



U4U in Luxembourg: Let's get involved together

There are more than 3,700 Commission staff members of all statuses in Luxembourg and at the end of this year we will be called upon to elect our representatives to the Local Staff Committee.

In difficult times for the Commission, for its staff and for the European project in general, it is more important than ever to make a strong and coherent choice.

With its development this year, U4U must not only be able to make its mark on the debates so that our working and living conditions in Luxembourg evolve, but also so that, with greater representative legitimacy, we can also push our concerns to the level of the entire Commission.

The problems specific to our Luxembourg sites are numerous. For example, recruitment and retention of staff both within the Institution and the European Schools, the significant social diversity among colleagues, the cost of living, the overcharging of medical expenses, and the unfulfilled promises of housing allowances.

All of these factors contribute greatly to the lack of attractiveness of Luxembourg and it must be noted that, up to now, the organisations currently in the majority on the Local Staff Committee have had only a limited impact on each of these issues.

At U4U, we take each of these issues seriously.

Our programme continues to be built with you to enrich it with all our realities.

We count on your support as you can count on ours.

What is the purpose of a local staff committee?

The Local Staff Committee is an elected committee, which represents all Commission officials and other staff working in Luxembourg vis-à-vis the administration and the College of Commissioners. This committee ensures that the rules concerning staff (e.g. health and safety at work, social actions, catering, childcare, etc.) are fully respected.

Some members of the Local Staff Committee are also called upon to sit on the Central Staff Committee which, together with representatives from all the other sites (Brussels, Hors Union, Ispra, etc.), defends the interests of the staff in matters which apply globally to the whole of the Commission (working time, appraisals and promotions, etc.)

It is therefore important that everyone takes great care in choosing their representatives on this committee.



U4U - A union with you and for you

Our commitment can be summarised in a few key points:

1. U4U is a union that puts staff participation at the centre of its work and is therefore **an active union throughout the year**. We always act in a constructive spirit and in full transparency. Staff are kept informed of our texts, proposals and results (monthly newspaper "Le Link", website), and can come and discuss them at our conferences.
2. **European construction** is at the heart of our raison d'être. We clearly link our trade union action to the future of the European project. Through the regular publication of the GRASPE magazine (www.graspe.eu), regular training courses and seminars on issues of European interest and the documented elaboration of constructive proposals, we act permanently in the interest of the European project.
3. **Unity** makes us stronger. We are fighting for the unity of the staff, to create solidarity between all its categories, its professions, all "generations" combined.
4. We work for an active and participatory management of staff **careers**, which **promotes a common European culture of solidarity and respect for diversity**. The administration must resist the temptation to do more with less, respect each of our professions and recognise the quality of our work.
5. We do not limit our action to the defence of pay, promotion or pension conditions. We do not only accompany you in all the steps for which you may need effective support. We look after **all our working conditions** and always oppose the opening up of our Staff Regulations, which would risk leading, as always, to unfavourable reforms on all aspects of staff working conditions.
6. **For our children** in crèches, nurseries and European schools, we advocate quality educational provision for all, with sufficient resources for its implementation.
7. We demand an **improvement in staff representation** and a **strong resumption of social dialogue**. The themes of social dialogue must be broadened and this dialogue must be made possible at all levels of the institution, in all DGs and services, as close as possible to colleagues.
8. **For equal treatment**: We are fighting for equal treatment between different categories of staff and between colleagues working at different sites.

Luxembourg at the heart of U4U

1. Recruitment difficulties and coverage of vacancies at the Commission in Luxembourg

Recruitment commensurate with the ambitions and role of the Commission is a priority to ensure the quality of the European civil service.

You tell us:

- *In Luxembourg, there are no more EPSO competitions organised since the pandemic.*
- *Others have dragged on, such as EPSO/AST-SC/10/20 - SC 2.*
- *The promise of LUX-only EPSO competitions, such as COM/TA/AST/02/20, is only sporadically realised.*
- *There should be a selection process for CAs to become TAs for a fixed period of time to enable them to participate in internal competitions.*
- *It is also necessary to revise upwards the anti-cumulative barrier of years worked as AC and/or AT, which prevents from becoming AT and finally from participating in an internal competition, otherwise it does not make sense.*

U4U's response

We demand the organisation of regular internal competitions allowing all officials (AD, AST, AST/SC) and temporary agents (TA) to reach higher grades, and thus reduce the disparities between different career paths.

We are fighting for contract agents (CAs) to be able to benefit, after 6 years in post, from temporary contracts (TAs) for one, or even two, additional year(s) allowing them to access internal competitions with a greater number of successful candidates.

We ask that internal competitions open to CAs be held at least twice during a Commission's mandate and that their planning be announced well in advance.

We call for regular external competitions.

We call for more free training for staff, including non-permanent staff, preparing for external competitions.



With regard to the coverage of vacant posts, we advocate forward-looking human resources management, capable of anticipating the indispensable needs and talents.

Did you know: The HR announced [the planning of 17 internal competitions by 2024](#) to give substance to its new strategy. This was published without specifying any areas or selection criteria. No further information available on new types of tests.

However, U4U's demand for more free training by the administration for staff was taken into account and announced in this communication.

