

Languages Service Sectoral Assembly (LSSA)

Minutes of the sixth meeting of the Bureau¹

Held via videoconference on Friday, 12 November 2021, from 11 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

Attendees: Marine Acker (FTS), Anna Aleksandrova (RTS), Jianjun Chen (CTS), Emily Duggan (ETS), Pauline Escalante (EDPU), Pablo González Silva (STS), Laura Johnson (President) and Lyndsay Nash (ES)

Main topics discussed:

- Concerns relating to the crediting of reprise
- Upcoming global town hall meeting for language staff
- Return to the office
- Outcomes of the latest Staff Management Relations Group meeting
- Staff representatives' upcoming visit to United Nations Headquarters (UNHQ)

Decisions taken:

1. *Concerns relating to the crediting of reprise:* Staff are concerned about how reprise will be calculated and credited as of the next performance cycle. In view of the fact that a task force on reprise has not yet been established, **the President** will send out a call for volunteers to form a staff working group on reprise.
2. *Return to the office:* **The President** will ask the Chief of the Languages Service for clarification as to whether staff members who take leave on a day when they would have been in the office are required to compensate for their absence by coming into the office on a different day of the week. (reply received: see annex)
3. *Staff representatives' upcoming visit to UNHQ:* **The Bureau** will continue to collect examples of poor translations to be used to convey the importance of translation quality to delegates to the General Assembly. During the visit to UNHQ, the Executive Secretary of the Staff Coordinating Council is hoping to meet with the Assistant Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management to discuss, inter alia, the results of the staff survey on the impact of the new workload standard. **The President** will ask the Executive Secretary to also seek information about the results of the desktop publishing survey that was carried out in 2020 and any changes that lie ahead for the desktop publishing units.

¹ Unless otherwise stated, the opinions reflected herein represent staff suggestions and views collected by their representatives and are aimed at promoting communication between management and staff. In order to avoid misunderstandings, any comments or requests for corrections to the minutes should be submitted to the President of the LSSA only, for inclusion in the minutes of the following meeting.

Annex

Question sent to the Chief of LS by LSSA President:

As you are aware, since 3 November staff have been required to work on the premises at least two days a week.

The return to office mostly seems to be going well.

However, I have received reports that at least one chief of section in the Languages Service has interpreted the requirement differently to the way I believe most people would understand it.

In general, I think staff have set regular days (at least two) that they will work on the premises and regular days that they will telecommute (a maximum of three).

Of course, if they are not at work at all, whether because of annual leave or illness, they will not be on the premises for two days in that particular week.

Apparently though, some staff have been told that the two days must be organized and monitored on a rolling weekly basis, meaning that they must “make up” for being off work on one of their on-site days by coming in on one of their telecommuting days.

Apart from creating unnecessary administrative tasks, this approach prevents staff from establishing a weekly routine and, perhaps most importantly, will surely make it more difficult to ensure compliance with the occupancy limit of 50 per cent.

I would appreciate your comments on this concern reported to me by staff.

Response received:

Yes, I am aware that staff are now expected to be back at work at least two days per week and we are also expected to make sure that we do not exceed the threshold of 50% attendance. It was never clear to me if we were expected to use total post or only occupied posts as a basis but the 50% threshold has never been a problem for LS. I agree that it makes sense though for people to choose their two days or more to make everyone's life easier.

It is not my understanding that if someone is on USL, CSL or AL on one or both of their two days in the office they would need to make up for those days that week or the week after. Having said that, I think it would go against the spirit of what the DG is trying to achieve for someone to work from home three days a week and to always take the days they are meant to be in the office as either annual leave or USL or to always schedule medical appointments on those days so that in the end they do not come back to work. I think every now and then is a coincidence. Every week would be a pattern and perhaps a different discussion is needed. What do you think?