



OUR GUIDELINES – THE PROGRAMME

What do we want?

The Commission's professions are constantly evolving as a result of the growth and diversification of its tasks and fundamental changes in management methods. These changes have been brought about in particular by new technologies and by the unprecedented crisis, which has increased our dependence on these new technologies exponentially but has also opened the door to a review of our working methods.

Our institution is under pressure, even more reason to take care of its staff! With its status unchanged, U4U is proposing a series of measures that we believe will benefit both staff and the institution. Of course, one cannot be achieved without the other.

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

1. Civic engagement

- For U4U, the European civil servant is not a bureaucrat, but an actor in the construction of Europe, which is the *raison d'être*. In the same way, and surveys confirm this, European civil servants are very often involved in society, defending European values by fighting for equality and solidarity, against precariousness and, more recently, against global warming. To support this commitment:
- U4U will continue to support the think tank GRASPE, as it has done since its inception. This magazine is run by civil servants of different persuasions to reflect on the future of the civil service and its role in European integration. It is recognised by academic institutions and followed by tens of thousands of civil servants;
- - Together with other European (and Brussels-based) associations, U4U has set up the European Citizens' Platform (ECP) to reflect on European integration outside the institutions, and even to organise demonstrations in its favour, such as the one on 9 May;
- U4U has created a website ([Europe Solidaire](#)) dedicated to European integration, with a library of articles on the European civil service. Thousands of people visit the site every month.

2. Diversity and inclusion

- Despite the progress made, parity and the inclusion of diversity are not always a reality in our institution. The style of management, the way in which staff is selected and the criteria used to evaluate them are not sufficiently conducive to diversity, and the institution itself wishes to improve them. Equality, dignity, and non-discrimination are European values that are now rooted in our aspirations as citizens: let's set an example. In particular, by changing recruitment practices to diversify skills and promote greater diversity;
- No one should be discriminated against or harassed, regardless of their nationality, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, or political beliefs. Specific measures must be taken to prevent this. The new HR strategy must develop a common institutional culture of inclusion and implement an inclusive approach in the daily working environment that can win the support of every colleague and make our institutions a workplace where everyone finds their place;
- U4U wants to fight against inequalities and job insecurity. The Commission must offer career opportunities based on merit and experience to all categories of staff: officials, temporary agents, and contract agents. A community of interests must be constantly sought, because division weakens and hinders the proper performance of the tasks entrusted to us.

3. Dignity and working conditions

- The administration must ensure the well-being of all its staff, in particular those facing a significant increase in their workload. Solutions must be found to ensure continuity in the quality of work, which is the hallmark of excellence of the work of the staff of the Institutions, while guaranteeing realistic working patterns and adequate tools and working environment. This will require additional resources: our institutions cannot continue to take on more tasks while accepting staff cuts;
- In addition, the spread of teleworking raises the issue of reimbursement of at least some of the costs involved;
- - Repeated restructurings, neither agreed nor explained, destabilise working teams and are rarely subject to the necessary prior scrutiny. What's more, they increase the opacity of the institutional structure, both for staff and for the 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 to be sought. Staff representatives must be present when these chambers are organised;
- The quality of the service provided takes precedence over "productivity", especially if this is achieved at the expense of our missions and the health of our colleagues;
- No colleague should be mistreated by our institution, left to fend for themselves or left without work. The Commission needs all its staff to work together in a constructive spirit so that the European Union can move forward;
- We all need to work longer, but our institution needs to prepare for this longer working life from the moment we enter the service. It must also do more to enable older colleagues to progress, by continuing to train them and offering them careers that take account of their experience and merit;

- In conclusion, U4U believes that human resources policy must be considered first and foremost in its own right, without depending on other policies. As with all fundamental challenges to working conditions and their possible consequences for the efficiency and well-being of staff, U4U demands that decisions on hybrid working methods, 'open' spaces and flexi-desks be taken on the basis of relevant analyses and in consultation with the trade unions. Their implementation must always be followed by a regular evaluation, on the basis of which an analysis can be made to decide, in consultation with the trade unions, on any corrections that need to be made. They must not be rushed through as in the past, for example as a springboard for a property policy. They must not be carried out without the involvement and support of staff;
- U4U would like to see the social dialogue between the institutions and the trade unions intensified, better prepared and the range of issues discussed broadened (e.g. budget and property policy). Similarly, trade unions should be able to propose a non-predefined topic for dialogue once a year, leaving it up to them to choose. In addition, U4U can also organise dialogue directly between the institution and the staff themselves through annual departmental meetings, where staff can propose topics for discussion, which are then discussed by the staff committee and with the trade unions;
- U4U advocates a reform of staff representation. At a legal level, we are calling for each workplace to have its own staff committee (for example, Seville does not yet have one). We also recommend that each committee should have a number of elected representatives proportional to the population represented. We ask that the elections in the different workplaces be held at the same time and according to the same electoral system, so that a stable Central Staff Committee (CSC) can be set up quickly.

