

Opinion of the CSC members of the GCC on
[GCC/DOC 13/2022](#)
“Bringing Teams Together”

1. The CSC members of the GCC give the following opinion on the “Bringing Teams Together” pilot project proposed in document GCC/DOC 13/2022.
2. The document announces a new management of office space in view of the New Ways of Working “[Pilot](#)” started on 1 June 2022 for a period of two years.

On the consultation

3. The document is tabled **for information**, which means that it shall not be subject to a vote and that the President does not expect an opinion to be submitted.

The project kicked off before any discussion

4. The project “Bringing Teams Together” was mentioned for the first time in the [May report](#) of 2 June 2022 and foresees a new management of office space allegedly “*to ensure that teams cluster in our buildings when working onsite*”. This project was never submitted to statutory consultation.
5. On 7 June 2022, the project kicked off with presentations per DG to line managers (see page 11).
6. The Local Staff Committee Munich (LSCMN) requested by [letter](#) of 9 June 2022 that statutory consultation take place in the LSCMN and the LOHSEC. In particular, it argued that this project introduces the deepest change in working conditions ever in the history of this organisation, and definitely requires a sound legal basis and a formal decision with an identifiable signatory.
7. The Central Staff Committee (CSC) urgently demanded by [letter](#) of 14 June 2022 that this new management of office space, and any other project implementing [Circular No. 419](#) (New Ways of Working), be discussed with Staff Representation and that statutory consultation in the GCC (Art. 38 ServRegs) and in the COHSEC (Art. 38a ServRegs) take place prior to entry into force.
8. On 20 June 2022, the GCC Secretariat sent the agenda for the GCC meeting of 5 July. Item No. 3 referred to a document “Bringing Teams Together” which was not yet made available.
9. On 24 June 2022, the President of the Office replied (see Annexes 1 and 2) that:

“Bringing Teams Together does not require a prior, formal consultation of the GCC, nor a reasoned opinion of COHSEC”. Indeed, the principle of individual workplace allocation remains and the concept is flexible, adaptable and based on the needs expressed by the managers and

individual staff. Additionally, the foreseen changes will have no impact on staff's occupational health, safety and ergonomics."

10. The document was finally made available on 27 June 2022 in the evening, namely 7 days before the GCC meeting.
11. On 28 June 2022, a CIN meeting took place during which the document was presented. When staff expressed major concerns against the project, the Communication Department declared "*[w]e are not here to discuss the **why** but rather the **how** because the decision has already been taken*".
12. While information to staff is important, we note that CIN meetings shall be no replacement for statutory consultation with the staff representation. Staff present in the CIN meeting brought reasoned arguments against the project but only got flawed answers or non-answers. It is further noted that CIN meetings can also not substitute for dedicated information available to staff via the intranet or e-mails.
13. The present document can be seen as an implementation of Title IV ServRegs (Working Conditions), in particular Articles 55 and 55a thereof. These articles expressly mention "*consulting the relevant joint committee*". Therefore, merely "informing" the GCC or any other joint committee of any changes in the working conditions is by far not sufficient.
14. The GCC meeting took place on 5 July 2022. In the meeting, the CSC members of the GCC requested that the agenda item be rescheduled for final consultation. The President refused and referred to the arguments exposed in his letter of 24 June (see Annexes 1 and 2).

Lack of consultation of local staff committees

15. In accordance with Art. 37(1)(d) ServRegs, the Local Staff Committee is "*responsible for maintaining suitable contacts with the local Administration*" and has the competence to "*raise site specific issues*" (Art. 37(1)(c) ServRegs). Pursuant to Art. 37(1)(a) ServRegs, the Local Staff Committee "*shall be consulted on any proposal [...] which concerns the **conditions of employment** of the whole or part of the staff at the place of employment concerned*".
16. The project is "*focusing on our most modern buildings*" (page 8) and therefore aims at emptying the Pschorrhöfe 1-4 and the Shell Building. This alone justifies a consultation of the local staff committees which never took place.
17. Staff working on site less frequently will only be allowed to book a "workplace-for-the-day" and keep their personal effects in an allocated locker/cupboard after work (page 5). This definitely implies a change in working conditions.

