



2019

## Annual report

of the Brussels Commissioner for  
Europe and International Organisations

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





# Preface

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So here is our fifth annual report. Five years of advocacy for the benefit of our Region and the international institutions based in Brussels.

As I write this traditional introduction (April 2020), the world has changed! It will never be the same again due to the Covid-19 pandemic and all that it will have as a consequence on our social, economic and political lives.

As an international capital, Brussels is especially affected by this new and uncommon context. But Brussels can and must rise to this new challenge, beyond the unexpected challenges imposed on us today!

As we have been doing for the past five years, the Office of the Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations (CEIO) will continue to pursue its objectives in order to enhance our reputation as an open, international city and the capital of the European Union. We will pursue our activities to facilitate the work of these institutions, to accommodate their numerous staff members as well as all of those who, for a variety of reasons, are our guests.

The awareness of our governments, our administrations, and our communes of the importance of the international role of our Region must allow us to mobilise exceptional resources to sustain the dynamics of this essential aspect of our common fate.

I would like to draw attention here to the importance of the presence and international role of Brussels both in terms of economic momentum and therefore regional prosperity, and in terms of employment and multiple opportunities for our younger generations. You will find these observations in the new edition of our "barometer" of international life in our Region, which is due to be published this year by our team.

We are confident that every political, social, cultural and economic leader in Brussels will have at heart to pursue and expand the initiatives aimed at consolidating the efforts undertaken despite this sudden socio-economic and health hazard. May the key sectors of this international development be adequately supported and may this unforeseen 'trauma' of our society be followed by an unprecedented commitment, but also by a moment of reflection about our common future.

I hope that the occasion offered to us will be an opportunity to seriously reconsider our way of understanding the city, to bring its functions back into balance, to review our priorities, to restore the importance of the social and human relations we have been able to measure during these months of "confinement"!

**Alain HUTCHINSON**

*Commissioner of the Brussels Government*

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# A host region policy





# 1. The mission of the CEIO

The **host region policy** can be defined as a hospitality policy for supranational and intergovernmental organisations having their headquarters or representation in the Brussels-Capital Region, including diplomatic missions and regional and local representations. The Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations is appointed and mandated by the Regional Government to conduct this hosting task. He represents the Government and coordinates this policy under its authority. The Commissioner operates exclusively within the broader context of the regional competences, with the harmonious development of the Region and the interests of its citizens as priorities. The mandate conferred on the Commissioner and his team comprises five specific missions:

## SHAPE A HOST REGION

**POLICY** under regional competences and in harmony with the development of the Region and the interests of its citizens.

## MAKE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

to the Brussels Regional Government on all projects that might have an impact both on international organisations and on the Brussels urban landscape.

## PERPETUATE THE STRUCTURAL RELATIONS

between the Brussels (regional and local) authorities and the European institutions, international organisations and diplomatic missions located in Brussels.

## ACT AS SINGLE CONTACT POINT

for all European institutions and international organisations through the institutional liaison desk.

## WELCOME THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

through the customised administrative support offered by the Expat Welcome Desk.

## 2. The international community in Brussels

If Brussels is referred to as the “Capital of Europe”, it is because of its diversity, its accessibility, and particularly the presence of the major European Union institutions, in addition to many other significant intergovernmental organisations. Though rather small in size, its growing international position has made it a political world-region, where incessant decision-making and consultation, both on a multilateral as on a bilateral diplomatic level, on matters of global significance take place.

### 2.1 The international players



## 2.2 Employment

The international presence generates up to 23,2% of regional employment.

Around **49.000 direct jobs**:

- **37.340** European Union staff
- **7.673** diplomatic personnel
- **3.304** intergovernmental staff
- **648** European schools staff



The 5 main European institutions, agencies and bodies create the majority of these jobs.

Between **10.000 and 14.000 lobbyist jobs**

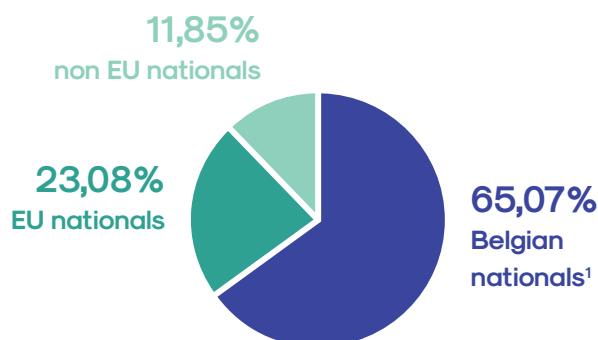
## 2.3 Population

The impact of the international role of Brussels is more evident than ever in the composition of its population.

After Dubai, Brussels-Capital Region is the most cosmopolitan city-region in the world:

- **more than 1 in 3 Brussels residents has a foreign nationality**
- **more than 1 in 5 is an EU national**

In the last 20 years, the number of EU citizens has practically doubled. On the 1st of January 2019, Brussels had a population of **1.208.542 residents**, of which:



<sup>1</sup> Including Belgian nationals with dual nationality.

### TOP 5 FOREIGN NATIONALITIES IN BRUSSELS

#### FRANCE

64.218 residents

#### ROMANIA

41.858 residents

#### MOROCCO

34.984 residents

#### ITALY

33.718 residents

#### SPAIN

28.480 residents

The publication "Brussels, International Capital – the figures 2020" reveals in more detail these key figures on the international presence in Brussels.

## 3 The CEIO as privileged point of contact

In 2019, the CEIO further developed synergies and fostered cooperation to provide our policy and administrative partners in Brussels with timely information on issues related to the European institutions. In return, the EU institutions increasingly see the CEIO as the single contact point for all matters relating to their presence in Brussels.

Our sphere of action covers all the areas for which the Brussels Region is competent. We take a proactive approach to resolve potential problems at an early stage and in a structural way. On the strength of its experience, the Expat Welcome Desk identifies global problems based on isolated practical cases and finding structural solutions. Nevertheless, our mediating skills remain too often solicited on an ad hoc basis.

Since October 2019, the Secretary of State for European and International Relations organises a bimonthly meeting with hub.brussels, Brussels International, visit.brussels, the CEIO and representatives of the cabinets charged with promoting the image of Brussels. There is no doubt that this consultation will contribute to improving our visibility with the regional authorities. The coordination meetings on 22 October and 3 December aimed, among other things, to formalise this cooperation in a written agreement.





# 4 Looking back on the host region policy 2014-2019

## In what areas did we have an impact? What happens after 2019?

Over the past five years, cooperation between European institutions and the Brussels authorities has been considerably intensified. Much of this is due to the efforts of the CEIO. The strategic choice of the Brussels government to appoint a Commissioner for Europe holding a political mandate has undoubtedly been the cornerstone of this success.

Many issues have been successfully tackled in recent years thanks to the new mindset the CEIO's actions generated.

Of course, this is only a start. How are we going to deal with the major societal challenges Brussels will have to face in the years to come? We are witnessing significant demographic growth and a large influx of knowledge workers from abroad. The achievement of environmental objectives and the sustainable use of space are prerequisites for the further development of our region and its economy. This evolution will also affect the international organisations in our region. We count on them to be exemplary and play a pathfinder role on this issue. In return, we expect the Brussels authorities to provide coherent and transparent legislation and policies considering the growing globalisation of the Region in its many aspects.

In addition, the question must also be asked whether, after five years of operation, one can speak of a widely supported vision of the regional headquarters policy and whether the seat policy represented by the CEIO can be considered permanently rooted in the existing administrative structures of the region.

The structure of the CEIO as a non-profit organisation (asbl), headed by a Commissioner appointed by the Brussels Government under the auspices of the Minister-President for its operating subsidy, has made the CEIO a unique organisation within the regional administrative landscape. It is a situation that presents both advantages and disadvantages.

The support given by the Brussels Minister-President, the former Minister for External Relations and the new Secretary of State for European and International Relations goes on unabated. To gain a better understanding of how we operate, the Secretary of State visited the CEIO and its antenna in the European Parliament at the start of his mandate in September 2019.

# 5. The team and the governing bodies of CEIO

The dynamic and multilingual CEIO team fulfils **a liaison role** between Brussels public authorities and the European and international institutions (and their employees) established in Brussels.

