



Union for Unity – Union pour l’Unité AISBL
Trade union group - Regroupement syndical

U4U: OUR GUIDELINES

Our program has evolved over time (see below) in line with new thinking and practices, while remaining true to our core identity.

Based on an analysis of the political situation and the challenges facing the institution and its staff, we now propose 5 priority areas of work. These priorities may be supplemented or modified as the context and staff preferences evolve.

*Our **first priority is to defend European integration, the durability of its institutions and a budget capable of meeting today’s challenges. With regard to the European Civil Service Statute, our approach is to oppose its modification: we believe that we can improve the situation of staff without changing it.***

*The **second priority** concerns the fight for equal treatment, which is at the heart of our project: inclusion of diversity, reduction of precarious situations, career development opportunities, mobility... Despite progress, equality and integration of diversity are not always a reality in our institution. Fighting against disparities and precariousness enables U4U to promote the emergence of a human community of values and interests. This is something we must constantly strive for, because division weakens and hinders the proper execution of the missions entrusted to us.*

*The **third priority** concerns working conditions and working methods.*

The digitisation of work raises fundamental issues that are not always understood or addressed. It is also accompanied by a reduction and depersonalisation of the workplace, which raises questions in practice. As a result, the voluntary, flexible, and variable nature of teleworking is being called into question, even though it is a central element in the efficient performance of tasks. Teamwork, cooperation in the workplace, and the conditions necessary to foster informal exchanges - a source of creativity and team cohesion - are made more difficult. Staff wellbeing is reduced.

*The **fourth priority is to improve our healthcare system, while maintaining its balance. This means, of course, increasing the amounts reimbursed to members, but not only that. It also means widening the scope of reimbursable care, making certain rules more flexible, and improving systems of equalisation coefficients.***

*The **fifth priority** concerns social dialogue and its management. It must be improved, and the time devoted to negotiations on the various subjects must be sufficient to ensure substantive and high-quality treatment. Finally, the social dialogue must be extended to all institutions, agencies and departments. The subjects of social dialogue must be broadened. Similarly, this*

dialogue must also be based on the results of the annual "Direct and collective expression of personnel". The experience acquired in this area in Barcelona (F4E¹) and Cologne (EASA²) demonstrates the value of this exercise and its usefulness in improving matters.

¹ F4European Regulatory Agency "Fusion for Energy" in charge of the European contribution the ITER project (fusion energy) (Barcelona)

² EASAA European Aviation Safety Agency (Cologne)

What do we want?

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

Our institution is under pressure, all the more reason for it to take care of our staff! With no change in status, U4U is proposing a series of actions 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 involvement

- For U4U, the European civil servant is not a bureaucrat, but an actor in the construction of Europe, which is his or her *raison d'être*. Similarly, and surveys confirm this, European civil servants are very often involved in society, defending European values through the fight for equality and solidarity, against precariousness, and more recently, against global warming. To support this commitment :
- U4U will continue to support the GRASPE think-tank, as it has done since its creation. This magazine is run by civil servants from a wide range of backgrounds, who 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, U4U has set up the European Citizens' Platform (ECP), to reflect on European integration outside the institutions, and even organise rallies in its favour, such as those held on May 9;
- U4U has created a website ([Europe Solidaire](#)) dedicated to European construction, with a library of articles on the European civil service. The site is consulted by several thousand people every month.

2. Diversity and inclusion

- Despite the progress made, equality and inclusion of diversity are not always a reality in our institution. Management style, selection criteria and staff appraisal criteria are not sufficiently supportive of diversity, and the institution itself would like to improve them. Equality, dignity, and non-discrimination are European values that are now rooted in our aspirations as citizens: let's lead by example. In particular, by changing recruitment methods to diversify skills, towards greater diversity;

- No one should be discriminated against or harassed, whatever 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 day-to-day working environment that can win the support of every colleague and make our institutions a workplace where everyone finds their place;
- U4U aims to combat inequalities and job insecurity. The Commission must offer career opportunities based on merit and experience to all categories of staff: civil servants, temporary agents and contract agents. A community of interests must be constantly sought, because division weakens and damages 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, especially those who have to cope with a significant increase in their workload. Solutions must be found to ensure continuity in the quality of the performance of tasks, which is a hallmark of excellence in the work of the staff of the Institutions, while at the same time providing realistic working rhythms, tools and an appropriate working environment. To achieve this, additional resources must be made available: our institutions cannot constantly take on more tasks while accepting staff cuts;
- Moreover, the widespread use of teleworking raises the question of reimbursing at least some of the costs involved;
- Repeated, uncoordinated and unexplained restructuring destabilises working teams and is rarely subject to the necessary prior assessments. What's more, they increase the opacity of the institutional structure, both for 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 to be found. Staff representatives must be present when these forums are organised;
- The professions and those who practise them must be respected: assistants as well as administrators, interpreters as well as translators, construction workers as well as security guards... The quality of the service provided takes precedence over "productivity", especially when 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 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 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 dependence on other policies. As with any fundamental questioning of working conditions and their possible impact on the efficiency and well-being of staff, U4U demands that decisions on hybrid working, open spaces and flexi-desks be based on relevant analysis and in consultation with the trade unions. Their implementation must always be followed by regular evaluation, which will form the basis of an analysis that will allow decisions to be taken on any corrective measures to be taken, in consultation with the trade unions. They must not be rushed through, as in the past, as a springboard for a property policy, for example. They must not be implemented without the involvement and support of staff;
- U4U would like to see an intensification of the social dialogue between institutions and trade unions, better preparation for it and a broadening of the subjects to be discussed (e.g. budget and property policy). Similarly, trade unions should be able to propose a non-predefined topic for dialogue once a year. For U4U, dialogue can also be organised directly between the institution and the staff themselves, through annual departmental meetings where staff can propose topics for discussion at the staff committee meeting, and with the trade unions;
- U4U advocates a reform of staff representation. At a legal level, we demand that each workplace should have its own staff committee (Seville, for example, 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 be held at the same time in the different locations, using the same voting system, so that a stable Central Staff Committee (CSC) can be set up quickly.

