

LING Restructuring: Serious concerns about staff cuts and lack of consultation

Recent announcements regarding the restructuring of LING have caused considerable alarm among staff and staff representatives. Under the proposed measures, the number of AST/SC posts in the translation units will be reduced by 46 (two in each of 23 language units). Only 12 of these posts will be kept and transferred to a mobile team. This far-reaching decision was taken without prior consultation of LING staff. It raises important questions about the substance of the reform and the way it has been implemented.

Yet another round of staff cuts in LING

LING experienced significant staff reductions up until 2018, a period during which approximately 5% of posts were cut. Once again, the service is being asked to absorb a drastic reduction in staff. The justification put forward is the anticipated introduction of “XMLisation” designed to automate administrative formatting tasks currently performed within the translation units. However, this tool is not yet operational. Experience shows that the implementation of a new digital system requires additional support and resources during the transition period, not fewer. Staff need to be trained, new procedures developed and inevitable technical and organisational challenges addressed.

Reducing staff before the tool has been introduced or has proven its effectiveness risks placing an excessive workload on the remaining colleagues. It may even jeopardize the successful implementation of the project itself. Efficiency gains should be demonstrated **before** resources are removed, not assumed in advance.

Poor timing and inadequate communication

The manner in which this decision was communicated is equally problematic. The announcement came at a particularly demanding period for LING colleagues, at the end of the Cyprus presidency and just before a European Council. Staff have been given very limited time to understand the implications, prepare for the changes and adapt to a new organisational structure.

In addition, no account is being taken of the current difficulties experienced in specific units owing to illness and part-time working arrangements. Such an approach creates unnecessary stress and undermines confidence in the change process.

Long-standing issues affecting AST/SC posts

The restructuring also highlights broader concerns regarding the AST/SC function group. The creation of this category was one of the consequences of the last Staff Regulations reform and has been criticised from the outset.

The responsibilities entrusted to colleagues in these posts frequently go far beyond what is traditionally associated with secretarial work. They perform complex tasks that require substantial expertise and institutional knowledge. Yet they continue to face extremely limited career prospects and remuneration that does not adequately reflect the value and complexity of their work.

Now many of the affected colleagues will be reassigned from one department to another without having had a meaningful opportunity to express their preferences or concerns. Such decisions should not be taken without proper involvement of the staff concerned.

Respect for social dialogue must be restored

Finally, we remind the Appointing Authority (AIPN) of the importance of social dialogue. Clear communication channels exist to ensure that major organisational changes are discussed with staff representatives, trade unions and the Staff Committee **before** decisions are finalized.

Early consultation allows potential risks to be identified and mitigation measures to be developed, while safeguarding operational effectiveness. Most importantly, it helps maintain trust and motivation among colleagues during periods of change.

We therefore call on the Administration to engage fully with staff representatives, provide greater transparency as regards the objectives and implementation of any proposed restructuring, and work with staff representatives to ensure that staff concerns are properly addressed.

The success of any organizational reform depends on the substance of the measures adopted and on the way they are developed and implemented. **Meaningful dialogue and respect for staff must remain at the heart of this process.**

