

Recommendations implemented by INTPA and suggestions from the Federation

At INTPA, we want to create a culture that supports designated “off” times, both physically and virtually. By changing our behaviour, we are looking after the health and well-being of our colleagues avoiding that they become exposed to the risk of “digital overload”.

However, digital overload might be the symptom of a lack of policy focus in delivery, too complex processes, or shortfalls in planning or organisation. That is why DG INTPA should continue identifying negative priorities, simplifying its ways of working, and implementing realistic deadlines and clear planning. This is a collective responsibility and managers must lead by example.

In this light, monitoring of implementation will be as follows:

- Senior and middle managers are invited to raise awareness on the policy at Directorate & Unit level;
- Middle managers and senior managers will be invited to complete a short evaluation on implementation of the guidelines before the summer;
- INTPA HQ staff will be invited to complete a pulse survey before the summer on implementation.

Every effort should be made to apply these guidelines. Any alternative arrangements should be compensated to respect the intention of the guidelines; for example if Monday morning cannot be a video-conferencing free times, another half-day should be compensated in return.

The Federation will inform you about the results of these surveys when available

On-line meetings / video-conferencing

1. Monday mornings and Friday afternoons are video-conferencing free times.

This allows for clear meeting-free times and a common approach across the DG. If you are invited to an external meeting, suggest to the organiser to change the meeting time.

The Federation recommends adding Wednesday afternoons to these periods to accommodate school timetables.

2. On-line meetings are limited to other workdays between 9:00-12:30 and 14:00-17:00.

Internal VC meetings should be organised within these times, while taking into account core times and childcare arrangements.

The Federation recommends to maintain current coretime brackets: 9:30-12:00 and 15:00-16:30 (16:00 on Fridays)

3. Clear, well-planned and concise meetings continue to be ever more important with the growth in number of on-line exchanges:

1. **Limit the duration of the meeting** as much as possible.
2. **Have a clear agenda, the right participants and stick to the planned timing.**
3. **Use collaborative IT tools** such as Teams, to make calls, chat and share documents to progress and allow for comments in real time.
4. **Be an active participant: for on-line meetings turn on your camera**, when the IT conditions allow, **un/mute your microphone and use chat** appropriately.
5. **Summarise operational conclusions/next steps at the end** – circulate a short concise summary and highlight actions expected for follow-up and by whom.

The Federation recommends improving the scheduling of meetings: the durations of meetings must allow a brief break of 5 to 10 minutes before the next meeting.

E-mails

4. Favour more “person-to-person” communication.

Talk directly to your colleagues instead of communicating via e-mail, in particular for urgent exchanges when a response is expected in a few hours. Use instant messaging if more appropriate.

The Federation invites managers and colleagues in general to privilege direct human communications

5. Use of collaborative, online workspaces is encouraged, which allow common documents to be shared rather than passed around by e-mail.

The Federation confirms its rejection of “hot-desking” / “Flexi-desking” as it represents a harmful office environment which is detrimental to staff health.

6. E-mails should be sent during working days between 8:00-19:00. You are encouraged to use the Delay Delivery function in Outlook that enables you to postpone the sending of your messages if you prepare a mail out of this timeframe. Outlook must be online and connected for this feature to work. Another option is to keep the mails as “draft” and send them the next morning. If you send an email at the end of your working hours, it is important that you clearly state that you do not expect the recipient to reply outside regular working hours, except in justified exceptional cases.

The Federation recommends introducing dedicated training on Outlook tools

7. Nobody is expected to read or reply to e-mails outside working hours, on weekends and during holidays, except in justified, specific cases agreed with your line manager.

8. Efficient use of CC and BCC

We should only copy people in mails when clearly relevant to them: if there is an action item for them, or they concretely need to be informed of the exchange, for example within a process of co-creation or as direct line manager. When replying to all, to a lengthy series of emails, move the people who are no longer an active participant in the topic to the cc/bcc if they still need to be involved or removed entirely.

The Federation fully supports the wide implementation of this recommendation that also contributes to the Commission's greening efforts: digital communication is not carbon neutral at all and its impact should therefore not be underestimated and overlooked.