Lack of consultation of LOHSEC/COHSEC

18. In accordance with Art. 38a(6) ServRegs, “the President of the Office shall keep the [...] relevant Local Committee informed of any projects envisaged or implemented affecting its **area of competence**.” The latter is defined in Art. 38a(4) ServRegs as “all **measures** and reports relating to occupational health, safety and ergonomics on the premises of the place of employment concerned”. Similar provisions apply to the COHSEC (Article 38a(3) ServRegs).
19. By generalizing “workplaces-for-the-day”, increasing the sharing of office space and densifying the workplace, the project does impact occupational health, safety and ergonomics.
- First, an unnamed and simply labelled “office for the day” makes it physically more difficult to individually locate staff members in case of emergency involving a power outage (only the booking system knows who is where).
 - Second, a “workplace-for-the-day” will be alternately used by different staff members. It will be the responsibility of staff members to disinfect IT equipment with the wipes available on the desk itself. Cleaning staff will perform only a standard cleaning and only in the evenings (page 10) although such an office is bookable for half-days and can hence change occupant during the day. There is no denial that the project will densify office spaces, which have an health impact in a time of a pandemic, for instance.
 - Third, the height of the chair, screen and table may have to be readjusted each time there is a change of occupant, and personal keyboard and mouse be connected and disconnected.
20. Finally, the distribution of post is affected (page 10).

The consultation is flawed

21. The document contains links (page 10) to other sources which may change over time. GCC documents should be self-contained.
22. The decision to generalize “workplaces-for-the-day” comes with no benchmark nor cost/benefit analysis.
23. The document (page 6) promises that the implementation will be monitored and continuously improved based on lessons learned and the occupancy reviewed. However, there is no mention of any involvement of the staff representation. Quite to the contrary: in the GCC meeting, the President announced that (only) managers would be consulted and that this was better than asking staff with a survey. This is tantamount to excluding consultation of the Staff Committee(s) from day one as well as in the future.
24. In accordance with Art. 38 ServRegs, the General Consultative Committee (GCC) shall be **consulted** on any proposal which concerns the conditions of employment of

the whole or part of the staff to whom these Service Regulations apply. Working conditions (Title IV in the ServRegs) are an integral part of the conditions of employment.

25. As explained above and expressly requested by the CSC, the project definitely has an impact on the working conditions and hence should have been tabled **for consultation** instead of “for information” prior to entry into force.

On the merits

The objectives are contradictory and unclear

26. The document (page 2) pretends to “*enshrine the flexibility and choice of the last two years*”. This statement is a misrepresentation of the facts. The last two years covered a pandemic period with mandatory teleworking.

Objective 1: Bring our teams together to benefit from all advantages that come with close collaboration

27. This objective is actually contradicting the latest Office reorganization which generalized cross-site teams and directorates. Some directorates used to work with a team of Formalities Officers were suddenly assigned to a team solely based at another site. Collaboration remains purely virtual in such cases.
28. During the pandemic, the Office had actually recommended physical distancing to prevent infections. Now, by concentrating staff in neighbourhoods and shared office spaces, physical distancing will become more difficult and the situation worse when the number of infections rise.

Objective 2: Strengthen the sense of belonging and avoid ghost town effect due to lower occupation

29. The project foresees the generalization of “workplaces-for-the-day”. As explained in this [paper](#), the literature shows that by introducing hot-desking also known as office hotelling, staff may interpret it as a message that they do not count. Such a project may hence worsen staff engagement. The Technologia survey 2022 run by SUEPO shows in the [results](#) that disengagement of staff in the role and development of the EPO continues to increase from 13% of staff in 2016, and 19% in 2020, disengagement peaked to 41% in 2022.

