



## AIACE

International Association of Former Staff of the European Union

11.500 members – open to former employees of the EU institutions and bodies

The Vice-President



### INFO-SECTIONS n° 6 - July 2017

Newsletter of the International Bureau to AIACE members

*This publication aims to be a link between the activities of the international structure of our Association and our 11,500 members. It provides some brief information on the activities of the International Bureau and is forwarded to the sections so that they can distribute this newsletter to their members. This 6th issue covers the period from January to June 2017.*

#### 1. MEETINGS

The Bureau met monthly during the first six months of 2017 and also organised the March meeting of the AIACE-International Board, as well as two meetings of the Board at Maastricht: one before the Assises to decide on the organisation of the 2018 Assises, to be announced at the AGM, and a second meeting to discuss other matters.

The Bureau also holds regular meetings with the PMO and DG HR. In these, we have met Ms. Gaffey, the new Director of the PMO. The Bureau also took part in the February meeting of the HR/PMO/AIACE technical working group, and represents AIACE at the CGAM (Sickness Insurance Management Committee), which meets every other month. Several topics have been discussed at these meetings.

#### 2. BREXIT

This is, of course, one of the main topics during the first half of this year. We have been in close contact with the UK section, chaired by Richard Hay, our former international president. Michael Hocken, member of both the Bureau and the UK section has helped to strengthen these links. Our President, Bernhard Zepter, has sent a document analysing the situation of pensioners post-Brexit to the Director-General of DG HR and to Michel Barnier, the Commission's chief negotiator. He has also asked to meet Michel Barnier. This meeting, initially due to take place on June 19, is now scheduled for end-July. Nevertheless, we have succeeded in making the Commission aware of the situation of all pensioners affected by Brexit: thanks to our action, the situation of pensioners is covered by the negotiation mandate. The aim is to keep the benefits that are provided for by the protocol on privileges and immunities.

Moreover, the Bureau was represented by Michael Hocken and vice-President Francis Wattiau at a Commission "Reflection day" on the Juncker plan for the future of Europe of 27, held on June 12.

#### 3. COMMUNICATION

A Communication seminar was organised in December 2016 by Maruja Gutiérrez, member of the Bureau, who presented a summary of its conclusions. This seminar covered communication both through the Web and on paper to all our members. Each section was able to send two representatives whose expenses were covered by the AIACE. The report was examined by the Bureau at its March meeting.

The VOX magazine is a pillar of our communication activities, and the Bureau invited Pierre Blanchard, editor-in-chief, to several meetings to discuss the 2017 publication programme.

We have also informed DG HR of our concerns regarding the future of Yammer after EC and the ending of the paper edition of Commission en direct.

As regards our international website, maintenance problems arose with the firm chosen for its development. Our secretary-general, Didier Hespel, found another service provider to undertake the maintenance work.

15 Sections : Belgique/België – Danmark - Deutschland – Éire/Ireland - España - France – Ελλάς/Grèce - Italia – Luxembourg – Nederland – Österreich – Portugal – Suomi/Finland – Sverige - United Kingdom

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#### **4. PMO**

We have been pleased to observe a significant improvement in the speed of reimbursements, as well as a degree of openness of the PMO to preventive medicine for spouses or partners under complementary cover. The Bureau took part in a meeting of the PMO with the Ispra settlements office. The PMO's services are now in the Merode building and we visited their offices and the Welcome Office ("Bureau d'Accueil"), which is in the same building.

The PMO has recently informed us that M. Scognamiglio, head of the Pensions sector, is leaving the PMO under mobility, and will be replaced by Mme. Silvano, currently head of the Ispra settlements office.

#### **5. CGAM (Sickness Insurance Management Committee)**

The Bureau is usually represented by Michael Hocken and Dr. Freese, replaced by Francis Wattiau if either is unavailable. We follow two files in particular: preventive medical examinations for the over 60s, and overcharging in Luxembourg hospitals. For the former, we refer you to the articles by Francis Wattiau in three recent issues of VOX. In short, we challenge the fact that screening for some common types of cancer has been discontinued from July 2015, and we condemn the fact that the reasons for this and its consequences have not been explained to our members.

