Programme and objectives

The challenges to be met................................................................. 2
Let's rediscover a sense of pride in who we are and what we do.................. 3
Time to move on ............................................................................ 4
'Union Syndicale For Unity': who are we and what do we stand for? ............. 6
Our goals, our 5 principles and 5 priority areas......................................... 8
Facts and arguments..................................................................... 10
Working together for change .......................................................... 12
Bringing pluralism to life, acting for change: yes we can For a shared future in the Union Syndicale................................................................. 14

http://www.unionsyndicale-elections.com/
The challenges to be met

The Union Syndicale de Bruxelles' (USB) last general assembly, (GA) held on 23 September 2008, set the date of elections for 28 October.

The elections will see the appointment of the 26 members of the USB's Executive Committee from the Commission, the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and Eurocontrol; 13 seats are attributed to the Commission.

The USB's Executive Committee defines and implements the policies of our trade union, on the basis of the guidelines set by the General Assembly; it appoints from amongst its ranks our representatives to the Union Syndicale Fédérale (USF) which brings together all of the Unions Syndicales in the institutions' various places of work and from a variety of other non-Community European organs (such as the European Patents Office or Eurocontrol). These elections are thus crucial for the trade union.

This time, the elections are taking place in a context marked by challenges from outside and even within our organisation:

- the poor implementation of the statute negotiated before 2004;
- renewed attacks by the Member States on our employment conditions and the European civil service;
- worsening working conditions in the services, aggravated by the worsening of the social dialogue;
- staff expectations regarding a more 'in touch' style of trade unionism;
- difficulties in USB internal relations, provoked by some resistance to generational power shifts and developments in the political and social policy within the institutions;
- a near-permanent state of competition with the other unions, of which some prefer short-sighted electioneering strategies to standing up for the rights of staff.

Boosted by their range of skills, their diversity, the combination of experience on the part of their senior members and the enthusiasm demonstrated by newcomers, a spirit of openness, a desire for change, their representativeness and a democratic and friendly approach, the candidates from the group "Union Syndicale for Unity" are ready to meet all of these challenges and oppose any new reform which attacks the European civil service.
Let's rediscover a sense of pride in who we are and what we do.

In order to do this:

- let's fight to defend the European civil service
- let's take part in the debate on ideas and the renewal of our practices
- our strength lies in what unites us: let us put into practice unity in diversity
- let us combat individual and collective denigration, let's listen to the needs of those we represent and let us create bonds of trust
- let us promote a new type of governance mobilising our skills and our moral and professional integrity
- to act and react, let's take a stance and vote

Read the proposals, compare them and make your choice.

Candidates of the List:

Fabrice ANDREONE
Jean Michel BOULLIER
Tomas GARCIA AZCARATE
Agim ISLAMAJ
Sylvie JACOBS
Carlota JOVANI
Ugur MULDUR
Stefan PASCALL
Giovanni SERGIO
Elena STROE
Jessica TENGELIDOU
Georges VLANDAS
Time to move on

More than four years after the new staff regulations were adopted, the Union Syndicale needs to move on from the Kinnock reform. Indeed, enough time has now passed for us to make an initial evaluation of the reform and what it has meant for us. At the same time, we find ourselves facing new challenges brought about by worsening job conditions and the gradual development of the Commission into an executive body which is abandoning its right of initiative against a backdrop of new attacks from various quarters, in a context marked by increasing problems encountered as part of European integration.

In 2001, the Union Syndicale signed up, in good faith, to negotiations on the reform, which led to the least bad compromise that it was possible to obtain at the time. Back then, the organizations in the Union Syndicale Fédérale managed to distance themselves somewhat from a compromise which involved, as is often the case, both positive and negative aspects. Those organizations which were not able to get things in perspective paid the price in successive electoral defeats in 2002 and 2006, even if it is true that neither staff nor staff representatives wanted the reform. As yet, no analysis has been made of these setbacks.

