



**commissioner**  
**.brussels**   
europe & international



# 2016

## Annual report

of the Brussels Commissioner  
for Europe and International Organisations



*“Brussels cultivates the unequalled art of a simple, warm welcome thanks to the atmosphere that only the people of Brussels know how to create.”*

JACQUES DELORS,  
former President of the European Commission

# Preface

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Brussels is the institutional capital of Europe and every day it hosts delegations from around the world which come to participate in high-level meetings.

We are delighted that the international community has selected our capital to host the European institutions and many international organisations.

The presence of these institutions and organisations is of crucial importance for political and economic reasons, as well as for more fundamental reasons. The significant international migration linked to this presence constitutes an enrichment for the Region from all points of view.

This position also implies a range of important obligations.

After operating for two years, the principal guideline for my mandate as Brussels Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations (CEIO) is still to commit fully to the creation of a dynamic solution-oriented seat policy, capable of competing internationally.

This activity report presents a detailed description and deep analysis of the policy carried out since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015. It also covers the achievements of 2016 and touches on the outlook for 2017.

I believe that the regional host policy is on the right track, but that there is still a long way to go and much still needs to be done by our regional and communal administrations. Even though we can see that the gap between the European district and the rest of the Region remains wide, too wide, and that a feeling of reservation towards the European public authorities persists, we also notice that the European institutions are much more open to dialogue and cooperation with their host region than in the past.

I find it therefore impossible not to mention the difficult relationship between certain communes, the Region and the federal government. The institutional complexity, reinforced particularly by a staggering territorial complexity, remains a real obstacle to the effective resolution of issues that face us.

The CEIO endeavours to play a unifying role with all the players involved in this district which is so strategic for our Region, the communes and their inhabitants. Nevertheless, careful thought on the effective coordination of Belgian public authorities, and particularly Brussels authorities, is indispensable if we wish to further and sustainably strengthen the confidence which our international partners have in us.

Through the Commissioner's Office, the Brussels authorities have made a commitment and invested in their relationship with the European institutions. Together with all the principal stakeholders – communes and regional organisms and ministries – we will continue in the direction which we have taken and persevere in finding solutions, including those for the most difficult issues we are facing.

**Alain HUTCHINSON**

*Commissioner of the Brussels Government*

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# The CEIO

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# 1. International presence in Brussels

## 1.1 Key figures

If Brussels is referred to as the capital of Europe, it is mainly thanks to the presence of many organisations of the European Union and number of other international institutions:



## 1.2 International rankings

The capital of Europe occupies a strategic position in international rankings:



**1<sup>st</sup> city in the world** in the number of **diplomats**

**1<sup>st</sup> city in Europe for congresses,**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> in the world**

**2<sup>nd</sup> city in Europe** in number of  
**languages spoken**

**3<sup>rd</sup> city in Europe** in terms of  
**economic potential**

## 1.3 Economy and employment

The presence of all these international institutions is obviously of vital importance to the Brussels economy and employment.

This international presence generates about **121 000 jobs** (81 000 directly / 40 000 indirectly). This means that the sector is good for **16,7% of employment in Brussels** and guarantees an **Added Value of about 5 billion euro** in the Brussels-Capital Region.

**121 000** jobs,

i.e. **16,7%** of employment in Brussels,

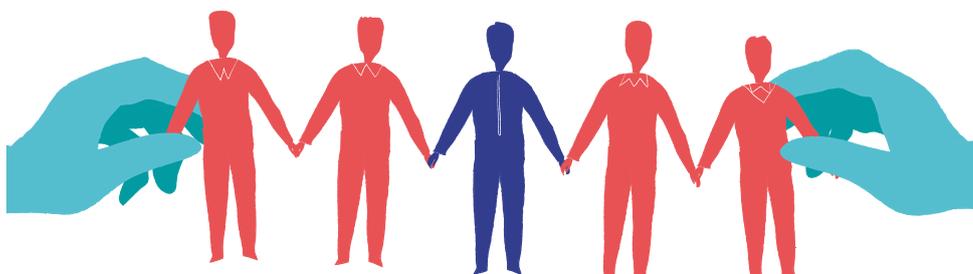
i.e. **5 billion euro**

Added Value in the Brussels-Capital Region.



## 1.4 Population

The impact of the international role of Brussels is more evident than ever in the composition of its population: **1 in 3 Brussels residents** has a **foreign nationality** and **1 in 5** is an **EU national**.



The publication “Brussels-Europe, the figures 2016<sup>1</sup>” reveals in more detail these key figures on the international presence in Brussels.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.commissioner.brussels/i-am-an-expat/news/item/625-brussels-europe-in-figures>

## 2. Mission

As headquarters for 6 European institutions, 14 EU organisations and 42 intergovernmental organisations, the Region has a heavy responsibility to successfully manage its growing internationalisation. Indeed the presence of all these institutions has a major impact on Brussels' economy and society. The Brussels government accepted this responsibility without hesitation, and it led to the creation, at the end of 2014, of the Brussels Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations (CEIO).

With this initiative, the Brussels government launched the development of a clear and coherent host policy which, within the framework of its regional competences, will enable the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR) to position itself as a region with an international vocation. The mission of the CEIO is to develop a host region policy centred around the hosting of all international organisations on Brussels territory while respecting the harmonious development of the Region and its inhabitants.





With this objective, the CEIO acts as mediator between the Brussels authorities and the European and international institutions established in Brussels. Concretely, this signifies that the CEIO operates as one-stop shop for all requests emanating from the European and international organisations concerning urban development, security, mobility, planning of public space, and that it assures all necessary coordination related to this.

In addition, the CEIO should be consulted on all public projects likely to have an impact on international organisations and their presence in Brussels. In this respect, the CEIO formulates advice and recommendations to the Brussels government.

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. The CEIO also supports regional representations, particularly concerning the annual issuing of the regional certificate by the Minister for External Relations.

The host region policy covers a great number of areas and is principally directed at the European institutions. The Commissioner has therefore been given a political mandate by the Brussels government, and he can also count on constructive collaboration with the communes. The Commissioner therefore represents the Brussels authorities and acts on their behalf in a coordinated effort.

# 3 Team



The dynamic multilingual (EN, FR, NL, DE, IT) CEIO team assures the role of political and administrative intermediary between the Brussels public authorities and the European and international institutions established in Brussels. Our activities revolve around two principal areas:

- > **A one-stop shop for requests from the European and international institutions** relating to urban development, security, environment, mobility and the planning of public spaces;
- > **An Expat Welcome Desk** which offers a personalised administrative assistance service to the international community settling in BCR and which facilitates the welcome of new arrivals in Brussels.



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# 4 Governing bodies

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

General Assembly	Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Alain HUTCHINSON, President</li><li>• Haroun ATILA</li><li>• Jérôme DE MOT</li><li>• Valentin GRAAS</li><li>• Ief JANSSENS</li><li>• Frank LELON</li><li>• Julien MILQUET</li><li>• Jeremy ONKELINX</li><li>• Laurent VAN DER ELST</li><li>• Charles-Eric VILAIN XIII</li><li>• Florence WAUTELET</li><li>• David ZYLBERBERG</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Alain HUTCHINSON, President</li><li>• Haroun ATILA</li><li>• Jérôme DE MOT</li><li>• Valentin GRAAS</li><li>• Ief JANSSENS</li><li>• Frank LELON</li><li>• Julien MILQUET</li><li>• Laurent VAN DER ELST</li><li>• Charles-Eric VILAIN XIII</li><li>• Florence WAUTELET</li><li>• David ZYLBERBERG</li></ul>

## The meetings:



### General Assembly and Board meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> April 2016

Adoption of the minutes of the General Assembly and Board of 19<sup>th</sup> October 2015, presentation of 2015 accounts and financial report, approval of 2015 accounts and discharge of board members, 2016 budget proposal, presentation of 2015 activity report and presentation of current activities.



### General Assembly and Board of Directors of 5<sup>th</sup> December 2016

Adoption of the minutes of the General Assembly and Board of 13<sup>th</sup> April 2016, 2017 budget proposal, appointment of two auditors, appointment and dismissal of board members, new staff member, proposal to introduce associate members, presentation of current activities and 2017 action plan.

# 5. Communication

## 5.1 Communication actions

### Website

The new website has been operational since January 2016 (in English only). It is a real hub of information for expats in the capital. Amongst other information, it contains data on the European presence in Brussels and practical information about administrative procedures for the international community. It is also directed at local authorities and international organisations, particularly in matters related to urban development, mobility and security in the European district. Lastly, the website includes a “news” column (EN, FR, NL) to keep users constantly up to date on practical topics related to life in Brussels and information concerning cultural activities taking place in the European district.

The site's simple and intuitive presentation enables visitors to access its various pages easily. The idea is to make it the preferred platform offering finely targeted information to new arrivals here. It will also help to give our Region a positive image with a group of the population that is one of the most important “ambassadors” for Brussels abroad.





## be expat be.brussels newsletter

The monthly newsletter *be expat be.brussels* from visit.brussels (the Brussels tourist agency) includes an article on the EWD dedicated to practical aspects of life in Brussels. This article is written on a different subject every month by our legal adviser. This trilingual newsletter (EN, FR, NL) is aimed at expats and sent to more than 12 500 persons from September to June. European Parliament staff and MEPs receive it directly via intranet through our office in the European Parliament. It is also available on our website in the “news” section of the EWD. Since February 2016, subscription to the newsletter can be made via the website.

These are the articles written by the EWD in 2016:

- What changes in 2016?
- Your checklist for renting accommodation!
- How to park legally?
- Free seminar: how to fill in your annual tax form?
- The latest edition of the “Expats in Brussels” guide has just come out!
- Greeter Klaus: 10 tips on how to settle down in Brussels!
- How to run a tourist accommodation in Brussels?
- When do you have to register with the commune?
- How to obtain permanent residency?
- Car accident? Practical advice!



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**WIN TICKETS : DISCOVER BRUSSELS!**



**December : Gastronomy, opera, New Year's eve and Winter Wonders!**

This month, our prize basket again includes some original prizes to discover Brussels by answering ten very simple questions. Check them out and try your luck!

\* a dinner for two persons in the restaurant "L'Esplanade"  
 \* two tickets for the concert "The Brussels Philharmonic" for the past New Year's eve parties in Brussels  
 \* two tickets for the exhibition "The Brussels Philharmonic" including 3 theatre performances, 1 museum and 1 cinema  
 \* four tickets for the exhibition "The Brussels Philharmonic 2016" at The Concertgebouw  
 \* two tickets for the exhibition "The Brussels Philharmonic" at Maison Margat  
 \* two tickets for the concert "The Brussels Philharmonic" at the Theatre Royal de la Monnaie  
 \* two tickets for the concert "The Brussels Philharmonic" at the Theatre Royal de la Monnaie  
 \* two tickets for the concert "The Brussels Philharmonic" at the Theatre Royal de la Monnaie  
 \* two tickets for the exhibition "The Brussels Philharmonic" at the Theatre Royal de la Monnaie

[More info](#)

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**NEWS IN BRUSSELS**



**Canal ambience!**

COOP is a new Brussels 3,000 m<sup>2</sup> economic and cultural centre, partly financed with European Union funds. It offers a permanent exhibition around the canal neighbourhood, workshops, artistic events, creative projects, and a new innovation work site. This new venue is also a place for working and learning. The building is the oldest four-story building that is now converted and renovated.

