



## AIACE

International Association of Former Staff of the European Union

More than 12.000 members – open to former employees of the EU institutions and bodies

The Secretary General  
37/2018



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*This publication aims to be a link between the activities of our Association's international structure and its some 12.000 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 8th issue covers the period from November 2017 to June 2018.*

#### PRESIDENCY

At its meeting last March, the Board elected a new president, Joaquín Díaz Pardo (from the Spanish section), and a new vice-president, Heinz Zourek (from the Austrian Section). In the transitional period up to the Valencia Assises, the Bureau remained in office, including the outgoing acting president, Francis Wattiau. At the Assises, the President announced the re-appointment of the Bureau, while wishing to expand its membership; the new members are Elisabeth Helander (Finland) and Erik Halskov (Belgium). On a proposal from the Chairman, the Board appointed Didier Hespel as Secretary-General and Marc Oostens as Treasurer-General; it confirmed the other members of the Bureau.

#### PENSIONS APPEAL

A hearing took place before the General Court (which took over the pending cases before the Civil Service Tribunal, which was dissolved). Ludwig Schubert was invited to speak by the judges (which is most unusual) and answered their many questions at great length. VOX 109 has a detailed article on this subject. The judgment is expected in the coming months.

#### BREXIT

The negotiations have reached agreement on the situation of pensioners in the United Kingdom, whether they are British or not: the Protocol on Privileges and Immunities will continue to apply. In addition, the United Kingdom has acknowledged its obligations as regards the financing and payment of pensions.

Two administrative issues remain to be settled at the level of the institutions, and in particular by the Commission, that is, the correction coefficients and the equality coefficients (for the reimbursement of medical expenses); in both cases assurances have been given, but no firm solution has yet been proposed.

#### JSIS

At the beginning of 2018, the CGAM (Sickness Insurance Management Committee) decided that the criteria for reimbursement of **psychotherapy** expenses should be harmonised. The result, a synthesis of therapies that have been validated scientifically for each type of pathology, has been posted online on My IntraComm in the meantime.

More recently, the CGAM has tackled a really chewy issue, **the updating of parts of the general implementing provisions (GIPs)**, in particular to allow the introduction of the new screening programmes (foreseen for end 2018 / beginning 2019), offering pensioners a choice between an agreed centre or making their own arrangements for the screening.

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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The CGAM has decided to take advantage of this update of the GIPs to clarify other chapters that are either not sufficiently clear or are downright outdated, such as dentistry (implants ...) or dependency, which is an increasingly important area. On this last point, AIACE will continue to fight to keep it inside the system, in whatever form. On this occasion, a revision of the ceilings could be considered. The CGAM is involved in this work.

The CGAM could link these discussions to the issue of the **management of the JSIS reserve**. The reserve is indeed growing, which could lead to improvements in coverage, but the CGAM wants to make sure that any improvement is sustainable in the long term and will benefit the members in general rather than the medical profession.

The financial situation is good, Article 90 claims are in constant decline, repayment deadlines are short.

The PMO is looking to simplify the process, so that additional staff can be assigned to meeting the needs of members.

Special attention is given to members in great difficulty (especially in the case of serious illness), as well as for disabled members who have moreover particular difficulties.

Practices have been harmonised between the 3 settlement offices and centres of excellence are being set up by activity or domain, so as to have specialised teams handling a single type of file, whichever repayment office is involved.

A front office, available to all members, has been created by R. Rotter in Brussels. A single front office for the 3 settlement offices will be created; it should be operational by early 2019.

#### OVERCHARGING IN HOSPITALS IN LUXEMBOURG

As a reminder, AIACE is financially supporting an appeal to the Court of Justice, introduced in 2017 by Francis Wattiau, then International Vice President. The appointing authority responsible for this procedure, the European Parliament, has rejected this appeal, thereby confirming the position of the Commission which signed the 1996 agreement that allows this overcharging. We must therefore wait for the Court hearing. However, things are moving. A petition launched on the initiative of an EIB official obtained the number of signatures required for it to be debated by the Luxembourg Parliament. The question therefore goes back to the political level. All the more so, since in a discharge procedure, Parliament's Budgetary Control Committee asked the Commission for an explanation of the additional cost of this overcharging for the JSIS. In addition, Commissioner Öttinger has written to the Dutch Health Minister asking that an overcharging problem in the Netherlands be remedied.

