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Sent: Tuesday, February 18, 2020 12:45:08 PM
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Subject: [ASAP] comments/clarifications related to staff meeting 11 February

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Mr Brunetti, secretary-general,

Thank you for the staff meeting on Tuesday (11/02) where you provided us with information about three important topics: the coronavirus, the EESC's building policy and the current harassment case. We would also like to thank you for having answered many of the questions that were sent to you by e-mail prior to the meeting or asked by the audience.

We do, however, regret your aggressive and disdainful reactions towards one EESC colleague and another participant from another EU institution. Under the Staff Regulations, neither unions nor socio-professional organisations (OSPs) are restricted or limited to a particular institution. This may be the case with staff committees, but not with OSPs. They represent the staff of the EU, not of a particular institution. On top of that, and this was all the more disappointing, this particular participant from another EU institution was representing a trade union active at the EESC.

Although you provided a lot of information, we would still like to make some comments and obtain further clarification on the following:

1. Review of the Code of Conduct for members

You pointed out that the Code of Conduct is brand new and needs some testing first. This is not entirely accurate. The document existed already, and some changes were made to it. In our view the committee has been too lenient with harassment cases for far too long.

So let us please skip the "testing" and follow the Parliament's advice, clearly formulated as follows:

Notes that the new Code of Conduct for members, [...], for the first time contains sanctions for members [...]; regrets that such sanctions are not significantly severe and not are aligned with the recommendations of the Ombudsman; [...]; asks the Committee to urgently strengthen the Code of Conduct for members in order particularly to add sanctions that may be more effective and dissuasive; (AMENDMENTS 1 - 64 - Draft report 2018 discharge: General budget of the EU - European Economic and Social Committee - PE645.093v03-

00<<https://urldefense.com/v3/https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUz11NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpb9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDAsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpbGljaylslmJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoimjAyMDAyMTAuMTY5MTQ2MDEiLCJ1cmwIjOiJodHRwOi8vd3d3LmV1cm9wYXJsLmV1cm9wYS5ldS9kb2Nlby9kb2N1bWVudC9DT05ULUFNLTU0NTA5M19FTi5wZGYifQ.2vfc7VQS2faKCWrmI9Ge0CI7fGEbraWD-62hj9j1yE/br/74860213178->

<https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUz11NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpb9saW5rX2lkIjoxMDAsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpbGljaylslmJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoimjAyMDAyMTAuMTY5MTQ2MDEiLCJ1cmwIjOiJodHRwOi8vd3d3LmV1cm9wYXJsLmV1cm9wYS5ldS9kb2Nlby9kb2N1bWVudC9DT05ULUFNLTU0NTA5M19FTi5wZGYifQ.2vfc7VQS2faKCWrmI9Ge0CI7fGEbraWD-62hj9j1yE/br/74860213178->;!DOxrgLBm!Q6jQBhTYHrxIDP8TENMca3Zre7C4sbwbi2ElsF3ixe2UtpGvgBilwvKKochWcgwWNIOi8AEI8ck\$>) How can we restore the reputation of our political position within the EU institutional framework, when both the Ombudsman and the EP have established that the sanctions are "not significantly severe" and we do nothing to change this?

Moreover, if the amendment in question is adopted at the EP's Plenary Session in March, it will leave us, the Committee, yet again in disgrace.

2. OLAF report, to be consulted only on a "need to know" basis.

You mentioned that the content of the OLAF-report is only disseminated on a strict "need to know" basis in the EESC, since it was sent only to the EESC President and the Belgian Judiciary Authority. We accept that the OLAF report is partly confidential. What we cannot accept, however, is "business as usual".

The fact that OLAF needed to step in indicates in itself an institutional dysfunction - irrespective of what the actual findings of that report may be. It is a fantasy to believe that harassment cases would stay *intra muros* in the age of #MeToo. The Committee would therefore do itself a huge favour by working towards a system of better checks and balances. In the event that credible steps are taken towards more transparency and accountability, you can be sure of our support.

3. Internal vs external investigations.

One of the findings of the "Respect@Work" campaign was that staff would feel more confident with external mediation or inquiries. Nevertheless, you continue to insist that it is important to "know the place" to be able to do qualitative mediation/investigation work. Our experience actually shows that the opposite is true - we badly need an impartial and professional view from outside, because many conflicts are clearly a consequence of the way the house works. Are you planning to give some follow-up to this finding of the "Respect@Work" campaign?

One final comment: the meeting of 11 February has left a rather strange aftertaste because of some of the conclusions suggested by you. Some examples:

- concerning the gap between members and staff: you expressed your view that as EU staff we are disconnected from the "normal world"; you say that it is up to staff to communicate better;
- the EP was presented as the big bad wolf that we should fear because it is about to swallow us up.

Of course, it is possible that some colleagues might have similar thoughts as you. Still, the "poor isolated staff in a bubble / big bad wolf" approach is a gross generalisation and simplification. It does not explain or solve anything. Such conclusions, in our view, do not show the necessary vision and leadership that a secretary-general should have, in order to motivate staff and bring solutions to this very difficult situation.

We are looking forward to receiving your answers and seeing your measures implemented soon.

Best regards,

Nancy Mazur, Apor Sajgó

ASAP