



European Civil Service Federation
Fédération de la Fonction Publique Européenne

A good working environment is essential to the well-being and health of staff. When not set up properly, the introduction of open-plan offices or Open Space can seriously damage the working conditions and health of the colleagues concerned.



The Federation has regularly informed you in detail about the negative aspects of the plans to transform workplaces into Open Space: unsuitability for the tasks to be performed, stress for colleagues, questionable financial savings... ([see our recent initial tract on Open Space 1](#)).

We then presented to you the latest [Commission Communication C \(2019\) 7450 of 16.10.2019](#) on 'The Workplace of the Future' which at last aims to make a start on bringing order to the anarchic practices of various DGs in the matter and ensure respect for a common set of rules and above all recognise the need to take into account colleagues' opinions and feelings ([see our second tract on Open Space 2](#)).

In particular, the Commission is now able to impose on the DGs and the OIB / OIL a structured approach towards designing and implementing an Open Space, notably including a detailed analysis of the implications for staff, and all done under the supervision of a **Steering Committee on the working environment**.

The Federation renews its request to the Commission to put rapidly this **Steering Committee on the working environment** in place.

Moreover, in the current context of the Covid 19 outbreak, it is evident to **the Federation** that it is now vital to add a **health dimension** to the study prior to any implementation of Open Space.

The recent events in Berlin as reported by 'Der Tagesspiegel' on 3rd March confirm the need for urgent action:

<https://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/48-coronavirus-infizierte-ich-gehe-fuer-berlin-von-einem-sehr-deutlichen-anstieg-aus/25605226.html>

“Indeed, in Berlin, an infected person spent two weeks with the symptoms in an Open Space office. The 22 year old, who was confirmed on Sunday 1st March as the first Coronavirus case in Berlin, spent more than two weeks coughing and spluttering in a shared office. An interview with one of his colleagues revealed to Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg (RBB) that he supposed that at least half of the ten employees had now been infected. All of the other employees are now in domestic quarantine.”

In view of this, **the Federation** requests that the approach adopted by the Commission in its Communication, which for inexplicable reasons is still not yet implemented, be therefore immediately **amended to add the health dimension into the impact study on any proposal to introduce an Open Space.**

In the meantime, the Federation requests that the Commission takes the following actions:

- Specific measures (for example the facilitation of teleworking) for all services already working in an Open Space (OIB, DIGIT, PMO)
- **The immediate freeze of any ongoing activities towards implementing Open Space.**

The well-being of all colleagues at their workplace is at stake.