4. Recruitment and training

- The Commission must fulfil its mission by fully assuming its institutional and political role. To achieve this, it needs a forward-looking approach to human resources management that goes beyond mere administration and regulation. It must be able to anticipate key needs and talents, and to monitor and support staff throughout their careers;
- The objectives and methods of induction should be reconsidered by improving the induction and training of new staff beyond the probationary period. New staff should be given the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the institution's services and history. The probationary period could be preceded by a 2-year temporary contract, which would only be offered after a successful external competition, once the results are known. During these two years, the future official should have the opportunity to get to know several departments and/or DGs and to receive the training necessary for the rest of his/her career. The probationary period could thus provide a real additional assessment of the skills of future officials. The same two-year course could be offered to officials entering the civil service directly;
- To help colleagues build a career from the moment they join, the Commission must provide targeted training - thematic, linguistic, IT - for all staff. Participation must be encouraged and facilitated. A special effort must be made for senior colleagues who need to redirect their careers and for colleagues in general who change jobs;

- With the accelerated implementation of new hybrid working methods, a special effort must also be made in terms of training to support staff in this transition, at all levels of the hierarchy;
- In order to reduce inequalities, we are in favour of internal competitions to allow all officials (AD) and temporary agents (AT) to reach higher grades. U4U is opposed to the idea of creating an office bringing together, for example, the building and logistics, mail, security, IT, and early childhood professions, which would make it possible to recruit contract agents (CA) at GFII level - or even higher - on more decent terms (permanent contracts with appropriate remuneration for their qualifications). On the one hand, this could improve employment conditions and offer better career prospects for contract staff, but there is a risk of reducing the number of civil servants and thus weakening the civil service. We believe there are better ways to meet the expectations of contract staff. For example, after 6 years on a contract, contract agents (CA) should be able to benefit from a further 2 or 3 years on a temporary contract (TA) so that they can compete in internal competitions with a higher number of successful candidates. Similarly, the employer should provide free training for staff, including those on precarious contracts, to prepare them for external competitions (as U4U obtained from the EUIPO employer in Alicante). Clearly, U4U is acting in the interests of all staff and prefers that everyone should have access to free training provided by the employer, rather than forcing them to join a trade union in order to benefit from it.

5. Careers and mobility

- Promotion should be based on merit, according to criteria that are clearly defined, comparable and known to all concerned. Appraisal and promotion procedures need to be simplified. Everyone must be able to understand how they are being assessed and the validity of the assessments;
- Internal selection (including transfers) to fill vacancies must be based on clearly stated criteria and provide useful feedback to candidates, including comments on their performance during interviews;

We need to reduce the number of hierarchical levels, which have tended to proliferate in the past. They are all obstacles to the expression of staff creativity and motivation, and they are also contrary to the policy of a culture of trust promoted by the "new HR strategy";

Mobility, whether spontaneous or initiated by the institution in the interest of the service, must be encouraged by offering supported, interesting, and rewarding career paths. Training should be provided to encourage and prepare for mobility, as well as support to ensure an effective transition. In general, the implementation of 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 help to strengthen the link between the institution and colleagues;

We still need to do more to welcome new staff, especially at a time when the organisation and working methods are changing, and regardless of where they are posted. Our organisation is complex: guidance and easier orientation are desirable (training, support, opportunities for different career paths, etc.).

6. Our health

- The Joint Sickness Insurance Scheme (JSIS) needs to be improved, made permanent and updated to take account of developments in science and society. Coverage must be extended and reimbursements improved. The actual reimbursement rate for medical expenses under the JSIS is no longer 85%. This is due to cost ceilings for treatment that have not been adjusted 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 in the country where most civil servants are based. These ceilings need to be reviewed in order to return to an effective reimbursement rate of 85%.
- Equalisation coefficients also need to be reviewed. To improve the service, the reserve should be reduced. If there is an imbalance, there should be no hesitation to increase contributions slightly (which is provided for in the current rules). There should be more agreements with the care structures in the Member States to avoid overcharging. What's more, the policies currently being developed by the European Union focus on both prevention and resilience;
- JSIS interventions must be consistent with this policy. Where they exist, they must cover colleagues according to need and without discrimination. They need to take better account of advances in preventive medicine, such as new mental health needs. Dependency should also be taken into account;
- The Commission's social policy budget must have the necessary resources to reimburse disabled colleagues or members of their families for disability-related expenses that are not reimbursed by the JSIS or by national aid from which they would be excluded by virtue of their assignment;
- U4U was the first trade union to call for a revision of the general implementing provisions of the JSIS in order to make these various improvements possible;
- With the spread of teleworking and the expected introduction of new "hybrid" working methods, there is an urgent need to ensure that occupational health and safety standards are met regardless of the working method (office, teleworking, etc.). The risks associated with hyper-connectivity and digital overload must be taken into account;
- We need to improve access to health care for all JSIS members in all EU countries. This requires a European social security card that is recognised in all Member States.

7. Our status

- We remain opposed to a reform of the Staff Regulations; we have all already paid the price of the 2004 and 2014 reforms, which led to a significant reduction in direct and indirect pay and pension savings, increased inequalities, and insecurity, without providing the means to mitigate these negative effects. What's more, they have made it possible to gradually roll back the concessions and compensations obtained by the trade unions (e.g. end of career, pensions, etc.). The 2019 report of the Court of Auditors highlights the growing difficulties of the Institutions in recruiting staff, particularly for certain profiles and nationalities: let's not deprive ourselves of our talents and our diversity!

- U4U is in favour of an increase in the Union's budget, with adequate resources for a civil service commensurate with its tasks. We recommend a mid-term review of the budget for heading 7 (human resources: operations, buildings, salaries, pensions, health, European schools) in order to facilitate the implementation of the current European recovery plan - or even to allow for the implementation of a second plan, which we consider useful.