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2015

Activity report

OF THE BRUSSELS COMMISSIONER FOR EUROPE AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS




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FOREWORD

More than 16% of employment in Brussels and a significant share of the added value of our Region, estimated at more than 5 billion euros...

Here are at least two essential arguments, revealed in the recent study published by the Brussels Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations (CEIO) and [visit.brussels](#) which analyses the impact of the international presence in Brussels.

These two arguments on their own should reassure the most sceptical and critical citizens – even amongst our politicians – about the implantation of European institutions and international organisations in Brussels.

It is therefore evident that everything possible should be done to assure these international public services, and all those they carry in their wake, of the best welcome, the best working conditions and the most favourable environment for the important missions that are theirs.

The Brussels government has understood this perfectly and has written in its general policy statement, the necessity to implement a real host region policy worthy of the name.

Originally federal, this hosting policy has been little by little – from state reform to state reform – transferred in large part to the Region.

Indeed the questions raised, the problems encountered and the solutions expected by these numerous and diverse organisations are today regional in scope, if not local: land development, urbanism, mobility, security, environment... all competences provided totally or partially on a regional level.

It was for this purpose that the CEIO was created, one year ago. In this first year the Brussels Commissioner and his team was immediately called upon to respond to a multitude of questions and find solutions which sometimes had been expected for a very long time.

During this first year our mission focused on two main directions: to develop strong links and establish a constructive dialogue between politicians and international and Brussels administrations on one hand, and convince Brussels politicians and citizens of the importance of this international presence in our Region on the other, while ensuring that it takes account of the life of Brussels residents.

To this we can add that, in the true Brussels tradition of welcome, our team carried on the duties of the Expat Welcome Desk (EWD), initiated many years ago in the former Brussels-Europe Liaison Office. The aim of this EWD is to provide those generally referred to as “expats”, but who become over time Brussels residents, all the information they require to set up life in our city.

The report you are about to read aims to illustrate achievements during this first year of operation. It also presages the importance of this mission that the Brussels government has given us; a mission that my team and I have seized enthusiastically and I hope, effectively.

Alain HUTCHINSON
Commissioner of the Government



Foreword	3
----------	---

PART 1

The CEIO	7
----------	---

1. MISSION	8
2. TEAM	10
3. GOVERNING BODIES	11
4. COMMUNICATION	12

PART 2

A host region policy	17
----------------------	----

1. METHOD	18
2. URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND MOBILITY	22
3. SECURITY	28
4. REGIONAL REPRESENTATIONS	31
5. PROSPECTS FOR 2016	32

PART 3

The Expat Welcome Desk	35
------------------------	----

1. METHOD	36
2. STATISTICS	38
3. COMPLETED PROJECTS AND/OR IN PROGRESS	44
4. INFORMATION SESSIONS AND STANDS	48
5. PROSPECTS FOR 2016	50

Conclusion	52
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PART 1

The CEIO



1. MISSION

Never before has the Brussels-Capital Region counted so many international players. This has an important impact, not only on the Brussels economy, jobs and population, but also on the appearance of the region, and in particular of the European quarter.



The figures from our quantified study “Brussels-Europe, the figures 2016” confirm the increasingly international character of the Brussels-Capital Region. The rising number of international organisations that have taken up office in Brussels in recent decades, the sharp increase in the number of people of foreign nationality, more and more languages, more international schools: these are just some examples of indicators that the region is rapidly becoming a more international place.

The international image of Brussels is largely determined by the presence of all these international organisations. However, their reception has not always kept pace with the region’s successful appeal. The collaboration between regional and local Brussels authorities and the international organisations is not always ideal.

As the seat of 6 European institutions, 14 other European Union organisations and 42 intergovernmental organisations, the Region has a major responsibility for managing these changes successfully. After the sixth reform of the state and the transfer of powers to the regions, it became a necessity for the Brussels-Capital Region to formalise its relations with the European and international organisations established on its territory.

With the establishment of the Brussels Commissioner’s Office for Europe and International Organisations (CEIO) at the end of 2014 and the appointment of its Commissioner, the Brussels government has taken the first steps towards developing a formal and consistent host region policy within the framework of its regional powers, and in support of the Brussels-Capital Region’s profile as an internationally-focused region. The mission of the CEIO is to develop a regional host policy, the main purpose of which is to facilitate the establishment of all international organisations in Brussels, in harmony with the development of the Region and the needs of its citizens.

The CEIO is the go-between between the Brussels authorities and the representatives of European and international institutions that have set up their base in Brussels. Practically, this means the CEIO is the single point of contact for any questions that European and international institutions may have regarding urban planning, security, mobility and the development of public space, and ensures the coordination needed to do so effectively. It must also be consulted about any public project that could have an impact on the international organisations and their presence in Brussels. The CEIO provides advice and recommendations to the Brussels government in such cases. Additionally, through its Expat Welcome Desk (EWD) the CEIO provides administrative support to people settling in the Brussels-Capital Region by reason of their professional activities in and around the European and international institutions. It has also inherited the supporting

role of the Brussels-Europe Liaison Office vis-à-vis regional representations, including as regards the annual award of the “regional certificate” by the Minister for External Relations.

In 2015, the foundation was laid for this proactive host policy, which extends over numerous policy areas and which was initially (and for obvious reasons) mainly focused on the European institutions. The Commissioner acts on behalf of the Brussels regional authorities and can also count on the constructive collaboration of the municipalities.



2. TEAM



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3. GOVERNING BODIES

The General Assembly and Board Meeting are composed of representatives appointed by the Brussels-Capital Region government.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

- Mr Alain HUTCHINSON, President;
- Mr Jérôme DE MOT;
- Mr Valentin GRAAS;
- Ms Justine HARZE;
- Mr Frank LELON;
- Mr Julien MILQUET;
- Mr Pieter VAN DAMME;
- Mr Laurent VAN DER ELST;
- Mr Charles-Eric VILAIN XIII;
- Ms Florence WAUTELET;
- Ms Nora YAHIAOUI;
- Mr David ZYLBERBERG.

BOARD

- Mr Alain HUTCHINSON, President;
- Mr Jérôme DE MOT;
- Mr Valentin GRAAS;
- Mr Frank LELON;
- Mr Julien MILQUET;
- Mr Pieter VAN DAMME;
- Mr Laurent VAN DER ELST;
- Mr Charles-Eric VILAIN XIII;
- Ms Florence WAUTELET;
- Ms Nora YAHIAOUI;
- Mr David ZYLBERBERG.

