

2022

Annual report

of the Brussels Commissioner for Europe
and International Organisations



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europe & international

Foreword

Last year, I concluded our seventh activity report for the Office of the Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations (CEIO) by going over our increasingly good relations with the Federal Government in the field of the host region policy. I now begin this eighth report by telling you about the fruition of these good relations!

More specifically, a permanent structure for cooperation has just been set up on the initiative of our two governments, the federal and the regional. This coordination platform is the tool that we have been waiting for. It will make it easier for us to manage, together but each in their own area of competence, the host region policy of Belgium and its capital, Brussels. We can now ensure that this policy is as effective as it needs to be to encourage and support our international destiny. And so, we can now say “mission accomplished”!

Issues affecting both the international institutions and our Region are part and parcel of our daily concerns: the redevelopment of public spaces in the European Quarter or in the vicinity of international organisations such as NATO; the electrification of those institutions' vehicle fleets; the reinforcement of security measures for the most sensitive locations; the real estate developments of several important institutions; etc. For our Region, it is no longer a question of making up for a long history of indifference towards these institutions, but rather of participating in their development and in the consolidation of their presence in Brussels!

The CEIO is also proud to be at the heart of quite a number of the projects that are currently driving the international Brussels that we are concerned with day in and day out. The aim is to transform the European Quarter into a place where it is good to live and not only to work, as desired by our regional government. A complex transformation that aims to 'remix' this part of our regional territory, which was too often considered to be permanently earmarked for offices and left to the disposal of numerous property developers. In the wake of this renewal, major urban projects such as the 'Cultural Mile' devised by Federal Secretary of State Thomas Dermine emerged to rekindle this daring and curious spirit of the Belgians for science and culture: looking towards to our country's bicentennial, we are dusting off and relaunching the activity of our national museums located in the Cinquantenaire Park, which will also undergo in-depth renovation.

The CEIO is also taking the lead in preparing the Belgian Presidency of the European Union. Our country will assume this important responsibility in the first half of next year and it will be an opportunity not only to deliver a bold political programme but also to show the world what our country and our Region have to offer, especially on the cultural front. In this domain, we have launched a joint initiative with the European Parliament to make the Solidarnosc esplanade an exhibition venue for the most interesting contemporary public art in Europe. The very first edition of this daring project will be dedicated to Belgian artists and will be inaugurated with the Belgian Presidency. Subsequent editions will follow apace with the Hungarian, Polish, Danish and, hopefully, other presidencies.

There are many concerns, projects and initiatives aimed at the international institutions and organisations as well those who work for or around them. It is far from the least of our concerns to make our Region attractive and welcoming to the many "new Brussels denizens" who we meet every day, who liven up our neighbourhoods and often participate in the public life of our Region. Our "Expat Welcome Desk" is the most efficient gateway for these thousands of trainees, civil servants, diplomats, families, etc. who arrive in our Region without knowing exactly how to go about finding a home, work or study place. Making sure that they get their bearings quickly and efficiently is the daily challenge of our team, which is particularly dedicated to this important mission.

The coming year will of course be rather special. Firstly, it will be the year of regional, federal and European and then of local elections. New governments, new parliaments, new municipal councils, a new Commission, and all the rest. No one can know today who will make up these many assemblies and decision-making bodies. That is the nature of this democracy that we hold so dear! As far as we are concerned, let us wager that our new leaders will grasp the scale of Brussels' destiny in this international context and that the efforts made so far in this area will be continued!

Alain HUTCHINSON

Commissioner of the Brussels Government



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An aerial, high-angle photograph of a city, likely London, showing a dense urban landscape. A prominent church spire, possibly St. Paul's Cathedral, rises from the center-left. The city is characterized by a mix of historic and modern architecture, with numerous buildings and streets visible. The image has a halftone or dithered texture, giving it a grainy, printed appearance. The color palette is dominated by the greys and browns of the buildings, with a bright, overexposed sky.

PART 1

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 or local representations. The Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations is appointed and mandated by the Regional Government to fulfil this hosting mission. 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:





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 and supranational organisations. Though rather small in size, its growing international position has made it a political world-region, where incessant decision-making and consultation on matters of global significance take place, both on a multilateral and on a bilateral diplomatic level.

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.