However, since the new staff regulations were adopted, the Commission has chosen to apply them in a manner which is systematically disadvantageous to its staff. Given this, we must note that the reform has not ushered in all of the positive results it heralded. Over the same period, we have borne witness to a growing mountain of red tape, something which must be highlighted. Finally, the Commission’s progressive abandonment of its right of initiative has manifested itself in endless restructuring and enforced mobility, reducing, from top to bottom, its skills potential. This is how monitoring tasks have gradually assumed centre stage, elbowing out political initiative: fewer than one civil servant in two is on the ‘front line’.

We need to face facts: whilst undergoing a decline in their working conditions, staff agreed to give up some of their perks: 5% household allowance down to 2% and a lump sum, the loss of education allowance for children attending Belgian or European schools, the loss of transfer of remuneration with correction coefficient, loss of correction coefficient for retired people, perpetuation of the ‘temporary’ contribution, reduction of the number of automatic steps from 8 to 5, a drop in the pay scale for those hired after 1 May, 2004 and the cohabitation of two groups whose rights and duties clearly differ, flying in the face of the principle of unity which underpins the Community civil service. As for the introduction of CAs (contractual agents) in the staff regulations, a move which was meant to represent an improvement in conditions for those in precarious employment did bear some fruit, but it also created disparities which proved hard for staff.

The reform was meant to protect the European civil service from attacks from the Council for at least ten years. And yet, just four years after it was introduced, the Commission is already preparing (as usual, behind the scenes) a new reform (MADELIN-HOLMQUIST report) which proposes, amongst other ‘modernist’ innovations, no less than to reduce the number of staff in the institutions and replace all ASTs with contractual agents, staff kept in the greatest, direst and most precarious job insecurity imaginable.
The challenge for the Union Syndicale today is to adopt an offensive strategy to protect the fundamental principles of the European Community’s civil service. It needs to become a counterweight and a force of opposition vis-a-vis the administration. It can only achieve this by involving its members and staff closely in the drawing up of its political positions, whilst continuing to pursue inter-trade union dialogue in a transparent fashion, because unity is, for the staff, a guarantee of effectiveness. Within the Union, the challenge is to come up with new ideas and practices, furthering the eventual changeover in leadership of the trade union to reflect the staff’s various cultures, careers, grades and nationalities.
'Union Syndicale For Unity': who are we and what do we stand for?

Renewal and skills

The 'Union Syndicale for Unity' group is made up of 11 candidates, chosen from a list of 20 colleagues. 4 can draw on significant trade union experience in the Union Syndicale. 7 are standing for the first time in the elections to the Executive Committee, which points to a move in favour of renewal as far as the leaders of the Union Syndicale are concerned. However, all have been involved in helping to run associations and trade unions outside the Commission. Moreover, their experience in the services, which is varied and important, helps to enrich debate within the Union Syndicale.

Representing all

The 11 candidates put forward by our group represent 8 different nationalities, including those of the new Member States, 9 Directorates-General and one executive agency. 40% of the candidates are women, 20% are temporary personnel or contractual agents and, taken as a whole, the candidates cover all categories, grades, functions and occupations in the Commission.

Openness

Our group is keen to heed all trends and feelings within the Union Syndicale. This is why the 'Union Syndicale for Unity' group is not putting forward a list which comprises as many candidates as there are posts (13), as it takes the view that our organisation ought to respect diversity within its ranks.

Reaching out

Our 'Union Syndicale for Unity' group wants to hear from everyone: staff, members and colleagues from other places of work. Our goal: to work together and capitalise on our diversity.

Talking and acting together

The competition which trade unions get involved in often leads them to be less effective when it comes to handling claims made by staff. 'Union Syndicale for Unity' aims to work in a spirit of total transparency in order to work towards common positions rather than wear itself out in futile electoral squabbles. This is why, in these elections, we are presenting a course of action which will help us stand up for personnel in a more effective way and prepare the future of the Commission.
Employment conditions

Our 'Union Syndicale for Unity' group would also like to deal with our colleagues' professional lives, an aspect which is often neglected by trade union action and working conditions in the services.