**Alain HUTCHINSON**  
*Commissioner*

## Management

**Karin IMPENS**  
*Deputy Director*

## Expat Welcome Desk

**Amélie BOVY**  
*Senior Legal Adviser*

**Hélène JACUB**  
*Assistant at the head office*

**Annick DE BLESER**  
*Assistant at the European Parliament*

**Anaïs JOUZDANI**  
*Junior Legal Adviser*

## Institutional Liaison desk

**Edoardo GUGLIOMETTI**  
*Adviser Urban Development*

## Communication

**Natacha BRIEVEN**  
*Communication and Office Manager*

## Reception

**Laurent GILARDENGHI**  
*Reception Desk Assistant*



The General Assembly and Board are composed of representatives appointed by the Brussels–Capital Region government at the beginning of each legislature.

| General Assembly   | Board  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alain HUTCHINSON, President</li> <li>• Daan FONCK</li> <li>• Linde HAVEN</li> <li>• Evelyne HUYTEBROECK</li> <li>• Julien JOST</li> <li>• Aurélie MAHOUX</li> <li>• Jeremy ONKELINX</li> <li>• Rebecca OVERLOOP</li> <li>• Alexandra PHILIPPE</li> <li>• Frédérick PIRARD</li> <li>• Lesia RADELICKI</li> <li>• Laurent VAN DER ELST</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alain HUTCHINSON, President</li> <li>• Daan FONCK</li> <li>• Linde HAVEN</li> <li>• Evelyne HUYTEBROECK</li> <li>• Julien JOST</li> <li>• Aurélie MAHOUX</li> <li>• Jeremy ONKELINX</li> <li>• Alexandra PHILIPPE</li> <li>• Frédérick PIRARD</li> <li>• Lesia RADELICKI</li> <li>• Laurent VAN DER ELST</li> </ul> |

## Brussels Parliament

In 2015 the Brussels Parliament created the **European Affairs Committee**, showing the importance that the Brussels Region attaches to the presence of international organisations on its territory. Once a year, the Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations presents the activities of the CEIO to this Committee and replies to numerous questions from the members of the Brussels parliament.





# Institutional liaison



# 1 The function of "institutional liaison"

## 1.1 Context

The Brussels-Capital Region (BCR) recognises the **growing importance of the presence of European and international institutions**, particularly their influence on the regional economy, the creation of employment, professional and leisure tourism, the attractiveness of the Region, international recognition of the city and the cultural richness of its increasingly-diverse residents.

To find the right balance in a mixed living environment and guarantee the quality of life for its inhabitants, the **BCR assists and works with this international presence through the Institutional Liaison desk** of the Brussels Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations (CEIO). Particular attention is paid to the consequences of this presence on the dynamics of the territory, in terms of the environment, town planning, architectural heritage, mobility, tourism, as well as the development of public spaces (both their security and their conviviality).

In these areas, the CEIO is the **single point of contact** for all organisations that have set up in Brussels. This includes the European institutions, which have thousands of employees and dozens of buildings concentrated in a few sites in Brussels, international organisations, embassies and diplomatic missions, and regional and local representations spread across the whole Region.

The objective is to break with the past – when the establishment of international organisations' headquarters followed top-down, real-estate driven planning approaches, causing traumatism not yet disappeared in certain neighbourhoods – and move to a **strategy** which takes account of the needs of the different parties involved, including local residents, employees, commuters, cultural operators, tourists, shops, and new businesses developing in the area.

## 1.2 Mission

The Institutional Liaison desk fulfils the **role of intermediary** between the Brussels public authorities and European and international organisations for every aspect relating to their presence in the Brussels region. Specifically, this means that we act as a **single point of contact** for all requests that fall within the competences of regional authorities, notably relating to town planning, security, mobility, environment, and the development of public space. In a wider perspective, our objective is to project a **positive image** of the Region, position the city-region as an **international capital** and thereby contest with international competition.

## 1.3 Strengths

### Our expertise

- Knowledge of the Belgian, European and international institutional system and context;
- Expertise in the fields of town planning, mobility, security and the environment;
- Project management and consultation methods;
- Privileged contacts with Belgian ministerial cabinets and administrations, and international organisations;
- Dynamic multilingual, multi-skilled team.

### Our most important contacts

- Brussels Ministers;
- Regional administrations and agencies;
- Brussels Parliament;
- Mayors and Aldermen in Brussels communes;
- Town planning and mobility services of Brussels municipalities;
- Interministerial Committee for Host Nation Policy (ICZ/CIPS) and federal ministry offices and administrations;
- Political and administrative heads in EU institutions and international organisations;
- Embassies and diplomatic missions;
- Regional and local representations.



## 2. Method

### A POLITICAL DIALOGUE

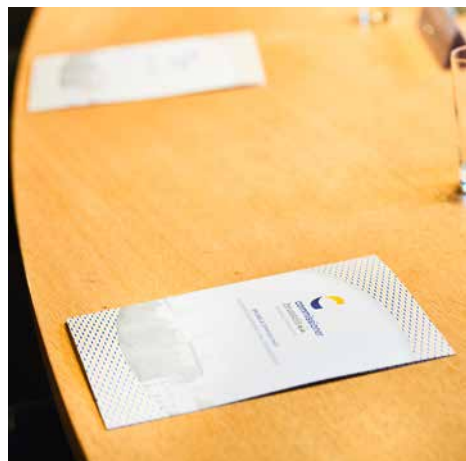
Once a year, the CEIO organises a **political summit** meeting that brings together the Brussels government (BCRG) and representatives of the European institutions at the highest level (European Parliament, Council of the European Union, European Commission, European Committee of the Regions, European Economic and Social Committee, European External Action Service).

These meetings provide an opportunity to **review** the various projects planned by the European institutions in Brussels as well as large development projects that the BCR has undertaken to complete, particularly in the European quarter.

The **decisions** taken and the **directions** agreed during these meetings form the basis of the CEIO's daily work: setting up working groups, define new areas of collaboration between the EU institutions and regional and local administrations, and exchange information in order to find solutions to challenges when dealing with the planning of public space.

Since the end of 2017, the **minutes** of this meeting (written in three languages: EN, FR, NL) are systematically added to the agenda of the BCR government.

Due to the regional and European elections and the particularly busy political agendas, the meeting that should have taken place in 2019 could not be programmed before the beginning of 2020. Nevertheless, the CEIO team and its counterparts spent a substantial part of the year preparing for the high-level meeting and working on the items of the agenda.



## WORKING GROUPS

In order to treat specific questions as effectively as possible, the Institutional Liaison desk of the CEIO organises and coordinates working groups. These working groups enable key persons to **meet** on technical issues, **conduct regular and constructive dialogue**, and **build mutual confidence** amongst all those involved. Working groups are set up based on decisions taken in the BCRG-EU Summits.

During 2019, the following working groups convened:

- The **working group "Tourism"** with visit.brussels, aimed at promoting the appeal of the European quarter and the synergy of the visitor services of the different EU institutions;
- The **working group on the "Luxembourg-Schuman connection"**, to examine the prospects for constructing a cyclo-pedestrian route between the two poles of the district.



Tourism working group at the headquarters of the Council of the European Union (Europa building) - 1 April 2019

## AD HOC ASSISTANCE

The Institutional Liaison desk receives a certain number of *ad hoc* requests from international organisations on a variety of subjects (road works obstructing passage, malfunction of public equipment, poor maintenance of parks or public spaces, etc.). **Assisting** them in their dealings with local and regional authorities and helping all parties involved to **reach agreement** is an essential part of the desk's daily work.





## DIALOGUE ON THE FUTURE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

The Institutional Liaison desk pays particular attention to the **development of the European quarter** and stays in contact on this subject with all levels of authority involved in each project, notably the Region, the municipalities most concerned by the presence of institutions on their territory (City of Brussels, Ixelles, Etterbeek and Saint-Josse) and the federal government. In this respect, permanent contact is maintained with the Interministerial Committee for Host Nation Policy (CIPS/ICZ) and the City of Brussels' Mayor and Aldermen college concerning building projects and mobility issues.

