

Press release

# EU staff costs: how to make savings, yet allow the institutions to work

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Committee : Legal Affairs

Raising the retirement age of EU staff, cutting the costs of their salaries and pension adjustment method and reducing their paid travelling time are among proposals, approved by the Legal Affairs Committee on Wednesday, to make substantial savings on EU administration costs. The committee also agreed on a series of provisions to improve efficiency and prevent conflicts of interest.

In this vote, the committee sought to balance the need to make savings with the duty to ensure the working conditions necessary to the proper functioning of the institutions.

"We need to find the right balance between necessary savings and having highly qualified staff working efficiently in the European institutions. We cannot make a 'lawn-mower' staff cut, horizontally across all institutions, irrespective of their responsibilities and possible new workload. It should be left to the institutions themselves to decide how they make the savings that they need to achieve. We all - first and foremost the Member States - need European institutions that function well and efficiently", said Dagmar Roth-Behrendt (S&D, DE), who is steering the file through Parliament.

## **Raising the normal and early retirement ages**

MEPs backed a Commission proposal to raise the normal retirement age from 63 to 65 and the early retirement age from 55 to 58.

## **Salaries and pension adjustment method**

The proposed new method of adjusting EU staff salaries and pensions would reflect nominal salary changes in all EU Member States, rather than real changes in just some of them, as is currently the case.

Finally, the text provides for a new "exception" clause that would allow the use of negative macroeconomic conditions to justify suspending the automatic wage increase.

## **Solidarity levy**

MEPs backed an increase in the so-called "solidarity levy", an extra tax on salaries introduced in 1982, from 4.23% to 6%.

## **Reducing paid travelling time**

Supplementary leave days assigned for travelling time to visit home should be reduced from six days to a maximum of two and half days per year, says the committee. The Commission had proposed a maximum of three days.

### **"Revolving doors" and conflicts of interest**

There should be a 12-month "cooling off" period before former senior officials can engage in lobbying activities at their former institution on matters for which they were responsible during the last three years of work, says the committee. The same rule would apply to officials taking leave on personal grounds

A specific check for any possible conflict of interest should be carried out by the administration when appointing a new official, it adds.

### **Whistle blowing**

Each institution should put in place a procedure to handle complaints lodged by an official who has previously informed the hierarchy of possible illegal activities, including fraud or corruption, happening in the institution.

### **Downgrading or dismissal of an official**

The committee approved an amendment that would mean an official could be downgraded after three consecutive unsatisfactory annual reports and dismissed after additional two negative evaluations.

### **Contract duration for agents and minimum working hours**

MEPs voted to exclude the possibility of compensation for extra hours worked by officials in positions such as head of unit, director or director-general. The institutions should be able to recruit contract agents for a maximum of five years, MEPs also decided, instead of the six years proposed by the Commission.

The committee also backed a proposal to introduce a minimum number of working hours, i.e. 40.

*The legislative resolution was approved with 19 votes in favour, 3 against and 2 abstentions.*

*Committee on Legal Affairs - In the chair: Klaus-Heiner Lehne (EPP, DE)*

*Procedure: ordinary legislative procedure, first reading*  
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