Objective 3: Implement a new flexible model of space utilisation aligned with the New Ways of Working

30. The superficially positive term “flexible” actually hides the burden imposed on staff who will have to book an office, connect/disconnect personal equipment, unpack/pack personal belongings and disinfect IT equipment.
31. The objective is unclear. What does the Office exactly want to achieve? If there are no plans to sell buildings, then why empty them (see page 8, “*focusing on our most modern buildings*”)? Is the Office trying to rent them or make them available to other organisations?
32. Back in 2019, management proposed to sell one EPO building ([CA/69/19](#), par. 23) but faced opposition from the Council. The project was abandoned. The CSC members in the GCC are asking for the reasons and whether or not they would remain valid three years later.
33. The programme New Ways of Working is a pilot foreseen for two years and under possible review by the Administrative Council. Therefore, it is not clear what the aim behind emptying buildings might be. Furthermore, staff might want to come back more to the offices and therefore office space must be available to them.
34. In the GCC meeting of 5 July 2022, the President promised that the **emptied buildings would not be sold** but added that if the Office reaches only 50% occupancy rate consistently, then the **renting of buildings will be considered**. The President even added that this would improve the finances of the Office and that the revenues would be transferred into the RFPSS (Reserve Funds for Pensions and Social Security).
35. If the renting of buildings materializes in the future, it will put an end to flexibility and the reversibility of the project will be very difficult.

Objective 4: Recognize the different needs between colleagues coming often to the offices and other coming less often

36. This objective already concludes that colleagues coming less often to the office premises have different needs than those coming often. All colleagues actually need close collaboration when working on-site, a sense of belonging or are entitled to expect the same health, safety and ergonomic conditions regardless of how often they are on-site. Assuming that it can be achieved for these less coming colleagues by setting up a different workplace introduces a bias upfront from the beginning of the project.

The project is based on wrong assumptions

37. The document (page 3) states “[a]s we return from the pandemic” although the pandemic is far from being over.

38. It even considers *“it is likely* that building occupancy levels will be lower than pre-pandemic levels” and *“[o]n the peak days we are currently around 20% occupancy”*.
39. Management actually made it unattractive to come to the Office’s premises over the last two years. Amicale facilities and canteens remained closed even at a time restaurants and fitness centres had reopened in the host countries. 36% of staff who work fully at the Office indicated that their work situation has worsened (see Shaping the New Normal survey [results](#) of 2020, page 6). In the GCC meeting of 5 July 2022, the project manager confirmed that the staff members complaining the most are those coming primarily to the Office’s premises.
40. The Isar and Pschorrhöfe canteens only reopened on 22 June 2022 in Munich. Many staff members are already on leave and mandatory presence only starts from 1 September 2022. **The current data cannot be relevant at all** to assess a post-pandemic occupancy rate.

“It is a journey”, but staff is not on-board

41. The CIN meeting of 28 June 2022 was well-attended, where many staff members stressed their reluctance to this project. It is said to be a journey, but many do not want to take off.
42. The lack of trust in the project stems from its alleged aim *“to bring our colleagues and teams together to deliver the benefits that close proximity can bring”* (page 4): creating *“neighbourhoods”* (page 5) to *“stay together”* (page 5).
43. This is contradictory to the alleged *“One-Office concept”* of the President generalizing cross-site teams with large physical distances in DG1. This contradiction has been made further evident in the GCC meeting on the 5 July 2022 when the project manager indicated that the staff is however free to book any bookable room in any building not only next to the team. For instance someone having the team in Pschorrhöfe could book a room in the Isar building if so wished, therefore rendering futile the principal reason of the whole project of *“bringing teams together”*.
44. Concerning the New Main building, the plan intends to *“[w]here possible, bring some DG4 / DG 5 staff into unused space in New Main”* (page 7). When it comes to stuffing empty spaces to empty the Shell building, it appears that teams can be split. In the GCC meeting of 5 July 2022, the project manager nevertheless assured that the same principle of neighbourhoods will equally apply. This should however be unambiguously clear from the document.
45. Inherent contradictions and double standards give rise to the suspicion that the wish to save money is actually the main driver.
46. Staff is said to play a key role but their feedback is only filtered through *“engagement with managers”*. The word *“managers”* is mentioned four times (page 4) whereas the word *“staff”* only once. It is remarkable that the project pretends to achieve trust and cooperation (page 4) solely through discussions with line managers and without involving staff and staff representation directly.