2. Retaining existing staff

The attractiveness of the European civil service is an even greater challenge for our institutions in Luxembourg. Hence the importance, after recruitment and entry into service, of giving ourselves the means to retain staff by offering real career prospects, whatever the status.

You tell us:

- *In order for people to come and stay in Luxembourg, they need to be given motivation and an attractive and diversified career perspective.*
- *The continuity of service to be provided when colleagues leave without their posts being covered is a discouraging workload, neither recognised nor valued, and all too frequent in Luxembourg*

U4U's response

We call for simplified evaluation and promotion procedures for more dynamic careers. We call for promotion based on merit, according to clearly defined, comparable and mutually known criteria.

We call for the organisation of internal competitions for reclassification, both for ACs and TAs and for ASTs/SCs and ADs. In addition, the feasibility of organising internal competitions that would allow AST/SCs to move up a category should be studied.

We call for easier access to the end of the career for AST 9 and AD 12.

We call for clear selection criteria for the allocation of internal positions and for generally useful feedback to candidates on their performance during interviews.



We are not in favour of a multiplication of hierarchical levels, which are contrary to the culture of trust promoted by the "new HR strategy".

We ask that mobility - spontaneous or initiated by the institution in the interest of the service - be encouraged by proposals for accompanied, interesting and rewarding career paths to ensure an effective transition. Under no circumstances should it be automatic.

On the other hand, we are in favour of mobility, including inter-institutional mobility, which takes on even more meaning in Luxembourg, and which would be encouraged by the organisation of a job market organised on a virtual platform in which the positions available would be published and thus visible to interested colleagues.

For vacancies in Luxembourg, the Institution could cover the costs for those who apply and attend interviews.

3. Unfair treatment of contract and temporary staff

"Divide and conquer' is an age-old maxim. At U4U, we have understood that solidarity and union of all categories of staff, beyond differences in grade, category and status, is our best chance to guarantee our rights and working conditions. In our organisation, contract staff, temporary staff, officials appointed before or after 2004 or 2014 all enjoy the same support and attention.

You tell us:

- *The statutory salaries of some contract agents employed by the EU institutions have fallen below the Luxembourg minimum wage, which is unacceptable.*
- *AC GF I are certainly below the basic salary in Luxembourg. They are the ones who should be specifically supported and their expatriation allowances should not be touched.*
- *The incomes of ACs, AST/SCs and low-grade ASTs do not allow them to live adequately on Luxembourg territory, so they have to live in border countries with possible road congestion. The more senior and better paid employees still have a remuneration that is less attractive than that of the other sites.*
- *Guarantee salaries that allow everyone to live decently in Luxembourg, combat overcharging for medical expenses.*
- *CAs are under-classified and often do the work of higher function groups (FGs), yet with the same responsibilities, the same tasks but with lower salaries.*
- *Engage GFIII CAs directly as TAs.*

U4U's response

U4U is the only one to have broadened the diversity and inclusion policy by drawing attention to the 3 dimensions to be considered:



1. **The societal dimension** (gender, language, age, disability, ethnic origin, social origin, family situation, physical appearance, political opinions, beliefs, etc.).
2. **The social dimension** (status, remuneration and income/grade/category disparities, access to information and dialogue, health care guarantees, mobility...).
3. **The cognitive and/or professional dimension** (knowledge, qualifications, skills, experience, training, types of work, different cultures, values, status, etc.).

The diversity of social realities within the workforce is integrated into our approaches.

Promoting social inclusion means fighting against discrimination, disparities, precariousness and career differences. This would involve, for example

- Ensure that the Administration guarantees **recruitment** to the grade and function group that corresponds to the training, experience and nature of the tasks assigned, in order to reduce under-classification at recruitment.
- Increase the number and frequency of **reclassification** actions (moving from one function group to another) that take into account qualifications, work done, and performance evaluation in order to reduce existing disparities and inequalities.
- Ensure **equal management of staff**, whether they are statutory or contractual (replacement of maternity leave, reimbursement of medical expenses, access to crèches/schools/childcare centres, etc.).
- Organise regular and planned **competitions** for tenure with a significant number of successful candidates. Contract agents (CAs) should be able to benefit, after 6 years in post (3+3), from temporary contracts (TAs) for an additional year or two, thus allowing them to access internal competitions with a higher number of successful candidates. Internal competitions should be planned and published regularly.
- Provide free **training** offered by the Administration during working time to staff of 3 days per year for each category, including non-permanent staff, who are preparing for internal and external competitions (as U4U has obtained from the EUPO employer in Alicante). Indeed, we act in the interest of all staff and prefer to give everyone access to free training provided by the employer, rather than requiring membership of a trade union to benefit from it.
- Encourage **mobility** at inter-institutional level and between work sites, between institutions and central services (PMO, OIL, OIB) etc. by organising an efficient virtual job market, making available posts visible to colleagues who are interested. This measure would offer new career prospects to colleagues and at the same time allow those with a fixed-term contract to reach the number of years necessary to benefit from the Community minimum pension.
- Ensure that CAs at the end of their contracts are granted free enrolment in the **European Schools** so that their children can complete their education.
- Ensuring eligibility for **crèche/childcare facilities** for 6 months after the end of the CA contract.
- Offer a **preferential rate at the canteen** for GFIs and AST1



- Eliminate classifications with a salary level below the **Luxembourg minimum wage** on recruitment.