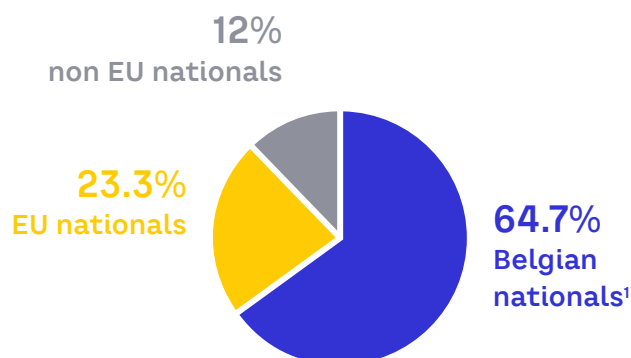
Between **10 000 and 14 000 lobbyist jobs**.

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 1 January 2020, Brussels had a population of **1 218 255 residents**, of which:



¹ 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 the key figures relating to the international presence in Brussels.



3. Pursuing an effective host region policy

Enhancing the international and European dimension of the Brussels-Capital Region goes hand in hand with the firm ambition of its authorities to make Brussels a metropolis on a human scale.

More than a mere slogan, this broadly shared objective translates into strong and ambitious policies and concrete measures which meet the challenges at hand.

Year after year, this momentum strengthens the position of Brussels on the European and international scene as a service-oriented region, mindful of the well-being of its inhabitants and where people, businesses and institutions can prosper and develop with ease.

The Office of the Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations has two main units (institutional liaison and administrative support) which both play a vital role in implementing the host region policy. By developing a strong network and a positive image among their counterparts and contacts, they are able to fulfil and reinforce the host policy for international institutions and their staff, a responsibility which is incumbent on Belgium in general and the Brussels-Capital Region specifically.

In 2022 the CEIO focused on further developing synergies and cooperation to provide our political and administrative partners in Brussels with prompt and pertinent information on issues concerning the EU institutions. Meanwhile, the EU institutions increasingly see the CEIO as the single point of contact for all issues related to their presence in Brussels.

Meeting between the President of the European Parliament, members of the Brussels Government and the Brussels Commissioner for Europe on 30 March 2022



Belgian donation of a generator to Ukraine, in the presence of the President of the European Parliament, on 8 December 2022



GBCR-EU Summit on 15 November 2022 in the Brussels Parliament



4. The team and the governing bodies

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

Alain HUTCHINSON
Commissioner



Karin IMPENS
Director



Expat Welcome Desk



Amélie BOVY
Senior Legal Adviser



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Assistant



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Jean-Pierre BOUBLAL
Urban Development Adviser

Communication



Natacha BRIEVEN
Communication and Office Manager



Bryn WATKINS
Project Officer

Reception



Laurent GILARDENGHI
Reception Desk Assistant



General Assembly and Board meeting, 22 June 2022 at the ASBL headquarters

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

General Assembly

- Alain HUTCHINSON, President
- Thomas ALLEGAERT
- Stefan VANDENHENDE
- Evelyne HUYTEBROECK
- Julien JOST
- Aurélie MAHOUX
- Monique KESTEMONT
- Rebecca OVERLOOP
- Alexandra PHILIPPE
- Frédérick PIRARD
- Lesia RADELICKI
- Laurent VAN DER ELST

Board

- Alain HUTCHINSON, President
- Thomas ALLEGAERT
- Stefan VANDENHENDE
- Evelyne HUYTEBROECK
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- Monique KESTEMONT
- Alexandra PHILIPPE
- Frédérick PIRARD
- Lesia RADELICKI
- Laurent VAN DER ELST

Parlement bruxellois

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. In accordance with the CEIO's statutes, the 2021 annual report was presented to the European Affairs Committee of the Brussels Parliament on 17 October 2022.



PART 2

INSTITUTIONAL

LIAISON

1 ■ Role of the institutional liaison unit

1.1 Context

Enhancing the **international and European position of the Brussels-Capital Region (BCR)** is an ambition that we must pursue, while ensuring that it is consistent with the commitment of the Brussels authorities to create a **metropolis on a human scale**.

More than a slogan, this widely shared determination is reflected in strong and ambitious policies and measures to meet the challenges we face.

Day after day, this momentum helps to consolidate our role on the European and international scenes while meeting the challenge of being a service-oriented region, concerned about the well-being of its inhabitants and where people, businesses and institutions can prosper and develop comfortably.

It is thus quite natural that this dynamic infuses all the actions of the Institutional Liaison Unit of the Office of the Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations (CEIO).

This unit works on a daily basis to enable Brussels, as a leading political and diplomatic centre, to develop and capitalise on its positive attributes. There Region can thereby assert itself internationally and across the European Union by pursuing a **host region policy** that strengthens our role to welcoming the international community and institutions.

This welcome is made even more attractive by the fact that it is supported by a Region that is committed to be cosmopolitan, open to the world, dynamic, creative, innovative, rich in history and traditions, friendly and pleasant to live in.



