



European Civil Service Staff Union
The President

Brussels, 3 July 2025

**Note to the attention of Marc Lachaise
Director of Fusion for Energy (F4E)**

Subject: Very worrying results of the Fusion for Energy (F4E) recent « Pulse Survey » and your very much welcomed message to F4E staff

Ref:

Our notes:

05/03/25 : [Note for the attention of Mr Piotr Serafin – Very serious concerns and delays in the implementation of the Commission Decision of 12 December 2023 on the prevention of and fight against psychological and sexual harassment](#)

17/04/24 : [Note for the attention of Mr Johannes Hahn – Reinforced governance of the Commission towards Agencies and other external bodies](#)

23/01/24 : [Note for the attention of Mrs Kadri Simpson, Commissioner for Energy and Mr Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for Budget and Administration – Urgent need of Commission's increased support to Fusion for Energy \(F4E\), inter alia, for its reorganisation](#)

16/03/23 : [Note for the attention of Mr Marc LACHAISE, Director of Fusion for Energy \(F4E\)](#)

10/05/21 : [Note for the attention of Mr Johannes Schwemmer, Director of Fusion for Energy – Request to open an independent investigation into the suicide of a colleague assigned to F4E](#)

Our file: [Fusion for Energy F4E – Renouveau & Démocratie](#)

“Quo usque tandem abutere patientia nostra?”¹

The very worrying results of the recent Pulse Survey confirm that F4E staff is STILL exposed to:

- **interpersonal conflicts, (77%)**
- **psychological violence (9.9%)**
- **sexual harassment (7.3%)**
- **physical violence (4.7%)**

All this DESPITE the F4E's proclaimed ZERO tolerance for all forms of harassment!

It is important to emphasise that these results do not come as a surprise but represent the umpteenth alarm bell sounded by F4E staff for far too long!

Indeed, for many many years **ALL F4E staff surveys** have ALWAYS been dramatically below the EU average and, in terms of total lack of trust in senior management, the worst result ever recorded in a European institution!

These dramatic results of the recent pulse survey come after **the two psychosocial risk assessment surveys** carried out by F4E after our colleague's suicide confirming that the psychosocial work environment at F4E has not really improved, worse still, some services have been experiencing a new negative trend.

¹ *When, do you mean to cease abusing our patience? Catilinarian orations*

In the light of these more than worrying results, one of the shocking conclusions of the external experts' report has been that F4E should *"review the processes implemented for harassment, violence at work and discrimination, and the particularities highlighted in the report to improve the performance of F4E in these situations and the results obtained"*.

The fact that, several years after the suicide of our colleague, such a recommendation still has to be issued in the framework of the survey organised as a legal obligation after such a **dramatic event represent an unacceptable and devastating finding which requires an immediate change in management culture and strategy.**

In short, the results of the recent pulse survey come after all these dramatic results from the staff consultation, **and no one can claim to be surprised now.**

It is now indisputable that staff do not trust internal procedures or the F4E's ability, or even willingness to conduct credible internal investigations and act with the necessary credibility and effectiveness in order to prevent and eventually punish any cases of moral or sexual harassment or of any other inappropriate behaviour.

"Potius sero quam nunquam"²

We do warmly thank you for your message to F4E recognising all the seriousness of the abovementioned results of the pulse survey.

Still, we can only hope that your message ... *"is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."*³

We do appreciate your message to the staff, which perhaps for the first time with full clarity, recognises all the seriousness of these results, avoiding once again limiting itself to a litany of empty slogans, finally mentioning concrete steps that have been taken and concrete proposals to be implemented.

We have particularly appreciated that you mention:

"What I discovered make me feel deeply concerned. The results cannot be ignored.

The Pulse Survey shows that even if many of us are aware of the procedures we have in place, a significant number of colleagues still report exposure psychological violence, and even harassment. For example, almost 10% of respondents said that psychological violence happens often, and a worrying number reported experiencing physical violence or sexual harassment.

(...) Awareness is not enough. We need these systems to work well for everyone and to be reviewed or further improved if they are not proven to be efficient enough and we must all feel confident that our voice will be heard and respected. I also confirm my intention to act when inappropriate behaviour is substantiated following the due processes laid down in our staff regulations as I did and ask LTM to do in the last months on specific cases I cannot disclose.

(...) I have already discussed this situation openly with our Bureau and with the European Commission, and we received their full support. You will be aware that I have already asked the Commission to have access to the services of their Chief Confidential Counsellor".