Did you know? In 2022, CAs represented 23.2% of the Commission's staff (more than 7,400 people out of more than 32,000). Luxembourg is the place of employment of more than 3,700 colleagues in the Commission (11.5%), all statuses included: for example, more than 400 colleagues work in OIL, more than 600 in ESTAT, more than 580 in OP. You will find more details in the [HR brochure on the composition of the staff](#).

4. Housing, travel and accessibility of the workplace

[More and more Luxembourgers are leaving the country](#), and in 2021 more Luxembourgers left the country than returned. Three quarters of them live in one of the three neighbouring countries, Germany, France or Belgium. A large majority of them still work in Luxembourg. This is according to a recent study on the population in the Grand Duchy by the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies. High property prices are one of the reasons.

This is also the reality for the staff of the European institutions.

Luxembourg's location poses problems as an EU site, making it less attractive than elsewhere. An example is the fact that :

- A Commission agency based in the Grand Duchy, CHAFFEA, was transferred to Brussels two years ago
- The new DG HERA (European Health Emergency Response and Preparedness Authority) has not been established in Luxembourg
- The European Public Prosecutor's Office has had difficulties in recruiting
- The European Parliament has abolished the location of one of these Directorates General in Luxembourg and moved it to Brussels

You tell us:

- *Affordable housing outside Luxembourg city or outside the borders.*
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- *Additional travel costs in money and also in TIME. Important time losses on the way to/from work (poor public transport connections for those who do not live in Luxembourg city, too much traffic and congestion on public roads during rush hours).*
- *Free public transport in Luxembourg is not the solution for cross-border commuters.*
- *Parking is an essential need in Luxembourg, especially for those who do not live in Luxembourg City. Wouldn't there be enough parking spaces for everyone versus good public transport connections for all?*
- *The location of the buildings influences the choice of station. For example EUFO is at the motorway exit: A1 =Germany = E44; A6= Belgium= E25=E411; A3=France+ E31).*

- *Other buildings are at the exit of the station. In a survey launched by the previous Director General, the question was asked in the OP: "Would you agree to change the location of the building? The majority answer was: "I stay in the PO because of its location in front of the station. If the OP moves, I will apply elsewhere".*
- *Beware of the new building policy. There is no teleworking possible for some CAs because of the specificity of their job (e.g. educators). As a result, this category, whose salary level does not allow them to live in Luxembourg City, cannot reduce the negative impact of travel time like other categories who work at home, for example, 3 days out of 5.*

U4U's response

We see a **housing allowance** as a favourable option for staff working in Luxembourg. This allowance would represent a fixed amount of around 650 EUR **for all**. It would be a basis of solidarity applicable without exposing staff to a reopening of the Staff Regulations and without being an opportunity to undermine acquired rights.

Did you know: Luxembourg has a special reference role, as does Brussels, as the main and home seat of most of the institutions. As a result, no weighting is applied to Luxembourg and Belgium (art. 64 of the Staff Regulations).

Any change to this provision, whether it concerns the seat roll or the application of a weighting, requires an amendment to the Staff Regulations. However, the introduction of an allowance is a matter for the Appointing Authority.

Let us remember:

The reopening of the statute in 2004 was an opportunity to

- Introduce lower entry grades
- Decrease the rate of pension accrual
- To renew and double the level of the exceptional levy
- To reduce a number of benefits
- To abolish the "capital" weightings in relation to the "country" weightings that are safeguarded but at a lower level
- etc

Under the pretext that the method of adjusting salaries and pensions was expiring (note that since then its renewal is automatic), **the reopening of the statute in 2014 was the occasion**

- To further reduce the pension accrual rate
- Increase the crisis levy
- Hindering the compensations obtained with the 2004 reform since access to grades

above AST 9 and AD 12 is severely limited

- To limit compensation for annual trips to the place of origin
- etc

In the perspective of a reopening of the statute, the issues at stake would be, for example

- The rate of pension accumulation
- The reference period for the calculation of the pension beyond the last year
- The method of adjusting pensions
- The level of the special additional 6.5% (crisis) levy would be increased
- The number of possible promotions and the average seniority in the grade would be reduced
- The 16% of expatriation would be significantly reduced in time

5. Medical overpricing

The cost of medical care in Luxembourg for European civil servants is said to be around 20% higher than that paid by beneficiaries of Luxembourg social protection.

You tell us:

- *In Luxembourg, a doctor can charge a higher fee for a member of the JSIS because the tax authorities cannot check this: they do not have access to the EC's staff files. For members of the Luxembourg mutual insurance company, the doctor can charge a higher fee for a limited number of consultations per year.*
- *Hospitals charge more to staff of the EU institutions than to locals because the National Health Fund (CNS) reimburses them on a fixed and limited basis.*
- *I take advantage of the Commission's annual medical check-up to avoid paying too much.*
- *Could we draw inspiration from what is done in Brussels with the agreements established with local hospitals in order to learn from them and transpose them to Luxembourg? For example, the fact that the Commission has direct pricing/invoicing agreements with certain hospitals (e.g. Saint Michel, Saint Luc).*
- *The blocking point in the possible renegotiations of the conventions or agreements is that the Luxembourg State considers that the budget for fixed costs is covered solely by the private sector, considering that the European public service does not pay its contribution.*
- *Please note that some hospitals, such as the Centre Hospitalier de Luxembourg (CHL), are transparent with their tariffs (see website) and others are not.*
- *The thresholds for reimbursement should be reviewed, or there should be more flexibility for advances.*



U4U's response

We clearly remind the Administration of the need to establish **more agreements with the health care structures** of the Member States in general and Luxembourg in particular, in order to avoid the current overcharging which penalises colleagues but also the health care reimbursement system.