1.2 Mission

As its name implies, the Institutional Liaison Unit **liaises** with both the Brussels public authorities and the European and international institutions on issues related to the presence of the latter in the Region. This mission applies in particular to all policies affecting the physical locality, such as urban development, architectural heritage, the environment, mobility, tourist flows or the management of public spaces (in terms of safety as well as conviviality).

Our role as a **privileged point of contact** makes it possible to identify and respond better to the expectations of all the organisations that come to settle in Brussels. This task is facilitated by our role as a **one-stop shop** for all requests that fall under regional competence.

A flexible and responsive operation enables us to provide **bespoke solutions**, to **engage in a constructive dialogue** and to improve the life of all the people and institutions present on the Brussels territory. These range from the European institutions, with thousands of staff and dozens of buildings, to international organisations, embassies and diplomatic missions, to smaller regional and local representations throughout the Region.

In addition, we make sure that the various measures and actions are in line with the stated **strategy** of projecting a **positive image** of the Region and strengthening our position as an **international metropolis**.



Visit to the Mayor of Izmir, Mr. Tunç Soyer, on 3 October 2022, Izmir

1.3 Assets of the International Liaison Unit

Expertise and networks

- Deep knowledge of the Belgian, European and international institutional system and context
- Role as a trustworthy interlocutor and competent intermediary
- Expertise in numerous fields such as urban planning, mobility, safety and the environment
- Experience in project management and implementing concertation techniques
- Privileged contacts in the Belgian political and institutional world, as well as in international organisations and representations
- A dynamic, multilingual, service- and result-oriented team

A constellation of tried and tested contact points with

- Brussels ministers and their cabinets
- Regional administrations and agencies
- The Brussels Parliament
- The political authorities of the Brussels municipalities
- The urban, mobility and spatial planning departments of the Brussels municipalities
- The Interministerial Committee for Host Nation Policy (CIPS), the federal administrations and cabinets
- Political and administrative officials of the European institutions
- Embassies and diplomatic missions
- Regional and local representations



2. Method

MORE COORDINATION FOR A MORE EFFECTIVE HOST REGION POLICY

Coordination and cooperation between the authorities, including the federal government and the Brussels Capital Region, has been strengthened and tightened to enhance the international visibility and long-term presence of the European institutions in Brussels.

This is reflected in the establishment, in 2022, of a **cooperation platform called "Europe in Brussels"**. This platform is jointly chaired and coordinated by the Prime Minister's strategic office and the Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations. Its ambition is to provide solutions and development options that will undoubtedly enhance Brussels' position on the European and international scene.

This reinforces more than ever the vital and multi-layered role of the CEIO's Institutional Liaison Unit, especially when it comes to building a positive image with our interlocutors and partners. This reinforces our policies for hosting international institutions – a responsibility which falls on Belgium in general, and the Brussels-Capital Region in particular.

POLITICAL DIALOGUE

In addition to the numerous political dialogues held with its interlocutors in various institutions, the CEIO organises a **political summit** once a year, bringing together the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region and the highest representatives of the European institutions (European Parliament, Council of the European Union, European Commission, Committee of the Regions, European Economic and Social Committee, European External Action Service). These meetings make it possible to highlight the various projects that the European institutions are planning in Brussels, as well as the major redevelopment work that the Brussels-Capital Region has undertaken to carry out, for example in the European quarter. The **decisions** taken and the **guiding principles** established during these summits guide many of the CEIO's activities in the weeks that follow: setting up workgroups, new cooperation arrangements by and between the EU institutions and regional and local administrations, contacts and exchanges of information which respond to the challenges and issue on the Brussels territory, particularly in terms of planning. In addition, the systematic inclusion of the **minutes** of this summit on the agenda of the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region guarantees that the decisions and guiding principles chosen are taken duly into account and followed up.

The 9th meeting between the Brussels Government and the European institutions was held on 15 November 2022 at the Brussels Parliament. Participants discussed measures taken or to be taken to increase the attractiveness and liveability of the European quarter while ensuring that the various functions are better allocated for the benefit of all its users.



GBCR-EU Summit on 15 November 2022 in the Brussels Parliament

WORKGROUPS

To ensure optimal and thorough understanding of certain issues and cutting-edge problems, we have developed a base of proven expertise that enables us to activate working groups made up of the best experts in relation to the topics to be addressed. Here again, the Institutional Liaison Unit is in charge of setting up and coordinating these groups. We aim to gather the key contacts and **maintain a regular and constructive dialogue between the various stakeholders, while building confidence.**



A GUARANTEED AD HOC ASSISTANCE

The Institutional Liaison Unit is called upon throughout the year by its ever-increasing number of interlocutors on a variety of issues (property issues, road works, mobility issues, public facilities, issues relating to parks and public spaces, etc.). The work of the unit is guided by the need to provide **guidance and support throughout the various procedures** with the competent authorities and to **encourage dialogue** by and between the stakeholders.