An 'in touch' approach, conducted in a spirit of friendship

The 'Union Syndicale for Unity' group wants to be closer to the staff, in particular by developing regular member consultations as well as staff consultations. We would also like to arrange meetings with you, in the various Directorates-General, and continue to organise social and cultural events.

Defending the European Civil Service

The future will bring renewed attacks on the statute and the civil service. The 'Union Syndicale for Unity' group is well-equipped to defend both, as, for one, it advocates an 'in touch' trade union style, closer to the concrete working conditions of those it represents, and for another, its candidates demonstrate a wide variety of talents and skills.

Responsibility

Once elected, our candidates will promote a responsible trade unionism based on claims and proposals.
Our goals, our 5 principles and 5 priority areas

Staff representation finds itself at a crossroads in a troubled context marked by a threefold crisis: the crisis in European integration, in the economy and in global regulation. We must assess the challenges we need to face, bring about the necessary changes and make binding commitments to our members to redress the situation. Our promises on trade union practice and what this involves can be summarized in 5 key principles:

1. **Unity in action**: we propose an inter-union action plan on matters of importance for staff. Additionally, we would like to organise discussions and debates between OSP’s (trade union or professional organisations) and staff;

2. **Transparency**: ‘running our affairs in a more open way’, both internally and externally. In order to achieve this, we plan to improve the pluralist way the Union Syndicale de Bruxelles (USB) and the Union Syndicale Fédérale (USF) are run, as well as engage in dialogue with staff;

3. **an ‘in touch’ approach**: we will regularly advise members and staff, organise frequent cultural and social events and promote the setting-up of decentralised trade union teams who care about the concerns of staff in the field;

4. **Renewal of teams and content**:
   - giving a voice to new trade union leaders which represent the diversity of our staff,
   - drawing up a charter which aims to set rules governing the use of trade union resources and responsibilities with a view to sharing such resources and responsibilities in a more effective way and frequently adding to our skills set. We would also like to propose these practices to other OSP’s,
   - organising, in a transparent manner, a period of reflection on the future of European integration and the European Civil Service in the context of changes and developments in European integration;

5. **Responsibility**: making commitments to our members on priority areas of action and implementing these priority goals.
Our priority areas are the following:

- yes to reforms which strengthen the independence of the European Civil Service, no to a new reform which attacks the latter, full application of the current statutes;

- defending working conditions in the services, defending improvements in housing conditions for civil servants, proposing an emergency plan for child-care facilities (crèches, schools, etc);

- developing courses of action with a view to improving the recognition of the contribution made by senior staff and a better integration of these staff in the workplace;

- reducing job insecurity within the Community institutions;

- contributing to and improving internal communication in the institutions: social dialogue, decentralised communication and consultations, etc.
Facts and arguments

The elections to the Union Syndicale Bruxelles are an opportunity for a debate of ideas, which we welcome: voters need to be informed, because, for the first time, there are three lists competing against one another.

For our part, we have already put out three texts - "The challenge to be met", "Who are we and what do we stand for?" and "Our goals, our 5 principles and 5 priority areas" - listing our values and promises. Here, we would like to shed more light on some issues which have arisen over the course of the campaign.

1. "Power struggle"?

The elections of 28 October are not just about electing people to the Executive Committee. First and foremost, they should provide an opportunity to discuss the challenges to be overcome and redefine trade union goals and practices. Therefore, the elections are not, for us at least, a power struggle between two or three ideologies, but rather a battle to lay the foundations of a new trade unionism that is more in-touch with the concerns of our colleagues, a trade unionism characterised by participation and unity, and based on:

- an objective, 'warts and all' analysis of past action,
- an awareness of the new political context, marked by three major crises: the crisis in European integration, the economic and financial crisis and the social and institutional crisis.