That is exactly what we have been saying all along and we are naturally delighted that you have agreed to endorse our analysis and requests.

² Better late than never - Tito Livio

³ Winston Churchill

It must be finally recognised that F4E cannot solve these problems on its own and absolutely needs stronger support from the Commission.

On the one hand, we can only hope that the reinforced support of the Commission that you are requesting, which is so necessary, will no longer be perceived and presented by F4E administration and management as yet another unacceptable action by **R&D** aiming at putting F4F under an ***“inacceptable constant supervision” of the Commission...***

On the other hand, you must be aware that it is not easy to believe that your message will not be at the end another list of good intentions that will never be followed up or a position imposed by the seriousness of results that can no longer be denied or trivialised

A genuine change in approach requires never repeating the same mistakes and never forgetting what should have been done but was not.

“Those who do not know where they come from cannot know where they are going, because they do not know where they are.”⁴

As the leading trade union for European civil staff, protecting staff health and preventing occupational risk factors are among **R&D's** priorities in all institutions, agencies and JUs.

Since the health of our colleagues is a crucial issue and staff always deserve the best, **R&D** has surrounded itself by the best experts so that we can intervene and make concrete proposals based on their expertise in all our interventions.

It is also with the assistance of these experts that we have carried out our analyses of the situation at F4E and formulated our proposals.

Over and over again, and since repetition is the mother of learning and *repetita iuvant*, we confirmed that the more than serious concerns identified at F4E required very urgent measures starting by a total change of management culture.

We cannot stress enough that *in response to the culture of considering it sufficient to constantly “tick boxes” without worrying about the results of the staff surveys, we have spared no effort to recall the general obligation of safety and result* which is incumbent on each employer according to Directive 89/391 of 12 June 1989, transposed in art. 1sexies §2 of the Staff Regulations, and in particular their responsibility to first assess the risks, including psychosocial risks, then to take the necessary measures to ensure the safety and protect the physical and mental health of their staff, **and finally to verify the effectiveness of the measures adopted and the results achieved.**

F4E is not the stage for a parody of Mission Impossible!

For too long, we started believing that the results of the Staff Surveys seemed for F4E, as the new Ethan Hunt, to have become the legendary message “that will self-destruct in three minutes” entrusting it with a truly impossible mission to convince anyone that everything is now was going well, even very well....until the next consultations of the staff...and then we're off again for another episode of the same movie with the obvious aim of discouraging and disgusting colleagues in the hope that they will no longer respond when they are consulted.

“If you always do what you’ve always done, you’ll get what you’ve always got, if you are not part of the solution, then you are part of the problem.”

⁴ Otto Von Bismarck

It is with surprise and regret that we have had to take note of the reactions of the Management of the F4E administration, which went so far as to describe our analyses and proposal, fully endorsed by the two Commissioners responsible for F4E, as ‘common misconception’ (SIC!) by desperately trying to deny the seriousness of the undeniable problems and by engaging in purely surreal analyses of the results of the staff surveys

This is unprecedented in the context of social dialogue within any other EU institution, or any agency and/or JU and I do regret that, as Director of F4E and ultimately responsible for the functioning of its administration, **you still did not deem it appropriate to intervene to rectify such a clear abuse.**

Indeed, despite all our requests to establish at F4E a value-based leadership culture leading by (good) example, a culture of trust by sweeping away management by fear and putting in place effective procedures against all forms of harassment and conflict at work, reestablishing trust in the fairness of the procedures... no significant consequences have been drawn.

It is in this context that the results of the pulse survey must be assessed in all their seriousness, and no one can now be surprised.

This is not in any way to deny the efforts made by many F4E’ colleagues with countless initiatives, presentations and slides, every possible action plans, change agenda, root cause analysis.... implemented by F4E.

Rather, it is simply a question of certifying the ineffectiveness and credibility of all these initiatives and the lack of any effective follow-up.

Among the many missed opportunities to demonstrate this change in approach, there is undoubtedly the painful saga surrounding the implementation of the anti-harassment Commission's decision by F4E

The truly embarrassing attempts to avoid implementing at F4E the Commission's anti-harassment decision and the intervention of the CCC

We had hoped that as F4E Director, aware of the seriousness of the situation, you would immediately take the lead in demanding that the decision be applied and also in making a formal request to the Commission to allow F4E's staff immediate access to the Commission's CCC, independently of the demand of other agencies.

Much more than the usual slogans and the even more usual self-congratulatory exercises, this would have been an undisputable sign of a change in culture at F4E, which could have really helped restore staff confidence. This was clearly not the case.