MEETINGS

- **Constitutive Meeting of 5 December 2014:** adoption of articles of association, appointment of board, adoption of the budget, constitution of the Bureau.
- **Extraordinary General Assembly of 19 October 2015:** approval of minutes of the Constitutive Meeting of 5 December 2014, resignation of Mr Noé Martens, nomination of Ms Justine Harzé, changes of members of staff, 2015 budget modification, 2016 budget plan and presentation of activities in progress.
- **Board Meeting of 19 October 2015:** approval of minutes of the Constitutive Meeting of 5 December 2014, changes of members of staff, 2015 budget modification, 2016 budget plan and presentation of activities in progress.
- **The members of the Office met on two occasions:** on 6 February and 10 June 2015.

4. COMMUNICATION

PUBLICATION

The publication “Brussels-Europe, the figures 2016” reveals the latest data on the international presence in Brussels. The data has been collected by the Brussels Commissioner’s Office and visit.brussels.

Key points from the review: European institutions and international organisations in Brussels generate 121,000 jobs, of which 81,000 are direct jobs and 40,000 indirect; the international sector represents 16.7% of Brussels employment; and it totals 5 billion euros of added value for the Brussels economy.

The publication also reveals latest figures on the number of EU agencies and international intergovernmental organisations in Brussels, the estimated budget of lobbying organisations in the capital, the number of foreign journalists following European summits, as well as the number of students in international schools and personnel attached to diplomatic missions and intergovernmental organisations in Brussels.





WEBSITE

In March 2015, a temporary web page was put online including a presentation of the team and the Office's missions and priorities. From September onwards, it has become a priority to create a new website, which will be launched in January 2016, and will initially only be available in English. The website will be simple, user-friendly and convenient. The lay-out and the navigation will be designed to make it easy to navigate between the different pages. Meanwhile we are pleased to set out the most important changes.

The website will consist of two major parts:

1. **The first part** is addressed to local authorities and international organisations, and tackles all the subjects related to the policy aspects of our operations: urban development, mobility and safety in the European quarter, and the policy consultation initiatives such as the high level meetings between the Brussels government and the European institutions organised every six months, and steered by the various inter-institutional working groups established by the Commissioner's Office for this purpose.
2. **A second part** will focus on every aspect of the administrative formalities involved in welcoming the international community to Brussels, and will provide tailored information for visitors. The structure and contents will be adapted to the needs of newcomers to Brussels. The helpdesk team has a good insight into who our visitors are and exactly why they visit the website. It will be possible to download certain administrative documents. The website will take the Brussels-Europe Liaison Office website as its starting point and expand into a reference platform with carefully chosen information for newcomers. This aspect of our work will also contribute to the positive image of the capital, in particular among a section of our population with a strong influence on public opinion.



THE CEIO IN THE MEDIA

The Commissioner, Alain Hutchinson, is regularly called upon by the Belgian and international media to present the CEIO and its mission.

L'ÉCHO

02/09/2014

"Alain Hutchinson, futur "Monsieur Europe" de Bruxelles"

Frédéric Rohart

L'ÉCHO

17/10/2014

"Le Bruxellois qui veut faire éclater la bulle européenne"

Jean Blavier and Frédéric Rohart

LE SOIR

29/01/2015

"Hutch les bons tuyaux"

Fabrice Voogt

RTL

26/03/2015

"Bruxelles et l'Europe s'engagent à rendre le Quartier Européen plus attractif"

Belga

BRUSSELNIEUWS

26/03/2015

"Werkgroep om Europese wijk aantrekkelijker te maken"

RTBF

27/03/2015

"Bruxelles a son Commissariat à l'Europe et aux institutions internationales"

Jérôme Durant

EUROPOLITICS

08/04/2015

"Bruxelles l'Européenne se réorganise"

Tanguy Verhoosel

EUROPEAN BUSINESS REVIEW

27/04/2015

"Brussels is complicated, but the EU institutions too"

Peter Kramer

IRIS INFO

Avril 2015

"Bruxelles a son Commissariat à l'Europe"

THE BRUSSELS-EUROPE PRESS CLUB MAGAZINE

May 2015

"Portrait : Alain Hutchinson"

Maria Laura Franciosi

LE SOIR

10/06/2015

"Le parlement bruxellois se rapproche de l'Europe"

Vanessa Lhuillier

THE BRUSSELS GLOBE

11/06/2015

"L'Europe et les organisations internationales encore mieux accueillies et intégrées à Bruxelles"

THE BRUSSELS TIMES MAGAZINE

June 2015

"Bringing back the European Quarter to life"

Peter Kramer

BELGIUM REAL ESTATE SHOWCASE 2015

June 2015

"European District and PUL on the move"

Tim Harrup

BRUSSELNIEUWS

13/07/2015

"Gewestelijke commissie ijvert voor behoud Europese instellingen"



PRESENTATIONS OF THE CEIO

- **Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region:** presentation of the CEIO role and activities to the Territorial Development Commission 28/01/2015
- **European Quarter Fund:** presentation of the vision of the Brussels Commissioner on the European quarter 04/03/2015
- **Brussels-Europe Press Club:** presentation of the CEIO at the launch of the "Diplomatic Platform" 09/03/2015
- **Parliament of the Brussels-Capital Region:** presentation of CEIO role and activities to the European Affairs Commission 13/07/2015
- **Municipal Advisory Council for European Affairs of Etterbeek:** participation by the Brussels Commissioner at the "Brussels as Capital of Europe" conference/debate 19/11/2015
- **Territorial Development Agency:** participation by the Brussels Commissioner in the seminar "How to make even better use of the position as European Capital? How to transform expats into Brusselers?" 15/12/2015





PART 2

A host region policy



1. METHOD

The role of the Brussels-Capital Region as capital of Europe and the headquarters of a large number of European and inter-governmental organisations is an important asset for the region, in both political and economic terms. A regional seat policy must be built up on these advantages and support the presence of these organisations in our region both on a political level as on an administrative level.

In its first year, the Office of the Brussels Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations, charged with the development of this host region policy, mainly focused on forging ties of trust between the international organisations on the one hand and the Brussels government and public services on the other. The CEIO has positioned itself as a single point of contact in the often-complex tangle of Brussels public services and international organisations.

The European institutions are among the most important international organisations in the Brussels-Capital Region, and the most important discussion partner of the CEIO.





“ In its first year the CEIO mainly focused on forging ties of trust between the international organisations and the Brussels government. ”



Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament



Rudi Vervoort, Minister-President of the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR)

The creation of these relationships of trust rests on four pillars:

1 The organisation of **POLICY MEETINGS** every six months, between on the one hand the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region, represented by the Minister-President, the Minister for External Relations and the Minister for Mobility and Public Works, and on the other the European Parliament represented by its Vice-President, the European Commission represented by its Vice-President, and the Council of the European Union represented by its Secretary-General. In the future, this will be expanded to include all European institutions. This direct policy consultation must foster mutual support for the interests of Brussels and European policy-makers in respect of the European presence in the Brussels-Capital Region, and mandates the Commissioner's Office to follow up certain issues in technical working groups.