These crises lead to a clash of two visions: the first pressing on with the destruction of the European civil service, the second, in the midst of this crisis, demonstrating the revitalization of the role played by the civil service as a motor in global regulation.

Our task is thus to set out a responsible, enlightened style of trade unionism, in touch with the day-to-day working lives of our colleagues, which is able to meet the challenge posed by this threefold crisis, the effect of which is felt by all of us each day. Our task is also to do our part in defending a strong European civil service, without which, on the one hand, civil servants would have much to lose and the systematic weakening of which, on the other hand, is the key goal of Eurosceptics (who are also present in the European institutions).

2. "Union Syndicale today: a weakened union?"

Several studies show that the staff representation body has been dealt a blow:

- cut off from the staff,
- frequently ignored by the hierarchy and at the beck and call of the employer - with some rare exceptions,
- buried under a mountain of red tape and divided between several factions, often prompted by personal ambitions rather than the collective good,
- and, as a consequence, due to an inability to take the initiative, forced to accept a third-rate 'social dialogue'.

...
This situation has led the Union Syndicale to two major setbacks in the elections to the 
LSC: therefore, it is up to those in power to assume the responsibility for this. Moreover, 
during the last term of office, the union lost two significant battles - the battle over the DGT 
and those in precarious employment.

The series of defeats has further reduced the influence of the union, not to mention the 
dreadful atmosphere with the other unions. Defeats, a dreadful atmosphere, all can be traced 
back to the same root cause: a refusal to talk to and debate with those at the top, a refusal to 
accept change in terms of challenges and context.

Here, the consequences are clear: today, staff have less confidence in the Union Syndicale 
and its image has also been tarnished by the triumphalist positions on display at the time of 
the last reform. Positions which led to this willing sense of blindness to the changes that 
have occurred since then.

3. "What changes are we putting forward?"

Our goal is to renew both trade union teams and practices.

Our list is the only one that tries to usher in a significant sense of renewal, as it includes just 
4 outgoing staff and detached staff on a list that originally numbered 11 and has risen to 12 
because we have been joined by an independent candidate.

Our list is also the only one that tries to reflect the different nationalities and careers at the 
Commission, a logical step since we wish for our trade union practice to be anchored in the 
reality of institutional careers.

Yet for us, the idea of renewal is also echoed first and foremost in our practices. A more 
proactive trade unionism which is in tune with the political context and the balance of 
power. An open trade unionism, conducted in a spirit of unity, a trade unionism for all 
(rather than a self-obsessed trade unionism focused on in-fighting).

In a nutshell: with us, every member will be at the negotiating table!
Working together for change

The elections underway, scarcely 15 months after the last ones, bring an end to the term of office of the current Executive Committee, a period marked by an awkward generational shift and conflicting ideologies. During this time, we were forced to take a look at the practices and positions that led to two successive defeats in the statutory elections. This analysis led us to try out new practices, particularly in trying to involve all members in trade union action and attempting to reinforce the legitimacy of what we do.

We would like to thank all those who put their trust in us and who took part in action in the spirit of the trade unionism we advocate, namely one involving all, unifying people and keeping in touch with the needs of those it represents. Amongst the action we have taken, the following feature:

- Direct aid to members, a cornerstone of trade union solidarity, in the form of direct intervention in the parity services and bodies concerned, training action, etc;

- Improving the inter-trade union climate by setting up a new weekly forum based on constructive exchange, general assemblies organised by all trade union organisations, concrete action, conducted together, on subjects which matter to the staff, joint reflection on what can be done to improve the way the trade unions are run, etc;

- Political support in setting up a section of the Union Syndicale Fédérale to stand up for the interests of staff working in delegations. This section, which already numbers more than 500 members, established as part of a democratic process by the staff involved and supported by our federal structures, strengthens the work done in the field by our organisation;

- Mounting local action: decentralised meetings, convivial events, setting up topic-based working groups helping place subjects put forward by the staff on the social dialogue agenda (senior staff, etc.)