In parallel to the establishment of these agreements, the Commission has a lever that it could use. The **health insurance reserve** is due to the obligation to guarantee a balanced budget at all times. It amounts to just under EUR 300 million. This order of magnitude, corresponding to 30 years of average annual deficit, is not necessary. Part of this reserve, at least EUR 250 million, could be used to improve the provision of health care for staff and to improve the scope of its coverage.

It should be remembered that the **ceilings for medical reimbursements** set out in the General Provisions for Implementation (GIP) have not been revised for 15 years, when the text was last revised (2007).

It is now urgent to get out of this situation and to update the ceilings and reimbursements.

In addition, the regulatory framework of the JSIS should be amended to allow **reimbursement ceilings to evolve in line with the rising costs of medical services**.

Finally, it would be useful to take into account new health expenditure and if necessary to revise the GIP.

We want to make it **possible to link the annual adjustment of wages and pensions to the reimbursement ceilings when necessary**. This would finally lead to a **dynamic system** in relation to inflation. We call for **the evolution of society and the needs of the personnel to be taken into account** in this process, as well as **the medical advances** that could meet them. The interventions of the JSIS must cover colleagues without discrimination. This is also the time to integrate advances in preventive medicine, new mental health needs and risks related to hyper connectivity and digital overload.

Did you know: If the amount of unreimbursed expenses for a period of twelve months exceeds half the official's basic monthly salary or pension, **special reimbursement shall be made** by the appointing authority, taking into account the family circumstances of the official concerned [...], (art 72.3 of the Staff Regulations).

6. European schools, nurseries and childcare centres

The European Union needs to maintain a high quality public service in order to face the current challenges. European schools, nurseries and childcare centres provide our children with the values and wealth of a multicultural environment and quality education. This is



at least the standard that should be assured for staff families and remain an important factor in the attractiveness of the European civil service.

You tell us:

Difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff in the European Schools (ES) and day-care centres

- *Schools find it difficult to recruit and ultimately use staff who are often unqualified, which is reflected in the results.*
- *Working conditions of the CPE (Centre Petite Enfance) educators, the bac+3 no longer present themselves.*
- *The lack of resources in crèches has an impact on staff motivation, which can create general frustration and the children feel it.*
- *HR policy and salary scales are largely responsible for the lack of interest in this type of position.*
- *The EE teachers of Mamer (EEII) after petitioning and lobbying by APEEEL obtained a 30% increase in salaries.*

Overcrowding

- *The idea of having Kirchberg as the primary and Mamer as the secondary has never met with enthusiasm. Young people are separated by main languages between EE I Kirchberg and EE II Mamer.*

Learning Luxembourgish

- *Need to teach our children in the ES the Luxembourgish language as a factor of integration in the country.*

U4U's response

In the case of the European Schools, crèches and nurseries, it is essential to provide sufficient infrastructure and quality staff. In order to allow everyone to concentrate on their work, it is important that the Commission ensures a quality place for all staff children and childcare hours that are compatible with work constraints.

We refuse to allow the education of our children, which is so important for families, to be a **budgetary adjustment** variable. Similarly, additional means must be found to ensure that the salary is sufficiently attractive for quality teachers and to avoid their departure. It is necessary to increase the budget for the European Schools in Luxembourg in order to consider the **creation of a third school** and to better distribute the school population. As for its location, it should be close to workplaces, in order to reduce travel time and environmental impact and to promote a better quality of life.

We support the teaching of Lëtzebuergesch as a third language in the European Schools.

7. Pollution and the workplace environment

The greening policy of the new HR strategy has made room for listening to the problems of its staff, the vast majority of whom, it is important to stress, are sensitive to environmental issues, while demanding that the measures put in place are not based solely on pure and simple restrictions aimed at indicators, but rather open up avenues for a different approach to life at work, while respecting the physical and mental well-being of staff.

You tell us:

- *We would like to see more environmentally friendly solutions for staff who cannot use public transport: safe cycle paths, adequate places for bicycles and other zero emission transport*
- *What about parking spaces for electric and hybrid vehicles for staff who want zero emission mobility?*
- *Subsidies for the purchase of zero-emission vehicles?*
- *What other incentives are offered for leaving the car at home and not wasting time commuting to work/school/home (other than free public transport)?*
- *Exclusive right-of-way transport - such as trams/train - is much more efficient than buses (the majority in Luxembourg). There is only one tram line at the moment, which is expanding, albeit with works that are clogging up traffic in the southern part of the city, and which is still underdeveloped compared to other European capitals.*

U4U's response

For U4U it is high time to put the environmental dimension at the heart of the criteria in :

- The choice of location of buildings, nurseries and European schools. Providing outdoor and indoor green spaces for all future buildings,
- Free transport to and from the city
- The design of workspaces,
- The selection of building materials,
- The energy performance of buildings,
- Mobility between buildings,
- Aiming for the "sustainable canteen" label for our collective catering, including in the crèches. At the heart of our concerns: a local, affordable, sustainable and quality catering offer in a friendly environment;

It is also about designing a mobility strategy:

- By devising innovative incentives for staff to travel differently
- Providing off-street parking and drop-off parking around schools
- Providing bicycles throughout the day, including for the journey home

It is necessary to collaborate with the Luxembourg authorities on :



- Public transport issues
- Cycle tracks
- Compliance with emission and noise standards, air quality, etc.

