

THE LINK - LE LIEN

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In addition to the individual services provided to the EP staff and information presented in its newspapers, U4U organizes conferences at the EP on various topics of interest to the staff (European Schools, Brexit, welfare, status issues, etc.).

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OPEN SPACE: taking into account the realities of work and the opinion of the staff

The administration has been trying for a few years to offer staff a new working environment: the open space.

Several attempts have been made, for example in the Offices, others have been refused by staff such as Near and TAXUD, sometimes with the active help of the Unions. Recently DG BUDG organized two information meetings with its staff to present its plan about new open space offices.

In general, the staff concerned is rather hostile to this type of work environment, especially since things are designed and implemented without its contribution, and without the improvement of working conditions being proven.

Like any transformation of the working environment, this requires an intense dialogue both with the staff concerned and with the intermediate bodies such as the trade union organizations and the Staff committee.

No change in the working environment would be beneficial to the services if it was against the advice of the staff, if it did not require its involvement in setting it up and if it was not obviously an improvement in working conditions.

The staff often had to suffer from imposed changes, which were contrary to its wishes. The most recent Satisfaction survey of the Commission's staff showed that it considered itself to be insufficiently recognized, as its opinion was not sufficiently taken into account, as shown in the analysis of the results, .

Today, we must reverse this trend by demonstrating together - administration and staff representation - that this is not the case. Let's make sure that changes in the working environment are built with the staff, based on the reality of each person's work and not conceived a priori from the outside.

The staff is the main asset of the institution and of its general directorates. Its contribution must be valued and its working conditions preserved, and even improved.

In these uncertain times when the European project is stagnating or even faltering, our priority is to mobilize our work community to better implement the policies of the Union.

U4U is convinced that this is your opinion as well. This is why our organization hopes that the coming dialogue will provide the relevant solutions. At each stage of this dialogue, U4U will act in consultation with the staff concerned to better reflect its concerns and proposals.

European Schools in Brussels: in a lasting crisis of overpopulation

Our schools are experiencing a protracted crisis at a time when the EE education model is spreading through accredited schools.

Brussels has four European schools as of right. They are already overcrowded, even with the school annex Berken-dael for primary. The number of children attending school is 550 students higher than the official reception capacity (previously fixed in an extremely optimistic manner).

This situation is all the more worrying because:

- ▶ only one out of every two child of civil servants is enrolled in these schools, because of a registration policy that leaves little choice for families and a reduction in the educational offer, and that
- ▶ between 300 and 400 new pupils a year still want to be enlisted

These data are worrying because the conditions of schooling of our children are one of the elements of the attractiveness of the European civil service. Moreover, the solutions to this problem are not immediate.

Indeed, the Belgian authorities procrastinate as always, they oscillate between several proposals, all of which have many disadvantages. U4U had already mentioned the case of a possible annex located rue du Commerce in the center of Brussels, which the Belgian authorities are proposing to offer but without carrying out a feasibility study which would attest to the adequacy of this site with the specific needs of a school, and for good reason, because this study would be negative. Moreover, the Belgian authorities are careful not to make a firm proposal.

The other proposal is the former NATO site, which could accommodate in the short term if not a complete school, at least a temporary annex built with prefabricated. But here too no firm decision is made, the Belgian authorities going so far as to assert, probably to do nothing, that the cost of such a temporary school would be close to that of a definitive school.

As for the fifth school we've been talking about for 10 years, no decision is made and will not be made until 2020. It will probably be located on this former NATO site. This delay in decision makes it possible to fear that its construction is completed only at the end of 2026 at best. Hardly finished, this school would already be fully filled.

In addition to these problems due to the repeated shortcomings of the Belgian authorities in the supply of buildings, Member States do not provide enough seconded teachers. The teachers who take their place are often recruited by the accredited schools which pay them better, but which of course are paying for the parents.

The institutions themselves are lagging behind on these topics. The budgetary constraints imposed by the Member States paralyze them. They do not know how to speak loud enough to be heard by host states. The paradox is, therefore, that all the actors, the host state, the Member States, the Institutions and even the Board of Governors have every interest in letting the time slip to avoid costs, the price of these failures being paid by the children and their parents.

It is time, as in the 90s, that the staff themselves mobilize again to exert the pressure necessary for the situation to evolve positively. That's what U4U is working on today.

Important judgment of the ECJ on the transfer of pension rights from a national pension scheme to the EU scheme (C-132/18 P)

We are happy to inform you that in the case of one of our adherents, the European Court of Justice confirmed the judgement of first instance (case T-728/16) on the deduction of

interest from the amount transferred from the national pension scheme to the EU scheme (C 132-18 P).

