

A good working environment is essential to the well-being of staff.

When not set up properly, the introduction of open-plan offices or Open Space can seriously damage the working conditions of the colleagues concerned.



Following up on our [previous message](#)^[1], which gave a review of recent studies and developing insight into the potentially harmful consequences of the forced implementation of Open Space, **the Federation** now presents its evaluation of the Commission's new approach to the "The Workplace of the Future" as presented in its **Communication C (2019) 7450 of 16.10.2019**^[2].

In this Communication, the Commission establishes ten principles, several of which echo recommendations that **the Federation** has been making for years in its role as a staff union and also as a member of the "health and safety" committee (CPPT).

This Communication complements and recalls certain rules and principles which are already in force in the [Housing Conditions Manual Part 2](#) (MCH2).

Indeed, **the Federation** considers that it is essential to follow a rigorous approach to analysing any proposal for installing an Open Space and its impact on the staff, who must also be consulted

[1] [Introducing open-plan \(or Open Space\) offices can seriously affect working conditions! Federation FFPE 20/02/2020](#)

[2] <https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/3/2019/EN/C-2019-7450-F1-EN-MAIN-PART-1.PDF>

before considering any switch to Open Space, because the costs of destabilising a service, increased illnesses (burnout, depression, ill-being) and reduced productivity can be considerable.

In setting out its principles, the Commission clearly establishes that:

- *One single standard office format within a Directorate General cannot meet all needs in a context as diverse as that of the Commission;*
- *The layout of the offices should be determined exclusively on the basis of the interest of the service, the nature of the tasks, the well-being of the staff (for example, noise control, temperature and lighting control) and the attractiveness of the Commission as a workplace;*
- *The choice of workplace configuration should always be based on an assessment of individual needs and consideration of available cost-effective options. Therefore, a thorough needs analysis should always be the starting point for implementing any changes to the workplace;*
- *The concerned staff should be involved from beginning to end throughout the process of conceptualising and implementing any new workplace.*

Now for the most essential step: moving from theory to practice.

In this regard, the Commission makes recommendations as to how to manage changes to the workplace in line with the principles it has established and in particular:

- *The setting up of a steering committee and an integrated service dedicated to the working environment, in order to provide the Directorates-General, services and teams with better coordinated steering and support;*
- *After each substantial change in the working environment, ensure adequate follow-up to assess satisfaction and well-being and take all necessary corrective measures.*

In order to adopt as quickly as possible this new approach that is so sorely needed to put an end to the current anarchic proliferation of Open Spaces, **the Federation** calls on the Commission to take the measures necessary to implement the principles formulated in its Communication:

- **by immediately creating the Steering Committee on the working environment**
- ***by ensuring that prior to any project of workplace modification, the Steering Committee and the Integrated Service dedicated to the work environment make an impact assessment.***