It is essential that this dialogue is maintained in order to ensure the quality of urban space in the future and thereby ensure the harmonious development of the European quarter, the Region and its inhabitants.

## PERMANENT EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

An integral part of the desk's activities is to **listen** to and understand all entities that operate in the European quarter, **stimulate new areas of cooperation** between Brussels and international authorities, and particularly, **encourage the exchange of information** in order to overcome specific issues relating to the development of public space.

## 3 Issues dealt with in 2019

Throughout the year, the CEIO followed up on major projects and resolved a range of concrete issues.

**Some of these projects are quite extensive, both in terms of resources deployed and time committed. Their main thematic areas are as follows:**

### DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC SPACES

The Region has reiterated its intention to redevelop the European quarter in line with the vision outlined by the Masterplan of 2008, while making the quarter a priority in the Regional Sustainable Development Plan.

As an active player committed to the respect and implementation of the Master Plan, the CEIO participated in the Support and Steering Committee of the “PAD Loi-RPA Wet” project. This is a zoning plan fixing both the regulatory and strategic framework for the area along rue de la Loi/Wetstraat. This part of the city concentrates and represents well the problems behind the lack of attractiveness of the area: a mono-functional space deserted in the evening, characterised by mediocre architecture and crossed by an urban motorway. Among the various projects aimed at increasing the conviviality of the area, the “PAD Loi/RPA Wet” aims to finally make possible the implementation of the “PuL/SpW” (“Projet Urbain Loi”) – the vision proposed by the Christian de Portzamparc urban planning agency. This vision advocates a mix of offices, shops, housing and community facilities, whose upward densification would allow the creation of new public spaces at ground level and whose alignment diversification would break the corridor aspect of rue de la Loi/Wetstraat. The plan was approved by the Regional Government on first reading and is now awaiting the results of public consultation before the second reading.



Jury of the architectural competition Loi 130 of the European Commission – 25 June 2019



Official opening of the exhibition of the architectural competition Loi 130 - 4 September 2019

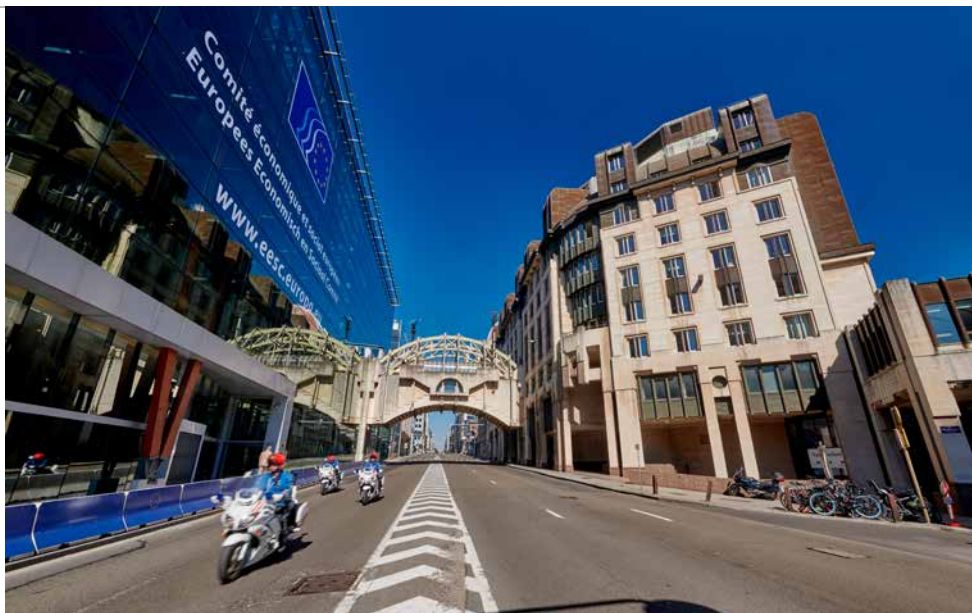
Future real estate projects located within the perimeter of the “PAD-RPA” will be required to apply its prescriptions, in particular the opening up of views and public spaces to break the corridor aspect of the Rue de la Loi. One of the first projects to translate the ambitions of the Master Plan is "Loi 130". The project restructures the offices of the European Commission located at 130 rue de la Loi, which will free up several buildings throughout the Brussels Region. The selection of the architects was subject to an international competition supported by the UIA (International Union of Architects) in accordance with the recommendations of UNESCO. It was overseen by an international jury in which the Brussels-Capital Region was represented by the Minister-President and the Brussels Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations.

## SECURITY

Since the terrorist attacks in Brussels in 2016, the regional administration has witnessed a significant increase in requests for street furniture and measures (road closures, suppression of parking spaces, camera surveillance, etc.) to secure sites considered to be under threat. Most of these sites being headquarters of international organisations, European institutions and diplomatic missions, the CEIO has been called upon to bring stakeholders to the table and accompany the discussions.

The escalating number of requests rapidly led to certain observations: the regional administration lacks guidelines for assessing the relevance of these measures in terms of site planning, there should be adequate parameters to establish the probability of threats to the sites, and the current case-by-case analysis should be replaced by a district wide approach, since the majority of the " high risk " sites are within the European quarter's perimeter.





The CEIO's first initiative was to suggest a survey. In 2016, the regional agency perspective.brussels<sup>1</sup>, started preparing a strategy aimed at integrating security requirements in the layout of the European quarter. The objective was to define an urban approach that converts safety measures into high-quality, sustainable developments that do not impact the quality of life.

With the support of the Cabinet of the Minister-President, BPS-BPV<sup>2</sup> and the CEIO, Perspective.brussels then translated the elements of the report into a diagram showing a ranking of places where security intervention was recommended according to the degree of urgency and the development cost. Given the quality concerns of the improvements to be planned, the region decided to transform this section of the survey into a guide that may be applied to the entire regional territory. The "Guide for the inclusion of security measures in public spaces in the Brussels-Capital Region" was presented and distributed at the "Security by design" conference organised by BPS-BPV on 29 May 2019.

After participating in the forum on urban security in 2017, organised by the Committee of the Regions for the mayors of cities that had recently suffered an attack, the CEIO advised the Region to participate more actively in the European debate. Which it eventually did, thanks to the dialogue with Perspective.brussels and BPS-BPV. The Brussels-Capital Region joined the partnership on Urban Security in the context of the European Union's Urban Agenda, where BPS-BPV already participated in the works and research missions. The CEIO since then regularly contributes to debates on BPS-BPV topics involving international organisations and participates in the meetings of the Technical Committee on Security.

This shows how the Brussels-Capital Region increasingly positions itself as a reflection, testing and steering centre for matters concerning the introduction of the safety aspect in the design of public spaces as part of spatial planning and urban policies.

<sup>1</sup> The Brussels regional planning office.

<sup>2</sup> The regional administration for safety and prevention.

## ENVIRONMENT

The CEIO worked closely with the Cabinets of the successive Ministers of the Environment (elections in 2019) and the regional administration to assist stakeholders during the examination of the **environmental permit applications for the buildings of the European Parliament**, in order to regularise the existing situation.

In addition, the CEIO is regularly consulted on many aspects of the **management and maintenance of green areas** such as the Parc Léopold and the Parc du Cinquantenaire. Be it organising events, ensuring the quality of the facilities or making access easier for visitors, the CEIO has brought the relevant parties together on every occasion.

## TOURISM, IMAGE AND CULTURE

The cooperation established in the tourism working group resulted in the creation of the **networking days**, co-organised with visit.brussels, for institutional, cultural, tourist and commercial operators in the European quarter. There have been two editions in 2019:

- "2<sup>nd</sup> European Quarter Networking Lunch" on 14 June 2019, hosted by the House of European History.
- "3<sup>rd</sup> European Quarter Networking Lunch" on 26 September 2019, hosted by the Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and Military History.

These days brought together a range of stakeholders working in the cultural and touristic fields in the European quarter, including public authorities, European institutions, associations of tourist guides, museums, theatres, shops, restaurants, and hotels. They all came to present and discuss their ideas for cooperation aimed at promoting the attractiveness and quality of life of the district.