At the last meeting (in May) of the CGAM, the President of the Medical Board announced that some examinations would be reintroduced. However, up until now, the PMO does not want to make any official announcement.

As regards overcharging in Luxembourg, we challenge the fact that the PMO has not withdrawn from a convention signed more than 20 years ago between the Commission services and the Luxembourg Government. We consider that this convention is no longer valid under European law, following a judgment of the Court of Justice. Francis Wattiau has introduced an article 90 complaint to challenge the requirement that he should pay 15% of this overcharging, which the ECJ has judged to be illegal. In addition, a petition in the Grand Duchy on this topic has gathered over 5000 signatures and will be debated in the Luxembourg Parliament.

#### **6. PENSIONS**

Mr. Ludwig Schubert, our uncontested specialist on the subject, has appealed to the ECJ in the name of the AIACE against the Council decisions which, contrary to the "method", only gave us 0.9% instead of twice 1.7% (salary and pension adjustments for two full years). The Court first examined another case based only on the absence of social dialogue. This first case was rejected and the Court has begun examining our case. Ludwig Schubert has sent our lawyers requests for a public hearing and the right of a written reply to the institutions' responses. The case continues.

#### **7. FINANCES**

At the Maastricht Assises our treasurer, Marc Oostens, presented all the figures relating to the execution of the 2016 budget and the draft budget for 2017. The printing of VOX magazine in the OIB allows us to make savings which we put to other purposes, for example, paying expenses for attendance at seminars such as that on communication.

#### **8. INSURANCE**

In a recent issue of VOX, we set out our position regarding the insurance policies that AIACE offers pensioners. This provoked a reaction from Afiliatys, which has its own Hospi Safe policy, and which, unlike AIACE, has a small financial interest in the number of policies that are taken out. In short, if an official took out a Hospi Safe policy during her career, she may continue to be insured under this policy when she retires. However, she will no longer be insured against the risk of an accident, as the Hospi Safe policy only covers medical expenses related to the accident, but no other payment. If pensioners want to insure themselves against accidents, it is in their interest to take out the two combined policies that AIACE has negotiated. Further details are given in VOX n°105, pp29-30, and n°106, p42, which may also be consulted on our website, [www.aiace.europa.eu](http://www.aiace.europa.eu).

## **9. ASSISES**

We noted fewer participants at the Maastricht Assises. Those who stayed away missed out on the excellent programme put together, as usual, by Didier Hespel, our Secretary-General, with the help of the Artion company. Apart from the tourist attractions and the wonderful weather, we had a very interesting debate with Carlo Trojan, former Commission Secretary-General.

It had been intended to hold the next Assises in Strasbourg, but in March the Board recommended choosing somewhere further away. In the light of the reduced numbers attending the Assises and the sizeable work their organisation entails, our president Bernhard Zepter wondered if it would not be more reasonable to hold the statutory general assembly in Brussels, and to organise the tourism element separately. At its meeting, the Board finally decided that the next Assises would be held in Valencia, in Spain. We hope that there will be more participants than this year; otherwise, it has been decided that the Assises will not continue in their current form.

## **10. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

As indicated in the previous info-sections, we have had to move to a different building on avenue des Nerviens (N105). This generated significant work for our international secretariat, Anne-Pascale Descamps and Florentino Sotomayor. The *espace Seniors* is in the same building, beside our offices. Access problems to this building had to be resolved. We remind you that the Belgian section is located elsewhere, in Evere. The Commission only made available a limited number of offices in the avenue de Nerviens building.

## **11. FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

- meeting of the CGAM on July 5 and 6
- meeting of the Bureau on July 25
- possible meeting with Michel Barnier, chief Brexit negotiator, end-July
- meeting of the HR/PMO/AIACE technical working group on September 11, during which we hope to learn the details of the new preventive medicine examinations
- Board meeting in October, during which the Bureau will remind the Board that its current mandate runs out during the 2018 Assises in Valencia, and that it is now time to consider its renewal.