47. In practice, managers are polling their staff in different ways (MS Teams Forms, shared Excels sheets and emails) with different questions in view of the limited information made available to them. To show that they are more sustainable than others, some managers even insist that an allocated fixed workplace shall only be granted in case of special circumstances, leading to discretionary decisions.
48. Direct and honest staff feedback is missing. We strongly advise the Office to make a survey asking staff their opinion on “workplaces-for-the-day”. Such a question was missing from the latest Willis Tower Watson [survey](#) which only asked about working patterns without clearly indicating the conditions (allocated fixed workplaces vs. workplaces-for-the-day).
49. In the GCC meeting of 5 July 2022, the project manager considered that dialogue between staff and their line manager is better than a survey. In his view, resorting to managerial discretion is a preferable solution and “*it is all about being sensible*”.
50. Unfortunately, past experience shows that managerial discretion at the EPO often leads to arbitrariness.

The project is premature and will rely on an unreliable basis

51. The document already sets the date of 30 September 2022 as the deadline for receiving the needs of each team/directorate/community. The New Ways of Working may have started on 1 June 2022, it remains that the mandatory presence is only scheduled as from 1 September 2022.
52. In his letter of 24 June 2022, the President argues that “*4 weeks to fully experience New Ways of Working*” are sufficient to make long-term plans concerning management of office space.
53. First, most of the school holidays end only mid-September. It is hence not four weeks but only two weeks which may allegedly enable to “fully experience” the New Ways of Working.
54. Second, the pandemic is not over. A summer Covid-19 wave is taking place in Europe and another one is expected in autumn. It is not even clear whether the Office will trigger the mandatory presence or will return again to mandatory teleworking.
55. Third, an energy crisis is expected to come in autumn and the Office might follow the practice in the host states and might order the closure of office buildings to guarantee sufficient energy for private homes.
56. **In conclusion, an observation of working patterns of staff can only be reliable in an actual post-pandemic period and over a longer period of time.**

The principle of individual workplace allocation is affected

57. In his letter of 24 June, the President denies that the principle of individual workplace allocation is affected. This is a misrepresentation of the project.
58. First, the document (page 5) pretends that floor layouts remain the same with “*mostly single offices*”. However, the distributed floor plans show an increased number of shared offices, especially in the buildings in Munich (several workplaces in the same office). It is not clear whether sites and units will be affected equally.
59. Second, even if an office has a single workplace, it will be of a different nature (page 5):
1. an **allocated fixed workplace** for colleagues “mainly working” in the buildings **or** having specific needs which cannot be covered by different means.
 2. a **workplace-for-the-day** in their “neighbourhood” if they will be “less regularly” in the premises and an **allocated locker/cupboard** for personal effects in the direct vicinity of their neighbourhood.
60. Therefore, even if the workplace-for-the-day is individual in **space**. It is not individual in **time**. A “workplace-for-the-day” may be booked at any other time by someone else. The document is essentially playing with words.
61. During the CIN meeting of 28 June, the project managers explained that “a workplace-for-the-day” is “your home”. However, staff will not have the keys and anyone being given the code via the booking tool will be allowed to enter.
62. The **allocated locker/cupboard** will offer more limited space to store personal items. The fact that such items have to be removed after the end of work will deter staff from placing them in the first place. This will inevitably lead to an impersonal workplace.
63. In the same meeting, staff was even worried to hear that such a recommendation will also apply to allocated fixed workplaces so that they can be used in case of absence by other colleagues. Such workplaces will however not be bookable via the booking system.