**Great ambitions for the European quarter: the survey “Improving the image and appeal of the European district in Brussels: a challenge, actors, a method, solutions”.**

Tourism is one of the main sectors of economic growth for the Region in 2019. The European quarter increasingly appears as a catalyst for tourism in Brussels, and the presence of the European institutions is a theme that has become part of the tourism discourse in Brussels. Since 2015, visit.brussels and the CEIO have been meeting in a reflection and concertation platform to coordinate actions and initiatives as efficiently as possible. With the need for an integrated approach to creating a brand image for the European quarter being felt, these contacts were intensified in 2019.

"Brussels" is a strong brand. However, as an international flagship and the economic heart of the Brussels-Capital Region, the European quarter of Brussels still suffers from a lack of prestige and attractiveness. Although the European district is mainly perceived as being administrative and institutional, there is a growing awareness of the many assets and opportunities of the district that could be put to better use. The increase in number of tourists visiting the quarter in recent years reflects this idea. Therefore, the European Quarter Fund, Perspective.brussels, hub.brussels and visit.brussels examined together with the CEIO whether the public and private stakeholders were willing to work on a joint strategy to improve the image and attractiveness of the European quarter. This collaboration is steered by visit.brussels, assisted by the Bastille Agency (Paris), known for its expertise in territorial appeal. The European institutions, the City of Brussels and the local authorities of Ixelles, Etterbeek and Saint-Josse, along with the associations of retailers and hotels in the European quarter, participate in the process. Around fifty public and private stakeholders are being consulted over several months by means of the Bastille Agency's methodology. This unprecedented strategy for Brussels aims to achieve a broad consensus between public and private bodies on a range of tangible proposals to enhance the image and attractiveness of the European quarter. The transformation of the district into an effective meeting place for its multiple users (residents, workers and tourists) will be one of the major challenges of 2020, taking into account both security and landscape integration imperatives.

# 4 □ Everyday practice

It is a fact that, even at national level, the 'host nation policy' does hardly receive any media attention, making it not at all a familiar concept in public opinion. What a 'regional seat policy' implies, with its daily activities as an 'intermediary' or 'facilitator' for the Region and international organisations, is therefore extremely difficult to explain. In this chapter, we cite several examples of specific cases that our 'institutional liaison' unit regularly encounters.



## EXAMPLE 1

- > **Startuppers** undertake the temporary occupation of a space in the European quarter to promote young local designers; architects wish to gain access to European buildings for a photography project; a local association is looking for sponsors for activities in the public space near the institutions, etc.
- > All these players are looking for contacts, funding, and relevant information to facilitate their projects. It is not always easy to understand the "who-does-what" at both territorial and administrative levels. So, they come across the CEIO's website and get in touch with us.
- > The CEIO meets these associations and systematically shares information with them about the feasibility of their project. It brings them into contact with organisations that can help them: as a result, the startuppers were able to meet the cultural and economic agents of the district, the architects gained access to the buildings they were interested in and the local association obtained funds to launch its events.

EXAMPLE 2

- > **The Embassy** of a European country needs to undertake urgent maintenance work in its building. To carry out these works, however, cranes and other heavy equipment must be placed in the public space.
- > The embassy manager wonders whether a simple building permit from the commune will suffice, or if he should seek permission from the affected neighbours. Is a special insurance required? The postal address places the embassy in one commune while the land register lists it under another. Which commune should the embassy apply to ?
- > The CEIO verifies the appropriate procedures with the relevant administrations, corrects any incorrect or inaccurate information and brings the embassy into contact with the appropriate person in charge for the permit application.

EXAMPLE 3

- > An **international organisation** is repeatedly approached by an artist who wishes to donate a work of art to be placed in the public space. At the same time, a commune in Brussels receives a similar offer.
- > Both the international organisation and the commune contact the CEIO and enquire if the project is known to us and if it has the support of other public authorities or renowned cultural actors.
- > The CEIO first engages in a dialogue with the region's territorial development coordinator, to find out about the plans for the specified public space, and subsequently with the Urban Planning and Mobility Administrations, to verify the correct procedures to be followed for the placement of works of art. Finally, a more detailed research on the project is conducted: do any authorities or associations support the initiative? Does the work correspond to the description? Afterwards, all the collected information is shared with the public authorities concerned so that they can make a well-grounded decision.

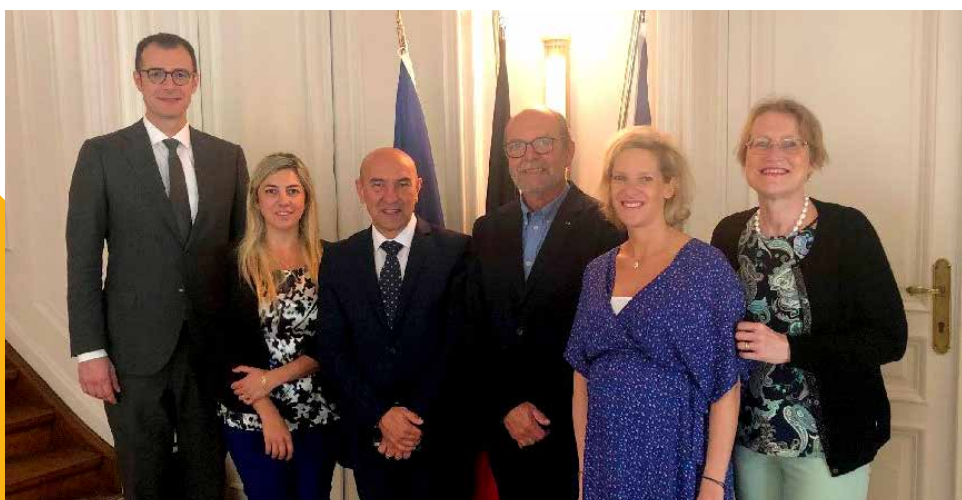


## 5 Regional and local representations

Brussels is the **international capital for regional and local lobbying**. It has become the norm for regions in EU member states to establish a representation to the EU in Brussels.

However, these regional offices – be they private or public – do not have official status and do not generally function under any legal form. They therefore often face **administrative problems** when setting up. To remedy these problems, the region introduced **regional certification** in 1994. Although this does not give delegations official status, it does nevertheless indicate that the office in question is recognised by the BCR as an organisation representing an intra-national collectivity. In practice, the regional certificate often helps the representations to overcome practical issues. Every year it is accorded to **240 regional and local entities** and is signed by the regional State Secretary in charge of European and International Relations, with the CEIO carrying out all the administrative work.

Regional representations have been created with very **specific objectives**, such as to obtain European funds, influence European policy, boost the geo-political visibility of their territory, as well as to join networks and the international community within the EU sphere. They are therefore seen as partners within the European political community with their core activities being the **collection, processing and filtering of information on EU policies and institutional developments of interest to their region**. The BCR does not have this type of representation to defend its interests with the EU, the Brussels delegation to the EU being integrated in the Permanent Representation of Belgium and its activity being aligned to the one of this latter.



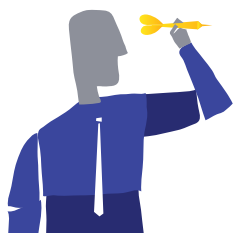
Visit of the Mayor of Izmir to the CEIO – 21 June 2019



# Expatriate Welcome Desk



**T**he Expat Welcome Desk (EWD) is an integral part of the host policy operated by the Office of the Brussels Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations (CEIO).



1

## MISSION

To facilitate the settling in of the international community in Brussels by way of a personalised administrative assistance. The objective is to offer our visitors advice for any practical and legal problems that may occur during their arrival and throughout their stay, and to guide them through all type of administrative formalities (registration in the commune, marriage, legal cohabitation, tax return, etc.).