When calculating the pensionable years, the PMO will no longer be allowed to systematically deduct an annual interest rate of 3,1% on a capital sum transferred to the EU scheme, for the period between the date of the transfer request and the date of the actual transfer. The PMO will only be allowed to do so if the national pension scheme was unable to set out the 'capital appreciation' during the transfer procedure. That is to say, if the national pension scheme informs the PMO about the exact value of the pension rights at the date of your initial request of transfer, this will be the amount on which the PMO has to base the calculation of pensionable years. We have knowledge that the PMO applied this method since the judgement in first instance on 5 December 2017, however, it might be worthwhile to verify the final calculation of your statutory pension annuities.

See the example below: the national pension scheme notified an amount of 141 652.07 EUR at the date of transfer request (to be found on the letter of your national pension scheme; here 27/05/2010). Therefore, this is the amount to be taken into account, and no 'actualisation' may be deducted (0,00 EUR).

Transferred Amount(s)						
Transfer Date	Transferable amount (in currency)	Rate on parameter date	Transferable amount (in Euros)	Ref. Transfer Date	Actualisation (2)	Amount used for calculation
27/05/2010	141 652,07 EUR	1,00	141 652,07 EUR	27/05/2010	0,00 EUR	141 652,07 EUR
		Total:	(Tra) 141.652,07 EUR		(I) 0 EUR	(Tra-I) 141.652,07 EUR

Calculation of theoretical annuities		
(Tra)	Transferable amount (in Euros)	141 652,07 EUR
(I)	Actualisation between parameter date and date of transfer (2)	0,00 EUR
(Tra-I)	Amount taken into account for the annuities calculation (Tra-I)	141 652,07 EUR
(CR)	Applied reduction coefficient see Annex 2 of the GIP, Art. 11 of Annex VIII of the Staff Regulations (1)	0,956
	Statutory pension annuities $[(Tra-I)/((SAL \times 12) \times TrCoeff) \times AnnRights / 100] \times CR$	3 Years 8 Months 29 Days

(1)	Published in Administrative Notice Nr 17-2011 / 28.03.2011 .
(2)	Deduction of 3,1% per annum (3,9% if request introduced between 01/01/2005 & 01/01/2009; 3,5% if request introduced before 01/01/2005)

Report from the Commission to the EP on the Pay and Pension Adjustment Method: a success

This report from the Commission to the European Parliament on the EU Staff Pay and Pension Adjustment Method (Document COM (2018) 830 of 14 December 2018) concludes that the 2013 Method is an indisputable success of the European Commission and DG HR Services.

This method introduced in the Staff Regulations on October 22, 2013, showed its effectiveness by preserving the parallelism of the evolution of the remuneration between European and national officials, between 2014 and 2018. It also allowed to set aside the recurring quarrel on this subject, between the legislative authority and the staff, which has been going on since 1972 and has led to numerous appeals to the EU court.

The text stresses in particular that the adoption of an automatic crisis clause and a moderation clause, as well as the procedure for adopting the annual adjustment by means of a publication in the Official Journal of the EU have made it possible to provide an effective response to the difficulties of implementing the former methods.

The legislative authority has been kept regularly informed by the Commission by means of annual reports which ensure the assessment of the quality of the data at the origin of the adaptation.

This system of adjustment of pay and pensions has also successfully withstood the legal examination before the Union Courts in several individual cases brought against it. It also helped to avoid social tensions since no major strike took place in the institutions during this period.

Finally, the text notes that there has been little difficulty in implementing the principle of purchasing power parity between EU employment places through the system of corrective coefficients.

The validity of the new method ends in 2023. It will be renewed automatically, unless denounced by at least one of the signatories. The Commission is unlikely to do so, so any denunciation would be made by the Council. Let's also note that in 2023 a report on pensions will also be published .

However, U4U notes that:

- ▶ Luxembourg staff do not feel well treated by the adoption of a common index Brussels / Luxembourg, which serves as a basis 100, not taking into account some specificities in Luxembourg, especially for the cost of real estate. This is why U4U is exploring the possibility of a housing allowance that would offset part of the loss of

purchasing power in Luxembourg. In addition, other sites (Ispra in particular) also claim an adjustment of the methodology of the correction coefficients

- ▶ The loss of purchasing power between 2011 and 2014 will never be compensated, which mechanically reduced wages and pensions, impacting the attractiveness of the EU civil service

Follow-up to the agreement signed on 18 November 2016 between U4U and EUIPO

U4U has concluded a framework agreement with the management of EUIPO (Intellectual Property and Trademark Agency) governing the relations between this regulatory agency and the unions. This agreement essentially provided for the appointment of an increasing number of staff on the basis of internal or external competitions. The Agency is funding part of the cost of training to prepare for the success of its staff in these competitions. This agreement also included social clauses as well as a formal framework for discussion between the social partners. This is an important agreement, EUIPO being the largest regulatory agency. Other framework agreements were subsequently signed, for example in Cologne (EASA, see our video) and Barcelona (F4E)