2 Organising and facilitating **TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS** that bring together Brussels and European partners to discuss specific issues. The progress of these technical working groups is validated by the political representatives during the policy meetings every six months who, if necessary, can extend the mandate of the CEIO.





Kristalina Georgieva, Vice-President of the European Commission

*Guy Vanhengel, Minister for External Relations of the BCR
Rudi Vervoort, Minister-President of the BCR
Pascal Smet, Minister for Mobility and Public Works of the BCR*



3

Facilitating **BILATERAL CONSULTATION**

between Brussels public services and international organisations. The CEIO is the single point of contact for both the Brussels public services and European and international organisations. It dispatches ad-hoc questions and problems to the relevant services and if necessary facilitates bilateral consultation between the parties.

4

Delivering **EXPERTISE AND ADVICE**

about international organisations in the Brussels-Capital Region, and the administrative procedures that these international organisations must complete. For instance, the CEIO acts as expert in the VUB's (*Vrije Universiteit Brussel*) Anticipate research project on advanced service clusters in the Brussels-Capital Region, and in the *UrbAct-III* project of the City of Brussels on the re-purposing of office buildings in the European quarter. It is also a member of the *Fonds Quartier Européen* consultation committee. In addition, the CEIO acts as advisor on urban planning and mobility issues that affect the European and international institutions in the Brussels-Capital Region.



2. URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND MOBILITY

Urban development and mobility issues have an important place in our host region policy.

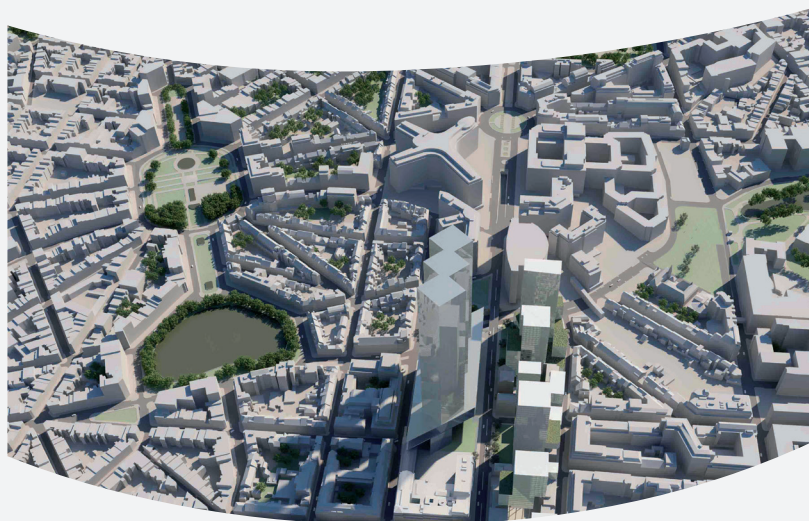
On the one hand, the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region hopes to integrate the European presence better into the region's urban fabric. Therefore, the government is continuing to encourage the implementation of the "Projet Urbain Loi" (PUL) and the renovation of the Schuman Roundabout in order to open up the European district once again to Brussels residents and tourists.

On the other hand, the presence of the European and international institutions has had an unmistakable impact on the urban fabric and on mobility - especially the European institutions, which have tightened up their security measures even further in the wake of the events in Paris. In addition, the scale and concentration of many European institutions goes hand in hand with significant mobility requirements.

Finally, the administrative fragmentation between municipal and regional levels, and administrative procedures in general, create a bottleneck for many international organisations that are established in the region and that have difficulty finding the right point of contact.



The CEIO organises and facilitates five technical working groups:



1

The **ESPLANADE SOLIDARNOSC 1980** working group facilitates contacts between the European Parliament, the City of Brussels, the Municipality of Ixelles and the Brussels-Capital Region in order to develop a broadly-supported programme for the European Parliament esplanade, meeting the quality and safety requirements of the Parliament and the tourist infrastructure in the immediate surroundings (the Parlamentarium, and the House of European History from autumn 2016 onwards). The first result of this working group is a weekly organic market, which will be organised every Tuesday on *Place du Luxembourg*, starting on 19 April 2016. From the autumn onwards, Bozar will organise an ambitious cultural programme on the northern tip of the esplanade. The practical and operational arrangements for this will be finalised in the first half of 2016.

2

The **“PROJET URBAIN LOI”** working group facilitates contacts between on the one hand the European Commission, and on the other the Urban Development Agency (ADT-ATO) and the regional planning administration in order to coordinate the redevelopment of the Rue de la Loi and the administrative centre of the European Commission (block B). A feasibility study was conducted into the qualitative redevelopment of block B in compliance with the statutory requirements of the regional zoning plan for the area (GGSV-RRUZ) and in support of the area’s future land use plan (BBP-PPAS) and the architecture competition for Block B. The mandate of this working group was extended during the second consultation between the Brussels Region and the European institutions on 15 September 2015 at the request of the Minister-President, in such ways that it has become a regular forum for discussions between the European Commission and the Brussels-Capital Region regarding the European Commission’s real estate policy in the European quarter.

3

The **MOBILITY** working group facilitates contacts between the European Commission, the MIVB-STIB and *Bruxelles Mobilité-Mobiel Brussel* with the aim to matching supply and demand for public transport of the European institutions and their employees. Detailed mapping of the European Commission's most important residential and office hubs will help the MIVB-STIB to optimise its offer and at the same time enable the Commission to encourage its employees to use alternative means of transport. At a later stage, this mapping will be extended to include other European institutions, and to all the public transportation operators active in the Brussels-Capital Region (MIVB-STIB, NMBS-SNCB, De Lijn, TEC).

4

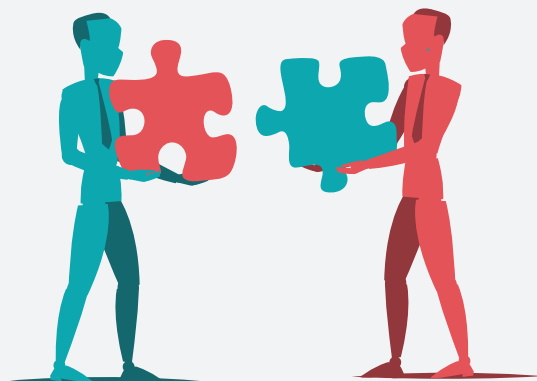
The working group devoted to the **BRUSSELS CODE FOR AIR, CLIMATE AND ENERGY (BWLKE-COBACE)** works closely with the cabinet of the regional Minister for the Environment to seek a balanced agreement for the application of the COBRACE to the parking capacity of the European institutions. The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union in particular are asking for an exemption on the basis of their specific needs as institutions. An agreement should be reached during 2016 for the Council.