[More info](#)

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**BE BRUSSELEIR!**



**Community opera at La Monnaie**

La Monnaie is launching a community opera project that aims bringing together all ages, social backgrounds, cultures, and diverse beliefs in Brussels. The piece combines music, poetry, and the visual arts and will be a performance about the ancient Greek mythical stories of Oedipus and Euripides, combined with the love story of Mignon and Lulu, famous in the Middle East.

[More info](#)

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**EXPAT WELCOME DESK**



**Practical advice in the event of a car accident**

Car accidents? Keep your mind sharp and trust your instincts. However, you can quickly feel overwhelmed, and it's hard to stay calm. Being an expatriate in Brussels and not necessarily fluent in our language does not help matters much. The Expats Welcome Desk tells you how to respond.

[More info](#)

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**EUROPE IN BRUSSELS**



**Now in the E-Quarter: Altium and Micro Market Place**

The European quarter evolves! The new welcome centre for the European Parliament group, Altium, has just opened its doors and the Place Jean Rey will host the fourth European micro-market of European products.

[More info](#)

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**FOCUS ON ... BEER**



**Brussels Artisanal Beer Festival**

Brussels hosts the Brussels Artisanal Beer Festival for the first time - an excellent opportunity for you to discover local and foreign breweries. On 8 December the festival will have lots of food, music, activities, and artisanal beers for you to discover.

[More info](#)

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**FOCUS ON ... MUSEUM**



**Sabena. Travel in style!**

The Alouette offers you the chance to return to Sabena's glamorous world during an exhibition that takes its history through modern aerodynamics, interiors, and graphics. The exhibition also embraces a break-in-café, bar, and in-flight activities.

[More info](#)

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**FOCUS ON ... EVENTS**



**Christmas Market: "Winter Wonders!"**

Those five weeks of charming atmosphere, colorful shops, gift ideas, original language, etc. have started again. Now the year of Winter Wonders in Brussels - a month-long event shows celebrating Belgian-Japanese tradition at Saint Catherine Church with an exclusive field of last drops on Grand-Place and so much more.

[More info](#)

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**FOCUS ON ... CINEMA**



**Be Film Festival 2016**

Did you miss the season's Belgian film events or do you want to see some masterpieces of black, white, and color again? For the first time, use the good pictures and appreciate a whole series of prestigious Belgian cinema figures. Many great previews of Belgian films are also provided.

[More info](#)

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**WE LISTEN TO YOU**  
 NUS LISTEN TO YOU  
 NOUS VOUS ÉCOUTONS  
 WILHOUDT PRINCEZ U

for quality  
 be.brussels  
 #BeInMindset/qualitydestination

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**CONTACT US!**

Forward

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18

## EWD brochure

In 2016 a brochure dedicated exclusively to the Expat Welcome Desk was released in order to better meet the needs of the international community and improve the visibility of the EWD. This attractive and reader-friendly brochure primarily presents the team and the principal activities of the helpdesk.



## Advertisements and articles for the EWD

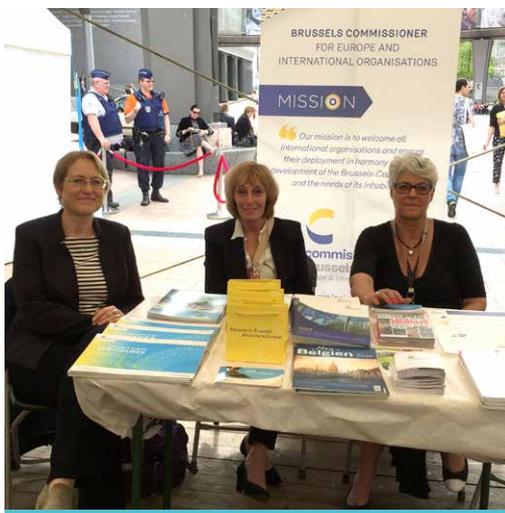
In order to reach an expat audience, the Expat Welcome Desk of the CEIO regularly publishes advertisements and articles in specialized media. An attractive and pertinent visual was created for this purpose.

In 2016 advertisements and articles were published in:

- *Expats in Brussels* guide 2016 (May);
- *Newshound*, the internal publication of the European Parliament (June);
- *Living here – Summer in Brussels* guide 2016, The Bulletin (June);
- *Politico.eu* website, media covering news of key EU institutions (August);
- *Brussels Times* website (September);
- *Chambre de Commerce & Union des Entreprises de Bruxelles* website – Beci.be (October);
- «*Bladet*», the journal of the Swedish Club of Belgium (October).

## Prezi presentations

Throughout the year the EWD takes part in information sessions for the international community (see below in section “Expat Welcome Desk”). During these sessions, the EWD gives a Prezi presentation of the principal information for newcomers. The Prezi internet platform enables users to create dynamic and audience-friendly presentations that are very easily shared via social media. In 2017 they will be available on the website, giving easy access to practical information presented in our information sessions.



## Information stands

In addition to seminars and information sessions given by the EWD (see below in section “Expat Welcome Desk”), the CEIO organises information stands to inform expats on the opportunities for getting involved culturally and socially in the city.

In 2016 the team was present at the following events:

- **Info day** at the European Commission (16<sup>th</sup> March);
- **Open doors Day** of the EU institutions at the European Parliament and at the Committee of the Regions (28<sup>th</sup> May);
- **28 on your plate** on the Esplanade of the European Parliament (22<sup>th</sup> June);
- **Afterwork *be summer be.brussels*** at Grand Central Café (27<sup>th</sup> June).

## 5.2 Events

### Organisation and participation

Throughout 2016 the CEIO organised and contributed to events in partnership with various partners. These were aimed at increasing expats’ involvement in Brussels life and raising local inhabitants’ awareness of the international dimension of their Region, capital of the European Union. In other words, the co-organisation of actions aimed at welcoming the international community in Brussels also helps to increase the visibility of the “Europe” theme (including the European district) in the promotion of Brussels. These partnerships serve not only to strengthen collaboration between the Brussels and international authorities, but also to establish coordination between their touristic and

cultural policies (further details on “Tourism working group” can be found in the section “Host policy”).

In addition, on several occasions the Brussels Commissioner met some of those responsible for the communication of the European institutions, notably Mr Reijo KEMPPINEN (Director general of Communication of the Council of the EU) and Ms Juana LAHOUSSE (then Director general of Communication in the European Parliament).

Below is an overview of events that we have organised or to which we have contributed:

- Association by the municipality of Ixelles/Elsene with the **inauguration of the weekly bio market on Place du Luxembourg** (19<sup>th</sup> April);
- **Intermediary role** in the **official invitation of Martin SCHULZ** (then President of the European Parliament) **to the Brussels Parliament** in order to strengthen dialogue between the Region and the European institutions (20<sup>th</sup> April);
- **Launch of the Brussels Circle of diplomatic artists** (an initiative of the German embassy and the German permanent representation) for the **opening event at E-Gallery** (19<sup>th</sup> May);
- **Role of moderator** on the “*Brussels, why it’s important to be there!*” seminar during the **European Business Summit** in Egmont Palace (1<sup>st</sup> June);
- **Organisation of the Afterwork *be summer be.brussels*** at **Grand Central Café** on Place Jean Rey, in collaboration with visit.brussels (27<sup>th</sup> June);
- **Participation in the organisation of the “Ambassadors’ event”** organised by visit.brussels – **gala in Train World** to promote the attractiveness of the Region to the diplomatic community (8<sup>th</sup> December)



## Promotion

Since June 2016 the CEIO carries out the targeted promotion of its events via the *Sendinblue* internet platform, an innovative relationship-marketing solution. This tool offers numerous functionalities including the ability to create and follow the campaigns, and to easily import and manage contact lists. Thanks to its large gallery and vast choice of models, it is possible to create attractive and personalised visuals. In 2016 we created personalised visuals for three events: the seminar organised by the EWD on the tax declaration; the afterwork *be summer be.brussels*; and the commune training day (see EWD section).

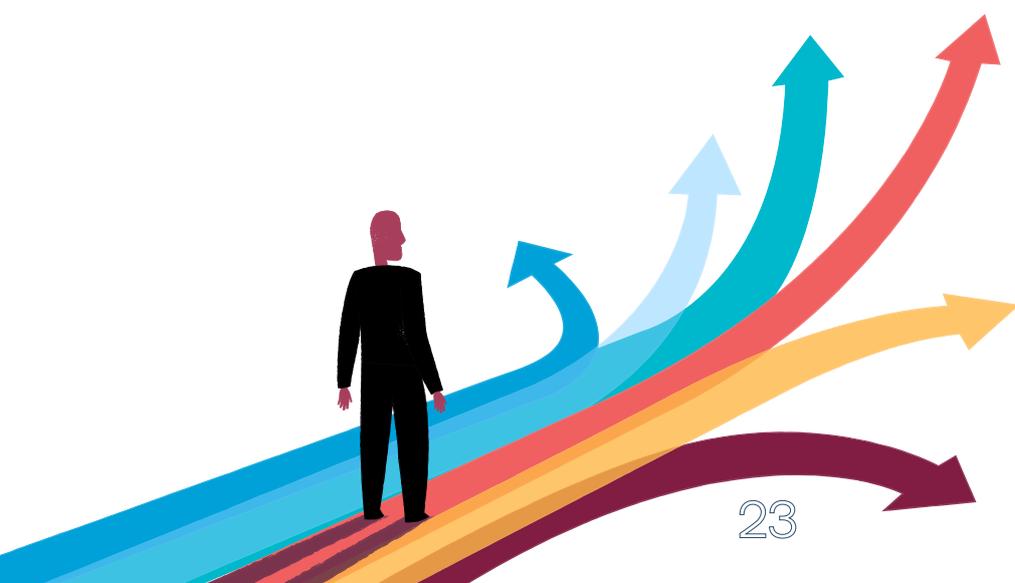


The “news” section on our website also enables us to promote events which take place in the European district. Below is an overview from 2016:

- Promotion for the opening of a **weekly bio market on Place du Luxembourg** in Ixelles/Elsene (April);
- Promotion for the **4<sup>th</sup> edition of the Bread Fair on the Schuman Roundabout** (May);
- Promotion of the **2016 Open Doors Day of the European institutions** (May);
- Promotion of the **2016 edition of Nuit Blanche in the European district** (October);
- Promotion of **Schuman Lights Up**, lighting of the Schuman Roundabout and various events to mark end of year festivities (December);
- Communication to target groups for the **Open Doors day of the Europa building**, the iconic new building for the Council of the EU (December).

## 5.3 Outlook for 2017

- > **Presentation of the 2016 annual report to the media** in order to introduce CEIO activities after two years of operation, and build awareness amongst Brussels inhabitants of the importance of the international presence in our Region;
- > Development of a common strategy with visit.brussels for the **distribution of “welcome packs” to the international community**. The objective is to help make newcomers feel welcome by offering them administrative and cultural information about Brussels. These welcome packs will be coordinated by visit.brussels (creation, preparation and distribution);
- > **Creation of a new brochure for the EWD in a step-by-step style**, grouping the principal practical and administrative information for settling in Brussels. This brochure, which will be more complete than the 2016 edition, will help us to better meet the needs of newcomers and will be coordinated with the distribution of the welcome packs for expats;
- > **Progressively develop the presence of the CEIO on social media** to increase its visibility. The objective is twofold: to create “direct” communication with the expat community by presenting our administrative assistance service, and to highlight the CEIO role amongst regional and international authorities;
- > **Development of the EWD section on the website:** creation of a “nationality” and “Brexit” tab, adding more detail in the “buying and selling property” section, and enriching the “leisure & social life” tab in association with visit.brussels.



