

“Optimising occupancy of premises” at the Court Opaque transparency or transparent opacity

Democracy is under attack throughout the world, both at national level and in the workplace. It is therefore vital that the European institutions ensure respect for democratic principles and strengthen social dialogue with trade union organisations at their level.¹

One of these democratic principles is **transparency**, which presupposes access to information available in the institution. “*The institutions shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society*”². In a situation where European citizens are losing confidence in the European Union and its institutions, transparency is all the more crucial. It is not a luxury, but a democratic duty. For the European institutions, it is a precondition for getting staff to adhere to the institution's mission.

In order to start making things more transparent, EPSU-CJ is pleased to share with you the following information that we have just learned:

- The European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) is interested in renting the Montesquieu Tower and this is already being discussed among the staff.
- The EPPO has already visited the offices of the Montesquieu Tower.
- The EPPO will eventually need the entire Montesquieu Tower but has not yet obtained the necessary budget.
- The EPPO is already being involved in calls for tender launched by the Court or for which the Court is lead awarding authority.
- Some of the Court's departments have already been asked for their opinion on such a lease.

Instead of a discussion via an architect who was commissioned to engineer a predetermined outcome, paid for at great cost to the taxpayer, [EPSU-CJ asked that the discussion on the](#)

¹ This follows from the first para. of [Article 152 TFEU](#), which states that "the Union recognises and promotes the role of the social partners at its level", and is advocated in particular in the [report by the Commissioner for Employment and Social Rights](#), Mr Nicolas Schmitt, published in 2021, in the [Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions \(COM\(2023\) 40 final\)](#), and in the [Council Recommendation of 12 June 2023 \(C/2023/1389\)](#).

² [Article 11 \(2\) TEU](#).

[occupancy of the premises be brought back into the proper framework](#), i.e. with the staff representatives. An initial meeting took place on 27 February.

The management of these projects has already resulted in a deterioration of the atmosphere in the departments concerned and beyond, as well as a loss of confidence in the institution. The Court is primarily a place of work. No one has asked for the 'convivial' and 'collaborative' spaces that the architect is about to push through. The colleagues affected by the pilot projects provide high-quality work that requires a high degree of concentration, hence the need to be able to isolate themselves in their individual office. If the working conditions are optimal, conviviality and collaboration follow naturally, without an artificially dedicated space.

Let's work together to make the Court a welcoming place to work, so that we can live “our institution in the image of what the European Union as a whole should ideally be”.³ ■

³ Koen Lenaerts, President of the Court of Justice, News@Curia 203, 8 October 2021.