Did you know: U4U is committed to the environment and climate. It also supports our colleagues in EUstaff4Climate who are proposing substantiated and concrete measures based on their professional experience. The U4U think tank GRASPE has published their texts, including two special issues (journal [N°36 "Special Climate and Ecological Emergency"](#) and [N°38 "Leading by example: proposals for reducing the Commission's footprint"](#)) discussed at conferences.

8. Physical and mental health - Well-being at work

In all EU countries, employers have a duty to ensure the health and well-being of workers.

These issues cover a number of dimensions to which we pay the greatest attention. In particular, these are :

- safety at work
- the protection of the physical, mental and emotional health of workers
- prevention of stress, harassment and other elements of psychosocial burden
- hygiene and beautification of the workplace
- ergonomics

You tell us:

- *The temperature in our workplaces is unbearable. This summer, it has risen above 30 degrees on several occasions. This is unacceptable and the administration can no longer tolerate such situations*
- *The quality of our working environment is constantly deteriorating. This applies to both common areas and individual offices. Moving from one building to another often means a loss of environmental quality*
- *The provision of sports and recreation facilities is insufficient. A more coherent policy and a better distribution of these spaces should be put in place*
- *With online work, the line between personal and professional life has become blurred. I'm often still at my computer after 8pm. This didn't happen to me before*
- *I am afraid for some of my colleagues. Working at home has made them more isolated and I feel they are not doing well. I don't know what to do to help them*
- *The environment around my workplace is unsafe. At night I am afraid to walk to the station or bus stop*



U4U's response:

Ensuring the health and well-being of staff is an employer's first duty. In this area as in all others, the Commission has a duty to set an example.

Whether it is a question of physical health, mental and emotional health, or the prevention of harassment, stress and violence at work, the Commission needs to put in place a comprehensive 3-level prevention policy:

1. In each of these areas, genuine **primary prevention** must be put in place. This means identifying potential risks and preventing them from occurring. In other words, the Commission has a duty to reduce as early as possible the risks to the well-being and health of staff members. This requires the development of a culture of respect, care, concern and responsibility of everyone, starting with but not limited to managers, towards their colleagues
2. **Secondary prevention**, aimed at the early detection of possible problems, should also be promoted. To this end, programmes such as "first aid mental health" should be developed. The impact on health of changes in working conditions (teleworking, etc.) should also be monitored more closely.
3. Finally, **tertiary prevention**, aimed at preventing complications and relapses of illnesses (and in particular burn-outs and depressions), must also be strengthened.

In general, a zero tolerance policy towards harassment and violence in the workplace should be put in place, giving priority as far as possible and as early as possible to remedial action, education and support for the perpetrators. In this area as much as in any other, prevention must be placed at the forefront. Taking disciplinary action is always a sign of failure of the action that was or should have been taken upstream.

A central measure in the fight against stress is also the absolute respect of the right to disconnect and not to be subjected to digital pollution. The use of social applications in the context of work must be more strictly supervised and disconnection times must be effectively respected.

The quality and equipment of work spaces must be a major concern for the Commission. This also applies to community facilities such as crèches, nurseries, canteens, leisure and sports facilities.

U4U - Our guidelines

Our institution is under pressure, all the more reason for it to take care of its staff. With the same status, we are proposing a series of actions that will benefit both the staff and the institution. The one obviously cannot go without the other.



Europe needs a cohesive, motivated, independent, creative and competent civil service: let us make sure that we give ourselves the means to achieve this ambition.

1. Civic engagement

- For U4U, civil servants and other European agents are not bureaucrats, but actors in the construction of Europe, which is their reason for being. Similarly, and surveys confirm this, European civil servants are very often engaged in society, defending European values through the fight for equality and solidarity, against precariousness, and more recently, against global warming. To support this commitment :
 - ✓ We will continue to support the think tank GRASPE, as we have since its inception. This journal is run by civil servants of various persuasions to reflect on the future of the civil service and its role in the construction of Europe. It is recognised by academic institutions and followed by tens of thousands of civil servants;
 - ✓ Together with other European (and Brussels-based) associations, we have set up the European Citizens' Platform (ECP), in order to reflect on European construction outside the institutions, and even to organise rallies in its favour, such as those held on 9 May;
 - ✓ We have created a website ([Europe solidaire](#)) dedicated to European construction and including a library of articles on the European civil service. This site is consulted each month by several thousand people;
 - ✓ We support and promote the actions of EUStaff4Climate;
 - ✓ We have initiated a new form of exchange, in the form of virtual cafés on subjects of general interest, in order to give a voice to all those who have inspiring projects, experiences and initiatives;
- We want to promote the environmental dimension at the heart of the criteria in the choice of building location (offices, crèches, day-care centres, schools), the design of work spaces, the selection of materials, energy performance;
- A better mobility strategy should be devised and, to this end, collaboration with the Belgian authorities on issues such as public transport, cycle paths, compliance with emission and noise standards, etc. In addition, there should be free parking and drop-off parking near schools and central day-care centres;
- We support the objective of a "sustainable canteen" label for our collective catering, including in crèches and day-care centres.