# 6

□ Overview 2016

**1** BCR-EU  
summit

**2** study  
trips

**68** political  
meetings

**4** seminars

**47** technical  
meetings

**82** coordination/  
concertation  
meetings

**1638** files handled  
by the Expat  
Welcome Desk

**2000** official European institution  
trainees

**23** presentations  
and speeches

**127** participants  
in *commune*  
training

**5** information  
stands

**14** information  
sessions

**10** newsletters

**26** press  
articles

**39** urban development  
files handled

**11** events promoted  
to international community

**6** organised  
events

**167** official letters to the authorities

**234** regional  
certificates



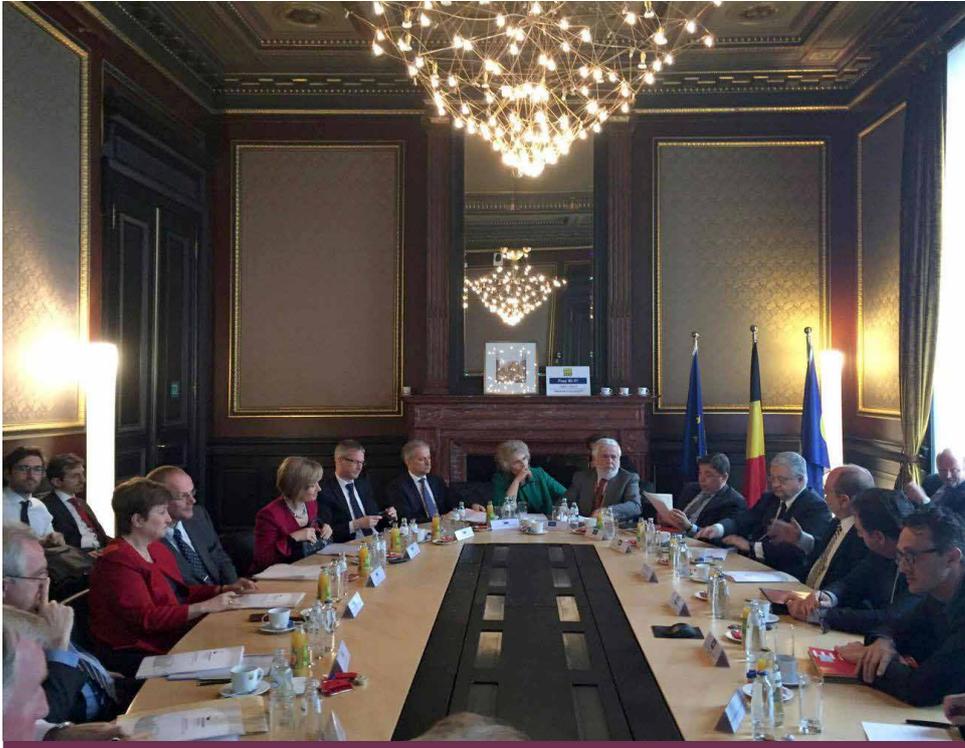
# A host region policy

# 1 The CEIO as a privileged intermediary

The Brussels–Capital Region (BCR) attaches considerable importance to the presence of international organisations on its territory, their impact on urban dynamics and their interaction with the existing fabric. It is against this background that the Brussels Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations (CEIO) operates, particularly in its involvement with major projects planned for the European district such as the implementation of the “Projet Urbain Loi” (PUL) and the redevelopment of the Schuman Roundabout.

During its second year of operation, the CEIO undertook to strengthen the bonds of confidence established between the regional and international authorities. Indeed the CEIO is the primary go-between for all international organisations and diplomatic representations needing to get in contact with Brussels regional authorities. Its role is primarily to advise them of the Region’s strategies and objectives which could concern them, as well as to identify the most opportune policies and administrative roadmaps.





Negotiations on questions relating to policy on property, urban development, mobility and security require constant dialogue between the Region and the European institutions. For this reason, the CEIO organises a BCR<sup>1</sup>-EU summit once or twice a year, dealing at the highest level with all questions deemed to require a fundamental agreement between the parties involved.

The third summit, held on 31 May 2016, brought together the Brussels government (represented by the Minister-President, the Minister for External Relations, the Minister for Mobility and the Brussels Commissioner) and the political representatives from the European institutions (European Parliament, European Commission, Council of the European Union, European External Action Service, Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee). Commitments agreed during these summits guide CEIO activities and working groups in which the various Brussels authorities participate.

<sup>1</sup> Brussels-Capital Region.

## 2 Urban development, mobility and environment

### 2.1 Tourism working group

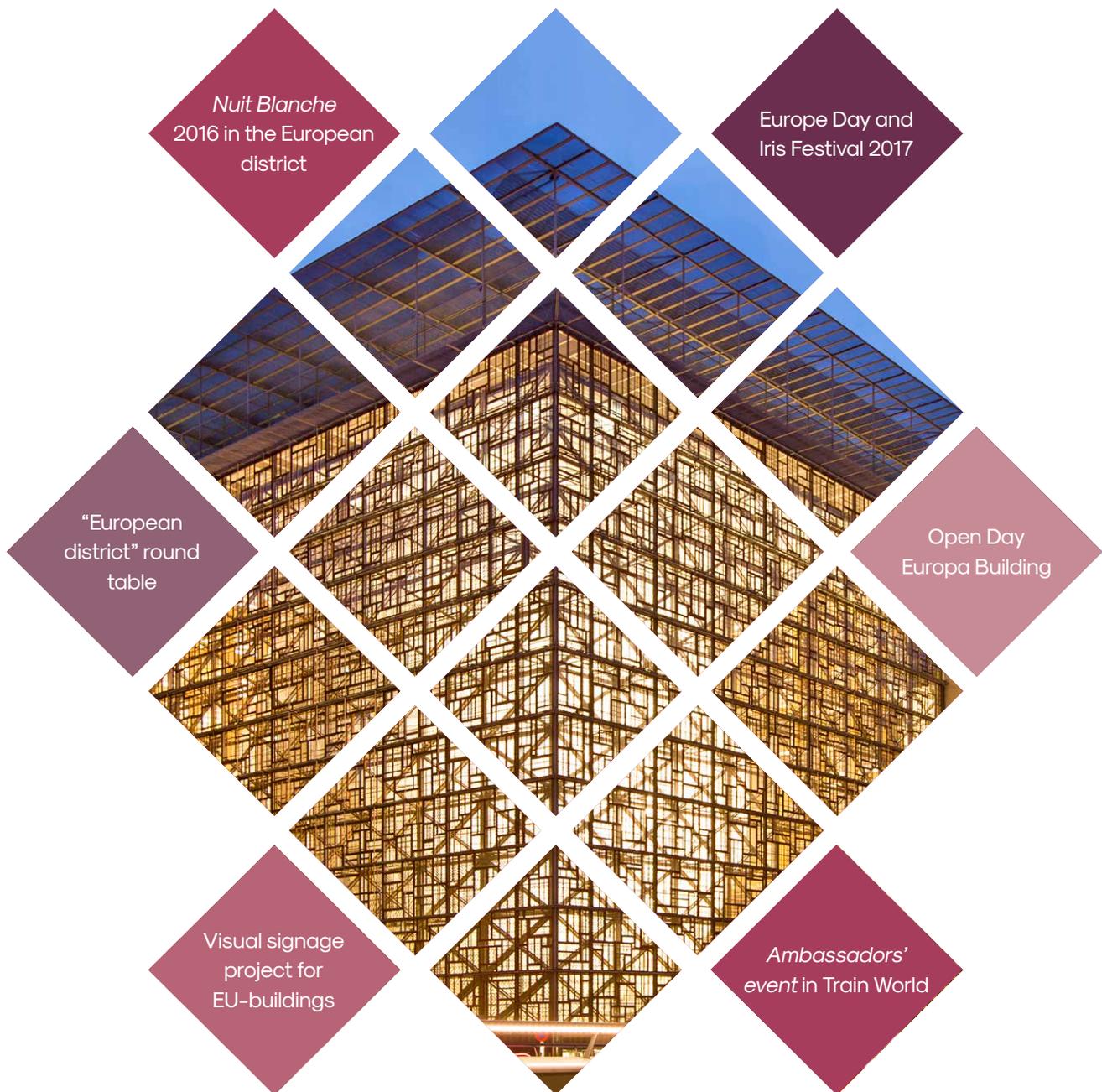
Gradually and through various initiatives, the European district is becoming a tourist centre of attraction, particularly in the area of the European Parliament with the *Parlamentarium* and the House of European History, as well as with the presence of highly iconic European Union buildings (the most recent being the Europa building, the new headquarters of the Presidency of the Council of the EU).



A quarterly meeting between those responsible for communication and relations with the public for the European institutions, the CEIO and visit.brussels (the Brussels tourist agency) facilitates coordination between the touristic and cultural policies of the European institutions in Brussels and those of the Brussels Region.

This meeting also aims to promote the Region's cultural events to the expat community, to raise interest amongst the Region's inhabitants in activities organised by the European institutions and to increase the attractiveness of the European district.

Thanks to the CEIO, this collaboration has enabled several events and activities (past and future) to be organised, including:



The CEIO

Host region policy

Expat Welcome Desk

Study trips

## 2.2 Mobility working group

Through this working group, the CEIO facilitates discussion between the European institutions, the Brussels-Capital Region government, Bruxelles Mobilité/Mobiel Brussel, STIB/MIVB (Brussels Intercommunal Transport Company) and SNCB/NMBS (Belgian National Railway Company) in order to map and better harmonise public transport demand and supply.

The objective of this working group is to evaluate home-work accessibility of European institution offices with a focus on the EU district. This will enable both the introduction of more suitable travel policies by the European institutions and the consideration of real mobility needs by the public transport service.

Work carried out in 2016 has already enabled the mapping of residential geographic zones for most employees in the European institutions and thus to visualise the principal home-work movement of around 40 000 people crossing the region on a daily basis.

Through these meetings, the various participants have also been able to reach agreement on the different travel parameters to be taken into consideration (waiting time, walking distances, proximity to car parking and stations) to represent the situation more realistically. Concrete results are expected in 2017, leading to the availability of a real tool for improving public transport service and promoting alternative mobility.



## 2.3 Discussions with representatives of the Region

The CEIO facilitates and organises bilateral discussions between Brussels public services and international organisations. In this project it works closely with local administrations (in particular with the urban planning services of the City of Brussels, the communes of Ixelles/Elsene and Etterbeek) and regional administrations for mobility and urban planning (Bruxelles Mobilité/Mobiel Brussel; the urban planning directorate of Brussels Urban Development; perspective.brussels – Brussels Planning Agency and the Brussels maître architecte/bouwmeester; the Royal Committee for Monuments and sites Brussels; Bruxelles Environnement/Brussel Leefmilieu and STIB/MIVB).



In 2016, the CEIO was involved in several specific projects:

- > The CEIO assists in the complex procedure of **transferring ownership of the “interinstitutional tunnel<sup>2</sup>”** between the federal state and the Region. The discussions which take place at the CEIO office bring together several players including the Belgian Buildings Agency, Beliris, the Office of the Brussels Minister for Mobility and Bruxelles Mobilité/Mobiel Brussel. The CEIO is also discussing the access and future maintenance of the tunnel with the European institutions.
- > Given the large increase in the number of visitors foreseen for 2017, due in part to the opening of the House of European History in early May, the CEIO continues, in consultation with the Brussels Minister for Mobility, in its efforts to **find a solution for the inflow and parking needs of tourist coaches in the European district.**

<sup>2</sup> Tunnel linking various European institutions situated around the Schuman Roundabout.