## 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



4

## WAYS TO ASSIST YOU

- > By phone: **+32 (0)2 430 66 00**
- > By e-mail: **[info@commissioner.brussels](mailto:info@commissioner.brussels)**
- > Via our website: **[www.commissioner.brussels](http://www.commissioner.brussels)**
- > By appointment





## Our target audience

- Staff of European institutions: officials, parliamentary assistants, seconded national experts, contracted staff and trainees
- MEP's
- Staff of international organisations
- Teachers at European schools
- Personnel of regional representations
- Diplomatic personnel
- Foreign lobbyists and journalists
- Foreign researchers and postdoctoral personnel
- Anyone wishing to set up professionally in Brussels
- Family members of all the above

## Our privileged contacts

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HR services of all European institutions</li> <li>• NATO human resources service</li> <li>• Office of the Secretary-General of the European Schools</li> <li>• Brussels Ministers</li> <li>• Immigration and population services in the 19 Brussels communes</li> <li>• Mayors and Aldermen of the 19 Brussels communes</li> <li>• Brussels Ministry of Economy and Employment</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federal Interministerial Committee for the Host Nation Policy</li> <li>• Federal Public Service of Foreign Affairs</li> <li>• Federal Public Service of Finances</li> <li>• The Belgian Immigration Office</li> <li>• The tenants' federation ("Syndicat des Locataires")</li> <li>• The regional tourism agency (visit.brussels)</li> </ul> |
|--|---|

## Our expertise

- More than 25 years of experience providing services to the international community in Brussels
- Global and deep knowledge of matters relating to European officials
- Expertise relating to privileges and immunities of the European Union
- Close contact with Belgian authorities and the European institutions
- Dynamic and multilingual team

## Our multilingual team

### 2 OFFICES

- **Head office:** Avenue d'Auderghem/Oudergemlaan 63, 1040 Brussels
- **European Parliament antenna:** ASP – Office 00H160

### 4 TEAM MEMBERS

- **Amélie BOVY**, Senior Legal Adviser at the head office
- **Hélène JACUB**, Assistant at the head office
- **Annick DE BLESER**, Assistant at the European Parliament
- **Anaïs JOUZDANI**, Junior Legal Adviser at the European Parliament

**Our office in the European Parliament**, completely renovated early 2018, positions us as a key partner for welcoming and assisting its personnel: MEPs, officials, parliamentary assistants, contracted staff, trainees, etc. This proximity enables us to strengthen ties between the CEIO and the European Parliament.



# 1. Method



**EWD INFORMS** the international community free of charge in 3 languages (FR, EN, NL), on all matters related to their settling and stay in Brussels. The EWD also provides information sessions within European institutions and international organisations for various target groups (trainees, spouses of officials). Our priority is to be accessible and responsive to all "expats" living in Brussels, many of whom are lost in the complexity of Belgian administrative procedures and rules.

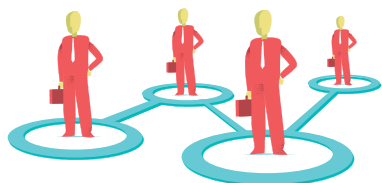
**EWD ADVISES** by examining each case on an individual basis, offering personalised advice and providing genuine consultancy work.

**EWD SOLVES** certain bureaucratic problems faced by the "expat" community, mostly due to a poor knowledge of one of our national languages or to their particular and sometimes complex situation (diplomats, European civil servants, seconded workers, etc.).



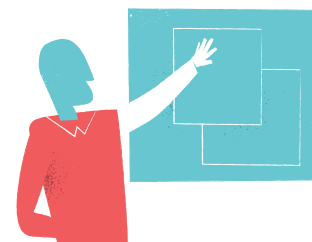
**EWD ORGANISES** seminars throughout the year for its audiences (officials and interns in European institutions and international organisations, spouses of European officials, diplomats, etc.).

**EWD BRINGS TOGETHER** its key contacts at frequent working meetings on the different issues encountered by European officials during their move to and stay in Brussels.



**EWD RAISES AWARENESS** by informing local, regional, and federal authorities of any problems or inconsistencies in administrative procedures that affect European officials and seeks to resolve them.

**EWD COMMUNICATES** clearly and frequently via targeted actions and communication supports to make itself known to its target audiences.



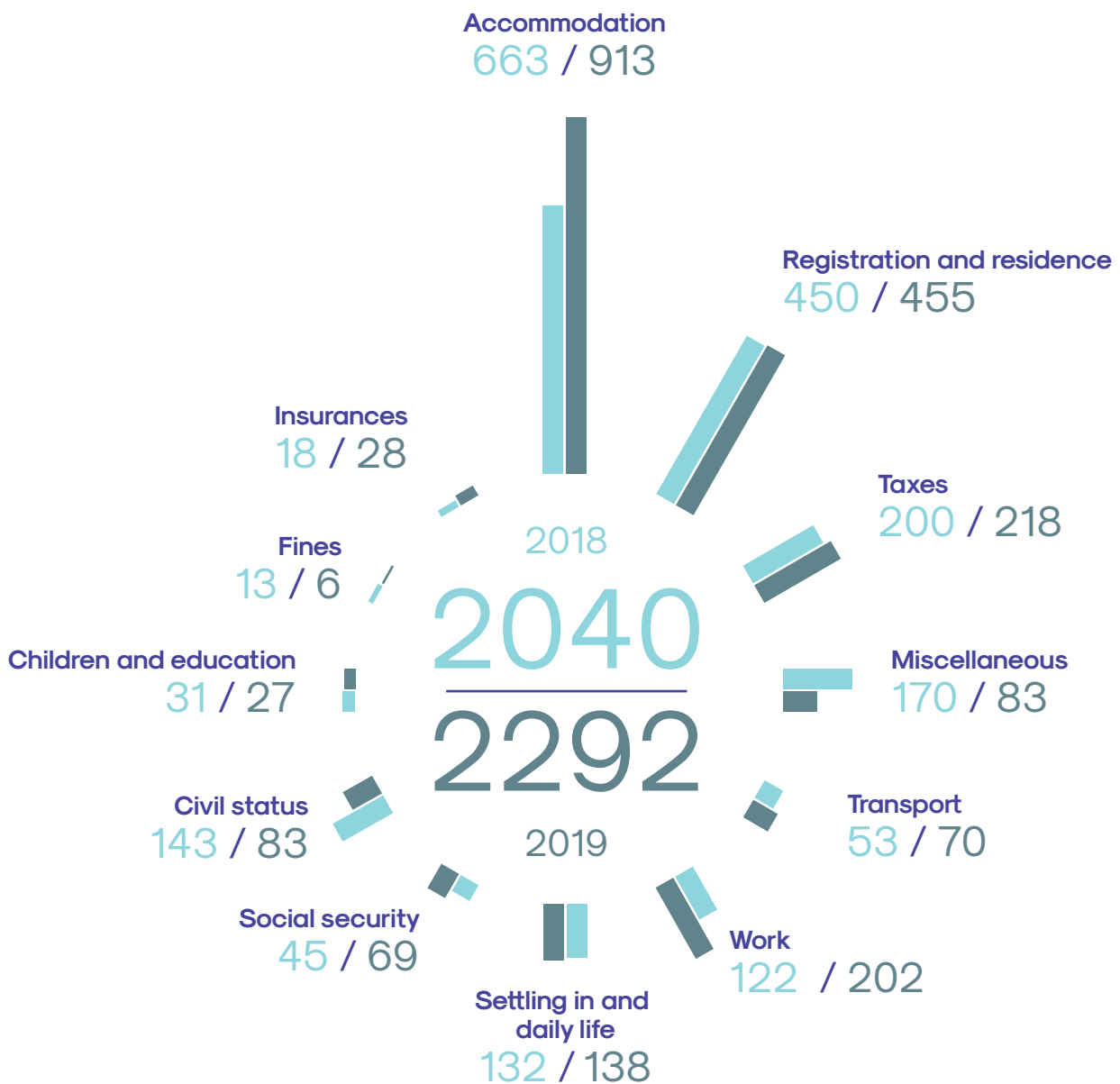
**EWD CONVEYS A POSITIVE IMAGE** of Brussels by providing a high quality, tailor-made welcome to the growing international community in Brussels. Anyone who is given the necessary and timely assistance during their time in Brussels will be an excellent ambassador for our Region abroad