5

The **CONSTRUCTION SITE COMMUNICATION** working group is intended to develop a high-quality framework for the construction sites that will dominate the appearance of the European quarter in the coming decades, in particular as a result of the redevelopment of the Schuman and Jourdan squares, and of the *Rue de la Loi* and block B. Based on a series of pilot projects on existing construction sites, and in cooperation with the office of the Minister-President, the Minister for Public Works, Atrium and visit.brussels, the working group will make practical recommendations to the Brussels-Capital Region government.

“ The CEIO facilitates bilateral consultations between Brussels public services and international organisations. ”



The CEIO facilitates bilateral consultations between Brussels public services and international organisations. It works closely with the municipal and regional authorities responsible for mobility and planning, in particular the urban planning services of the City of Brussels, the municipalities of Ixelles/Elsene and Etterbeek, and regional administrations: *Bruxelles Mobilité/Mobiel Brussel*, the urban development directorate, Brussels Urban Development, the Urban Development Agency (ADT-ATO), the Master Builder (*Maître Architecte/Bouwmeester*), *Bruxelles Environnement/Brussel Leefmilieu*, the Directorate for Monuments and Landscapes and the MIVB-STIB.

In 2015, the CEIO mediated in the following cases:

- In the Belliard-Etterbeek land-use plan (PPAS-BBP), the CEIO mediated between the Brussels planning department and the *Office Infrastructure and logistics in Brussels (OIB)* to reach a compromise for the redevelopment of the European Commission's *Van Maerlant-2* building. Motivated exceptions to the new PPAS could be authorised after consultations between the two parties.
- The CEIO played a mediating role in finding a sustainable solution to the problem of parking space for satellite vans parked temporarily on the Place Jean Rey during European Council meetings. After mediation between the cabinet of the Minister for Mobility and Public Works and the Council of the European Union, it was decided to retain the Place Jean Rey as the most appropriate site. Work to improve access to the electricity and fibre optic cable networks in the square, co-financed by the Council of the European Union, should enable this temporary occupation of the public space to cause as little disruption as possible.
- Bilateral consultations facilitated by the Commissioner's Office persuaded the Etterbeek municipality to join in the collaboration between the Region, the City of Brussels, the municipality of *Ixelles/Elsene* and the European Parliament to create a pedestrian wayfinding system between the *Mont des Arts/Kunstberg*, the European Parliament and the *Cinquantenaire* Park, co-financed by the European Parliament.
- At the initiative of the Commissioner, the European Parliament, in consultation with the Master Builder (*Maître Architecte/Bouwmeester*) and the office of the Minister for Mobility and Public Works, has decided to organise a competition for the design and maintenance of new street furniture for the Esplanade Solidarnosc 1980.

- After consultation with the Minister for Mobility and Public Works, it was agreed to meet the European Commission's request to remove the parking spaces on regional roads alongside their buildings for security reasons. The physical alterations necessary will be carried out in the course of 2016. The intervention of the CEIO has also persuaded the European Parliament to investigate the semi-public use of the car park beneath the Willy Brandt building. Finally, the region is establishing a new coach parking in Etterbeek for the coaches bringing visitors to the European Parliament.
- The Office is playing a mediating role between the OIB and the MIVB-STIB regarding a property exchange for the development of a metro depot for the future metro line 3 at the Houtweg in Haren.
- It is mediating between Beliris, the House of European History, the Committee of the Regions, the representatives of the Land of Bavaria and the City of Brussels regarding the redevelopment of the entrances to the Leopold Park located alongside the Eastman building and in the *Rue Wiertz*.





Other matters in which the CEIO has played a mediating role include:

- Installation of Wi-Fi on the Esplanade Solidarnosc 1980 and in the European district;
- Traffic problems on *Rue Montoyer*;
- Interim use of vacant buildings in the European district;
- Adaptation of signposting for European institutions in the Brussels metro and railway stations;
- Imposition of a no-parking zone on the *Place Jean Rey*;
- Future redevelopment of the Albert Borschette conference centre;
- Fibre optics infrastructure for the Benelux secretariat;
- Planning consent for erecting a piece of the Berlin Wall on the Berlaymont esplanade;
- Developer contributions for the conversion of the new Croatian embassy;
- Cooperation on communication regarding the new traffic plan in the city centre of Brussels.

Finally, the Office acts as advisor in a series of planning projects:

- The CEIO is member of the executive board for the redevelopment of the Schuman Roundabout and is also part of the jury that will select the design team for the redevelopment.
- The CEIO is member of the advisory committee assisting the drafting of a management plan for the Leopold Park.
- The CEIO advises on the planning application for the creation of a new entrance to the Leopold Park from *Avenue du Maelbeek*.

3. SECURITY

BACKGROUND

2015 was a dramatic year for the EU, beginning and ending with acts of terrorism. As for the Brussels-Capital Region, it fell victim of a terror threat necessitating the implementation of specific security measures.

Following the terror threat, a security plan was introduced on a national and local level to guarantee maximum security, including for European institution buildings and the European quarter at large.

For several years heads of state and government of the 28 EU countries have been coming to Brussels for European summits, and these meetings became even more frequent in 2015. It is on these occasions that the risks are highest and security is strengthened.

Although only temporary and in support of the police, the military deployment to ground surveillance of sensitive buildings, sites and perimeters in the area is deeply appreciated by the European institutions. Obviously the security cost is significant and is borne partly by the federal government which allocates specific funds to the Brussels-Capital Region under the 'Financing of certain expenditures linked to security resulting from the organisation of European summits in Brussels', in addition to security and prevention expenditure relating to the national and international function of the capital, totalling 54.8 million euros in 2015. This amount essentially covers costs linked to the European summits, security of the STIB/MIVB transport network, and investment in security infrastructure and material.

Nevertheless, the European quarter is in the midst of redevelopment. During the next few years it will be transformed into a tourist area with attractions including the new House of European History, the Parliamentarium, the European Parliament esplanade with its monumental artworks, a series of tourist pedestrian itineraries between the city centre and the European quarter's most important cultural and tourist attractions, and the redevelopment of the Schuman roundabout, ...which will in time attract many more people.