2. Equal treatment: diversity and inclusion

- U4U has long been fighting for equal treatment. Despite the progress made, parity and the inclusion of diversities are not always a reality in our institution. The management style, the type of selection and the criteria for evaluating staff are not sufficiently conducive to diversity, and the institution itself wants to improve them. Equality, dignity and non-discrimination are European values that are now rooted in our civic aspirations: let us set an example. In particular, let us change recruitment methods to diversify qualifications and skills, with a view to achieving greater diversity;
- No one should be discriminated against, regardless of their nationality, gender, age, origin, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs... Specific measures should be taken to avoid this. The new HR strategy must develop a common institutional culture, favouring an inclusive approach in the daily working environment, which can win the support of every colleague and make our Institutions a place where everyone can find their place. In addition, training focused on welcoming colleagues with special needs must be provided;
- Diversity is also social. We want to fight against disparities and insecurity among staff. On the basis of their merits and experience, the Commission must offer career opportunities to staff of all categories, officials and other agents. A community of interest must be constantly sought because division weakens and hinders the proper execution of the missions entrusted to us.

3. Dignity and working conditions

- The administration must ensure the well-being of all its staff, and in particular those who are experiencing a significant increase in their workload. Solutions must be found to guarantee the continuity of the quality of execution of tasks, a mark of excellence of the work of the staff of the Institutions, while guaranteeing realistic work rhythms, tools and an adequate work environment. In particular, we consider that work spaces must correspond to the constraints and possibilities of the various professions. They should be set up with the agreement and participation of the staff. This applies to new proposals such as open spaces and hot desks. The pressure to implement these spaces, at any cost for all, and under any conditions, must be resisted, to the detriment of efficiency and conviviality. In addition, thought must be given to different forms: hot desking in open spaces or hot desking in individual offices ("hot office"). Moreover, additional resources must be provided: our institutions cannot take on more and more tasks while accepting staff cuts;
- For U4U, telework should be voluntary, flexible and variable. Team spirit, creativity, handing over, welcoming and integrating new colleagues all require the

preservation of office work. Appropriate training will help avoid digital overload and hyper-connectivity. Digital tools must be adapted both to the possibilities of hybrid modes and to a more collective and participative operation of the various work teams. Furthermore, the generalisation of telework raises the question of equal treatment between workers who do not suffer from the same material constraints, including the reimbursement of at least part of the related expenses;

- Telework allows for more flexibility in the location of work. U4U supports the possibility of teleworking "abroad" (outside the place of employment) for at least three weeks, not linked to holidays. In addition, U4U supports the granting of additional periods for detailed personal reasons. Finally, U4U is the only trade union organisation to advocate a mobility policy, including inter-institutional mobility, which allows for family reunification;
- Repeated restructurings, which are neither concerted nor explained, destabilise working teams and are rarely subject to the necessary prior assessments. Moreover, they add to the opacity of the institutional structure, both for the staff and for the general public. Staff must be systematically consulted, and in the event of disagreement, listening chambers must be organised to allow problems to be expressed and consensual solutions sought. When organising these chambers, the presence of staff representatives is required;
- The quality of the service rendered takes precedence over "productivity", especially when this is obtained at the expense of our missions and the health of our colleagues;
- No colleague should be treated inadequately by our institution, left to fend for themselves or stuck in non-work. The Commission needs all its staff to work together in a constructive spirit so that the European Union can move forward;
- We all have to work longer, but our institution must prepare for this extension of working life, and this from the moment we enter the service. It must also better enable older colleagues to continue to progress, by continuing to train them and by offering them careers that take account of their experience and merit;
- In conclusion, U4U believes that HR policy should be considered first and foremost in its own right, without depending on other policies. For example, telework should be the result of a Human Resources reflection, not a building policy. As with all fundamental challenges to working conditions, and their possible consequences on the efficiency and well-being of staff, we demand that decisions taken on hybrid working modes, 'open' spaces and flexi-desks be based on relevant analyses and in consultation with the trade unions. Their implementation must always be followed by a regular evaluation, which will be the basis for an analysis that will enable decisions to be taken on any corrections to be made, in consultation with the trade unions. They cannot be rushed, as in the past, for example to serve as a springboard for a building policy. They must not be carried out without the involvement of the staff, and without seeking their support;