## 2. Cases taken up in 2019

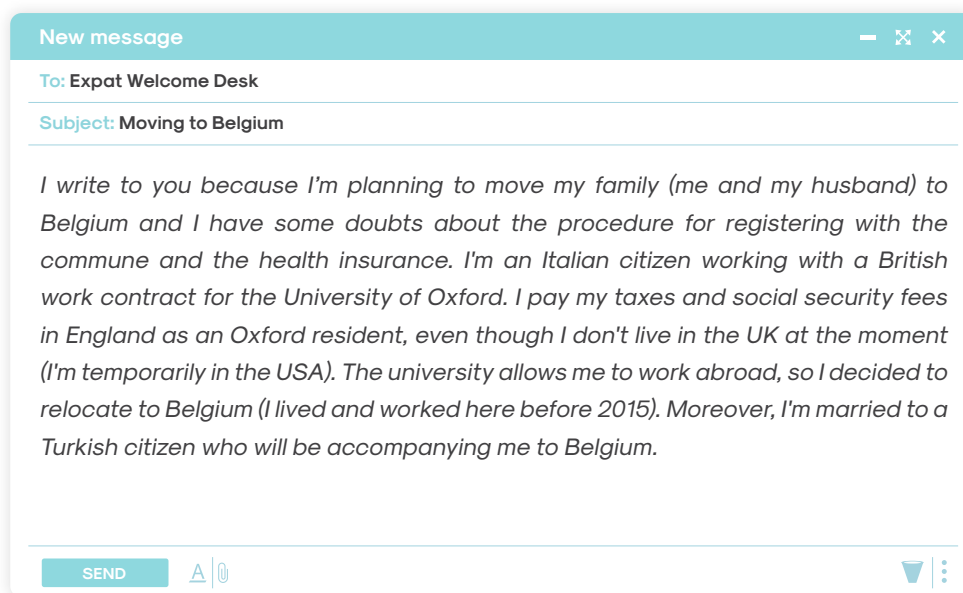
### 2.1 Statistics

Number of EWD cases by type, over two years (2018 and 2019):



## 2.2 An example

The EWD frequently faces complex problems, especially when new expats arrive in Brussels. In these cases, the personal situation of the expat is examined from different angles: registration with the commune, social security affiliation, taxes, rental lease, etc. The following case study illustrates the issues addressed by the EWD during its consultations.



- > The EWD provided guidance to this person by first reminding her of the different ways to register as a European citizen. Since this person has not a Belgian employment contract but a foreign one, she must be able to prove she has sufficient income and register with the commune on this basis.
- > Her husband (a non-European national) may also register by means of family reunification based on the marriage certificate.
- > Membership of a health insurance company is possible only after people have registered with the commune. But to register with the commune, proof of health insurance is required. A European Blue Card for health insurance or a private insurance can therefore be provided as a solution to first register with the commune and then join a Belgian health insurance organisation.
- > Finally, it is important to draw the person's attention to her tax situation. If you live in Belgium and register with the commune, you are presumed to be resident in Belgium from a fiscal point of view and must therefore report all your income (including foreign earnings) in Belgium. The fact that social security contributions are paid in another country does not mean that taxes are also paid there. Of course, there is a bilateral treaty avoiding double taxation, but it must be determined how it applies to the situation of the person.



## 2.3 Testimonials



### ANDREW (UK)

*took part in our training day for municipalities organised at the European Parliament on 3 June.*



"On behalf also of my staff (staff services at NATO) I would like to say how much we appreciated being able to attend the excellent training day for the communes at the European Parliament on Monday. The session was really informative on so many points and has encouraged us to continue to work ever more closely with the Brussels Commissioner's office. A big thank you to you and your colleagues for an excellent event."

### KONSTANTINA (GREECE)

*contacted our Expat Welcome Desk for a review of her lease contract and several questions related to her installation to Brussels in the context of her new job.*



"Thank you so much for your fast and precise response. As this was the first time I contacted your office, I am impressed and would like to congratulate you on the professionalism and quality of your services. I will definitely recommend the Expat Welcome Desk of the CEO to other expatriates."



### HIND (PALESTINE)

*wanted to know the procedure for obtaining a residence permit as a partner of a European citizen. We provided guidance and advice on a family reunification procedure based on legal cohabitation.*

"The Expat Welcome Desk has been an extremely valuable go-to-source for me to navigate Belgium's bureaucracy as a migrant. Ever since arriving in Brussels as a trainee, they have been there for me every step of the way – from applying to the commune, the work permit, taxes and to cohabitation. I can honestly say that without their quick advice and regular support, I would have not been able to live the life I have built today. I sincerely want to thank you for all the time, patience and service you offer."

## 3. Meetings and issues

### 3.1 Consequences of Brexit on “citizens’ rights”

During 2019, many British citizens consulted the CEIO to obtain precise information on the type of residence card they would be given after Brexit, whether a work permit would be necessary, whether having a permanent residence would benefit them, etc.

The EWD also participated in two information sessions on Brexit organised by the Brussels British Community Association and responded to various questions from British citizens.

Questions related to obtaining Belgian nationality have decreased slightly this year but continue to be of concern to British nationals, seeking assurance that they can maintain their rights to stay and work in Belgium.



### 3.2 Impact of the single permit for non-EU interns of the European institutions

Since 1 January 2019, highly qualified foreign migrants from third countries who wish to come and work in Belgium must apply for a single permit. While this new procedure is intended to be simpler for workers (the single permit being both a work and residence permit implemented at EU-level), it actually makes it more complicated and time-consuming for them to access work.

This also applies to non-EU interns, who, strictly speaking, are not subject to the single permit but must still apply for a formal exemption involving a procedure almost equivalent to that of a single permit (constitution of a dossier with a duly legalised/authenticated and translated criminal record, a medical certificate, a copy of the internship contract, evidence of sufficient income for the trainee, etc.). These new rules have made it much more complicated to employ non-EU trainees in the European institutions, who have difficulty to comply with this complicated administrative procedure for a short-term (5-month) traineeship.

In response to this problem and at the request of the European institutions, the Expat Welcome Desk has managed, in consultation with the regional Employment office and the Foreigners' Office, to reach an agreement to handle the applications of this group more quickly and efficiently.

### 3.3 Meeting of the Mayors and Aldermen of the 19 Brussels communes

After the local elections and the designation of new elected officials, the Commissioner decided to convene an information meeting on 12 February 2019 to which the nineteen mayors and the Brussels aldermen for civil status, population and European affairs were invited. This meeting was the occasion to outline the missions of the CEIO, to discuss certain issues related to the registration of European civil servants and their families and, finally, to present upcoming events and projects in which the CEIO wishes to involve the communes. The meeting was attended by fourteen communes, represented by the relevant alderman (échevin) or by a staff member.



## 3.4 Training day for staff of the civil registry and population services in the 19 communes

On 3 June 2019, a seminar took place at the European Parliament for staff of the civil registry and population services of the 19 Brussels communes and the staff services of the European institutions.

As previously, the aims of this training are:



to enable local civil servants to improve and update their knowledge of administrative issues specific to European nationals;



to highlight the work of local civil servants, in particular by welcoming them to the European Parliament, a symbolic site of the European Union;



to enable local civil servants to meet their counterparts both from other communes as well as at the personnel services of the different European institutions, who are often in contact with them by telephone.

Through this initiative, the CEIO aims not only to improve the image of Brussels and its communes among EU-staff, but also to promote the image of the European Union to local officials.



# Programme

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

**9.30** **Bregt VYNCKE**, Protocol Direction  
(Privileges and Immunities), Federal Public Service  
of Foreign Affairs:

- *Registration of international staff holding a special residence permit*
- *Advantages and disadvantages of the special residence permit*

**10.15** **Amélie BOVY**, Expat Welcome Desk of  
the CEO:

- *Impact of the rules of the single permit on the stay of non-EU interns of European institutions*

**10.45** **Immigration Office** (Chantal GODIN –  
Long stay EU citizens, Feyzullah CANBAY – Family  
reunification, Gilles BEUTELS – Study centre):

- *The residence of European officials and their families under common law*
- *Family reunification with an EU citizen*
- *The residence requirements for British citizens after Brexit*

**11.45** **Maria VILAR-BADIA**, DG Justice and  
Consumer Affairs, European Commission:

- *Applying European Regulation 2016/1191 on promoting the free movement of citizens by simplifying the requirements for presenting certain public documents in the European Union and amending Regulation*

**12.15** **Questions & Answers**

**12.30 – 14.00** **Lunch**

Around a hundred people attended this training day.