At a meeting with the head of the Luxembourg Settlement Office, the hospitals' representatives categorically refused to explain their costs and how these extra charges could be justified. The Luxembourg Settlement Office has informed the heads of administration of the institutions in Luxembourg of this situation. The latter are now aware that action is needed at the political level. In summary, we have to keep waiting, but there is increasingly reason to hope for a resolution of this issue, which until now has been blocked by the Luxembourg hospitals.

#### NEW SCREENING PROGRAMMES

The International Bureau, together with representatives of National Sections, takes part in meetings of a Technical Working Group with representatives of the PMO and DG HR. We were informed of the very slow preparation of new screening programmes (the Bureau's first contribution to one of these technical group meetings was in September 2016). We still have not received information about the exact date of implementation of the new examinations or the details of the procedures to be followed. More information on our

position on these new programmes may be found in the article published on page 33 in the latest VOX, number 109, published in late May 2018. In summary, the new programmes will be better than the catastrophic programmes introduced in July 2015, but of course, everything will not be screened and members need to be clearly informed about what will and will not be covered by these programmes.

### AMBASSADORS

In co-operation with the PMO, AIACE has set up a network of "ambassadors". AIACE Ambassadors are volunteers who know the rules and procedures better than others. Their role is to act as intermediaries between members and the PMO. This implies for example:

- "translating" the administrative language of the PMO into terms that members can understand
- "translating" messages from members to the PMO into the PMO's administrative language
- if needed, explaining the procedures to members
- if needed, helping members to fill out forms
- contacting the PMO to clarify sensitive or confusing situations of individual members

The ambassadors on the list have been approved by the PMO and have privileged access to it. Their role mainly concerns Sickness Insurance, but can also cover Pensions.

This "service" is of mutual interest to both parties, and the PMO has organised and co-financed a meeting with several ambassadors, to upgrade each other's knowledge and explain the procedures, especially for contacting the PMO.

### ASSISES

The 2018 Assises took place in Valencia. An article on it will appear in VOX 110, to be published in July. Participation remained stable (ignoring Maastricht). The 2019 Assises will take place in Lisbon from 18 to 23 May. The goal is to find a "low-cost" formula to attract more participants.

At the October Board meeting, the discussion on the future format of the Assises will be resumed, taking into account the various proposals made.

### YAMMER AfterEC

The contract has finally been renewed for 5 years, so the application will continue to work without any change for users.

### 10th ANNIVERSARY OF THE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT WITH THE COMMISSION

The cooperation and partnership agreement with the Commission, signed 10 years ago by our then President Ludwig Schubert, is the basis on which the AIACE has been able to develop its activities, in the mutual interest of pensioners and the Commission. It has given the AIACE better conditions in which to deliver its fundamental objectives, of representing and defending pensioners' interests. As the only association that represents all pensioners, AIACE has had access to office space and all the related logistical and IT infrastructure, including access to meeting rooms and the use of printing and dissemination services. It has also been able to develop constructive relations with DG HR, the PMO, and the OIB. The distribution of VOX magazine to all pensioners is an effective source of information. The social network reserved for pensioners made available by the Commission, Yammer AfterEC, is a popular tool for exchange between pensioners, the dissemination of official

(and other) information, as well as for the storage of documents of general interest. AIACE has developed social actions for all pensioners, as an extension of the services of DG HR and working closely with it; this activity takes place mainly at the level of sections, thanks to the work of volunteers. As part of the overall co-operation with DG HR, many problems faced by pensioners have been addressed - and often resolved - and AIACE has been able to raise pensioners' concerns. As regards the PMO, AIACE's contribution has led to clarifying a number of texts, replacing administrative jargon by language that all can understand. AIACE's contributions, especially in the area of preventive medicine (although they have not always been successful), have been greatly appreciated in a spirit of constructive co-operation. The agreement has also allowed AIACE to sit alongside staff representatives on various committees where pensioner-related issues are discussed, and to defend pensioners' interests (for example, the CGAM, the Statute Committee, and the technical Remuneration Group, to mention only the most relevant). AIACE representatives played a crucial role in negotiating the salary adjustment method and influenced the drafting of the Brexit negotiating mandate. AIACE has actively participated in information and awareness-raising efforts about online applications such as JSIS, My IntraComm, and most recently, Sysper Pensions. Finally, in cooperation with DG HR, it has finally been possible for pensioners to have easier access to Commissions buildings, instead of being treated like other visitors.