In view of the diversity of the European quarter, it will be necessary – although not easy – to find a balance between the security of the institutions and the needs of local residents, shopkeepers, tourists and indeed street protesters.

SECURITY WORKING GROUP IN CEIO

A Brussels-wide information meeting has been organised bringing together the European institutions and the police zones concerned, with the aim to assembling a detailed inventory of security measures in the area and in particular around the European institutions. Measures include a police structure on two levels based on functional links between local police (Boulevard Clovis station, foot and vehicle surveillance) and federal police (fixed posts, support missions, specialist functions), enabling close collaboration between the different police services and operating on the basis of a permanent threat evaluation by OCAM/OCAD (Coordinating Unit for Threat Analysis) in the crisis centre (FPS Home Affairs).

Although the European quarter remains the most secured area in the Region, the European institutions continue to request significant strengthening of protection and security, and underline the feeling of insecurity.

At the present time, all institutions without exception are requesting that the level 3 alert introduced on 15 January is maintained, and also therefore the fixed positions in front of the institutions which are essentially preventive measures. Certain institutions, specifically the European Parliament and the EEAS (European External Action Service) have more fundamental security concerns within their perimeter. For the European Parliament, security of the esplanade and the problem of the bus parking in *Rue Remorqueur/Stoomslepersstraat* are major issues. As part of the redevelopment of the European quarter, the Esplanade Solidarnosc 1980 is set to become the focal point where the city, its citizens and the EU come together. There is a need therefore to find the right balance between an adequate level of security and the traditional openness of the European Parliament.



OTHER SPECIFIC PROJECTS

Security perimeter and control of access for institutions around Schuman roundabout.

These projects have an impact on both security and public space:

- Repercussions of introducing the new traffic plan at the Schuman roundabout (transfer of north-south traffic from the roundabout to *Avenue de la Joyeuse Entrée/Blijde Inkomstlaan*, particularly affecting the necessity (or not) to close *Avenue de la Joyeuse Entrée* during European summits);
- Repercussions of security perimeters on the new pedestrian zone between *Cinquantenaire/Jubelpark* and the mouth of *Loi/Wet* tunnel, particularly the accessibility (or not) of pedestrians to this public area during European summits;
- Repercussions on public space of the security checkpoint the Council of the EU intends to set up to control traffic going towards Residence Palace (Europa);
- Repercussions of moving the VIP entrance of the Council of the EU (from *Rue Froissart* to *Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat*) on the security perimeters.

Although security of the European institutions is an absolute priority for the Belgian and regional authorities, it remains necessary to start a global assessment on the impact of security measures of European institution buildings and the security perimeters to be set up, on the quality of public spaces. Managing public spaces is one of the few means by which the government can improve the image and quality of life of the area, which is a major issue of the 2008 masterplan for the European Quarter.



4. REGIONAL REPRESENTATIONS

The appearance in Brussels of representations of infra-national authorities dates back to the 1980s. The opening of these representations is essentially the result of two dynamics. The first follows the general trend of interest groups to develop representations to the European Union which has since led to Brussels becoming, after Washington, the second highest concentration of lobbyists in the world. The second influence on the operation of representations is the growing role allocated by the European integration process on an infra-national level through, for example, the creation of the Committee of the Regions.

A fundamental problem facing regional representations is the legal void in which they operate and the potential problems that could be created by the absence of a specific status. The regions with legislative competencies, which are in general more concerned about their institutional recognition within the EU, often express their interest in improving their status, even if they generally recognize that achieving the same status level of national representations – in other words, a diplomatic status, would be quite impossible.

It is nevertheless undeniable that the absence of an official status for regional representations can cause administrative and practical problems stemming from the fact that most of these representations have, within their own country and region, the status of a public service but do not have this status in Brussels, where their legal status is not legally defined. The legal obligations to which they are subjected in their home countries in vir-

tue of their status as a public service can conflict with Belgian administrative and legal norms – a problem that does not exist with embassies due to their diplomatic status.

An initial solution for the Brussels-Capital Region was to create in 1991 certified recognition for regional and local representations in Brussels, issued by its Ministry of External Relations. The process of granting these certifications was in the past handled by the Brussels-Europe Liaison office and is now conducted in the CEIO.

This certification officialises the presence of regional representations in Brussels in order to facilitate their contacts with Brussels regional and communal authorities in addition to certain service providers (banks and telephone companies) and European institutions. Every year, the regional Minister for External Relations issues this “facilitating” document to official representations of cities and regions, and other representation organisations with public status, which request it. This document recognises each office as an official representative of an authority or entity with public status. It is a facilitating document which in no case infers Brussels-Capital Region legal or financial responsibility in any form whatsoever. To date 240 representations receive this certification every year.

In 2016 the CEIO intends to examine the feasibility of developing a special status for these representations.

5. PROSPECTS FOR 2016

Through the mutual political and technical contacts with the European institutions, the Commissioner's Office has drawn up a series of priorities which will be further highlighted during the course of 2016 to foster relations between the Brussels-Capital Region and the European institutions, in the framework of the region's seat policy.

1

Security around European and international institutions will be further explored, in particular in terms of the coordination of the regional and municipal planning and mobility interventions to promote security.

2

Allocation of the developer contributions collected from European and international institutions must be structurally better organised. For the redevelopment of block B it has already been confirmed that the contributions will be invested in the immediate surroundings of the project for which they are collected. To establish a structural framework, the CEIO is already in contact with other capital cities in the EU to identify good practices.

3

Finally, with the disappearance of the Urban Development Agency (ADT-ATO), which hitherto had a relatively complete overview of development projects in the European quarter, the CEIO will play a more active role in monitoring the area's development, in close cooperation with the *Bureau Bruxellois de la Planification/ Brussels Planningbureau* (BBP/BPB) and the regional and municipal authorities. A development road map will be drawn up for the purposes of coordination.

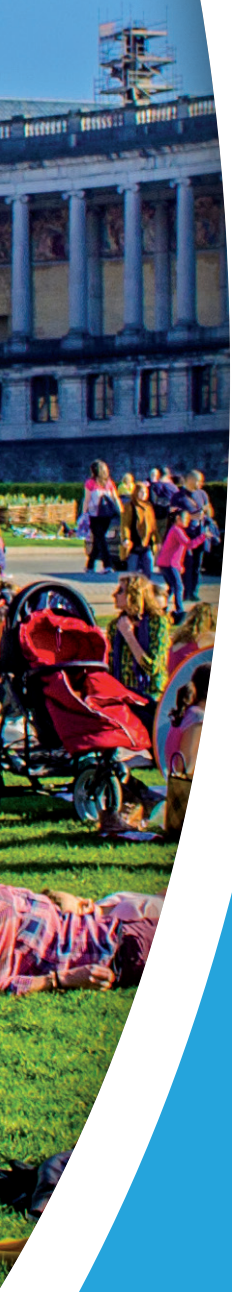




PART 3

The Expat Welcome Desk

Since 1st January 2015 the Expat Welcome Desk (EWD) of the Brussels-Europe Liaison Office has been integrated into the office of Alain Hutchinson, the Brussels Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations (CEIO). The EWD provides a welcome and administrative assistance service to all those who come to work in Brussels in or around the European and international institutions. It is therefore an integral part of the host region policy of the Brussels Commissioner's office.