The CEIO is actively involved in discussions and work relating to the **redevelopment of the Schuman Roundabout** and its transformation into a partly pedestrianised area. The CEIO sits on the advisory committee, the steering committee (hosting its first meeting) and the jury that selects the winning project. This has enabled the CEIO to facilitate the exchange of information between European institutions and the *communes*, and to ensure that the project is coherent with the regional strategy in terms of security.



The CEIO participated in setting up a **public signage joint-project for a pedestrian wayfinding system** linking cultural facilities and buildings of interest to visitors between Brussels Park and Cinquantienaire Park (a project involving Brussels-Capital Region, Ixelles/Elsene and Etterbeek *communes*, City of Brussels, and the European Parliament)



The CEIO represented the regional government at the latest **EU-BE Task Force** between the federal state and the European institutions which was held on **25<sup>th</sup> November 2016**. This technical meeting, coordinated by the Interministerial Committee for Host Nation Policy (CIPS/ICZ), covered numerous issues related to the presence of European institutions on Belgian territory (such as mobility around institution buildings, the creation of a European school...). The participation of the CEIO underlines the contribution of the Region in moving regional projects forward and strengthens cooperation with the federal level in the context of the Belgian host nation policy



Following renovation work and the opening of the **Schuman railway station**, the CEIO assisted in the introduction of **coherent signage in the metro** (by STIB/MIVB and SNCB/NMBS) following a request from the Council of the European Union.



In connection with the **renovation of the Maelbeek metro station**, the CEIO intervened to facilitate an agreement on the option for the design of the new metro exit while taking care to address the feasibility and management concerns of STIB/MIVB and within the framework defined by the international architecture contest for *Block 130* which will be launched by the European Commission in the near future.



Following political agreements of the BCR-EU summit, the CEIO actively coordinated the preparation of procedures concerning requests for **renewal of environment permits for three car parks at the European Parliament**.



Technical meetings have been organised by the CEIO to finalise the timing and specifications of **work on Place Jean Rey**. This work concerns accessibility to the electricity and fibre-optic grid for satellite vehicles parked on the square during European summits, with the aim of minimising their negative effect.

Other issues on which the CEIO has played a role of mediator:

- Setting up a future welcome point for visitors to the European Commission in front of the Berlaymont building;
- Interpretation of the application of COBRACE (Brussels code for air, climate and energy control) related to parking for European institutions buildings;
- Renovation work at the Estonia embassy in Brussels;
- Planning permission charges for the conversion of the new Azerbaijan embassy;
- Maintenance work in European schools;
- Maintenance of STIB/MIVB distributors in Schuman station;
- Leopold Park management plan.

# 3 Security

The tragic events of 22<sup>th</sup> March 2016 have had major consequences in Belgium and Brussels, particularly in terms of the security, quality of life and mobility of its inhabitants. To guarantee the security of the European district, its inhabitants, institutions and businesses, existing federal and regional security measures have been strengthened.

The federal government established static and mobile surveillance by the national police, local police and the army. At the same time the Region is carrying out a security study in the European district (see details below) and plans to set up a series of measures through its new regional structure *Brussels Prevention and Security* (BPS). The Region is routinely informed about the security coordination meetings which take place at federal level while CIPS/ICZ ensures that information is exchanged on initiatives taken by the Region.



The climate of insecurity has changed remarkably the approach of international institutions towards the public areas which surround them. In this regard the CEIO was heavily solicited, particularly for requests to improve the security of sites, roads and public areas in the European district. This situation has also had an impact on projects in development such as the organisation of public events on the Esplanade Solidarnosc of the European Parliament and the integration of a security dimension in the development of the Schuman Roundabout.

This situation, in addition to the revelation of potential flaws in the security of public spaces next to institutional buildings, has led the CEIO to encourage exploring the possibility of finding a balance between the imperatives of security and those related to the conviviality of urban space. Throughout 2016 CEIO activities have been undertaken in this spirit, with the objective of developing a shared vision between the different protagonists.

Actions undertaken by the CEIO can be divided into three main directions:



Following numerous requests for reassurance (by the European institutions) made to the CEIO, it suggested to the Brussels government that a **security study in the European district** should be carried out. The objective of this analysis is to find a way to harmonise the enjoyment of public space and the imperatives of security. It is essential to provide the Region with agreed criteria for evaluating the degrees of danger, flaws and risk scenarios, while integrating these security measures in the urban fabric. This would allow the creation of a frame of reference for the integration of security measures in the city, and the Region would have a tool to respond in a coherent manner to the numerous requests for security from international organisations in Brussels.

This study initiated by the CEIO was launched by perspective.brussels (the Brussels Planning Agency) on behalf of the Brussels-Capital Region. The European institutions observed the selection process of the consultancy firm. The CEIO hosted the first meeting of the advisory committee bringing together representatives of the institutions, the communes and the Region. Final results of the research are expected in mid-2017. The CEIO will also ensure that the initial recommendations of this study are integrated in the Schuman redevelopment project.



While waiting for the results of this research on security in the European district, the CEIO has received several requests for **temporary security measures** from the European institutions, notably during the BCR-EU summit. With mediation by the CEIO, some of these have already received authorisation (pedestrian status for a part of Rue Wiertz, securitisation of certain roads), others have been authorised with conditions (removal of parking places in sensitive perimeters), while the remainder are waiting to be dealt with (security around certain buildings). The CEIO is continuing to follow up and coordinate these requests



The CEIO has been associated with several meetings relating to the development of the **new regional closed-circuit television (CCTV) plan**. This has been presented by BPS to the European institutions with the aim of including the placement of cameras on institutional buildings. The CEIO attends key meetings organised by BPS and ensures follow-up with the European institutions.

# 4 Regional representations

## 4.1 Certificate for regional and local representations

In 1991 the Brussels–Capital Region created a certificate for regional and local representations established in Brussels. This certification is issued by the Minister for External Relations. In the past, the management and attribution of these certificates was handled by the Brussels–Europe Liaison Office. Today the CEIO runs the service.

This certification serves as official confirmation of the presence of a regional representation in Brussels and is a means of assisting the given representation in its contacts with Brussels regional and local authorities, with certain service providers such as banks and telephone operators, and even with European institutions. Every year the Minister for External Relations issues this “facilitating” document to official delegates of cities, regions and public organisms that request it.

The certificate identifies each entity as an official representative of the given authority in Brussels but confers no legal or financial responsibility on the Brussels–Capital Region authority. Today 234 regional and local representations receive this certification every year.

In 2016 the CEIO looked at the possibility of creating a specific status for these representations which would also transfer a range of (regional) privileges and immunities. However this appears to be very difficult in legal terms due to the great heterogeneity of these representations and the institutional diversity of their statuses in their respective countries of origin.



## 4.2 Meeting with British regional representations in Brussels concerning the potential consequences of Brexit on their presence in Belgium (05/10/2016)

Organised by the *Bristol Brussels Office*, this meeting was held in *London's European Office*. Present at the meeting were: *Southern England Local Partners, Cornwall Brussels Office, Scotland Europa, Coventry University Brussels Office, Local Government Association, White Rose Brussels Office (Universities of Leeds, Sheffield & York), Convention of Scottish Local Authorities-COSLA, Southern England Local Partners, Kent County Council, London's European Office, Liverpool City Region Brussels Office, Welsh Local Government Association and East of England European Partnership.*

The representatives present showed a certain anxiety concerning their future in Brussels, the possible consequences of Brexit on British nationals' residence rights in Belgium and, by extension, on the possibilities of acquiring Belgian nationality (an issue detailed below in "Expat Welcome Desk"). The free movement of people within the EU will apparently be an important element in Brexit negotiations since intra-EU immigration was one of the major issues in the UK referendum.

It is unlikely that the status of well-established expat residents will be questioned. However in the long term many things could change in terms of the free movement of people. If the United Kingdom leaves the European Union and fails to negotiate any specific status, British expats would become, in the eyes of Belgian law, residents from "third party countries", with all the consequences that this entails in terms of residency rights.

Many British nationals are enquiring about the procedures for acquiring Belgian nationality. Some have said that they are concerned by the fact that the *communes'* interpretation of the conditions stipulated in the new law on acquiring Belgian nationality does not always appear to be unanimous. Certain *communes* are not fully familiar with the application of specific provisions which are more complex than those in the previous legislation and are part of a general tightening of the procedure.

# 5 Outlook for 2017

It is important to keep an eye on **innovative practices introduced by other international cities** hosting sensitive sites in terms of host nation policy, particularly those concerning the integration and coordination of security measures, the urban development and management of public space, and the welcome policy.

The CEIO may therefore make contact in the future with Strasbourg, The Hague, Vienna, New York, Paris, Rome, Frankfurt and Luxembourg amongst others.

The organisation of an **“Urban Planning Midday”** on European district issues would enable regional players involved in managing the European district to share their expertise and vision, particularly with authorities involved more sporadically with this theme.

In the long term, it could be useful to **create a European or international network** bringing together international cities in order to encourage the exchange of information on these specific themes. This network could meet once a year





In parallel, **information exchanges** could also be organised in the form of **seminars**. A training cycle on a range of themes could be considered: the different means of security for public areas; the management of summits and large flows of people; techniques for the security of public buildings; pilot projects for crisis management; and so on.

The CEIO commits to continue thinking about the role of **Brussels as an international capital**. We propose to maintain regular dialogue with institutions likely to develop offices or additional centres (repatriation of decentralized agencies due to Brexit, new UN centres, etc.).

The **“Guide to privileges, immunities and other amenities for international organisations”** initiated by the CEIO in conjunction with CIPS/ICZ could be finalised and then distributed as an important tool and sort of reference for our target audience.

In this framework, the CEIO believes it is necessary to **write a model Brussels bidbook**, an initiative it would like to be associated with.



# Expat Welcome Desk





**T**he Expat Welcome Desk (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 (CEIO).



### 3 WAYS TO ASSIST YOU

- > By phone: +32 (0)2 430 66 00
- > By e-mail: [info@commissioner.brussels](mailto:info@commissioner.brussels)
- > Ask for an appointment



### 5 REASONS FOR USING OUR SERVICES

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



### 2 OFFICES

- > Main office:  
Avenue d'Auderghem 63 - 1040 Etterbeek
- > European Parliament antenna

# 1. Method

The EWD gives visitors individual advice by e-mail and telephone, as well as in face-to-face meetings. The service is free of charge and provided in three languages (NL, EN, FR). 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 staff. In 2016 the EWD has broadened the scope of its action to the personnel of diplomatic representations and has organised a number of seminars for this target group.