- In the case of the European Schools, crèches and nurseries, it is essential to provide sufficient infrastructure and quality staff. Indeed, to enable everyone to do their job properly, it is important that the Commission ensures a quality place for all the children of the staff and reception hours compatible with the constraints of work;
- We are obviously against the progressive disappearance of canteens. They are an essential element of collective life and well-being at work. Especially at a time when there is talk of motivating us to return to the office. While we are campaigning for as many canteens as possible to be maintained, we are also asking for additional means and resources to be given to the creation of 'sustainable canteens'. Our focus is on affordable, sustainable, quality and local catering in a user-friendly environment;
- Our union would like to see an intensification of the social dialogue between the institutions and the trade unions, better preparation of the dialogue by sending the texts to be discussed in advance, which must be documented, and at the same time a broadening of the subjects to be discussed (for example, the Union's budget and buildings policy). Similarly, once a year, the trade unions should be able to propose a non-predefined topic for social dialogue, which they could choose freely. The employer would be obliged to organise a dialogue on this topic. In addition, for U4U, the dialogue can also be organised directly between the institution and the staff themselves through annual meetings per department, during which the staff can propose themes for discussion which will then be discussed in the Staff Committee, and with the trade unions;
- We also advocate a reform of staff representation. At the statutory level (i.e. staff committees), we call for each workplace to have its own committee (for example, Seville does not have one). We also advocate that each committee should have the same number of elected members in proportion to the population represented, to correct the current disparities. Finally, we ask that the elections in the different places be held at the same time and according to the same electoral system, so that a stable Central Staff Committee (CSC) can be formed quickly;
- On a daily basis, we back up our demands with a number of concrete actions. U4U has set up several tools to help colleagues individually and collectively: coaching, training, preparation for competitions, personalised legal assistance, advice, support in the evaluation and promotion process and in meetings between colleagues and management, conferences and debates on subjects of general interest (pensions, diversity, etc.). When circumstances allow, we also organise convivial events: exhibitions, concerts, meals, etc.

4. Recruitment and training

- The Commission must carry out its tasks by fully assuming its institutional and

political role. To do this, it must have a forward-looking human resources management system that is not just administrative and regulatory. It must be able to anticipate the needs and talents that are indispensable, as well as to follow and support staff throughout their careers. Furthermore, open competitions - the main route for recruitment - must be simplified and their duration shortened. More alternative modes of recruitment should be allowed, such as temporary agents or a "junior professional" type programme;

- The objectives and methods of induction should be rethought by improving the reception and training of new arrivals, beyond the probationary period. New staff should be allowed to familiarise themselves with the institution's services and its history. To this end, in the absence of vacant posts, the probationary period could be preceded by the immediate granting of a temporary agent contract for a period of two years, enabling successful candidates to be recruited more quickly, as soon as they have passed their external competition. During this two-year period, successful candidates would receive training and differentiated career paths in the services before being offered a position as a civil servant;
- The same two-year pathway could be offered to the civil servant who joins the civil service directly as a civil servant. During the first two years, the future civil servant should also have the possibility to discover several fields and/or DGs, and to follow the necessary training for the rest of his/her career. The probationary period could thus provide a real additional assessment of the competences of future officials. Specific courses should be offered to colleagues destined for management positions;
- To help colleagues build a career from the moment they enter service, the Commission must accompany their learning with a programme of targeted training, thematic, linguistic and IT. A specific effort must also be made for colleagues who have to reorient their career or who change jobs;
- An effort must still be made to better welcome new staff, particularly in this period of change in organisation and working methods, and regardless of the place of employment. Our organisation is complex: guidance and easier orientation are desirable (training, support, possibilities of several paths);
- With the accelerated implementation of the new hybrid working methods, a specific effort must also be made in terms of training to support staff in this transition, at all hierarchical levels;
- Precariousness and disparities have increased since 2004 with the various reforms. Staff unity has been undermined. In order to reduce the disparities between the different career paths, we are in favour of the organisation of internal competitions allowing all officials (AD, AST, AST/SC) and temporary agents (TA) to reach higher grades;
- Contract agents (CAs) should be able to benefit, after 6 years in post, from temporary contracts (TAs) for a further year or two, thus allowing them to enter internal competitions with a higher number of successful candidates. Internal competitions should be planned and published regularly;

- In the same vein, the employer should provide free training for staff, including non-permanent staff, who are preparing for external competitions (as U4U has obtained from the EUIPO employer in Alicante). Indeed, U4U acts in the interest of all staff and prefers to give everyone access to free training provided by the employer, rather than forcing them to join a trade union in order to benefit from it;

5. Career and mobility

- Promotion should be based on merit, according to clearly defined, comparable criteria known to all parties. Assessment and promotion procedures should be simplified. Everyone should be able to understand how he/she is being assessed and the validity of the assessments;
- Internal selection for posts should be based on clearly stated criteria, and provide useful feedback to candidates, including comment on their performance at interview;
- We demand the organisation of internal competitions for reclassification, both for ACs and TAs and for ASTs, AST/SCs and ADs. U4U calls for easier access to the end of the career for AST 9 and AD 12. In addition, the feasibility of organising internal competitions that allow for a change of category for AST/SCs should be studied;
- The number of hierarchical levels needs to be rethought with a view to reducing their number. They have tended to multiply in the past, which risks being an obstacle to the expression of staff creativity and motivation, and moreover is contrary to the policy of a culture of trust that is being promoted by the '*new HR strategy*';
- Mobility, whether spontaneous or initiated by the institution in the interest of the service, must be encouraged by proposals for accompanied, interesting and rewarding career paths. Training should be offered to better encourage and prepare for it, as well as support to ensure an effective transition. Generally speaking, implementing automatic mobility, including for middle and senior management, is counterproductive and often arbitrary in its effects, with the risk of a loss of expertise for the institution. Moreover, leaving colleagues to rely on their personal and/or national networks to find a new post does not strengthen the link between the institution and colleagues;
- Finally, mobility, including inter-institutional mobility, should be encouraged by the organisation of a virtual job market, making available posts visible to interested colleagues. This measure would offer new career prospects to colleagues with fixed-term contracts and at the same time allow them to reach the number of years necessary to benefit from the Community minimum pension.