1. METHOD

The EWD gives visitors individual advice by email and telephone, as well as in face-to-face meetings. The service is free of charge and provided in three languages (French, Dutch and English). A wide range of subjects are covered, principally in the areas of accommodation, registration and residence as well as taxes (see "Statistics").

In addition to the daily processing of questions, the EWD organises information sessions for specific groups such as trainees in the European institutions, the spouses of newly-arrived officials and diplomatic personnel.

In order to assure an effective and high-quality service, the EWD works closely with a number of administrations including the Immigration Office, the FPS of Foreign Affairs, Brussels municipalities (also called "communes"), as well as the Federal ministry of Finance and the Brussels Ministries for Economy and Employment.

The EWD has two offices employing three people:

Amélie BOVY – Legal adviser and Hélène JACUB – Assistant, in the main office; Annick DE BLESER – Assistant located in our antenna in the European Parliament.

The main office is located in CEIO's headquarters at 63 Avenue d'Auderghem/Oudergemlaan in Etterbeek, while a second office is situated on the ground floor in the main building of the European Parliament.

Our presence inside the European Parliament positions us as the front-line point of contact for its members and personnel, notably officials, parliamentary assistants and trainees. This proximity enables us to further strengthen links between the CEIO and the European Parliament.



A wide range of subjects are covered, principally in the areas of accommodation, registration and residence as well as taxes.





1 MISSION

We provide administrative assistance to the international community in Brussels through a dedicated and customized service

5 REASONS FOR USING OUR SERVICES

1. Free
2. Independent public service
3. Multilingual (English, French, Dutch)
4. One-stop shop
5. Direct link with administrations at the local, regional and federal level

2 OFFICES

- > Main office on Avenue d'Auderghem 63
1040 Brussels
- > European Parliament antenna

10 MOST FREQUENT ISSUES

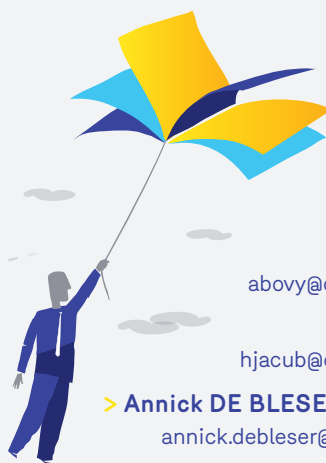


3 WAYS TO ASSIST YOU

- > By phone: +32 (0)2 430.66.00
- > By e-mail: info@commissioner.brussels
- > Ask for an appointment

2 COMMUNICATION TOOLS

- > Our website: www.commissioner.brussels
- > A joint monthly newsletter with visit.brussels, which includes a section dedicated specifically to the CEIO.



3 TEAM MEMBERS

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2. STATISTICS

Number of EWD cases by type over one year:



TOP 3 QUESTIONS TREATED

ACCOMMODATION

614 CASES OF WHICH

- > 230 CHECKING LEASES
- > 150 DISPUTES
- > 123 INFORMATION FOR PROPERTY SEARCH

RESIDENCE

368 CASES OF WHICH

- > 236 REGISTRATIONS IN THE POPULATION REGISTER
- > 39 INFO FOR SPECIAL IDENTITY CARDS
- > 36 VISA REQUESTS

TAXES

164 CASES OF WHICH

- > 114 ON INCOME TAX (INDIVIDUAL, TAX RETURNS)
- > 28 ON REGIONAL TAX
- > 11 ON CAR REGISTRATION TAX



Quantified analysis and commentary on the different cases:



ACCOMMODATION

614 CASES

COMMENTARY

This subject is one of the most important for the EWD. Lack of familiarity with our national languages and legislation in this area leads to many people from the European institutions seeking help from our office for general questions on renting, breaking leases, obtaining sample letters, settling disputes between landlord and tenant, details on rent indexation, translation of contracts and inventories of fixtures. We systematically check leases in terms of legality. Some problems are anticipated and explained in detail in order to give our clients as much information as possible before taking the decision to sign a contract.

Although each institution provides a similar welcome service for its employees, many of them come to our EWD, particularly our office in the European Parliament, because they know that they will receive advice the same day, with lease contracts often in need of urgent treatment.

Checking lease	230
Disputes	150
Accommodation search	123
Breaking lease	67
Info for purchase/sale	40
Registration of lease	4
Total	614

REGISTRATION AND RESIDENCE

368 CASES



COMMENTARY

The cases in this section concern the registration and residence of foreign individuals who live in the Brussels-Capital Region.

The questions tackled cover various aspects such as the residence permit, visas, family reunification, special identity cards and commitment that charge will be taken.

This section highlights the important role of the "link" that the CEIO fulfils between expats and local administrations.

The EWD comes to the help of foreigners who find themselves blocked in their administrative endeavours with the commune either through their lack of knowledge of the language or because of the particularity of their own situation as personnel in a European or international institution. Often misunderstood or having received refusals during their initial visits to the municipalities' offices, foreigners feel frustrated and contact us in the hope of successfully completing the formalities.

Registration in the municipality always seems a fastidious task, both for Europeans and non-Europeans. Indeed, the procedure takes several months, which is not easy to understand for foreigners who sometimes find themselves in a delicate situation which slows down other steps (such as opening a bank account or the other spouse looking for work).

Registration in the population register	236
Special identity card	39
Visa	36
Family reunification	29
E+ card	20
Non-EU permanent residence	7
Commitment that charge will be taken	1
Total	368



TAXES

164 CASES



Income tax	114
Regional tax	28
Second residence tax	11
Car registration tax	11
Total	164

COMMENTARY

Following the introduction of open borders inside the EU, Belgium has received more and more foreign workers. But despite European harmonisation in many areas, national laws remain complex. The EWD receives numerous requests in this area of taxation...

How to fill in my tax return even though I am exempt from income tax?

Who has to pay the regional tax?

I am a cross-border worker; how can I avoid double taxation?

How do they calculate the tax on the purchase of property?

How much tax will I pay on my income?...



