

Collaborative spaces are best for staff who perform tasks including both concentrated and collaborative work. Layouts are based on typical building blocks and can therefore be easily tailored to specific work profiles. Some layouts may provide more quiet spaces, some layouts may include more meeting and social areas and some layouts can offer a balanced mix of all building blocks.

Shared offices

Shared offices generally allow less concentration than individual offices and less flexibility than collaborative space. However, this set-up is a valid alternative when trade-offs are needed.

Meeting space

Meeting rooms with improved technology are an essential part of all types of layout, ideally with flexible layouts for workshops, rather than fixed furniture. In addition, more small meeting places should be provided with audio, video and display system technology.

> **PRINCIPLE 7. Hot-desking ([4]) should be considered where offices have low occupation rates.**

In addition to maximising the match between the demands of specific Commission jobs and the features of the physical working environment, steps need to be taken to optimise space use in Commission buildings. Low average levels of office occupation (e.g. average presence in the office of fewer than two-thirds of the staff) due to frequent teleworking or missions, for example, are indicators of possible opportunities for space rationalisation through hot-desking or freeing individually occupied space for other types of spaces in accordance with evolving needs. For example, collaborative spaces combined with hot-desking can offer a greater variety of different working settings.

In practice, any type of office could be combined with hot-desking. For example, some services have occupation rates of only 50% because of missions and/or teleworking, but need a high level of concentration when in the office. Sharing desks in non-assigned individual offices could make sense in this context.

Critical mass is important to make hot-desking feasible. A large group of staff will have less variation in presence than a small group and it is more cost-effective to offer a variety of space to a large group. Hot-desking also requires special equipment, such as tools to manage it, desks adjustable in height and multiple keyboards. The draft Housing Conditions Manual for Commission Directorate-Generals and Services, Part 3, provides detailed guidance on how desk-sharing can be implemented in the Commission. The concept will also soon be piloted in the Informatics Directorate-General in Luxembourg.

> **PRINCIPLE 8. Before deciding on a particular office set-up, Directorate-Generals, departments and teams should receive help and advice and help to look at options and decide what the best office arrangement is for their work.**

([4]) Also known as desk-sharing, dynamic office or flex-desking.

The purpose of the analysis above is to illustrate how different office sets-ups could be matched with different work profiles. The configuration of workspace should always be informed by a proper needs assessment and a consideration of the cost-effective options available. Consequently, a thorough needs analysis should always be the starting point for implementing changes in the workspace, triggered by changes such as a reorganisation or a move to a new building. Proper follow-up is also crucial to ensure that necessary improvements are made over time.

Confidentiality requirements should also be taken into consideration for the choice of office arrangements. Special solutions suited to different office set-ups could be provided. For example, highly individual work that requires a high degree of confidentiality can be performed in individual offices equipped with special key lockers. Similarly, highly collaborative work that requires a high degree of confidentiality can be performed in collaborative spaces provided that access is limited to selected staff. A clean desk policy can also help.

PRINCIPLE 9. Staff affected should be involved throughout the process of conceptualising and implementing the new workspace.

Two-way communication before and during the implementation process is vital. A consultative approach to designing the new workspace requires good processes for dialogue and taking on board feedback. Consequently, staff affected should be highly involved in the process from the very beginning, including expressing their needs for the workspace and helping to make decisions about its final design. They may call upon relevant staff representative organisations to assist in that process. The guidance (^{5}) accompanying the Communication on Organisation Charts of the Commission Directorate-Generals and Services (^{6}) provides a good example of how to proactively communicate, inform and engage staff in a change process.

The overall design should be based primarily on the work profiles of the staff who will occupy the space. The design should not be tailored to particular individuals, since reorganisations and mobility mean that staff move offices frequently. The layout should ensure sufficient variety of different types of workspace to accommodate different tasks and work styles and be flexible enough to take into account the special needs of individuals.

PRINCIPLE 10. A substantial part of the cost savings resulting from space optimisation should be reinvested to create attractive and inspiring workspaces.

Collaborative spaces or shared desks occupy fewer square meters per staff member, resulting in cost-savings which should be reinvested to improve the physical, digital and well-being aspects of the future workspace.

Attention should be paid to the quality and process of supply of office furniture. Office furniture should be easily and quickly adjustable to the needs of staff (such as height of desk), not only in collaborative spaces and hot-desking. The quality and aesthetics of common areas

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(^{5}) The guidance is available on StaffMatters at
https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/hr_admin/en/metrics_reporting/organisational-design/Pages/organisational-structures.aspx.
(^{6}) Communication to the Commission on Organisation Charts of Commission Directorate-Generals and Services, Brussels, 31 July 2017, C(2017)5231 final.

such as meeting rooms, canteens, cafeterias, conviviality areas and reception areas should be improved.

Collaborative spaces should also be created for temporary multi-disciplinary teams working on projects, including groups of experts from different Directorate-Generals, EU institutions and external consultants. Two such spaces already exist in the Research and Innovation Directorate-General and the Joint Research Centre. Intensified collaboration across policy areas and within different professional communities and domains means the demand for such spaces is likely to increase.