On Friday 29 March, the Executive Director of EUIPO met with the President of U4U to review the agreement signed between the two parties in November 2016. This fruitful and positive meeting, but which does not cover all the problems encountered by the staff, we retain the following conclusions:

- ▶ 1. U4U and EUIPO confirm the signed agreement, which remains in force until 30 September 2020. To date, its implementation is fully satisfactory to all parties concerned
- ▶ 2. The organization of competitions in the field of Intellectual Property has yielded very concrete results with a total of 150 laureates and, to date, 121 recruitments. The Office will continue to use the reserve lists until the end of 2020
- ▶ 3. EUIPO confirms the organization of an internal competition in 2019 for non-Intellectual Property profiles. It will aim to open a few staff posts to a number of temporary agents and contract staff employed in support functions. 25 positions are reserved for them in the business plan
- ▶ 4. The Executive Director confirms his intention to increase the number of temporary agents who could obtain a second renewal of their contract. However, the Office points out that open-ended contracts are complementary to competitions (main entry route to the Office)

- ▶ 5. The Office confirms the continuation of the policy on transfers of staff having passed open competitions organized by the institutions with the support of EPSO, or already Officials in another institution. In 2019, and considering the internal competition, the Office will study the possibility of launching a new call for expression of interest, if the business plan allows it
- ▶ 6. U4U takes note of this positive information and wishes to continue to keep a close watch on the number of temporary and contractual agents who will see their situation improve over the period 2019 - 2020. In this respect, the Office is committed to put in place a mechanism facilitating the mobility and reclassification of contract agents, as soon as the Commission's model rules are approved
- ▶ 7. U4U and EUIPO confirm their willingness to continue to maintain and expand a constructive social dialogue that reconciles the legitimate expectations of staff with the interests of the institution

The next follow-up meeting will be convened before summer 2019, followed by another in the fall.

Reform of the staff representation: nothing moves

The Commission had offered the opportunity to improve the functioning of the staff representation. For now, the staff representation, the unions, have not yet seized this opportunity.

It was indeed urgent to improve things for, for example:

- ▶ give the opportunity to each workplace to have a local committee, Seville does not
- ▶ to allow each location to have the same weight in the central committee, the Outside Union is under-represented, Luxembourg and the JRC sites overrepresented
- ▶ ensure equality of treatment between union lists, some of whom participate in the elections under different

names, which gives them an advantage over organizations which, as is normal, only appear with one list

- ▶ elect at the same time the central staff committee and its local committees: today, 7 months after the elections, for example, the constitution of the central committee's organs is not completed, or even risks being called into question by the elections of the staff local committee of Luxembourg, which is due to be elected next November
- ▶ The reform of staff representation is necessary, even if it calls into question acquired situations or advantages. It is necessary to enable staff to be better represented and to take on new challenges when member states want to challenge the Staff Regulations. The greatest fears are allowed at this level since even some lists in the European elections of May 2019, considered as European, propose to question the European civil service
- ▶ Only staff unity and the strengthening of its staff representation will be able to oppose it effectively

Presentation of a book - Alas de Papel - at the European Parliament

In addition to the individual services provided to the EP staff and information presented in its newspapers, U4U organizes conferences at the EP on various topics of interest to the staff (European Schools, Brexit, welfare, status issues, etc.)

On April 9, the presentation of the book «Alas de papel» was organized in Spanish. Its author, Cristina Páez Cot, presented us her reflections resulting from 25 years of experience working with people with mental disorder and the consequences for their families.

It is a text that makes you think, vibrant and passionate. Passionate about caring for others, reflecting all the direct care professions that work with the person and their family.

The interest of colleagues urges us to repeat similar presentations.

Vernissage of Art Club Exhibitions

WHERE THE RAINBOW BEGINS

The members of the European Commission's Art Circle invite you to discover their work which will be exhibited from 15 April to 31 May 2019 at the cafeteria of the Van Maerlant 2 building.

The rebirth of Spring is a source of inspiration: light and colours are everywhere!



Vernissage of Art Club Exhibitions

KALEIDOSCOPE : LIGHTS, FORMS AND COLOURS

The members of the European Commission's Art Club are delighted to invite you to discover their work which will be exhibited from 1 May to 31 July 2019 in the ground floor of the Borschette building.

In a kaleidoscope shapes and colours multiply and produce a multitude of beautiful images, with the original word in Greek meaning "look at beautiful shapes". Starting from a real image from nature, each artist reworks their own vision of shapes and colours, bringing their own emotion and personal experience: a process of deconstruction and reconstruction of a real image through personal engagement.



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