The allocation criteria are unclear

64. The criteria for obtaining an allocated fixed workplace are unclear and could vary in time. The **frequency of 3 days or more per week** is given but only as an example. Later in the document (page 8), the project is said to focus on the most modern buildings, thereby meaning that some buildings shall be emptied (e.g. Pschorrhöfe 1-4 in Munich, and the Shell in The Hague). This strongly suggests that the Office intends to adjust the criteria according to this goal. If too many staff members request an allocated fixed workplace, a higher frequency of 4 days or even 5 days per week may be required.

65. The objective of emptying buildings will obviously set physical limits to flexibility at some point. This [paper](#) from the Local Staff Committee Munich explains why.
66. The document promises that “[u]ltimately if all staff chose to come mainly in the office each week, we have the capacity to host everyone” (page 5). However, each neighbourhood will have a final size (page 5) thereby making any reversibility difficult, especially if the emptied buildings are used for other purposes.
67. Specific needs could justify an **allocated fixed workplace**. In our view, a non-exhaustive exemplary list should be mentioned such as: disabilities, but also specific roles like confidential counsellors, reporting officers, staff representatives, ethics and compliance, etc. For some staff members, focused work requires to be in the same office and not to change office regularly.
68. In the GCC meeting of 5 July 2022, the project manager explained that **3 days or more** is “*not a hard rule, it’s only a guidance*”. We understand therefore that staff planning to come two days per week may request their line manager to be awarded an **allocated fixed workplace** if they so need.

Conclusion

69. For the above reasons, the CSC members of the GCC:

- request that a dedicated working group is convened,
- request that the LOHSECs and COHSEC are consulted regarding health matters, as well as building capacities (ventilation, sanitation, etc.), ergonomics and safety matters,
- consider that the project is premature and might further worsen staff engagement and the sense of belonging,
- recommend observing the working patterns of staff in a post-pandemic period and over a longer period of time,
- request to run an honest staff survey clearly indicating the conditions (allocated fixed workplaces vs. workplaces-for-the-day).
- request that this item is rescheduled for final consultation.

Annexes:

1. Reply from the President of 24 June 2022 to the LSCMN letter of 8 June 2022
2. Reply from the President of 24 June 2022 to the CSC letter of 14 June 2022

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Date: 24.06.2022

Your letter dated 8 June 2022

Dear Mr Chair,

Reference is made to your open letter of 8 June 2022 related to several topics, i.e. Bringing Teams Together, New Normal planning tool, opening of the canteen in the Isar building and construction of a terrace.

Before addressing these points in more detail, the Office would like to recall that the mentioned topics have, as part of larger wholes, been pursued for several months now and were the subject of different announcements on the Intranet. Additionally, it is recalled that the Office invited the Local Staff Committee ('LSC') Munich for a meeting initially scheduled on 15 June 2022, and requested to communicate any topics the LSC wanted to add to the agenda. This meeting had to be rescheduled, but the Office reiterated its invitation to the LSC Munich to indicate which topics it wishes to discuss.

While regretting the unnecessarily polemical tone of your letter, the Office wishes to specify the following:

1. 'Bringing Teams Together'

The Office has long been committed to ensuring that our buildings offer an exceptional work environment for our staff, which is adapted to the evolving way in which we work. With this in mind, the Office revised its medium-term building strategy in June 2021 based on the principles of offering staff greater flexibility, while ensuring that our buildings remain a space where staff can gather, collaborate, network and socialise. The ambitious renovations and improvements of the building in Vienna and the Isar building – which were consistently communicated about – are the direct results of this commitment and directly and visibly benefit the staff.

