

Dear colleagues,

In light of the ongoing public health crisis due to COVID-19 the Commission has prolonged the application of its Business Continuity Plan until and inclusive of 19 April 2020. The situation will be reviewed in due course and a further prolongation remains a possibility. Under the business continuity plan all Commission with the exception of critical staff are obliged to telework.

Seconded National Experts (SNEs) with a **confirmed start date on 16 April or 1 May 2020** and their Commission services of assignment have been contacted individually by the SNE team in DG HR. They have been offered the option to postpone the starting date for the secondment or to maintain it as agreed. For those who opt to postpone the starting date for the secondment, a new starting date will be set once the end of the business continuity period for the Commission is known. The application of the rules governing the rights and obligations of the SNEs and, if applicable, the payment of allowances would be postponed accordingly as they are directly linked to the effective starting date of the secondment.

For SNEs who opt to maintain the start date for the secondment, the following measures apply as long as the Business Continuity Plan applies:

- They are not authorised to access the Commission premises and they have to work remotely instead. The date until when this measure applies is provisionally set at 19 April and will be adjusted in view of new developments. In any event, new colleagues are systematically invited to await a confirmation by the SNE team before coming to the office.
- As from the start of their period of assignment, they enjoy all rights (e.g. daily allowance etc.) and are bound by all obligations stemming from the Decision on Seconded National Experts.
- SNEs are invited to contact their future line managers in order to identify the duties that they can already carry out while working remotely and agree on tasks and assignments. Private email may be used to receive non-sensitive documents.
- The Welcome sessions will be rescheduled. In order to already provide the new colleagues with some useful information, the SNE team sends presentations and other materials (on-line Welcome material notably) and remains in contact with all SNEs by email through the dedicated functional mailbox [HR-END@ec.europa.eu](mailto:HR-END@ec.europa.eu).

**SNEs who are due to start on 16 May or beyond**

Individual contacts will be taken by the SNE team in DG HR with the concerned SNEs and with the services of assignment depending on possible prolongations to the period of BCP in order to individually assess the opportunity to postpone the start of the secondment. The concerned SNEs should refrain from taking firm travel and accommodation commitments.

**Telework arrangements for SNEs whose secondment has already started or is ongoing:**

The Commission has adopted new guidelines on telework applicable as of 1 April 2020 which apply mutatis mutandis to [Seconded national experts \(SNE\)](#). Please find the relevant text of these guidelines below.

Telework should in principle always be carried out at the place of employment at the Commission. Staff who telework should be able to physically come back to their workplace in a reasonable time (a couple of hours) if their presence is required at the office. Moreover, the rules applicable in the COVID-19 crisis applicable in each host country should be respected by all staff categories.

At the same time, the Commission wishes to avoid any unnecessary travel in order to avoid exposure to the virus. This means that those SNEs who have already started their secondment during the Business continuity period and currently telework in their Member State do not need to change their current place of telework at this stage.

Under the guidelines on Telework, SNEs may decide to change their current place of telework in a very limited number of cases such as reuniting with a spouse, partner or dependent child(ren), or when special leave has been granted for serious illness of a family member. SNEs should seek prior authorisation of their line manager and of the central SNE service in DG HR ([HR-END@ec.europa.eu](mailto:HR-END@ec.europa.eu)) before making any travel arrangement.

As a rule, the exception to join a spouse, partner or dependent child(ren) who maintained his/her/their permanent residence in the place of origin will not apply if these family members moved to the Commission place of assignment during the secondment and now wish to return to their Member State of origin.

Please also note that the SNE who may be granted telework under this exception is expected to return to the Commission place of employment without delay as soon as the Commission lifts the application of its business continuity plan and the obligatory telework regime for all its staff.

## **Teleworking arrangements**

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF TELEWORK**

#### **A. Place of telework**

##### *i. Principle*

Telework shall in principle be carried at the place of employment and staff should, in principle, telework from home, i.e. their usual place of residence. Although it is not strictly forbidden to telework from elsewhere than the usual place of residence, staff should be able to **physically come back to their workplace in a reasonable time** (within a couple of hours) if their presence is required at the office due to an emergency or an unforeseen specific need of the service.

Teleworking from outside of the place of employment, notably from the place of origin, is in principle forbidden, unless this is a neighbouring country in a location that is close to the place of employment

##### *ii. Exceptions*

By way of exception:

1. staff whose spouse, recognised partner and/or dependent child(ren) reside permanently in another Member State may telework from there in order to be with their family.
2. staff who have been granted special leave for serious illness of a family member may be allowed to telework from the place of residence of the relative who needs

their care, immediately after the end of the special leave.  
These two exceptions have to be approved by the line manager.

3. in situations where the Commission or the national authority itself would acknowledge that there is strong evidence that the national health system of the host country is not able to ensure proper health care and treatment of staff members and their families, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, case-by-case derogations or generic derogations to authorise staff to telework from outside the place of employment may be granted by the Director- General of DG HR.

*iii. Staff unable to return to the place of employment following private trip*

In general, the Commission counts on staff's individual sense of responsibility when deciding on travelling. Staff should be well informed of and strictly abide by any instructions issued by the competent authorities of the countries of departure and arrival. Staff who are unable to return to their place of employment due to travel restrictions imposed by the national authorities of the country of destination or of arrival should telework from this location to the extent possible. They shall take annual leave if teleworking is not possible.

Kind regards

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