4. Recruitment and training

- The Commission must fulfil its missions by fully assuming its institutional and political role. This requires a forward-looking approach to human resources management, which is no longer merely administrative and regulatory. It must be able to anticipate key needs and talents, and to monitor and support staff throughout their careers;
- The induction process should be reviewed in terms of its objectives and procedures, with improved induction and training for new recruits beyond the probationary period. New staff should be given the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the services and history of the institution. The probationary period could be preceded by a two-year temporary contract, which would be offered only after successful completion of an external competitive examination, once the results are known. During these two years, the future official should have the opportunity to get to know several sectors and/or DGs and to receive the training necessary for the rest of his/her career. The traineeship could thus provide a genuine 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 needs to offer targeted thematic, linguistic and IT training to 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 introduction of new hybrid ways of working, 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 competitive examinations to allow all officials (AD) and temporary staff (AT) to reach higher grades. U4U is opposed to the idea of creating an office bringing together, for example, building and logistics, postal services, security, IT and early childhood education, which would allow contract staff (AC) to be recruited at GFII - or even higher - on more decent terms (CDI paying appropriate remuneration for qualifications). On the one hand, this could improve employment conditions and offer better career prospects for contract staff, but on the other hand, it runs the 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 temporary contracts (TA) for a further two or three years, giving them access to internal competitive examinations with a higher number of successful candidates. Similarly, the employer should provide free training to staff, including those on precarious contracts, to prepare them for external competitions (as U4U obtained from the EUIPO employer in Alicante). As you can see, U4U acts in the interests of all staff, preferring to give everyone access to free training provided by the employer, rather than forcing them to join a union in order to benefit from it.

5. Career and mobility

- Promotion must be based on merit, according to criteria that are clearly defined, comparable and known to all concerned. Appraisal and promotion procedures must be simplified. Everyone must be able to understand how he or she is being assessed and the reasons for the assessments;
- Internal competitions (including transfers) for posts 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 an obstacle to the expression of staff creativity and motivation, and also run counter to the policy of a culture of trust advocated by the "new HR strategy";

Mobility, whether spontaneous or initiated by the institution in the interest of the service, must be encouraged through proposals for supported, interesting and rewarding career paths. Training should be provided to encourage and prepare for mobility and support should be provided to ensure an effective transition. In general, the introduction 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. What's more, leaving colleagues to rely on their personal and/or national networks to find a new job does nothing to strengthen the bond between the institution and its colleagues;

We need to do more to welcome new staff, especially at a time of organisational change and changing working patterns, and regardless of where they are posted. Our organisation is complex: we would like to see better guidance and orientation (training, support, multiple career paths).

6. Our health

- The Régime Commun d'Assurance Maladie - RCAM - must be improved, made permanent and updated to take account of both scientific and social developments. Coverage must be extended, and reimbursements improved. Indeed, the actual reimbursement rate of medical expenses by 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 revised in order to achieve an effective reimbursement rate of 85%.
- Equality coefficients also need to be reviewed. To improve service, the reserve should be reduced. In the event of imbalance, there should be no hesitation in slightly increasing contributions (which is provided for under current rules). More agreements need to be drawn up with healthcare structures in Member States, to avoid overcharging. What's more, the policies developed today by the European Union speak of both prevention and resilience;
- CAMR interventions must be consistent with these policies. Where they exist, they 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. Dependency must also be taken into account;
- The Commission's social policy budget must include the necessary resources to reimburse disabled colleagues or their family members for disability-related expenses that are not reimbursed under either the JSIS or national aid schemes, from which they would be excluded by virtue of their assignment;
- U4U was the first union to call for a revision of CAMR's general implementing rules, to allow for these various improvements;

- Given the widespread adoption of telecommuting and the expected implementation of new "hybrid" modes of work, it is urgent to ensure that occupational health and safety standards are equally respected whatever the mode of work (office, telecommuting...). The risks associated with hyperconnectivity and digital overload must be taken into consideration;
- We need to improve access to medical care for all JSIS members in all EU countries. This requires a European social protection card that is recognized in all 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, which resulted in a significant reduction in direct and indirect remuneration and savings on pensions, increased inequalities, and precariousness without offering the means to mitigate these negative impacts. What's more, they have made it possible to gradually roll back the concessions and compensations that had been obtained by the trade unions (e.g. end-of-career benefits, pensions, etc.). And budgetary savings have continued with the current Commission (notably under the headings of pensions and European schools) ... The 2019 Cour des Comptes report points the finger at the Institutions' growing difficulty in recruiting, particularly for certain profiles and nationalities: let's not deprive ourselves of our talents and diversity!
- U4U is in favour of increasing the Union's budget, with adequate resources for a civil service commensurate with its missions. We advocate a mid-term review of the budget for Heading 7 (*human resources: operations, buildings, salaries, pensions, health, European schools*), to facilitate implementation of the current European recovery plan - or even allow for the implementation of a second plan that we consider useful.