The training was aimed primarily at those in charge of the civil registry, population and foreigners' departments. It is vital that reference persons be targeted by this training so that they can transmit the information to their agents afterwards. The participants were provided with a syllabus including the presentations of the various speakers. About twenty HR-staff from the different European institutions also participated in the training actively interacting with local officials, together contributing to identify and propose solutions for problems met by international staff.

The topics discussed generated a lot of interaction with the participants, both from the side of the Brussels civil servants and the participants of the EU personnel services. This made it possible to focus on the issues encountered when dealing with the registration of international civil servants and to propose adequate solutions.



## 4 Welcoming the Members of the European Parliament

Starting the 2019 European legislature, the CEIO participated in the reception of all the elected members of the European Parliament. During the month of June, the EWD team provided on-call services on a dedicated stand in the "MEP Village" in the European Parliament. They met numerous MEPs and their assistants to answer questions relating to their moving to Brussels and distributed practical leaflets to newcomers.

In July (with visit.brussels) Welcome Packs containing a welcome letter, various tourist and practical brochures and a few Belgian chocolates were distributed to all newly elected MEPs.

These initiatives have met with very positive reactions, contributing to a positive image of the Brussels-Capital Region amongst this important target group.



# 5. Seminars

Depending on the demand we receive, the EWD organises seminars in English on various subjects for specific groups. These seminars are led by specialists called upon by the EWD to ensure that the subjects are prepared thoroughly. They are held in the CEIO premises, in the heart of the European quarter.



14/03/2019

***"The Belgian School System: all you need to know"***

**59 PARTICIPANTS**

02/04 and 16/10/2019

***"Networking Meetings of Diplomatic Liaison Personnel in Brussels"***

**65 PARTICIPANTS**

23/05/2019

***"How to fill in your annual tax return?"***

**60 PARTICIPANTS**

10/10/2019

***"Job coaching"***

**68 PARTICIPANTS**

07/11/2019

***"Purchasing real estate in Brussels"***

**90 PARTICIPANTS**

03/12/2019

***"How to read an employment contract? Rights and obligations of the employee"***

**47 PARTICIPANTS**

## 6 Information sessions

Throughout the year, the EWD takes part in information sessions organised for the international community with interactive presentations for each target group (cultural matters are covered by [visit.brussels](https://visit.brussels) and administrative matters by the EWD). Welcome packs containing our brochure "*Settle down guide*" are also distributed by [visit.brussels](https://visit.brussels).

### Welcome for European institutions trainees





09/01/2019 and 18/09/2019  
Welcome for students  
from the *University of Kent*

04/05/2019  
Information stand  
at the Open Doors  
Day of the European  
Institutions at the  
European Parliament



20/03/2019  
*"Info Day"* at  
the European  
Commission

06/05/2019  
Information stand at Wolubilis initiated by  
Woluwe-Saint-Lambert/Sint-Lambrechts-  
Woluwe on the occasion of the Europe day



11/07/2019  
Information session *"Survival Kit Brussels:  
Useful recommendations for life in Brussels"*  
for German seconded national experts

13/06/2019  
*"Coffee morning"* for European  
officials' spouses

25/09/2019  
*"Expatriation information fair"* organised  
by The Bulletin and ING



29/10/2019  
Welcome of trainee  
diplomats at the FPS  
Foreign Affairs

12/11/2019  
Information session at the German  
Permanent Delegation to NATO

18/11/2019 Information session at the German Embassy

# 7 Communication

The EWD seeks greater visibility among its target audience and continues to develop close relationships with Belgian authorities by communicating clearly and frequently using targeted communication actions and materials.

## COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

CONDUCT AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

WORK WITH DIGITAL TOOLS AND MEDIA

ESTABLISH AND SUSTAIN PARTNERSHIPS

IMPROVE OUR COMMUNICATION MATERIAL

BRING A CLEAR, TARGETED, AND POSITIVE MESSAGE

PARTICIPATION IN AND ORGANISATION OF TARGETED EVENTS

## COMMUNICATION CHANNELS AND MEDIA

- Welcome offices of the European institutions
- The website: [www.commissioner.brussels](http://www.commissioner.brussels)
- Facebook and LinkedIn pages: @commissioner.brussels
- Seminars and information sessions
- The "settle down guide"
- The trilingual monthly newsletter [be.expat.be.brussels](http://be.expat.be.brussels)
- Targeted digital campaigns
- Belgian and international media
- Word of mouth





## ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN THE NEWSLETTER “BE EXPAT BE.BRUSSELS” IN 2019

- European elections on 26th May: how to vote in Belgium?
- The single permit: in force since January 2019!
- Can my child acquire Belgian nationality?
- Belgian tax return: how does it work?
- The new edition of the Expats in Brussels guide is available now!
- How to resolve a dispute with your landlord?
- Some changes in force since 1<sup>st</sup> July!
- All you need to know about foreign driving licences
- As a British national, how can I prolong my stay in Belgium?
- Alternative mobility options in Brussels
- Child benefits in Brussels

## EUROPEAN ELECTIONS: A DIGITAL AND TARGETED PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

EU citizens wishing to vote in Belgium for the European elections of 26 May 2019 were invited to register with their commune before 1 March 2019. The CEIO took the initiative to inform European citizens living in the Brussels Region about the administrative and practical aspects of the elections on its website, Facebook page and the monthly newsletter of [visit.brussels](http://visit.brussels).

18,849 of the 225,138 voters in the Brussels–Capital Region registered (8.4%) for the elections, a slight increase compared to 2014 when only 7.6% of potential voters had done so according to statistics from the FPS Interior. The differences between communes are at times considerable. Watermael–Boitsfort/Watermaal–Bosvoorde recorded the highest score with 18.5%, followed by Woluwé–Saint-Pierre/Sint-Pieters–Woluwe. These were also the leading communes in the registration for the local elections of 2018.

In contrast to the local elections, few communes sensitised their EU-citizens to registration. This may partially explain why, for European elections, many Europeans choose to vote in their country of origin and not for candidates in Belgium.







# The CEIO as a knowledge centre



**T**he Office of the Brussels Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations (CEIO) generally acts on an ad hoc basis, but always with great reactivity when it is called upon. This is because the issues require it. However, its broad spectrum of expertise and its role in the transfer of information should be further invested. For example, the CEIO is frequently contacted by students writing their theses and by journalists seeking information about Europe and the European District. In providing the CEIO with resources for specific research, such as impact studies, and by setting up work visits and field trips to other host cities and capitals, we aspire to be a genuine knowledge centre for all matters relating to the international dimension of the Brussels-Capital Region.

# 1 Facts and figures in a new impact study



It is vital for the CEIO to have detailed information about the context in which it performs its activities. In 2019, the CEIO, jointly with the Brussels Institute for Statistics and Analysis (BISA) and the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), launched a project to map the international dimension of the Region based on recent and statistically reliable data. The publication "Brussels, international capital - the figures 2020", commissioned by the CEIO from the VUB, will therefore outline the international dimension of the Brussels Region and provide a rigorous assessment of the economic impact resulting from the presence of European and international institutions in Brussels. This will include a more detailed and rigorous quantification of this impact than in previous studies, based on a thorough understanding of all aspects of the international dimension of Brussels, including the institutional and administrative aspects. This statistical survey will also benefit from the advanced knowledge on the subject that is available internally (CEIO).

The international vocation of Brussels is a key element in its urban vitality. The assessment of its impact should be an ongoing process and it would be advisable to establish a monitoring institute based on interuniversity and interdisciplinary cooperation.



## 2 Information seminar for leading officials of the Brussels-Capital Region

In recognition of the fact that constructive cooperation with regional administrations and bodies contributing to Brussels' position as an international capital is essential, the senior officials leading these organisations have been invited on 27 November 2019 to a matinée of debates and discussions. This dialogue focused on the international presence in Brussels, its impact on the territory and the importance of good cooperation with all the relevant regional structures. Presided over by the Secretary of State for European and International Relations, the subject of Europe's presence in Brussels was addressed: the history and context; the mission and activities of the CEIO (political dialogue, methods, coordination with the Brussels administrations); the dynamics, needs, status and hosting of the international community in Brussels; and, finally, the vision of the EU district in terms of urban planning and tourist promotion.





