



NC (22) 07

Brussels, 8 September 2022

To Didier SEEUWS, Acting Secretary-general  
William SHAPCOTT, Acting Secretary-general

The Staff Committee and the GSC's three trade unions are deeply concerned about what has become an intolerably heavy workload across the GSC. The pressure on colleagues has grown, with no parallel increase in staff numbers - in stark contrast to the continuing rise in staffing levels at the European Parliament. The accumulation of international crises has further aggravated the situation. Irritation and exhaustion have increased, with harmful effects on staff health (illness and burnout).

In the first six months of 2022, staff worked an excessive number of hours with the obligation to work additional hours and perform standby duties on a frequent basis, including over weekends and during annual leave. Large numbers of colleagues were often required to work late into the evening, sometimes overnight and over weekends. Repeatedly, colleagues were asked at short notice, after a full working day and with no prior rest, to work additional hours or perform standby duties, clearly undermining the healthy work-life balance that the existing rules<sup>1</sup> seek to ensure. They then continued to work, without interruption, well beyond the maximum working time permitted under European Union law<sup>2</sup>. As a result, working days have sometimes been 24 hours or longer, with no rest taken. Previous cuts in staff numbers and a progressively heavier workload have led to a chronic shortage of staff and real difficulties in responding to Member States' needs in the crises that the EU has been facing - and will continue to face.

GSC capacity is being undermined by what we consider to be an excessive and unjustified recourse to the recruitment of temporary staff, whose acquired experience is lost once their contracts come to an end. This places an additional burden on permanent staff, who are required to induct and train their new colleagues and to repeat the process when the latter leave and are replaced.

Urgent measures are needed to ensure the effectiveness of the Council as a political organisation. We therefore urge the Administration, with immediate effect, to:

1. notify the Council of Ministers of the threat that this poses to business continuity;
2. increase staff numbers, including the numbers of permanent staff recruited;
3. ensure compliance with European Union labour law;
4. ensure that all additional hours and standby duties are recorded and can be recouped.

The Administration has a duty of care to safeguard our colleagues' health. Our colleagues have a right to disconnect and to a life outside work. We will continue to work closely together to protect our staff and will convene a General Meeting of staff on 22 September to discuss these problems and the action that should be taken.

The Staff Committee, FFPE, Renouveau et Démocratie, Union Syndicale

**Copy :** Charles MICHEL, President of European Council  
GSC staff

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<sup>1</sup> [CP 77/15](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Directive 2003/88/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 November 2003 concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time](#), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2003/88/oj>