In order to assure an effective and high-quality service, the EWD works closely with a number of administrations including the Immigration Office, the Federal Public Service 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:

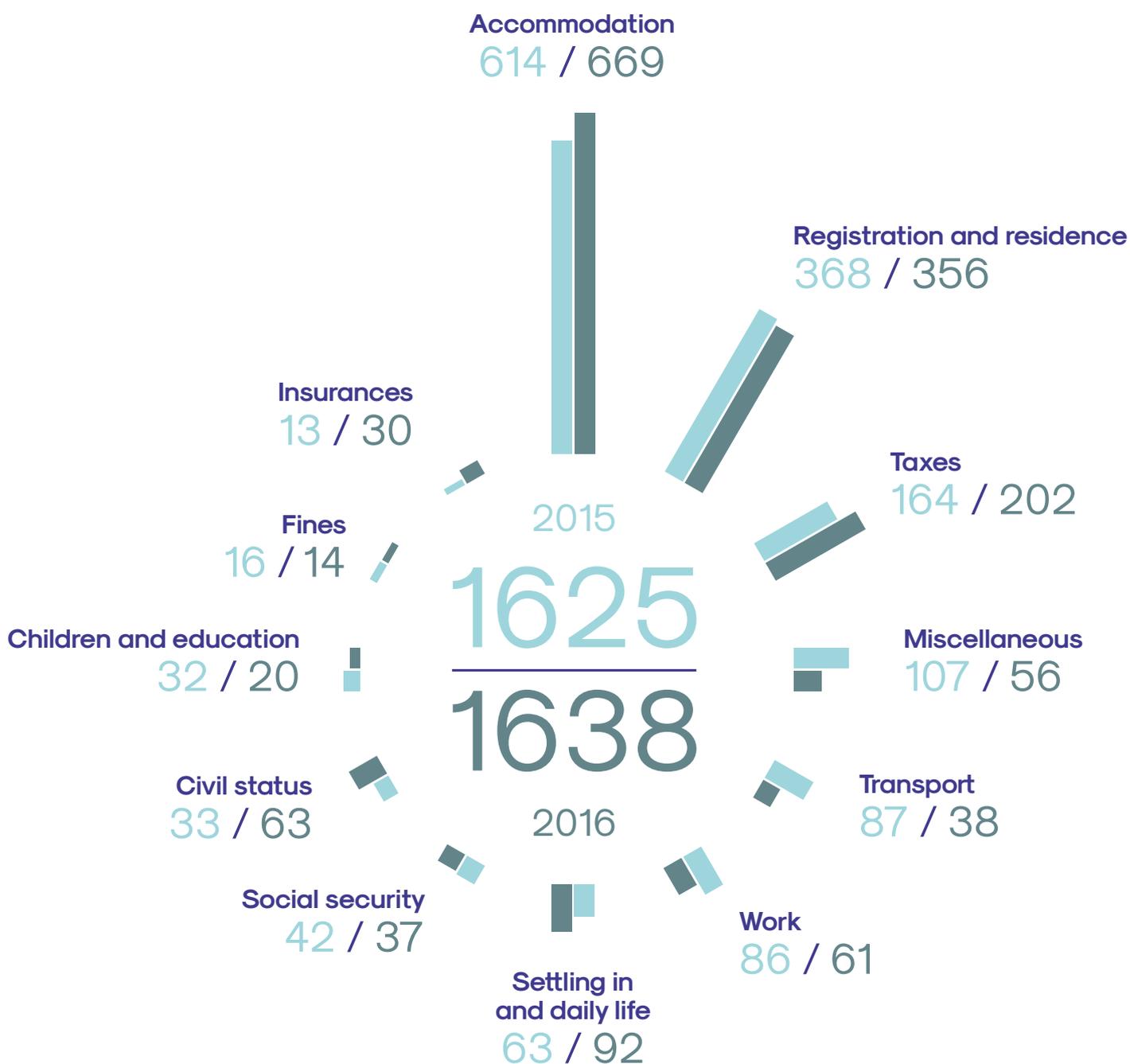
**Amélie BOVY** – legal adviser and **Hélène JACUB** – assistant, in the main office; **Annick DE BLESER** – assistant located in our antenna in the European Parliament. The main office is located in CEIO’s headquarters at 63 Avenue d’Auderghem/Oudergemlaan in Etterbeek, while a second office is situated 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 MEPs, officials, parliamentary assistants, contract agents and trainees. This proximity enables us to further strengthen links between the CEIO and the European Parliament.



# 2. Statistics

Number of EWD cases by type, over two years (2015 and 2016):



## Top 3 of the questions treated in 2016 compared to 2015

### ACCOMMODATION



- 237 checking leases
- 183 disputes
- 112 breaking leases



- 230 checking leases
- 150 disputes
- 123 accommodation search

### REGISTRATION AND RESIDENCE



- 242 registrations in the population register
- 31 visa requests
- 30 family reunification requests



- 236 registrations in the population register
- 39 information on the special identity card
- 36 visa requests

### TAXES



- 150 income tax
- 31 regional tax
- 13 second residence tax



- 114 income tax
- 28 regional tax
- 11 car registration tax

# 3 Issues handled in 2016

## 3.1 The special identity card (CIS)

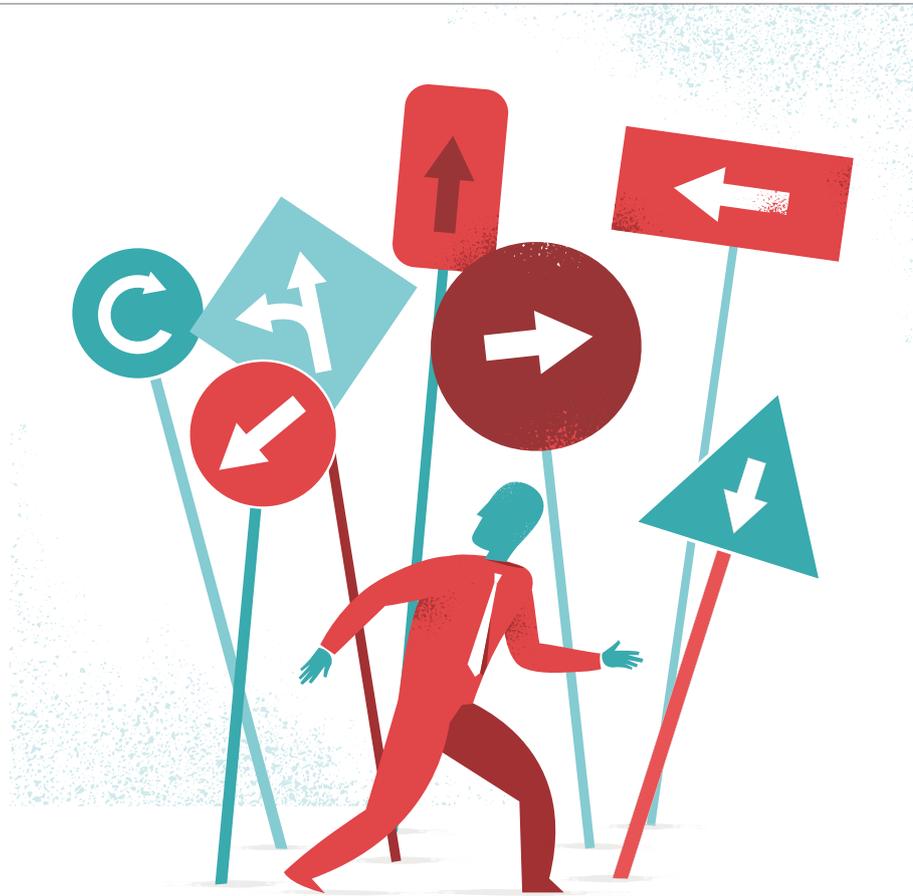
The European institutions consulted the CEIO to obtain a list of the advantages and disadvantages of the special identity card issued by the Federal Public Service of Foreign Affairs, in order to advise their officials of the consequences of this card *vis-à-vis* a residence permit issued by the local *commune*. The CEIO contacted the department of Foreign Affairs so that this list could be prepared. This question was in fact on the agenda of the training day organised by the CEIO for supervisors of the population and civil status departments of the 19 Brussels communes (see below).

### Advantages

- The CIS gives the holder a right to tax exemption during an initial period
- The holder is not bound by provisions limiting immigration and registration formalities for foreigners. Concretely, it is not necessary to report to the population department of the local commune administration
- The holder is not bound by the regulation relating to the employment of foreign workers which implies exemption from the work permit for non-European workers
- It is a residence permit for the Schengen zone although it should always be accompanied by a valid passport
- The CIS is free of charge
- The card is issued rapidly (+/- 4 weeks)
- Easy residence access for non-European legal cohabitants
- Holders have the option to include their private address on the special identity card
- Symbolizes a “privileged” status

### Disadvantages

- The CIS does not have an electronic chip
- The CIS is a provisional residence permit linked to the holder's work contract
- The CIS is not taken into account in the calculation of years spent in Belgium for the acquisition of Belgian nationality
- Family members holding a CIS are not permitted to carry out remunerated work
- The CIS does not give the holder the right to make a commitment that charge will be taken for persons from a foreign country (except for family members up to second degree)
- The CIS does not mention the holder's national registration number, indispensable for many administrative processes
- The enrolment period for the national register is longer
- The CIS does not give the holder the right to community unemployment benefits



The question of choice between the CIS and the *commune* residence permit has grown in importance following the Belgian authorities' non-recognition of the CIS as legal residence in terms of the nationality code. Indeed many European officials have become aware of the implications of this special identity card and have re-examined its value.

Newly-arrived officials choose the CIS since this card is a prerequisite for obtaining VAT exemption on a range of goods for 12 months during the first two years of their arrival. After this, they tend not to consider returning their CIS and registering in the *commune*, but hold on to it for years. One can therefore understand the surprise of many officials who have lived for many years in Brussels and who are not aware of the implications of this card.

In view of this problem, the Foreign Affairs Protocol department is currently working with Federal Public Service Finance and the various European

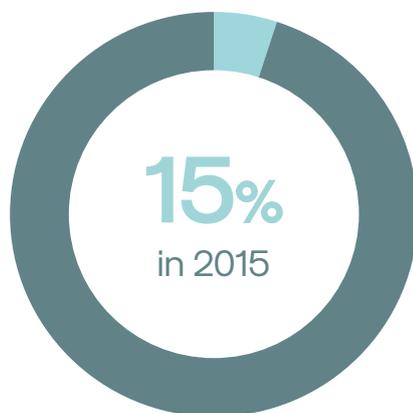
institutions to create a system which enables European officials to register directly in the *commune* while retaining their initial exemptions. In addition, new regulations relating to the national register are being discussed by virtue of which Protocol would manage data relative to international officials in the national register. The CEIO will closely follow up on these projects.



## 3.2 Obtention of Belgian nationality by European officials

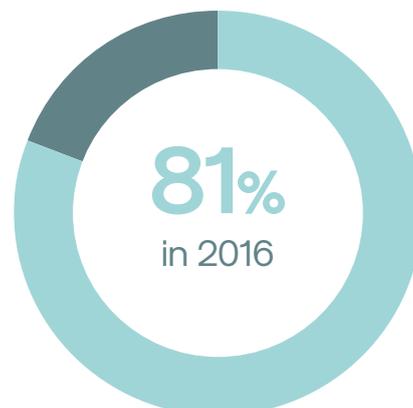
Since the announcement of Brexit, the European institutions have regularly consulted the EWD of the CEIO concerning the question of European officials obtaining Belgian nationality.

The diagram below shows the significant increase in the number of questions received relating to nationality compared with the previous year.



In 2015, **15%** of the cases within the framework of civil status matters concerned the acquisition of Belgian nationality (only 5 cases in 33).

In 2016, this number has increased to **81%** (51 cases out of 63).



## Legal framework

Since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2013, procedures for acquiring Belgian nationality have been modified. The law of 4<sup>th</sup> December 2012 reduces the high number of procedures for acquiring Belgian nationality to four:

- 1/ The declaration of nationality by a foreigner born in Belgium;
- 2/ The short procedure of declaration of nationality after five years of legal residence:
  - accompanied by proof of social integration and economic participation;
  - accompanied by proof of social integration for a foreigner who is married to a Belgian national, as long as the spouses have lived together in Belgium for at least three years or who is parent of a Belgian minor or non-emancipated minor;
  - for handicapped persons, those with reduced mobility or those having reached pensionable age.
- 3/ The long procedure of declaration of nationality after 10 years of legal residence;
- 4/ Naturalisation in exceptional cases when it can be justified that exceptional merits could make a particular contribution to the international standing of Belgium, and for stateless persons.