On the contrary, the F4E administration seemed to want to take the lead in organising opposition from other agencies and JUs to the implementation of the decision.

Nevertheless, it must be recognised that the F4E's delay in making the right decision may also have been due to “legal clarifications” concerning the new Commission’ decision were surprisingly, to say the least, communicated to F4E Unions on behalf of ‘F4E Management’.

It was extremely regrettable to witness the pseudo-legal acrobatics aimed at confusing the technical adjustments necessary for the adoption of the decision with a genuine “opt-out” aimed purely and simply at excluding the application of the decision.

Given the scale of the problems identified, it was simply irresponsible to even consider to adopt an “in house” F4E's decision keeping on claiming that everything is “already fine” with the in-house

“management” of any potential case of harassment, of course being so proud of a legendary “zero tolerance” ... the failure of which no longer needs to be proven.

These more than painful attempts have gone so far as to claim and even convince some colleagues, that the adoption of the Commission's decision would have resulted in the disappearance of the Confidential Counsellors (CC) (*sic!*).

In order to ensure full clarity and putting an end to shameful gesticulations, we were then obliged to organise **a detailed webinar to present the main aspects of the Commission' decision** and recall that, on the contrary, the roles of the CCs will be duly strengthened thanks to the coordination ensured by the CCC without any interference from the administration **(see art.12, 13, 14, 15, 28, 29 and 30 of the decision...)** and that their role is so crucial and their missions so reinforced that the CCs are mentioned 69 times in the text of the decision ([link](#))

In any case, it has been very reassuring to acknowledge that, in his note of 14 April 2025 ([link](#)), Commissioner Serafin responded favourably to my note of 5 March 2025 ([link](#)) requesting that the advances underlying the Commission's new decision be extended to colleagues working in decentralised agencies and joint undertakings, starting with the possibility of calling on the CCC, and also confirmed the commitment, within the framework of the enhanced governance decided by the Commission, to continue to support F4E and other agencies in specific situations.

Let's put an end at the culture of impunity!

Over and over again, I've been asking to put an end to the culture of impunity so often denounced by F4E staff.

I've been recalling all experts confirm that culture of impunity lead to a breakdown of trust in institutions and authority figures, as colleagues feel that the system is not working fairly emphasising that when there are no consequences for wrongdoing, it can only encourage others to engage in similar behaviour.

Of course, the response was that I was engaging in an unacceptable witch hunt ...

Thus, I'm glad to note that in your message to the staff you clearly confirm your intention to act when inappropriate behaviour is substantiated following the due processes laid down in our staff regulations and that you formally confirm that you did and ask LTM to do in the last months on specific cases that you cannot disclose.

On the contrary, I believe it is essential to disclose them ensuring that such decisions, duly anonymised, be brought to the attention of staff and, above all, to confirm that that all measures have been taken to recognise the rights of victims.

Indeed, it is essential to be able to assess the appropriateness of the sanction adopted in relation to the seriousness of the facts established.

It is clear that the adoption of measures that are manifestly inadequate in relation to the seriousness of the facts established and the absence of any information and official recognition of the rights of the victims, can only further undermine the trust of colleagues.

This is precisely the purpose of the summaries of all disciplinary proceedings included in each IDOC annual report.

I therefore invite you to adopt the same approach.

Conclusion

1) Thanking you again for your message to F4E staff, we do share your request for a *SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASED SUPPORT FROM THE COMMISSION, in full compliance with the new reinforced governance towards Agencies and JUs:*

- *in order to obtain that F4E staff must be able to IMMEDIATELY access assistance and support from the Commission's Chief Confidential Counsellor without having to wait for the decision-making process to be completed by the agencies and*
- *and also, for the organisation to the external procedure for appointing the new F4E Head of HR Département. This is an absolutely essential position to ensure the change in management culture that F4E desperately needs. This will ensure compliance with the procedures in force and seamless coordination with the Commission's central services. F4E can in no way afford making a mistake in selecting the right candidate.*

2) We request to ensure full transparency concerning the results of the pulse survey

In line with this very much welcomed new approach, we hope that we will not have to go again through another tedious “treasure quest” in order to obtain the detailed results of the pulse survey.

The results must directly be made available to staff representatives, including the results by department and detailed responses by risk level. Without being forced again to endure biased presentations that give the impression of witnessing a “settling of scores” between members of F4E's senior management.

Cristiano Sebastiani,

President

Copy:

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