MISCELLANEOUS

107 CASES

COMMENTARY

In addition to recurrent cases, the EWD replies to a series of ad hoc questions on a great variety of subjects: questions about our office, the Brussels administrations, the impact of the European Union on Brussels, the legal system, the press, and many more...

TRANSPORT

87 CASES



COMMENTARY

The EWD is frequently consulted about vehicle importation and registration. Some expats are served with a summons because they are resident here but have not yet registered their car.

Car registration	57
Driving licences	10
Transit plates	9
Resident parking card	6
Transport info	5
Total	87



WORK

86 CASES



Work permit	32
Search for employment	18
Employment contract	15
Self-employed status	11
Domestic work	6
Au pair work	3
Professional card	1
Total	86

COMMENTARY

It is surprising to see how much we are confronted with questions concerning cross-border employment to Belgium. The EWD therefore has to analyse the situation of people wanting to work case by case and take various parameters into consideration (nationality, situation of spouse and type of activity). Several requests involved work permit B and internship permits. We help people assemble all the necessary documents and then we forward the application directly to the regional employment ministry. These requests usually result in a successful conclusion.

SETTLING IN AND DAILY LIFE

63 CASES



COMMENTARY

We often receive ad hoc questions related to daily life: where can I find a paediatrician or a notary? Where can I find information about museums in Brussels? Where can I buy a pre-paid telephone card?

Cohabitation	8
Legalisation	6
Divorce	5
Marriage	5
Nationality	5
Birth	3
Voting	1
Total	33

CIVIL STATUS

33 CASES

COMMENTARY

The range of cases in this area is vast.
We reply to all questions related to civil status:
How can I obtain Belgian nationality? Do I have to legalise my foreign birth certificate? How can I vote in local elections?
Can I make a legal declaration of cohabitation with my boyfriend who has just arrived?





SOCIAL SECURITY

42 CASES



Health insurance	19
Unemployment	15
Limosa registration (for foreign workers)	4
Pensions	2
Family allowances	2
Total	42

COMMENTARY

People come to us principally for explanations on how the social security system works in Belgium and how to join a mutual insurer. The Belgian system differs from many in other European countries. Having to register with a mutual health company is a step often misunderstood or unknown amongst expat workers.

CHILDREN AND EDUCATION

32 CASES

COMMENTARY

The EWD helps families in several aspects of settling in Brussels. Learning a foreign language, particularly when it is spoken in the country of residence, is one of the preoccupations of new arrivals in Brussels. The search for a crèche or school is also an important goal for newly-arrived parents in Brussels. Frequently establishments are unable to admit a new child because of a shortage of places. Parents then consult us in order to understand how the system works and we direct them to the relevant organisations.



Schools	15
Language courses	9
Day nurseries	8
Total	32

INSURANCE

13 CASES

Disputes	11
Ombudsman	2
Total	13



COMMENTARY

People often contact us after they have encountered a problem with travel, an insurance or a purchase. Maybe the hotel didn't conform to the description in the holiday brochure, or the new washing machine is defective, or the price of a mobile subscription has suddenly increased... We often guide these people to the relevant mediators or specialised arbitrators in a particular sector.



FINES

16 CASES

<i>Fines</i>	10
<i>Disputes</i>	6
Total	16

COMMENTARY

Many expats ask us for explanations about a fine they have received from the police, and the procedures to be followed.





3. COMPLETED PROJECTS AND/OR IN PROGRESS

COLLABORATION WITH THE CITY OF BRUSSELS IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT OFFICE

During 2014 the City of Brussels contacted us and expressed the wish to organise a good reception for new parliamentarians and their staff by creating fast-track access to administrative registration and formalities. The idea was to move a civil servant of the City to our office in the European Parliament from time to time, in order to enable the newly-elected members, their staff and officials to register and complete some of the administrative formalities (special identity cards, residence certificates, ordering and issuing identity cards, etc.) directly and without having to go to the foreigners' desk which, in the case of the City of Brussels, is seriously overloaded. In order to be even-handed, a letter was sent to the other 18 Brussels communes inviting them to also join the project.

After a period of analysis and setting up the necessary tools and technical solutions, European Parliament personnel were informed of the pilot project on 12th January 2015. The first series of appointments of this City of Brussels administration "counter" with the EP took place on Thursday 29th January 2015. In agreement with the City of Brussels

and the EWD, the opening slot for meetings was fixed for Thursday mornings of each week, except during the Strasbourg plenary session.

Two months after the launch of this pilot project, a report was prepared by the Relations Unit with European Parliament personnel in which the following conclusions were drawn:

- The reaction of Parliament personnel to this new service was very positive. The simplification of administrative procedures by the coordinated intervention of services from the EP and City of Brussels, particularly for complicated cases, was always highly effective and appreciated.
- In addition to the resolution of specific cases, customer service in general was improved thanks to more direct and continuous contact between administrations.
- The novel character of the initiative created interest from other institutions such as the Welcome Office of the European Commission.



This report was approved on 28th September 2015 by the Secretary General of the Parliament and led to the following decisions:

- To continue the project under current procedures relating to the City of Brussels.
- With the City of Brussels and the EWD, explore additional possible improvements to the services provided (notably the number of representatives and operations available as well as improvement of the work space and waiting area).
- Follow up the request of the European Commission to join this service, the means of which are to be defined.
- Remain open to the extension of the project vis-à-vis other municipalities.

In 2016 a letter will be sent by the CEIO to Ixelles and Schaerbeek communes in order to reiterate our proposition of collaboration in regard to this pilot project. Both municipalities have a higher concentration of personnel from European institutions and their presence in the Parliament would be extremely useful.





ANALYSE THE QUESTION OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF THE INTERNSHIP CONTRACTS OF EUROPEAN (EU) AND NON-EUROPEAN (NON-EU) TRAINEES WORKING FOR MEPS

On 17th September 2015 a meeting was held at the CEIO between the Head of Unit of the Directorate-General for Finance-Directorate for Members' Financial and Social Entitlements and the EWD concerning the question of the legal framework of EU and non-EU trainee internship contracts of MEPs.

MEPs have the possibility to welcome three trainees simultaneously in their teams in Brussels. These internships are not systematically linked to training (mandatory internship) and no particular conditions are required to obtain such an internship. The trainees sign an internship agreement directly with the MEPs and not with the Parliament. In fact MEPs do not have the status of employer in Belgium and therefore sign a convention with a trainee without any legal formality.