CHAPTER 3 – RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONCRETE IMPLEMENTATION

To make the best of the work environment, the Commission should progressively implement the above guiding principles in a way that is consistent across the institution. This will help it both make the organisation as efficient and agile as possible, and support the well-being of staff.

A. EMBEDDING NEW WAYS OF WORKING

RECOMMENDATION 1. Building on existing good practices and examples, develop a comprehensive practical guide, training offer and awareness-raising campaign on new ways of working for staff and managers.

The guide should explain how to:

- implement flexible working taking into account organisational, team and individual needs;
- manage by results;
- foster a culture of trust, empowerment and psychological safety;
- collective intelligence: collaborate, communicate and share knowledge;
- continuously look for improvements in the way work is done;
- embrace environmentally friendly behaviours;
- make the most of new technology and different types of office accommodation (collaborative spaces, individual offices and shared offices).

Over the years, the Commission has already developed good practices in responding to requests for flexible working. Management by results and trust-based culture are not new in the Commission as they are necessary conditions for successful implementation of the Commission's teleworking policy. Nevertheless, the flexible working policy is not always interpreted and applied in the same way across the Commission. Similarly, the importance of collaborative working, communication and knowledge-sharing has been reflected in the Communication to the Commission on Data, Information and Knowledge Management ([7]) and the Communication on Organisation Charts of the Commission Directorate-Generals and Services ([8]). These working practices should be further developed and supported both within and between Directorate-Generals and departments. As explained in the accompanying report, many improvement initiatives have been initiated both at a corporate and local level. Still, the 2018 staff survey showed that effective management of change and innovation remains a challenge for the organisation.

B. MAKING THE MOST OF THE NEW TECHNOLOGY

RECOMMENDATION 2. Ensure that teams that are launching new ways of working are equipped from the start with the full set of IT solutions needed to make the project work.

RECOMMENDATION 3. Plan the roll-out of key IT tools through a systemic approach to organisational change, based on users' needs. When technology changes, other related organisational elements should also be aligned for example impacted processes or people

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([7]) Communication to the Commission on Data, Information and Knowledge Management, Brussels, 18 October 2016, C(2016)6626 final.

([8]) Communication to the Commission on Organisation Charts of Commission Directorate-Generals and Services, Brussels, 31 July 2017, C(2017)5231 final.

skills and behaviours.

> **RECOMMENDATION 4.** Under the supervision of the Information Management Steering Board, continue to explore how collaborative tools can help improve core Commission-wide processes, such as interservice consultations, strategic planning or meetings of corporate and management boards.

Effective roll-out of new technologies is key. On the one hand, it is important to ensure that everyone in Directorate-Generals, departments, units and teams is provided with new IT solutions at the same time. Otherwise, old ways of working will prevail. This is of particular importance for teams housed in collaborative spaces. On the other hand, changes in the digital landscape of the Commission should always be planned as part of an interconnected organisational system of processes, structures, people and the physical environment to ensure their overall alignment.

C. IMPLEMENTING FUTURE WORKSPACE

> **RECOMMENDATION 5.** As far as possible, all buildings should be reconfigurable so that various office arrangements can be more easily and cost-effectively created.

One type of accommodation that would be appropriate for all staff does not exist. Developing entire buildings into individual offices, shared offices or collaborative spaces is too limiting. More flexibility is needed.

The choice of new buildings is restricted by what is available on the market within budget constraints. Within those constraints, any new building leased or owned by the Commission, should ideally be flexible and easily reconfigurable at a low cost to enable a variety of office arrangements as and when needed.

Partitioning and furniture should where possible be easily movable and adjustable. Easily adjustable partitioning will allow for creating working conditions for different levels of focused and private work, including individual offices. When combined with moveable furniture and well-designed heating, ventilation, air-conditioning and lighting, it will also make it possible to change the proportions of different office set-ups so that layouts can be easily and efficiently adapted to changing organisational and team requirements.

To facilitate access and security checks, large meeting rooms should ideally be on the ground floor and should be available for all Directorate-Generals to use, if needed.

> **RECOMMENDATION 6.** After each substantial change in the work environment, ensure proper follow-up to assess satisfaction and well-being and make any necessary adjustment measures.

Experience has shown that changes to the environment and the organisation of work can cause problems, including uneasiness, discomfort, problems of adaptation and dissatisfaction. This should be monitored and measures taken to address problems identified. At present, the Commission does not have any statistical data related to these changes and their potential consequences in terms of, for example, sickness, absence or loss of productivity. Data could also be collected with regards to changes in communication, work patterns and collaborative behaviour.

> **RECOMMENDATION 7.** Establish a Workplace Steering Committee and an integrated Workplace Service to provide more coordinated steering and support to Directorate-

> Generals, departments and teams.

The analysis of the current workplace governance system showed that there is a need for more **coordinated steering and support** from services responsible for different aspects of the workplace.