Bringing Teams Together goes hand-in-hand with these changes, and aims to ensure that our buildings and the workplaces they offer are used to their

fullest potential and are adapted to the new reality we work in. Indeed, the organisation of the workplaces should reflect the increased flexibility offered to staff with regard to where they work from under the New Ways of Working, as well as the organisation of DG1 in Technology Communities and cross-functional principal directorates which has been completed since April 2022.

Attached to this letter you will find the letter the Office sent to the CSC, which contains additional information regarding Bringing Teams Together and the intended timeline. It is noted that this topic will be submitted for information at the upcoming GCC meeting of 5 July 2022. The letter sent to the CSC shows that the conditions of employment of our staff are not impacted by Bringing Teams Together. The principle of individual workplace allocation remains and the concept is flexible, adaptable and based on the needs expressed by the managers and staff. It recognizes the different needs between colleagues working mainly from the Office, who may need fixed workplaces, and others choosing to work on site less frequently, who are recommended to use workplaces-for-the-day in their neighbourhood. An initial three and a half-month period is foreseen during which input from staff and managers will be gathered to determine the detailed accommodation plans.

2. New Normal Planning Tool

In line with Circular No. 419, adopted following a broad and thorough consultation process, employees are given increased flexibility with regard to where they work from and an online tool is put in place to register their working/teleworking plans in advance. The opening of the New Normal Planning Tool corresponds to the administrative implementation thereof. As to the default settings of the tool, staff who so desire can select an entire time range and indicate that they will be working from the Office premises.

3. Canteens and Terrace

First, it is noted that staff has been kept informed of the re-opening of the canteens – which depended on the evolution of the pandemic and the arrangements with the caterer. This has also been announced and discussed with the Local Staff Committee Munich in the past, for example during the meeting of 23 June and 28 October 2021. As regards your remark related to the former canteen committee, we refer to our letter dated 21 October 2021 and the need to centralise the discussions on this topic in the bodies foreseen by our legal framework, i.e. the LSC.

As to the construction of the outdoor terrace, we refer to the communication to staff on [7 December 2021](#) on this topic, and my services remain available should you have particular questions.

We hope that the above information clarifies the Office's position on the points you raised. Should you have any further questions, my services would gladly clarify these in a meeting. In that respect, please allow us to reiterate the Office's invitation for a meeting with the LSC Munich in July, and to share with us the points you wish to discuss and add to the agenda.

Yours sincerely,

António Campinos

Encl. 1: Copy of letter to CSC

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Date: 24.06.2022

Bringing our teams together: use of the Office's workplaces

Dear Mr Chair,

Reference is made to your open letter of 14 June 2022 related to Bringing Teams Together. As you are aware, this topic will be submitted for information at the upcoming GCC meeting of 5 July. However, we would like to already take this opportunity to explain the background of Bringing Teams Together and what it precisely entails before addressing the envisioned timeline and the stakeholders' involvement.

1. Bringing Teams Together – the concept

The Office has long been committed to ensuring that our buildings offer an exceptional work environment for our staff, which is adapted to the evolving way in which we work. With this in mind, the Office revised its medium-term building strategy in June 2021 based on the principles of offering staff greater flexibility, while ensuring that our buildings remain a space where staff can gather, collaborate, network and socialise. The ambitious renovations and improvements of the building in Vienna and the Isar building – on which we have consistently communicated – are the direct results of this commitment and directly and visibly benefit the staff.

Bringing Teams Together goes hand-in-hand with these changes, and aims to ensure that our buildings and the workplaces they offer are used to their fullest potential and are adapted to the new reality we work in. As you know, those workplaces have traditionally been organised based on the concept of staff members being physically present in our buildings. However, building on the lessons learnt during the pandemic, staff will be offered increased flexibility with regard to where they work from in the framework of the New Ways of Working, which will take full effect in September. The organisation of the Office's workspaces should reflect this new reality, as well as the

organisation of DG1 in Technology Communities and cross-functional principal directorates which has been completed since April 2022. The time has come to bring our teams together and also close to the teams with which they shall collaborate.