6. Our health

- The Joint Sickness Insurance Scheme (JSIS) needs to be improved and updated to take account of scientific developments on the one hand and social developments on the other. The General Implementing Provisions (GIP) of the JSIS are the basis for the reimbursements granted to civil servants and employees. U4U was the first trade union to ask for their revision;
- Coverage needs to be extended and reimbursements improved. Indeed, the effective reimbursement rate of medical expenses by the JSIS is no longer 85%. This is due to cost ceilings for care that have not been adapted since 2007. In Belgium the average reimbursement rate is 80%, while the JSIS is below 80%: this means that we reimburse less than the national system of the country where most civil servants are located. These ceilings must be revised in order to achieve an effective reimbursement of 85% again. In addition, the functioning of the Medical Council must be made more transparent;
- There are several ways to improve the service. More agreements need to be established with the health care structures in the Member States in order to avoid the current overcharging. This would free up substantial budgetary resources to be devoted to this improvement. On the other hand, the funds in the reserve should be used. The reserve can indeed be significantly reduced to extend and increase reimbursements. We do not need a reserve of more than 300 million euros, equivalent to 30 years of annual deficit. In the event of a possible imbalance in the future, which would be partly due to these improvements, it should be remembered that the current rules allow for a very rapid increase in contributions (e.g. an increase of 0.1% in contributions generates an additional income of 10 million euros, which is the average amount of annual deficits). Agreements must be developed between the PMO and Belgian mutual insurance companies, so that, for example, each member of the JSIS who lives in Belgium can establish a global medical file with a doctor, which ensures better patient follow-up;
- Furthermore, CAMR interventions must be consistent with the policies developed today by the European Union, which speak of both prevention and resilience. Where they exist, these interventions must cover colleagues according to need and without discrimination. They must take better account of advances in preventive medicine, such as new mental health needs. There is a need to continue to provide quality care for dependency;
- The budget for the Commission's social policy must be reinforced to support colleagues with a disability or a disabled or special needs beneficiary whose expenses are not reimbursed either under the JSIS or under national aid. Indeed, let us recall two things that put these colleagues in great difficulties: 1) 80% of disabilities occur throughout life (accident, illness etc.) and 2) as agents of the European civil service, many national aids are not accessible to us. The Commission's social policy budget must take these realities into account;

- Given the widespread use of telework and the expected implementation of new "hybrid" modes of work, there is an urgent need to ensure that occupational health and safety standards are met equally regardless of the mode of work (office, telework...). The risks associated with hyper connectivity and digital overload must be taken into account;
- As part of the "*new HR strategy*", the Administration is considering a better policy for returning from long-term illness. At present, once the threshold of one year of sick leave is reached, an invalidity scheme is offered if one cannot return to work. However, there are situations in which adequate early support could have prevented the extension of sick leave or even entry into "invalidity". For these situations, we support the desire expressed in the new HR strategy to put in place such adequate and coherent support (improved ergonomics, adaptation of working hours, etc.). In general, we are in favour of a return policy, where possible;
- To improve access to medical care for JSIS members in all EU countries, it would be useful to have a European social protection card that is recognised in all Member States as a minimum. This would facilitate the provision of care and reimbursement. The pandemic has reminded us that civil servants and other staff do not have the same access to the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) as other European citizens, because the JSIS is considered to be an extra-national scheme which is not coordinated with the social security schemes of the Member States.

7. Our status

- We are still opposed to a reform of the Staff Regulations; we have all already paid the price of the 2004 and 2014 reforms. They resulted in significant reductions in direct and indirect pay and savings on pensions. They have also increased disparities and precariousness without providing the means to mitigate these negative impacts. In addition, they have made it possible to gradually reverse the concessions and compensations that had been obtained by the trade unions (e.g. end of career, pensions, etc.). And the budgetary savings have continued with the current Commission (particularly under the headings of pensions and the European Schools). The 2019 report of the Court of Auditors points out the negative effects of the two reforms of the Staff Regulations on the attractiveness of the civil service, underlining the increasing difficulty of the Institutions to recruit, in particular for certain profiles and nationalities: let us not deprive ourselves of our talents and our diversity!
- We defend our pension system, as well as the method of adjusting our pensions and salaries to ensure that purchasing power is maintained;

U4U is in favour of an increase in the Union's budget, with sufficient resources for a civil service that is equal to its tasks. We advocate a mid-term review of the budget of Heading 7



(*human resources: operations, buildings, salaries, pensions, health, European schools, crèches and childcare facilities*), to facilitate the implementation of the current European recovery plan - or even to allow for a second recovery plan, which we consider useful.