Foreigners who live in Belgium and wish to become Belgian nationals are required to compile justification with the civil status department of their commune. Once all the necessary documents have been compiled, the applicant must sign a hand-written declaration as follows: *"I declare that I wish to acquire Belgian nationality and respect the constitution, the laws of the Belgian people and the Convention for the protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms"*. The *commune* then transfers the request to the crown prosecution who pronounces judgement within four months.

## Summary of facts

In practice, it has been noticed that European citizens rely principally on two procedures to obtain Belgian nationality. Firstly, the "short" procedure of five years of legal residence accompanied by social integration and economic participation. Secondly, the "long" procedure based on 10 years' legal residence. Each of these procedures call for particular conditions which, in practice, pose several problems for EU officials.



**The first issue common to both 5- and 10-year procedures is the non-recognition of special identity cards as legal residence in terms of the nationality law (art.7 bis §2 2°).**

EU officials enjoy a special legal status governed by the Staff Regulations of Officials and the Protocol on Privileges and Immunities of the European Communities of 8<sup>th</sup> April 1965, the application of which entitles them to a special identity card. This CIS is issued by the FPS Foreign Affairs which provides a list of holders of this card to SPF Finance in order to facilitate the holder's exemption from VAT when he or she arrives in Belgium.

Articles 3 and 4 of the royal decree of 14<sup>th</sup> January 2013 cite in detail the residence documents which may be taken into consideration for the calculation of the number of years of residence in Belgium, as proof of legal residence for acquiring Belgian nationality. However, CIS is not in the list.

While the Immigration Office takes account of residence years under CIS in order to issue permanent residence to European officials (by virtue of the SPF Interior circular of 20/02/2013), these same years of residence under CIS status are not taken into consideration for acquiring Belgian nationality. Concretely, this signifies that at the present time a European official who has lived permanently in Belgium for 20 years cannot acquire Belgian nationality if he or she is not in possession of a residence permit issued by the *commune*.



**The second issue specific to the 5-year procedure is the non-recognition of working days of European officials in terms of the nationality code (art.1 §2 7° + footnote to articles 37 et 38 of the royal decree of 25/11/1991 relating to the regulation of unemployment).**

Indeed the “short” procedure requires proof of both social integration by showing five years of work without interruption at the time of the request, as well as economic participation defined as 468 working days during the last five years. However the law counts only those working days which are subject to Belgian social security, which excludes European officials who do not pay Belgian social security.



**The third issue relates to the disparity within *communes* on the interpretation of the law.**

Beyond the two issues identified above, it should be stressed that interpretation by communes of the conditions stipulated in the new law on the acquisition of nationality is still not unanimous. In addition, certain communes are not fully familiar with the application of specific provisions which are more complex than those of the previous legislation and lead to a general strengthening of the procedure. Several applicants who have filed applications in their commune have informed us of a lack of awareness by commune staff of the long procedure for a declaration of nationality, of the criteria of integration, of the manner of proving social integration and of the required linguistic knowledge. The new law on nationality and its concrete application have therefore been included on the agenda of the “training day for the 19 *communes*” organised by the CEIO (see below).

## CEIO interventions

The Director General for Personnel of the European Parliament contacted the Brussels Commissioner in September 2016 and sought its assistance in alerting the relevant authorities to the problems encountered by European officials wishing to acquire Belgian nationality and their concerns about the system applied. The Brussels Commissioner therefore brought up the issue of European officials seeking Belgian nationality with the Prime Minister. The latter stressed that staff in the European institutions are free to request registration in their *commune* of residence rather than with the Directorate of Protocol. In addition, concerning the specific situation for British civil servants, it would be preferable to wait for future negotiations on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union.

The CEIO has also obtained the opinion of the Minister of Justice who states that the objective of the law on nationality is that a foreigner should only be able to obtain Belgian nationality from the time that he or she benefits from a status of stable residence in Belgium. Since the duration of validity of a European official's special identity card is limited to the duration of his function, it does not meet the demands of article 7 bis §2 of the nationality code in terms of "unlimited" rights of residence. In addition, the Minister of Justice underlined that European officials always have the opportunity to request an "ordinary" residence permit (E card or E+ card after 5 years of residence) instead of the CIS, acknowledging their right of residence as a citizen of the European Union.

Lastly, the CEIO sought the expertise of the "*Association pour le droit des étrangers*" (ADDE) in order to deal with the question of the acquisition of Belgian nationality by European officials during the "training day for communes" mentioned below. During the presentation, the ADDE legal expert stressed the existence of favourable jurisprudence for the recognition of the special identity card issued by the Protocol of Foreign Affairs as legal residence in terms of the Belgian nationality code, but that this necessitates court referral. However it appears that in practice certain *communes* declare "non-responsive" applications, thus leaving no possibility for the courts to express any alternative opinion to that of the public prosecutor. It therefore seems important to remember that each authority involved in the process of issuing Belgian nationality – the civil status officer, the public prosecutor and the courts – plays a specific role and should guarantee access to a means of recourse to the applicant, essential under a law which still leads to numerous interpretations.

## Conclusion

At this time, and with the exception of marriage to a Belgian, which is subject to different time periods, officials of the European Union who wish to acquire Belgian nationality must reside in Belgium for 10 years AFTER having exchanged their special identity card for an E+ card. They are also required to prove that they speak one of the three national languages and are integrated in their host community. This last requirement may relate to any relevant legal proof such as child schooling or involvement in community activities. The CEIO will stay closely involved with this issue throughout 2017.

## 4 Training day for population and civil status officials of the 19 *communes*

On 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2016 a new training programme for population and civil status officials of the 19 Brussels communes, as well as personnel services of the European institutions, took place at the European Parliament. The sessions previously organised in 2001, 2004, 2005, 2008 and 2011 (during the time of the Brussels-Europe Liaison Office) had been a clear success. Based on recent developments, the CEIO judged it opportune to renew the initiative with a revised agenda.

### Objective

As in the past, this training aimed to:

- Enable *commune* officials to deepen and update their knowledge of administrative issues relating to European expats. The training should also lead to a better welcome in *communes* and improve the efficiency of the service;
- Elevate awareness and understanding of *commune* officials, notably through a visit to the European Parliament and in the members' restaurant;
- Enable *commune* officials to meet colleagues from other *communes* and managers of personnel services of the different European institutions with whom they are often in contact by telephone.

In other words, through this initiative the CEIO aims to not only improve the image of Brussels and its communes with the Europeans, but also to improve the image of the European Union with *commune* staff.

### Preparatory meetings

On 17<sup>th</sup> February the CEIO invited Brussels population and civil status councillors to its offices, together with European affairs councillors, in order to present them with, amongst other subjects, the "training day for *communes*" project, with the aim of obtaining their enthusiastic involvement.

On 12<sup>th</sup> September the CEIO organised a preparatory meeting with representatives of the various European institutions, the immigration office, supervisors of the foreigners' desk of Etterbeek and City of Brussels *communes*, as well as a representative of the Foreign Affairs Protocol Department. This meeting discussed the topics and issues to be covered during the training and laid the foundation for the following programme to be established.



# Programme

**8.30** Welcome of participants

**9.00** Introduction by **Alain HUTCHINSON**,  
Brussels Commissioner for Europe and  
International Organisations:

«Presentation of the Brussels Commissioner's  
Office»

and

«Presence and impact of the European Union in  
Brussels»

**9.30** **Geert DE BUCK**, Expert,  
Interministerial Committee for the Host Nation  
Policy (CIPS/ICZ):

«The Protocol on Privileges and Immunities (PPI):  
reason for being»

**9.50** **Bregt VYNCKE**, Directorate of  
Protocol (Privileges and Immunities), FPS Foreign  
Affairs:

«Registration of international officials under the  
Protocol on Privileges and Immunities: the special  
identity card and future changes»

**10.30** Coffee break

**10.45** Immigration Office (**Chantal GODIN**  
and **Frédéric DUTERME** - EU long-term residence  
and **Yves KEIL** - Family reunification) :

«European officials' residence and their families  
under common law»

**11.30** **Fabio GALATIOTO**, Head of Unit - EP  
DG Personnel and **Alexis GEORGIOULIS**, Head of  
the immigration desk of the City of Brussels:

«Experience of a decentralised commune office  
in the European Parliament»

**11.45** **Caroline APERS**, Lawyer, "Association  
pour le droit des étrangers" (ADDE):

«Acquisition of Belgian nationality for European  
officials: current status»

**12.15** Q&A

**12.30 – 14.00** Lunch



## Attendance

Unlike previous sessions, this training day was primarily addressed to the principal supervisors and their deputies of the civil status, population and foreigners' desks and not to personnel working in these services as a whole. Since some presentations are highly technical – particularly the content relating to residence and European expats – it is essential that this primary group should be targeted by this training so that they could then pass on the information to their staff. A compilation of all presentations was made available to all participants. Councillors of the civil status of the 19 *communes* were also invited to this training day. Moreover, all the *communes* invited were represented by a minimum of two persons (population and foreigners' desks). Around 20 European officials responsible for personnel services of the various European institutions, as well as six representatives of each police zone in the Brussels–Capital Region also attended the morning of training.

127  
persons  
attended  
the training day.



## Organisation

This training lasted for a single morning instead of four mornings as previously. In practice, the organisation of four days of training is logistically very difficult to manage, particularly since the strengthening of security measures at the European Parliament complicates access to the building for all attendees. The CEIO worked with the Information Office and the Staff Information Desk of the EP in the organisation of the event (room, entry badges, translators, etc.). The training session closed with a lunch in the MEP's restaurant.



## Conclusion

The sixth edition of the “training day for communes” was a clear success. The themes approached provoked much interaction from attendees, both on the *commune* personnel side and from the personnel services of the European institutions. This enabled the meeting to highlight problems encountered on the ground by the *commune* officials who handle the registration of international officials and to propose some solutions.

During 2017 the CEIO will contact the Intercommunal Working Group (GTI 19 in French: ‘*Groupe de Travail Intercommunal*’) to organise a working meeting on certain technical aspects relating to the handling of registration of international officials. Our aim is to move towards the harmonisation of registration procedures for international officials applied within the 19 Brussels *communes*. Moreover this training day also brought out the disparity that exists between *communes* in their manner of handling problematic cases of European officials applying for Belgian nationality. Some *communes* refuse to consider an application to be complete knowing in advance that the elements in the application would not be accepted by the public prosecutor. A letter will be sent to the Minister-President of the Brussels-Capital Region at the beginning of 2017 to draw his attention to the question. Finally, this training day presented the opportunity to reiterate our invitation to the different communes to be part of the pilot Brussels City decentralised commune service project in our office at the European Parliament, with a presence once a week.

# 5 Seminars

Depending on the requests we receive, the EWD organises various seminars on specific themes for selected target groups. These seminars are conducted by specialists called in by the EWD to ensure good preparation of the topics to be covered. In general the seminars take place in CEIO offices but may on occasion be organised outside, for example in a European institution.



## Lunchtime session on “*Private rental contracts*” in the European Parliament

11<sup>th</sup> January

The Staff Information Desk of the European Parliament contacted the Expat Welcome Desk in October 2015 requesting help to organise a seminar on private rental contracts. The EWD contacted the tenants union (*‘Syndicat des locataires’*), with whom it has already worked on several rental issues, and asked if it would conduct this seminar.

