

Ispra, 14th October 2022

NOTE TO THE ATTENTION OF
MR S. QUEST - DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE JRC

Subject: Our Concerns Regarding Possible Staff Cuts and Future of the Ispra Site

Dear Mr Quest,

R&D Ispra would like to draw your attention to some concerns regarding the JRC's budgetary situation. We are aware of the current difficult situation of the overall Commission, and particularly the JRC's, budget caused by a conjunction of the following factors:

- Impact on EU budget due to the annual update of the remuneration 2022;
- Impact on budget of high energy costs;
- EURATOM cuts;
- Missing participation of the UK and Switzerland in Horizon Europe.

Additionally, within the JRC, we have clearly noticed that the staff policy implemented in recent years has already lead to a **low level of replacement of retired staff** (especially AST scientific staff) and the **ratio between permanent and non-permanent staff** has worsened significantly.

The acute ongoing crisis is therefore exacerbating an already difficult situation. We are disappointed that ambitious scenarios¹ for improving the energy efficiency of the Ispra site have only been partially implemented in recent years (e.g. substantial increase of solar PV, installation of heat pumps and smart meters, building renovation and insulation, and demolition of obsolete buildings, etc.). These measures would have greatly reduced the impact of the excessive energy costs we are now facing.

We are concerned that the fact that the JRC budget includes its infrastructure and operating costs, unlike other DGs, may penalise the JRC's staff and its research objectives and also makes the Ispra site less attractive.

The above-mentioned budgetary pressures are now leading to additional real concerns about further pressures on permanent staffing levels, the possible non-extension of CA contracts and an uncertain situation concerning external staff (crucial for specific scientific projects due to the reductions of statutory staff). This would lead to a loss of talent in many scientific fields, which could in turn negatively affect many scientific projects. We are also concerned about reductions in investments for scientific and social infrastructures exacerbated by the reduction in Ispra infrastructure and maintenance staff.

Our main aspiration is the preservation of the integrity of the Ispra site, which is threatened by the above mentioned risks. R&D Ispra would therefore like to contribute with an open and transparent discussion on the future of the JRC Ispra site. We take the opportunity to list a number of measures that we believe essential to be considered immediately:

- Ensure that the JRC defends its correct functioning as an essential service of the Commission by negotiating all additional budgetary measures that can avoid it is treated unfavourably vis-à-vis other DGs. This is consistent with, but additional to, the recent promise from Commissioner Hahn's Head of Cabinet that the Commission intends to ask the European Parliament and the Council for additional human resources in order to ensure the existing budget is more productive and we can successfully face the current challenges.

- Agreeing energy saving measures for all the JRC sites, additionally taking advantage of the recent Commission Decision on Working Time and Hybrid Working fully involving the staff representatives;
- Investment in additional infrastructure energy efficiency measures within the limit of the budget available;
- Moving from the JRC budget line all the infrastructure investments related to the well-being (e.g. new canteen/new garderie, projects for which we understand are currently blocked due to budgetary reasons);
- Prioritisation of the JRC scientific projects in order to ensure full compliance with EU policy, and in particular the European Green Deal as a new growth strategy;
- Regular targeted open scientific competitions to ensure the JRC has the talents to meet its future scientific needs.
- We believe this would be the right time to focus on creating a dedicated Office for infrastructure management (OII – Office Infrastructure Ispra or OIJ – Office Infrastructure JRC sites), in this way the infrastructure/operational costs would not continue to be a burden on the JRC budget, and at same time will give the possibility to stabilise concerned Contract Agents.

Returning to the immediate energy crisis, while all staff must make their own efforts in its own energy saving behaviour, and we offer our help in promoting awareness, fundamental structural changes must be put in place. We hope that appropriate action can avoid the need for any cuts in staff or investments, but where any savings do become necessary, we request that the **Ispra site does not carry an unfair burden**.

We trust that you will act in every possible way to defend the JRC Ispra site as well as its staff who play a fundamental role in supporting Commission policy making as well as the international scientific community. We look forward to the possibility of fruitful discussions about all these critical issues.

Yours Sincerely,

Gianfranco Selvagio
President, R&D Ispra
(signed)

Salvatore Tirendi
Vice-President, R&D Ispra
(signed)

Cc. Bernard MAGENHANN, Sabine HENZLER, Philippe DUPONTEIL

¹ Maschio, I., Bavetta, M. and Paci, D., JRC Ispra site energy transition: Energy transition scenarios to 2030 for JRC Ispra site, European Commission, Ispra, 2018, JRC113368