Staff can experience transformations of physical working environment, such as moving from individual offices to collaborative spaces as a significant change. Such changes are likely to affect their daily work and are difficult to reverse. Better guidance and support ensuring proper planning, implementation and improvement over time will minimise the risks of negative consequences.

Therefore, there should be sufficient support and oversight available. Furthermore, changes to organisational structures should be considered as an opportunity to trigger a reflection on workspace arrangements and be based on a holistic approach.

Currently, it is the responsibility of Directorate-Generals, departments and teams to analyse their space requirements and the responsibility of OIB/OIL to analyse the feasibility of their requests. In the future:

- A new integrated **Workplace Service** could be set up to help Directorate-Generals, departments and teams to look at the options and decide what the best office arrangement is for them. The Workplace Service team would systematically be consulted, whenever an office set-up might change for a Directorate-General, department or team. The service would help ensure that staff are highly involved in the process, including expressing their needs for the workspace and helping to make decisions about the final design. Once the request for change has been authorised at an appropriate level, the service would be available to help implement it and improve it over time;
- **A Workplace Steering Committee** could also be set up, responsible for advising on individual workplace change projects supported by the integrated Workplace Service, overseeing the implementation of the workplace of the future principles and recommendations and overseeing the work of the integrated Workplace Service.

The Workplace Steering Committee could be of an interservice nature and would hold regular meetings with a group of resource directors of client Directorate-Generals, to discuss workplace trends and emerging client needs. The EEAS would be associated with the work of the Committee insofar as Commission staff in Delegations are concerned.

The level of decision-making for workplace change projects should depend on the scale of the change proposed. Minor changes might be decided by the relevant Director-General alone, mid-size changes might require the opinion of SG and HR or a decision through simplified procedure. Major changes might need to be decided by oral procedure ('QABD'). This means that the Director-General and/or the portfolio Commissioner would always be part of the decision-making process. The Workplace Steering Committee would be consulted in all but minor cases.

> **RECOMMENDATION 8.** Carry out benchmarking on the working conditions and working environment specific to different work profiles (professions) in the Member States. This will serve as a basis for making the workplace in the Commission more attractive.

One of the Commission's priorities as an employer is to be as attractive as possible to potential recruits across the EU and to maintain a geographical balance of the nationalities of its staff. Any change in the organisation of work must be consistent with these two objectives.

The analyses carried out so far did not take into account the differences that may exist between the various professions and Member States, in both the public and private sectors.

To remain attractive to the highly qualified people it needs, the European Commission must be able to offer a modern and inspiring working environment.

> **RECOMMENDATION 9.** The Housing Conditions Manual for Commission Directorate-Generals and Services applicable to buildings of the European Commission in Brussels and Luxembourg (Part 1 and 2) and other relevant policy and guidance documents should be aligned with the principles and recommendations included in this Communication.

The Housing Conditions Manual for Commission Directorate-Generals and Services applicable to buildings of the European Commission in Brussels and Luxembourg, Part 1 ([9]) and Part 2 ([10]), establishes harmonised rules and guidelines for allocating office space and other premises to Directorates-General and Services in Brussels and Luxembourg. It should therefore be revised in accordance with the principles and recommendations included in this report. The guidance ([11]) accompanying the Communication on Organisation Charts of the Commission Directorate-Generals and Services ([12]) already provides rules on how to proactively communicate, inform and engage staff in a change process.

([9]) Housing Conditions Manual for Commission Directorate-Generals and Services applicable to buildings of the European Commission in Brussels and Luxembourg, Part 1, European Commission, Brussels, 9 February 2009, available at https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/dg/oib/docref/Documents/ec-housing-conditions-manual_en.pdf

([10]) Housing Conditions Manual for Commission Directorate-Generals and Services applicable to buildings of the European Commission in Brussels and Luxembourg, Part 2, European Commission, Brussels, 23 May 2013, available at https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/dg/oib/docref/Documents/ec-housing-conditions-manual-part2_fr.pdf

([11]) The guidance is available on StaffMatters at https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/hr_admin/en/metrics_reporting/organisational-design/Pages/organisational-structures.aspx

([12]) Communication to the Commission on Organisation Charts of Commission Directorate-Generals and Services, Brussels, 31 July 2017, C(2017)5231 final.

CHAPTER 4 – CONCLUSION

In a changing environment and faced with new challenges, the Commission must strive to optimise the way it organises work, make the best of its highly qualified staff and give them conditions in which they can thrive. The 2016 Communication on Synergies and Efficiencies in the Commission asked the Commission to present concrete proposals in terms of human resources, IT and office space. As outlined in the attached staff working document, the Steering Committee for this project has delivered a thorough analysis of the state-of-the-art in the area, and looked at relevant conclusions for the Commission. On the basis of their work, this Communication puts forward proposals to modernise the Commission's workplace and to make it more efficient and agile and more attractive and fulfilling for staff.

By approving this Communication, the College will, in agreement with the President:

- **take note** and **endorse the principles and recommendations** set out above;
- ask the **Corporate Management Board** to oversee the implementation of these principles and recommendations.