Raphael EL GHRAIBI, a legal expert of the tenants union and responsible for training, accepted the invitation. Together we defined the different points to be covered during this seminar: what you should know before you sign a rental contract, how to end a contract, the inventory inspection, how to react in the event of problems with the landlord, and so on.

The seminar was held on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2016 at the European Parliament in the form of a lunchtime session (from 12.30 to 14.00 with a Q&A). The presentation was given in French accompanied by PowerPoint slides in English. Very specific topics were covered which incited numerous questions from the 70 attendees.

## “Networking Meetings of Diplomatic Liaison Personnel in Brussels” at the CEIO

2<sup>nd</sup> February and 12<sup>th</sup> October

Organised at the initiative of the German Embassy and Permanent representation in collaboration with the CEIO; these meetings bring together the “family officers” of various embassies whose role is to welcome new members of staff and their families. Two meetings were organised on different themes at the CEIO offices in 2016.



### 2<sup>nd</sup> Networking Event: 2<sup>nd</sup> February

During this second edition, 10 embassies were represented and new attendees such as Romania and New Zealand were also present. Several different speakers addressed the meeting; a member of the Professional Institute of Property Agents (IPI) presented the legal status of a real estate agent in Belgium. A property agency made a presentation on how to find and rent accommodation in Belgium. Finally, the Welcome Office of the European Commission (the internal administrative welcome service) presented the different measures it has introduced to integrate new members and their families. This event provoked many questions from attendees particularly on the question of rental contracts (inventory check, rental deposit and diplomatic clause) and registration in the commune by seconded national experts (SNEs).

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Networking Event: 12<sup>th</sup> October

The following topics were included in the third edition: VAT for diplomatic personnel (Alain VAN DELSEN, Counsellor-Director at FPS Finance) and the role of a social administration office for diplomatic missions (Hugues THIBAUT, Manager of the International Department at Group S). The presented information was extremely useful for attendees who also asked many questions to the speakers. This third edition attracted 40 attendees.



## “How to fill in your annual tax return” seminar at CEIO office

2<sup>nd</sup> June

On 2<sup>nd</sup> June the EWD organised a seminar on the theme “How to fill in your annual tax return” with two invited speakers. Fiscal expert Eric LAURENT (ERYV) covered several subjects including: which taxes are deducted from your salary? What is document 281.10? How to declare foreign income? Hugues THIBAUT (Group S) made a short presentation on the concept of the salary (gross-net) and non-financial benefits. This event brought together 40 persons.

# 6 □ Information sessions

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

## Welcome for trainees in the European institutions



Every year almost 2000 (official) trainees, mostly European, come to Brussels to work in the European institutions. In 2016 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). Each institution hosts two series of trainees per year. The presentations take place in February/March and September/October.

A presentation entitled “*Trainee? Welcome to Brussels*” was given with [visit.brussels](http://visit.brussels) during each session. It is also available online: <https://prezi.com/hsahrdhkh4d2/trainee-welcome-to-brussels/>

Welcome packs were also distributed by [visit.brussels](http://visit.brussels).

## **University of Kent** 13<sup>th</sup> January and 21<sup>st</sup> September

The EWD’s legal adviser and the Manager ‘Europe’ of [visit.brussels](http://visit.brussels) gave two information sessions to students at the University of Kent. The presentation “*Student? Welcome to Brussels*” consists of two parts (one about cultural/daily life and another about administration) and is available online.

<https://prezi.com/tr2cclag6601/student-welcome-to-brussels/>



## “Info Day” at the European Commission

### 16<sup>th</sup> 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.

## “Coffee morning” for partners of officials

### 7<sup>th</sup> April, 9<sup>th</sup> June and 15<sup>th</sup> November

Once or twice a year, the European Parliament and European Commission organise information sessions for spouses and partners of new officials and contract agents 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 online: <https://prezi.com/oe3zlh3zvhew/spouses-welcome-to-brussels/>

## Information session for the Permanent Representation of Ireland to the EU

### 27<sup>th</sup> October

At the request of the personnel service of the Permanent Representation of Ireland to the EU, the EWD gave a presentation entitled “Welcome to Brussels” covering practical subjects for diplomats, for whom regulations, particularly relating to residence, are different from those applying to European officials. Following this first edition, it was decided that this information session should be given once a year to cover the arrival of new diplomats.

# 7

## □ Outlook for 2017

Several meetings and projects will be organised in 2017:

**"Info session: job coaching"**  
seminar targeting primarily  
the spouses of diplomats.

**Meeting with the Intercommunal  
Working Group (GTI 19)** on the problems  
relating to the registration of European  
officials and foreign researchers/  
professors invited by a Brussels  
university.

**Seminar on the theme social  
security** in collaboration with  
INAMI (the Belgian national  
institute for health and disability  
insurance).



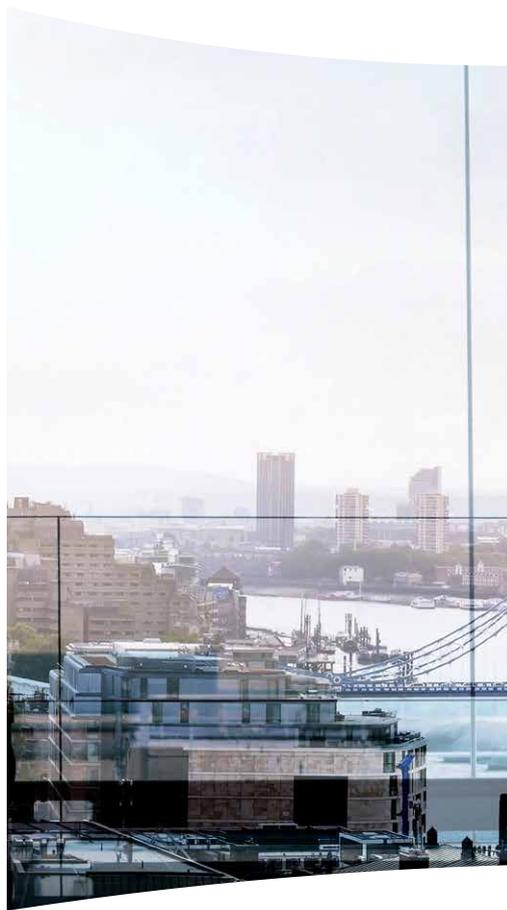


Development of a common strategy with visit.brussels for the **distribution of “welcome packs”** to the international community.

To establish **points of contact in international organisations** in order to improve the visibility of the EWD.

Creation of a new brochure for the EWD in a **step-by-step style**, grouping the principal practical and administrative information for settling in Brussels.

Planning and start of **renovation works** on our office in the **European Parliament** following the move of visit.brussels to Station Europe (former Luxembourg Station).



# Study trips

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It is essential to develop a precise and coherent host region strategy to enable Brussels to position itself effectively as an international region. To start considering the evolution, challenges and responsibilities implied by such a strategy, the Brussels Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations (CEIO) initiated the idea to organise two study trips to cities with experience in the domain. Firstly to Geneva, which has a long tradition as a host city for international organisations, and secondly to London in order to analyse the innovative solutions which have been tested to harmonise the conviviality of public areas and the imperatives of security.



# 1 Study trip to Geneva

4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> July 2016

This study trip, which was made possible by the Permanent Representation of Belgium to the United Nations, was organised jointly with the Interministerial Committee for Host Nation Policy (CIPS/ICZ).

## 1.1 The international presence in Geneva in figures<sup>1</sup>

Like Brussels, Geneva has a long tradition as a host city for international organisations. The international organisations there are established in an “international district” and therefore have less impact on the city.

<sup>1</sup> Data 2016.

**33** intergovernmental organisations

institutions and international secretariats

**250** non-governmental organisations (NGOs)

with a consultative status with the United Nations

**2524** international meetings

and 20 165 sessions attended by 203 391 delegates and experts

**255** delegations, missions and permanent representations

i.e. 4085 employees

**24 554** international officials

of which 50% reside in the canton of Geneva and 40% in France

## 1.2 The “Geneva International” platform

This platform, composed of a series of federal and cantonal agencies assigned to carry out the Swiss host nation policy, is responsible for the welcome, support, guidance, and security of international organisations as well as the image of Geneva and Switzerland. This visiting delegation was able to meet with each of these services.



### Swiss Press Club (CSP)

A media hub assigned to promote the standing of Geneva and the image of its international organisations. It organizes press conferences for missions, NGOs and the Department of Foreign Affairs when it addresses the international community.



### Welcome Centre – Geneva International (CAGI)

Created in 1996 by the Swiss Confederation and the Canton of Geneva, and supported by local and national private and public entities, the CAGI takes care exclusively of the welcome for members of the diplomatic community (including international officials) and their families. Recently the CAGI's responsibilities have been extended to the welcome of staff from large international organisations (excluding their accommodation). The CAGI mission is to guide and inform international staff working and living in Geneva, and to help them integrate successfully. This team of 13 persons aided by 26 volunteers forms a network of welcome staff for new arrivals. The CAGI programme includes excursions, events, language sessions, accommodation service and rental aid. It also helps NGO's and provides a welcome service for delegates coming to attend international conferences. With an annual budget of 1 800 000 Swiss francs and a large staff, the CAGI can be thought of as the larger twin of the Expat Welcome Desk of the CEIO.





### Buildings Foundation for International Organisations (FIPOI)

Financed jointly by the Swiss Confederation and the Canton of Geneva, this foundation handles cases passed from the permanent representation. It advises international organisations and manages their building projects as well as a welcome service for international conferences. It spends +/- 5 million Swiss francs a year, including loans on favourable terms to international organisations. These loan recipients nevertheless retain overall control of their projects since the FIPOI mission is limited to a support role.



### Permanent Representation of Switzerland – Security Section and General Affairs

The Swiss Permanent representation to the United Nations is responsible for the execution of Swiss host nation policy as defined by the Department of Foreign Affairs in Bern.



### Protocol Service (City of Geneva)

This service tends to facilitate relations between the international organisations and the City of Geneva. It is responsible for communication with the local population in close coordination with the international organisations. In this respect the service acts in close consultation with federal and cantonal authorities.





### *Bureau de l'Amiable Compositeur - Conciliation Office*

This organ acts as a mediator in (work related) disputes between international organisations or diplomatic missions and members of their staff – disputes for which normal labour courts have no competency. The bureau is totally independent of all authorities and strives to find amiable solutions.



### Foundation for Geneva – Pictet Foundation

Financed exclusively by the private sector, this private foundation acts as a think tank for the public sector, starting from the precept that the authorities do not always pay sufficient attention to the international presence in Geneva. This foundation is highly active within CAGI of which it is the leading private benefactor.



### Diplomatic Security Guards (GSD)

This group is an integral part of the cantonal and municipal police forces. The national security strategy and evaluation of terrorist threat falls under the confederate authority. The GSD is responsible for:

**the coordination of international security, specifically:**

- planning and coordination of official visits;
- coordination of security measures with security services and confederate and cantonal police;
- operation of a single diplomatic help desk, 24/24;
- operation of a single desk for all demonstration and protest requests;
- operational implementation of security measures in function of the threat level evaluation by the confederation.

**operational aspects of international security, specifically:**

- airport security;
- protection of individuals;
- diplomatic and VIP escorts and convoys.



## 1.3 General recommendations



In Geneva the exchange of information and the ongoing coordination between the different levels of authority are the governing principles of the host nation policy.

