



**Note for the attention of Mr Rytis MARTIKONIS, Director-General Translation
and Ms Gertrud INGESTAD, Director-General Human Resources and Security**

Subject: Abuses of DGT standby duty system and lack of overall compensation

The recent developments with an ever-increasing number of requests arriving through the DGT standby duty system have revealed its serious shortcomings. Intended specifically for urgent and emergency situations, the system is mostly used for non-emergency translations, which could and should be treated during normal working hours. Translators often get “urgent” night assignments to translate documents with a deadline of ‘as soon as possible (ASAP)’ or for the next morning, where these could easily be worked on during the following day¹. These cases, as demonstrated in the numerous examples that the Permanent Delegation of Translators (DPT) has collected in the attached document, constitute a clear abuse of the system.

It therefore seems that DGT’s 24/7 availability is taken for granted and there is a need for a clear rule stating that the standby duty scheme shall only be used for unexpected events (a “force majeure” clause), as opposed to documents “expected to come in late”. The current abuses/misuses of the system should stop and requester DGs need to be warned against such practices.

Currently, translators are only compensated for the time they spend translating, and being on duty even during the night remains unconsidered, which is unacceptable given that they have to do this in addition to their normal 8h working days. This practice has a net impact on the private life of colleagues because it reduces the time they can spend with their families, prohibits them from taking normal recreational, sports and/or cultural activities; it causes unnecessary additional stress for the translators on top of an already high workload which has repeatedly led to more cases of sickness and burnout². Besides, it results in a general lack of motivation to “volunteer” for the

¹ Sometimes translators even receive new versions of these documents up to 2 days later, which proves that they were actually not that urgent. It should also be noted that this is all in addition to the flexibility shown by most translators and assistants to work overtime in order to meet urgent deadlines of dossiers coming through the normal workflow.

² Many of these same work-life balance issues were brought to your attention in the CSC note (2020)128388-09/01/2020 to the attention of Commissioner Johannes Hahn: [DPT petition against further staff cuts](#) + [Annex](#) and again in 26/10/2021 (2021)6587711 [Recommendation of actions warranted by recent opinion survey](#).

standby duty³. There is no clear obligation for staff to participate (but no clear freedom to refuse either) and the system's rules concerning responsibility, overtime and recuperation lack clear definition.

In our view, work outside official working hours – including the “readiness to translate”, which is limiting to private lives – should be adequately compensated, as is the case in all well-functioning entities in both the private and public sector, as well as in some Commission DGs (e.g. JRC, DIGIT). An approach such as the one followed in the Council, involving special dedicated teams of translators mobilised only in real emergencies with adequate compensation, could be a valid alternative.

We expect that all the issues and options mentioned above (as illustrated by several examples) will be seriously considered in view of a thorough revision of the existing standby duty system, which is clearly unfair, inefficient and abuses the remaining good will of the service.

Kind regards,

(signed)
Athanasios KATSOGIANNIS
President

Annex: Examples of misuse of standby duty

Cc: Permanent Delegation of Translators – DPT
Ms B. Pellistrandi, Mr A. Gonzalez (CSC)

³ The issue regarding additional hours is also referenced in (2019)7798989-18/12/2019 [Standby duties – request for information and consultation](#) + [Annex](#) and in your response (2020)3790061-17/07/2020, where it is mentioned that “DG HR would propose to have a meeting with the “ad hoc group” created by the Central Staff Committee in September to go over the information gathered during this exercise and discuss any suggestions that the Central Staff Committee might have on further improvement of governance and compliance in the area of standby duty services.” (The CSC requested to set a date for this 06/05/2021 Ares [\(2021\)3029885](#).) Followed by 26/10/2021 (2021)6587711 [Recommendation of actions warranted by recent opinion survey](#) + [Annex SOS](#) + [Annex 1](#) + [Annex 2](#) + [Annex 3](#) + [Annex 4](#) and 19/11/2021 (2021)7133499 [Issues revealed by recent translators opinion survey and translation of the Resilience and Recovery package](#) + [Annex SOS](#) + [Annex 1](#) + [Annex 2](#) + [Annex 3](#) + [Annex 4](#)