Ref. Ares(2026)8865199 - 18/09/2026

European Commission

CENTRAL STAFF COMMITTEE

CCP–AK/RTR

Note for the Attention of Ms Ewelina JELENKOWSKA-LUCA',
Director DG HR.C "Careers & Staff Development"

Subject: **Review of the service model for language training**

Dear Ms Jelenkowska-Luca',

The Central Staff Committee (CSC) has been receiving continuously complaints about the quality of the language trainings for staff of the European Commission. The observation of repeated incidents and organisational difficulties experienced after the latest tender entail a clear need for an in-depth revision of the current model.

The common practice by Service providers to try having the tender awarded by bidding unusually low prices often leads to significant impact on the working conditions of the teachers. Naturally, the latter has negatively affected the quality of the service. The situation has allegedly reached its nadir with the company LSD, which – apart from reducing pay to dumping levels has been unable to ensure the expected organisational standards even one year after winning the lots for German, English and Italian.
The complaints of teachers and students are piling up concerning mainly these areas:

1) **Communication issues** such as unclear course schedule and erroneous planning, poor reachability, lacking or excessive instructions, to mention just a few. LSD has no operational office in Brussels or in Luxembourg, making timely support for operational and pedagogical issues impossible. Communication with teachers is limited to a generic email address, with delayed replies from different staff members. Under LSD's system, printed copies of exam papers for in-person courses are only delivered to teachers on the day of the examination. This ineffective system has already caused serious disruptions: for example, when the school forgot the examination date of an in-person interpreters' group, the exam had to be postponed because the printed tests had not been delivered and there was no local office able to resolve the problem.

2) **Technical issues** with the platform, including a software update which led to the loss of valuable teaching material.

3) **Issues with assessment** – unchecked use of AI resulting in poor quality and inadequate difficulty of the exams. Little or no time provided for professional revision of the exams by the teachers themselves. Criticism of the continuous assessment tests has not been addressed despite numerous appeals from both teachers and students.

4) **Poor quality premises**. The conditions in Drosbach (LU) are so inadequate, both for students and teachers, that many colleagues have preferred to drop out of the course (and thereby also reduce their disproportionate commuting time). The premises are in the most remote wing of the building, accessible only along a muddy path. Each time the teachers need to go to the main building for coffee or lunch, they need to factor in additional time wasted with a security check on their return. This treatment is felt by teachers to be utterly humiliating, as it comes on top of all the above-mentioned restrictions that have been gradually imposed on the external workers.

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5) **Access issues.** The access to the buildings with a badge valid for the entire duration of the course, correctly stating the purpose for which it was issued – this concerns specifically Drosbach (LU), where teachers have been downgraded to mere visitors and are obliged to renew their badge every month, which leads to disproportionate administrative burden and late arrivals.

   Concerning parking slots, many spaces remain empty in Drosbach while teachers are forced to pay for parking elsewhere and carry heavy equipment or teaching material to the classroom.

The CSC requests DG HR to

- review the current contract with LSD and take appropriate measures for resolving the noted issues;
- provide quality classrooms, adequate IT equipment including printers, eased access to the buildings and sufficient available free parking lots;
- reconsider the criteria for tenders in such a way that in the future, the language training is of the highest level.

In addition, the CSC believes that the Large-Scale Review is an excellent opportunity to reconsider the way the Commission provides certain services and the rules that govern them, if necessary, to improve their quality[1].

The CSC therefore strongly suggests that DG HR considers strengthening its collaboration with other institutions to ensure the best possible use of available EU premises, homogeneous and clear rules in all Institutions and decent working conditions and respectful treatment for everyone that contributes towards better intercultural understanding and easier mobility within and between Institutions.

I thank you for your kind attention.

Athanasios KATSOGIANNIS
President of the Central Staff Committee

c.c.: Mr Roques, Mr Linder, Mr Demirdjiev, Mr Duluc, Mr Annis (DG HR)
Mr Ellinides, Mr Maraslis, Ms Kunte, Mr Meert (DGT)
Local Staff Committees

[1] Large-scale review of the European Commission: Executive summaries by the 15 workstreams.