MEPs are free to fix remuneration for the internship with a ceiling of €1482 (net) per month. The internships have a maximum duration of 6 months and may be renewed twice, which extends the maximum duration to 18 months. The number of EP trainees present in Brussels varies constantly but is in the order of 500 to 600 on average. It is clear that this very general framework brings no homogeneity to the status of MEP trainees, some being paid and others not, some not using the contract format established by the Parliament, and the duration of internships being different. In addition, no specific regulation applies for non-EU trainees in regard to work permits, which does not comply with Belgian law. In view of this, the EWD was contacted by the Directorate-General for Finance-Directorate for Members' Financial and Social Entitlements in order to examine the question.

WORKING MEETING WITH THE WELCOME OFFICES OF THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS (29/06 IN THE OFFICE OF THE CEIO).

The objective of this meeting – which involved managers of Welcome Offices of all European institutions, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Immigration Office – was to present the CEIO and its EWD and highlight the various problems facing European institution personnel, particularly in the area of residence formalities (granting and expiration of E+ cards ...). Following this meeting it was decided that a notice would be established in collaboration with the Immigration Office to remind the communes of certain regulations concerning residence. It was also agreed to draw up a list of the advantages and disadvantages of the special identity card issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, compared with the residence permit issued by the commune. This work will be carried out during 2016.



1ST NETWORKING MEETING OF DIPLOMATIC LIAISON PERSONNEL IN BRUSSELS (21/09 IN THE OFFICE OF THE CEIO)

Organised at the initiative of the German Embassy and Permanent representation, this meeting brought together the “family officers” of various embassies whose role is to welcome new members of staff and their families. The goal was to meet the EWD and highlight the various services that it can provide. Fourteen embassies were represented including the United States and Australia. Numerous questions were asked in regard to lease problems and commune registration. Further meetings with this particular group will be organised during 2016. Since this event the EWD has received several questions from embassy personnel. This is a new target group for the CEIO which has been reached relatively little in the past by the Brussels-Europe Liaison Office.



NOTE FROM THE IMMIGRATION OFFICE ON D VISAS FOR NON-EU TRAINEES

At the request of the Immigration Office, the EWD produced an update of the notice to diplomatic posts, written in 2013 concerning D Visas for non-EU trainees of the European institutions. It consisted principally of adapting the amounts of grants in function of each institution. This notice will from now on be updated by the EWD every year.

4. INFORMATION SESSIONS AND STANDS

Throughout the year the EWD takes part in information sessions and various events for the international community.



WELCOME FOR TRAINEES IN THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS

2ND AND 16TH FEBRUARY, 2ND MARCH, 1ST AND 16TH SEPTEMBER, 1ST OCTOBER

Every year almost 2000 (official) trainees, mostly EU-nationals, come to Brussels to work in the European institutions. In 2015 the EWD worked with trainees in the European Parliament, the Council of the EU, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Committee of the Regions (CoR). A presentation entitled “*Trainee? Welcome to Brussels*” was given during each session. It is also available on line: https://prezi.com/-uaiw-bc8_qp/trainee-welcome-to-brussels/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy

Welcome packs were also distributed. Each institution hosts two series of trainees per year.

COFFEE MORNING FOR PARTNERS OF OFFICIALS

18TH AND 23RD JUNE

Once or twice a year, the European Parliament and European Commission organise information sessions for spouses and partners of new officials and representatives to whom the EWD is linked. Regular subjects covered during these sessions include residence formalities, the special identity card and the search for employment. The EWD has a presentation dedicated specifically to this target group which is available on line:

<https://prezi.com/oe3zlh3zvhew/spouses-welcome-to-brussels/>





INFO DAY AT THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

18TH MARCH

Organised by the Welcome Office of the European Commission at the Berlaymont (Piazza), Info Day is a day of information dedicated to new arrivals with numerous information stands. It includes stands featuring internal Commission services (PMO, schools, etc.), expat associations, and several Brussels municipalities and institutions. At the request of the European Commission, the CEIO is responsible for inviting the 19 Brussels municipalities to the event.

INFORMATION DAYS FOR NEW EESC MEMBERS

22TH AND 23RD SEPTEMBER

The EWD operated a stand to represent the CEIO at the EESC during the welcome of new EESC members.

UNIVERSITY OF KENT

23RD SEPTEMBER

A presentation was given for the first time to students at the University of Kent by the EWD's legal adviser and the "Europe" representative of visit.brussels. The presentation "*Student? Welcome to Brussels*" consists of two parts (1. Cultural/daily life 2. Administration) and is available online:

https://prezi.com/tr2ccclag6601/student-welcome-to-brussels/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy

The organisers wish to continue this project with future welcome sessions for students.

5. PROSPECTS FOR 2016

Several meetings and projects will be organised in 2016:

1

A MEETING WITH ALDERMEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CIVIL REGISTRAR AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS OF THE 19 BRUSSELS COMMUNES

in order to present the CEIO and reiterate the intermediate role played by the EWD between the foreigners' desk of the communes and the international community.

2

A TRAINING DAY AT THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT FOR LOCAL OFFICIALS

to enable them to strengthen their knowledge, particularly in the area of administrative issues related to internationals living and working in Brussels.

3

A SEMINAR FOR REGIONAL REPRESENTATIONS

on the theme of *"temporary posting and social security issues"*.

4

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER WILL BE PUBLISHED

jointly with visit.brussels in which articles will be dedicated by the EWD to topics of interest for the international community.

5

ALTERATION WORK IS PLANNED FOR OUR OFFICE IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

following the future departure of visit.brussels which currently shares the facilities.





CONCLUSION

There can be no doubt that the benefits of the presence of the international community in Brussels outweigh the disadvantages. Only think of the 121,000 jobs and the €5 billion of added value to the Brussels economy.

Nevertheless, we cannot ignore the fact that there are also less positive sides to this international character, which must indeed be tackled. Unfortunately, it is these obstacles that are often magnified into a caricature by the media.

Numerous European capital cities envy Brussels for its position. As a consequence of the enlargement of the EU and NATO, several serious candidates are putting themselves forward as hosts for European and international organisations, and can often offer a very attractive set of conditions. The advocates of such relocation are well known.

Meanwhile, with the creation of the Brussels Commissioner's Office for Europe and International Organisations the Brussels-Capital Region has equipped itself with an appropriate tool to counter these attempts. In 2016 it will continue the structural consultations with the European institutions that were set up in 2015, and will continue to liaise with international organisations.

Our range of action is very broad, as is the number of issues with which we are faced. The challenges for a small team are thus by no means small. But only by continuing with dialogue, consultation and cooperation will we succeed in permanently anchoring all these international organisations in Brussels.

Karin IMPENS
Deputy to the Commissioner

Alain HUTCHINSON
Commissioner

NOTES

At the initiative of the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region:



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