In embarking on this new chapter, the Office remains committed to providing an attractive home for our professional community, thereby strengthening our sense of belonging. This is all the more important, given that as we return to our buildings, occupancy levels may be lower than in pre-pandemic times. This reinforces the need to bring our teams together and for our workplaces to be flexible and adaptable, so we can respond to the changing needs of colleagues and of each and every team, and to avoid that large areas of the office become empty spaces.

Further thereto, please note the approach the Office is planning to take:

- collect information on the needs of each staff member, team, and unit through consultation with line managers. Staff will be able to provide their feedback via their line manager.
- keep the floor layouts as they are, meaning that the vast majority of the rooms remain single offices, with only slight amendments if absolutely required.
- bring together teams in neighbourhoods to ensure that teams, directorates, technology communities and principal directorates stay together.
- recognise different needs of colleagues working mainly from the Office and others choosing to work on site less frequently. By way of guidance to bring life back to our buildings and avoid creating areas with large numbers of empty offices, line managers and staff will be recommended to consider:
 - being allocated fixed workplaces for colleagues mainly working in our buildings
 - booking workplaces-for-the-day in their neighbourhood if they will be less regularly in our premises and have an allocated locker/cupboard for personal effects in the direct vicinity.

The approach aims at balancing individual and collaborative work needs in our buildings while encouraging social connections between colleagues. There will be a step-by-step approach per building to keep buffers and allow flexibility. As from September 2022, we will first move all DG0/4/5 staff back in Isar once the Isar daylight project is completed. Priority will then be to bring the teams of DG1 together to reflect the reorganisation. Moves in Pschorrhöfe and Isar in Munich, and in Main in The Hague are expected to start in November 2022. The workplaces in Berlin will be assessed at a later stage. The new building in Vienna will adopt a similar concept from the beginning.

2. Timeline and information/feedback from the stakeholders

The detailed accommodation plans will be elaborated after successive consultations with all managers and through engagement between each manager and their staff. While we have, as you pointed out in your letter, already introduced the general approach to all managers in dedicated meetings per DG on 7 June 2022, the next steps are outlined as follows:

- Provide more detailed information to all line managers in smaller groups per site and per technology community (for DG1) or per PD (other DGs) in meetings between mid and end June 2022. For each group, single points of contacts will be nominated to liaise regularly and directly with Facility Management.
- Inform staff in a CIN drop-in session on 28 June 2022 (another CIN meeting took place already on 23 June 2022).
- Along the process, inform staff through intranet of the approach and keep them updated on the progress of the implementation.
- Request from line managers to define the needs for their teams. They should provide consolidated list of requirements (including the list of staff who need an allocated workplace) by 30 September 2022. This allows line managers about three and a half months to reflect and engage with their teams, including 4 weeks to fully experience New Ways of Working.
- With this, Facility Management can finalise the detailed accommodation plans and start the moves for DG1 as from November 2022.

The situation will then be closely monitored and continuously improved based on lessons to be learnt.

The Office has attached great importance to communicating extensively and transparently on all evolutions with regard to our buildings. This is reflected in the numerous Intranet publications on the renovations, and – specifically related to Bringing Teams Together – the early information meetings with staff on this topic and the publication of the MAC report.

As mentioned above, the Office will submit this topic for information at the upcoming GCC meeting of 5 July. Additionally, should any site-specific considerations arise, these may also be discussed with my relevant services.

That being said, the Office considers that Bringing Teams Together does not require a prior, formal consultation of the GCC, nor a reasoned opinion of COHSEC. Indeed, the principle of individual workplace allocation remains and the concept is flexible, adaptable and based on the needs expressed by the managers and individual staff. Additionally, the foreseen changes will have no impact on staff's occupational health, safety and ergonomics.

We hope that the above information clarifies the Office's position on the points you raised.

Yours sincerely,

António Campinos