## 3 Study visits to Ispra and Berlin

### Theme: security and public spaces

The CEIO has been invited to take part in the "EU training on the protection of public spaces" on 12 and 13 June 2019 at the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission in Ispra (Italy).

The Joint Research Centre has developed real expertise in security among its various working areas. It regularly produces specific publications in this respect and special attention is often given to the security of public spaces. Building on its experience, the Centre develops training courses for public authorities in charge of the safety and security of public spaces, particularly in the field of anti-terrorist prevention. The approach of these training courses reflects the interests and needs of the CEIO and other administrations involved in the development of "critical" sites in general and the European district in particular. In addition to technical discussions, this event gave participants the opportunity to share observations, experiences and good practices from various cities and territories in Europe.

#### 1<sup>st</sup> day: 12 June 2019

- 11:30-12:00 Arrival at the Joint Research Centre – Registration
- 11:30-12:30 Introduction (Artur Pinto, Head of Unit E4, JRC Ispra)  
Workshop agenda, administrative questions (M. Larcher, JRC)
- 12:30 Lunch
- 13:30-14:00 Political dimension, action plan (Andrea Volkmer, DG HOME)
- 14:00-15:00 Threat definition, Past events
- 15:00-16:00 Blast effects and protection
- 16:00 Coffee break
- 16:15-18:00 Hostile vehicle mitigation – introduction
- 19:30 Dinner

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> day: 13 June 2019

- 09:00-10:30 Hostile vehicle mitigation – Solutions – Design principles  
Site issues
- 10:30 Coffee break
- 10:45-12:30 Case studies – Best Practices  
Break out groups– Practical training
- 12:30 Lunch
- 13:30-14:30 Closing remarks
- 14:30-15:30 Visit of the ELSA Reaction Wall laboratory (building 48) -optional
- Departure

# Ispra



## Theme: institutional tourism and management of public spaces

The "tourism" working group, which is coordinated in partnership with the Europe unit of visit.brussels (the regional tourism agency) to promote the European district, has always closely monitored the promotion of the institutional tourism offer in other cities. Primarily to draw inspiration from the experiences developed in other major locations and increase Brussels' know-how, but also to establish constructive and profitable contacts via networking. A first study visit organised in Strasbourg in 2018 convinced the working group to hold its meetings once a year in a different location.

# Berlin



Following the suggestion of the European Commission, a study visit took place from 4 to 6 December 2019 in Berlin. It included a visit to the Reichstag (building hosting the German Federal Assembly) followed by a meeting with its visitors' service, as well as a visit to the "Erlebnis Europa" centre, opened in 2016, which has an innovative approach that should inspire communication about the European Union in other centres, including in Brussels. These meetings were combined with visits initiated by the CEIO and open to Brussels administrations with an interest in the "seat policy": How is the international community hosted? How is land-use planning and security managed in institutional districts? In the context of these contacts, the Brussels delegation was welcomed by the Head "International Relations" of the Senate (regional government) of the Land of Berlin.



## 4. Inclusion of the CEIO in bid books

The CEIO, and more specifically its Expat Welcome Desk, is an essential part of bid books offering international organisations and associations that want to relocate to Brussels a smooth transition. It is of prime importance for these organisations and agencies that their staff are given an efficient administrative support during this process. The Expat Welcome Desk can assist their employees in matters such as housing, children's education, employment of partners and administrative procedures. As far as the hosting of intergovernmental and supranational organisations is concerned, the CEIO cooperates with the federal body in charge of this matter within the Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, the Interministerial Committee for Host Nation Policy. For the hosting of foreign associations and NGOs, the CEIO works closely with the Association Bureau of [visit.brussels](#) and with [hub.brussels](#). Thanks to these partnerships, Brussels successfully participated in the competition for the hosting of the European e-sports federation in 2019. Since then, we have worked with the Brussels delegation within the Belgian Permanent Representation to follow-up on the establishment of the European Cyber Security Agency, for Belgium/Brussels is a candidate to host it.

## 5. Brexit

Brexit dominated the European agenda in 2019. The Brexit negotiations on citizens' rights and potential scenarios were closely monitored by the Expat Welcome Desk. The EWD receives continuous information from the Brussels delegation to the European Union and regularly participates (at their invitation) in coordination meetings on citizens' rights. On 17 October 2019, the European Union and the United Kingdom reached an agreement on the UK's exit from the EU, which will take effect on 1 February 2020. From this date, a transitional period is established until 31 December 2020, which may be extended from 1 to 2 years. During the transitional period, the UK will be bound by EU rules but will no longer participate in the work of EU institutions. During this period, EU and UK citizens will be able to travel, live and work in the EU and the UK under the same conditions as before.

## 6. Accommodation of trainees

Trainees hold an important place in international employment in the European district. It is estimated that each year more than 8,000 young European graduates undertake traineeships in or in connection with the European institutions, of which around 2,000 official (paid) 5-month traineeships are carried out within the institutions. Along with the more than 19,780 foreign students in Brussels, they make a major contribution to the vitality of our Region.

Trainees usually need accommodation for a short stay, preferably in the European district. In 2019, the acute lack of adequate accommodation and the various problems existing in the available housing units (unsanitary accommodation, inadequate rental contracts, etc.) prompted Perspective.brussels, the Planning Office of the Brussels-Capital Region, to initiate a reflection on the accommodation of trainees in the European district. This reflection was conducted as part of "Ateliers Bruxelles Europe", initiated by Perspective.brussels, the European Quarter Fund and the City of Brussels. To gain a better understanding of the problem and discuss concrete proposals to improve the situation, these workshops were organised with leading stakeholders such as the CEIO and the European institutions, users, and the private sector.

## 7. Multilingualism

The CEIO also facilitated the presence of the Brussels Minister for the Promotion of Multilingualism at the third edition of the European Parliament's Multilingualism Day, during which he was able to witness firsthand how the European Parliament operates in 24 different languages. Multilingualism is a core value of the European Union which provides the opportunity for all EU citizens to follow in their native language the proceedings of their democratically elected representatives. The event allows everyone to experience the use of these languages in the world's most multilingual Parliament. Today, for the first time, a Brussels minister is given the powers to promote multilingualism and devise a plan for its development. Subsequent to the event, the European Parliament and the cabinet of the Minister for the Promotion of Multilingualism have met to co-organise Multilingualism Day in 2020.

# Conclusion

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2019 concludes the first five year period of our operations. In this annual report, we have obviously looked back, but we also look ahead to the approach of the 2020-2024 legislative period.

Administrative procedures, such as obtaining a work permit for non-EU citizens, registering with the local authority, or dealing with town planning issues, remain burdensome and difficult to deal with. This administrative maze continues to be an arduous process for an international institution or an expatriate in Brussels. For their part, it seems crucial that the European and international institutions inspire the inhabitants of Brussels more and encourage their staff to be less confined in their respective bubbles.

However, all is not bleak. A new mindset and culture are emerging, pushing the European and Brussels authorities out of their entrenchments and committing them to join forces. In this respect, it seems crucial to lay the groundwork for future milestones as the new European Parliament hemicycle and the new administrative headquarters of the European Commission.

Greater openness of regional administrative and political structures towards the Brussels Commissioner's (CEIO) mission and a fair assessment and recognition of our operations remain essential prerequisites for the further development of the CEIO's work. We cannot stress enough that, as a political project, the CEIO is entirely at the service of the Brussels Region and its Government and contributes to shaping the future of Brussels as an international capital.



We would like to thank the Brussels Government for its trust in our work, and particularly the Minister-President and the Secretary of State for European and International Relations, our supervising ministers.

And finally, words of appreciation and heartfelt thanks to the small but dynamic team of the CEIO whose dedication, skills and contributions made all this happen.



**Karin IMPENS**  
*Deputy Director*



**Alain HUTCHINSON**  
*Commissioner*

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



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# BRUSSELS, YOUR HOST REGION!



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