- The fight against job insecurity, in particular the inclusion of staff from the Clovis crèche in the staff regulations, defending colleagues working in DG Research in precarious employment in court following collective action, working towards putting a stop to the 'social exception' represented by the situation of parliamentary assistants in the Community institutions, etc;

- Finally, the drawing up, firstly, of proposals adopted by majority in the Executive Committee, then by the General Assembly, which will make the trade union more democratic, thus avoiding in the future a repetition of the difficulties in the way the union is run, the like of which we have recently experienced; secondly, taking stock of past action and composing a programme, presented during our campaign, which sheds more light on trade union activity in the future and is backed up by clear commitments on priority areas.
Thanks to our work, we have noted a slight rise in our member figures.

It is on this basis that we wish to continue our work in breathing new life into the trade union. In order to achieve this, we are counting on the involvement and commitment of many. Only then can our slogan – 'with us, every member will be at the negotiating table' - become a reality.

So, we invite you to fill yourselves in, to familiarise yourselves with our current positions and provide a huge turnout in a vote which will not just affect the future of our trade union, but also that of staff representation as a whole.
Bringing pluralism to life, acting for change:
yes we can
For a shared future in the Union Syndicale

Elections to the Executive Committee of the Union Syndicale de Bruxelles have just taken place. All of the outgoing elected representatives from the Council, ESC/COR, the European Parliament and Eurocontrol were returned to office.

At the Commission, 2 new candidates from the 'US democratic' list were elected, which meant that 9 people from the list were elected from the list, as opposed to 7 previously.

Our group - Union Syndicale for Unity (US4U) - won 4 seats at the Commission.

None of the 4 independent candidates were elected.

In total, US4U has, along with the elected representatives from the other institutions, 11 votes out of 26 (45% of the seats) in the Executive Committee against 9 votes in US democratic (Commission) and 6 votes in the Council, which could possibly come together to make up a total of 15 out of 26 votes (55%).

We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to members who voted for our list, and, in so doing, supported the willingness to breathe new life into trade union content and practices.

We have the following observations to make on the results of these elections:

1. A mere 20% of members voted, even though three lists or groups were present. This gives us all food for thought. It reflects misgivings, or even unease, on the part of members when faced with alternatives whose arguments were revealed too late in the game. For this reason, it is a source of regret that there was no dialogue between the different lists during the electoral campaign, as such a dialogue would have shed more light on the positions of each group. The voters were not always familiar with the position of the independents or the 'US democratic', for example, on the Union Syndicale's recent electoral defeats, where they stood on the reform, trade union unity, participative working methods, the organised renewal of trade union frameworks, the organisation of a more 'in-touch' style of trade union action, priority areas, etc.

   This low turnout ought to set alarm bells ringing and prompt us to rethink our internal trade union practices to make them more inclusive and pluralistic.

2. The US4U candidates achieved good individual scores, although our group obtained fewer elected representatives than all of its votes combined, due to a greater dispersion of votes brought about by our policy of openness vis-à-vis other candidates, including independents.

3. Our US4U group used the campaign to develop new topics, thus echoing the desire for change felt both within the organisation as well as amongst Commission staff. It
gave way to a new sensibility that goes well beyond these election results. Our organisation would do well to take on board the expectations of the staff to encourage a greater openness on issues which have more to do with people's day-to-day working lives.

Once again, our organisation is at a crossroads. It needs to rise above the past practices of exclusion and personal denigration to bring to life and build on the debate of ideas, pluralism within its own ranks and, above all, respond to the need for change expressed by a large number of members and staff. US4U will continue to stand up for pluralism as well as the hope for change which was confirmed in this vote. Only then can our organisation once again rediscover the fundamental position it once held and which has been eroded by the bad practices of recent years.

November 2008