Thanks to a longer experience of the international presence – and with a large consensus in political circles on the importance of this presence – Switzerland has succeeded in acquiring a wide range of tools in the field of hosting international organisations. These entities are, for the most part, created and financed jointly by confederal, cantonal and local authorities.

Permanent coordination between the different levels of power is facilitated by the presence of representatives from these various levels within the governing bodies of these institutions. Consultation and cooperation between the different Belgian levels of authority often takes place in both a more rigid and more informal manner. The CEIO therefore proposes to study the possibility of creating a permanent coordination and consultation platform of federal (CIPS/ICZ) and regional (CEIO) services responsible for host nation policy. This thought process should also include relations with the City of Brussels and several communes.



It is also necessary to develop structural contacts with all the regional players, including Brussels International (formerly the Directorate for External Relations), the Delegation of the Brussels-Capital Region to the European Union, and perspective.brussels (BBP - the Brussels Planning Agency) concerning the strategy towards international organisations set up on the territory of Brussels-Capital Region, with the focus on continuity and long-term thinking.



Like Brussels, Geneva is also confronted by problems of acceptance by the local population of the international presence and the efforts required in this context. Initiatives aimed at bringing together the international community and local residents therefore deserve to be

# 2 Study trip to London

21 September 2016

Following the tragic events of 2016, a review and analysis of security in the European district was certainly necessary. This study at the initiative of the CEIO will be launched by perspective.brussels (the Brussels Planning Agency) on behalf of Brussels-Capital Region. The objective is to find a way to harmonise the conviviality of public areas and the imperatives of security. In fact the aim will be to give the region an agreed framework for evaluating the levels of danger, weaknesses and risk scenarios while integrating security measures into the urban fabric (particularly through the development of open spaces, specific lighting, street furniture, mobility solutions and so on).

To start assessing the challenges facing such a project, the CEIO proposed to organise a study trip to London, a city that is already working with these issues. Several preparatory meetings have taken place with the CEIO and various players and experts, amongst which those of the British Embassy in Belgium. Following these meetings, the Brussels regional government decided that it would be extremely worthwhile to gain a deeper understanding of London's experience and the several innovative solutions which have been tested.



## 2.1 The delegation and visits

The Brussels delegation consisted of representatives of the Cabinet of the Minister-President of the Brussels-Capital Region, the Brussels Planning Agency (perspective. brussels), Brussels Urban Development, the Brussels 'Chief Architect' office, Brussels Prevention & Security (BPS), and the CEIO.

Guided by Mr Justin Bedford of the British Embassy in Brussels, the delegation met with:



The *Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI)*, a government organisation with expertise in the field of the security and protection of public and private organisations, with the aim of reducing the vulnerability of their facilities. The measures and protocols suggested aim at preventing, detecting and/or minimising threats and the consequences of a possible attack, both in physical terms (site and persons) and digital terms (security of information). A department of the centre also looks at crosscutting questions to these three security disciplines.

The presentation focused on the theme "Blast and hostile vehicle mitigation". It made particular reference to certain standards in urban security practices such as the ineffectiveness of trees and concrete blocks against vehicle attacks, and the maximum air gap between bollards so that they are effective but do not obstruct the flow of pedestrians (1.2 m). Materials such as sprung steel and metal in a honeycomb structure were cited for the construction of urban furniture easily integrated into the landscape.



The delegation then met staff in charge of security for Queen Elisabeth Olympic Park. *The London Legacy Development Corporation (LLCD)* is the authority, currently reporting to the government, responsible for development of the park and surrounding areas. It replaces the municipal authority for the request of permits in its jurisdiction, defines urban development policy and is responsible for managing projects. The following subjects were covered: the involvement of the CPNI and the National Council of Security for development of the area; the management of staff by function groups and their coordination with event organisers; the preparation of coordinated responses in cooperation with the Transport Advisory Group; and the rules and regulations of the park which have been established jointly with the four neighbouring municipal authorities.



The next meeting was with a representative of the *Joint International Counter-Terrorism Unit*, of the *Home Office*. The Home Office of the United Kingdom government, which is responsible for public security and anti-terrorism, includes a unit which works closely with its counterparts in other European countries. Meetings normally take place in Brussels where experts review strategies and available information.



Delegates from the Brussels-Capital Region then met the *City of London police*. The meeting focused on risk reduction related to terrorism through a holistic security approach. The accent was placed on a “context strategy” which relies on both a protection and preparation aspect. The meeting stressed the importance of preventive work, because it acts in the pre-criminal area, but that it is also highly controversial. Inexpert handling of the prevention aspect, as was the case for certain organisation projects which were not sufficiently reliable, risks destroying the credibility of the approach and the authority sponsoring the projects. Other topics discussed included tools employed on a metropolitan level, pilot projects and principles for reducing crime.

**This study trip provided a good view of approaches set up in London to integrate security measures in the urban landscape. In addition, contacts made during this visit could help the Brussels situation and bilateral meetings and exchanges will follow. For instance, certain representatives of the Region were invited to take part in tests carried out by the CPNI in October.**



## 2.2 Conclusions



### The first observations from London bring out the following:

- The long experience of authorities in the evaluation and prevention of terrorist attacks;
- The creation of a structure that researches, tests and promotes security measures based on precise standards;
- The search for coherence and quality in the integration of security measures in the urban landscape;
- The integration of security issues even at the design stage;
- The experience in pilot projects;
- Expertise in the coordination of parties involved.

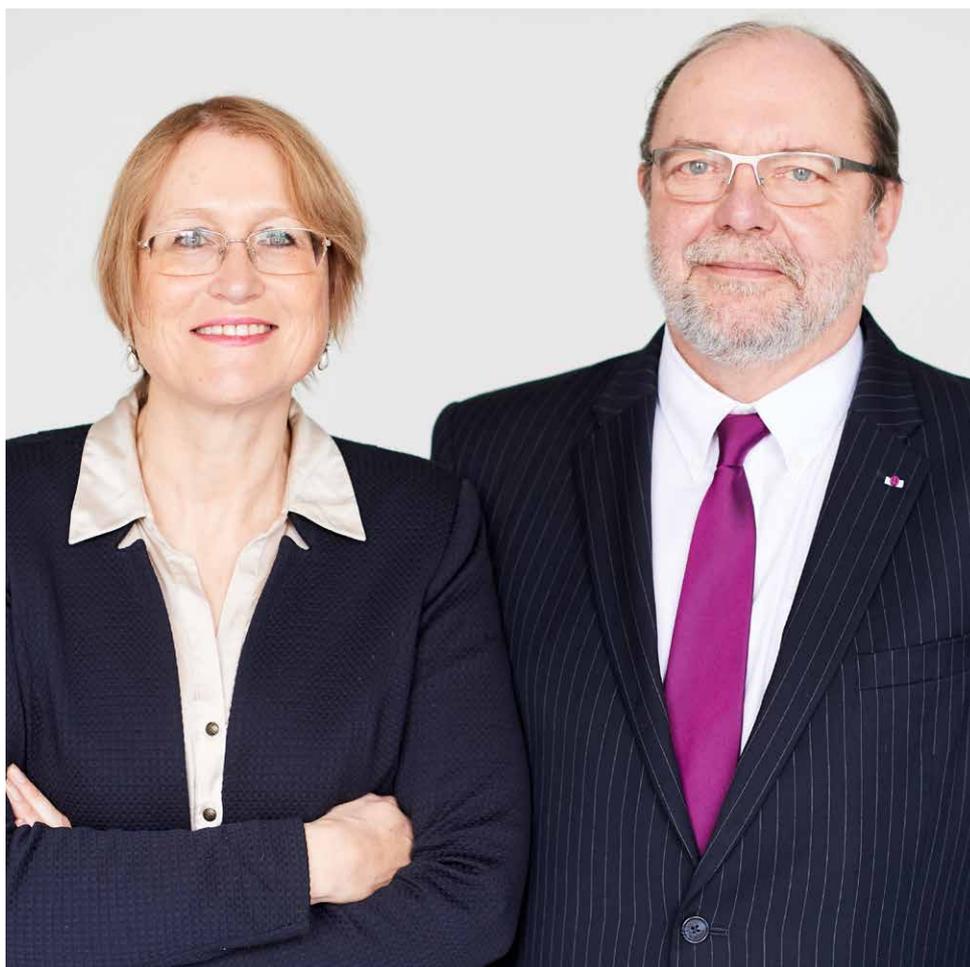


### The Brussels delegation made the following conclusions / recommendations:

- In general, to think of security in a global manner in order to avoid multiplying useless and/or inefficient measures (bollards / cameras);
- The importance of examining the question of accessibility (vehicles) of different strategic buildings and limiting the number of vehicle entrances (look at the presence of vehicles in the district as a whole);
- The possibility of integrating a range of measures in urban furniture. It would be particularly interesting to define priorities, in this area, for the development of certain urban zones;
- The importance of the presence of officers on the ground, the unpredictability of surveillance and good maintenance of public spaces;
- The benefit of making a security audit of buildings and in establishing a list of recommendations at the time of issuing planning permits;
- The involvement of a “prevention advisor” right from the design of a sensitive project which could either be in the form of pending notification or an integral part of the planning permit (similar to the Fire Brigade notice in Belgium);
- To consider establishing a gradation on the level of security and on the type and level of security measures used, according to how close one comes to sensitive sites.

# Conclusion

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Europe is going through a turbulent period and it would be naïve to think that this will have no impact on our capital.

Indeed, at a time when the European Union faces numerous challenges and is reaching a decisive moment in its history, the Brussels Region cannot think of the presence of the European institutions on its territory as a given fact.

Brexit is forcing the European Union to re-examine itself and to question the way it operates. It is not impossible that this re-consideration will bring up the question of the physical presence of the European institutions in our capital. It is therefore essential that our political decision-makers are fully aware of this new political context and that they take account of it.

Brussels has many advantages in this debate: considerable sums of money have been invested in recent years and many steps have been taken to strengthen the international standing of our Region.

The European institutions themselves have also made commitments on their side: the time when they displayed manifest disinterest in the future planning of the city has long passed. This is illustrated by the response of Ms. Kristalina Georgieva, then Vice-President of the European Commission, to a question from a Belgian member of the European Parliament written on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2016:

*“Both before and after the 22<sup>th</sup> March 2016 terrorist atrocities, the European Commission, the Belgian federal and Brussels regional authorities have worked closely to fostering a positive image of Europe’s capital. The European Commission and the Brussels-Capital Region have developed a strategic vision for the Capital of Europe, in which the EU district plays a more integrated and dynamic role in the life of the City. In 2008, the Brussels-Capital Region launched the ‘Projet Urbain Loi’ (PUL) to improve the quality and image of the area. The project seeks to transform the current EU district into an eco-friendly mixed office/housing/retail neighbourhood with more public spaces.*

*The European Commission’s commitment to the City of Brussels is demonstrated by the planned launch in 2017 of an international architectural competition for the redevelopment of the ‘Loi-130 plot’. This Project should integrate office space with other uses including public spaces, residential space, retail and catering. As such the Loi 130 Project will contribute to making the EU district a new architectural landmark and a more attractive and dynamic part of Brussels to the benefit of the people who live and work in the capital as well as for tourists and other visitors.”*

The Brussels Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations will continue to strive to perpetuate the valuable cooperation that has developed with the European institutions in recent years. We also hope with all our heart that the European Union will emerge stronger from the current crisis. Because a stronger Europe inevitably means a stronger Belgium.

**Karin IMPENS**

*Deputy to the Commissioner*

**Alain HUTCHINSON**

*Commissioner*

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



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