DIALOGUE ON FUTURE URBAN DEVELOPMENT

At the CEIO, the Institutional Liaison Unit constantly monitors and follows up on the evolution of urban issues, particularly those related to the **development of the European Quarter**. For this purpose, we conduct a dialogue with all stakeholders at all official levels for each individual project: the Region, the communes concerned by the presence of the institutions on their territory (City of Brussels, Ixelles, Etterbeek and Saint Josse) and the federal government. In this respect, a permanent dialogue is maintained with the federal level, notably via the "Europe in Brussels" platform, co-chaired by the Commissioner. Maintaining this dialogue is essential to promoting the **quality of our urban space** so as to ensure the **harmonious development** of the European Quarter, the Region and its inhabitants.



Press conference: "A new vision for the European Quarter", 12 May 2022, CEIO

PERMANENT INFORMATION EXCHANGE NETWORK

Being a catalyst, a facilitator and a major actor in the process of collecting, disseminating and bringing **quality information** into circulation is an imperative for the CEIO. This means permanent access to, dialogue with and listening to all stakeholders working in our fields of competence. It also means maintaining and stimulating **new cooperation arrangements** by and between the Brussels and international authorities.

3 ■ Issues addressed in 2022

The CEIO deals with a number of issues throughout the year, some of which result in projects of considerable scope in terms of resources deployed as well as time spent. In addition to the emblematic creation of the "Europe in Brussels" platform previously described, whose agenda is filled with issues specific to the European and international impact of Brussels (security, European schools, the Belgian presidency of the EU, etc.) the most striking examples are the following:

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING - CEIO/EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT - PUBLIC ART EXHIBITION

At the end of 2022, the CEIO and the European Parliament negotiated and signed a Memorandum of Understanding to seal their partnership on a contemporary public art exhibition in the heart of Brussels. This will involve a bi-annual exhibition of public art by artists from the two member states that hold the EU Council Presidency in 2024, that is Belgium and Hungary, and to repeat the exercise with the other two countries for 2025. This showcase entitled "2024 and 2025 edition of the exhibitions - Presidency of the European Union" would take place on the Solidarosc Esplanade of the European Parliament.

EUROPEAN SCHOOLS

At the last 'European Schools' task force meeting of 7 July 2022, the Prime Minister's office mentioned the importance for Belgium and the European institutions of being able to veer towards 'hybrid' schools in the future. This was in addition to confirming the creation of the 5th school in Neder-over-Heembeek.

In order to be able to draw up the blueprint of this formula and to identify the issues and challenges involved, the CEIO was asked to set up an exploratory technical workgroup to study the possibility of opening a "hybrid/mixed" European School in the European Quarter. To this end, the Commissioner invited the various (federal, community, regional and municipal) stakeholders on several occasions to set up this exploratory workgroup. They are to study all possible avenues and to forward the various remarks and observations to the Prime Minister's Office via the "Europe in Brussels" collaborative platform.



COLLABORATIVE PLATFORM BETWEEN THE THREE EUROPEAN HEADQUARTERS CITIES BRUSSELS-STRASBOURG-LUXEMBOURG

The CEIO visited Strasbourg and Luxembourg to initiate a constructive dialogue by and between these three headquarters cities and to strengthen the ties between them. The objectives of these high-level meetings are:

- A better perception of the issues at stake in hosting European institutions;
- The possible actions to be undertaken across the three borders so as to improve the connections between and accessibility of the different sites;
- The importance of anchoring the European Parliament on these three sites while avoiding polemics and other attempts at sterile competition, in view of the respective roles of the three cities as established in the treaties.



Visit to the Mayor of Strasbourg, Jeanne Barseghian, 26 October 2022, Strasbourg

EUROPEAN QUARTER: MONITORING OF MAJOR URBAN PROJECTS AND ISSUES IN THE EUROPEAN QUARTER

Monitoring of the European Commission's Buildings Policy

Since the presentation and implementation of this new buildings policy in the previous year, the CEIO has been providing support and bespoke guidance in order to realise the will of the Brussels authorities and the European Commission. This means, for example, promoting inclusive and accessible spaces, where the dialogue between different cultures, disciplines, genders and ages affords a unique opportunity to imagine liveable spaces in the European Quarter.



Information session for international institutions on the redevelopment of the Schuman roundabout, 19 May 2022, CEIO

Schuman roundabout: monitoring and presentation of the state of progress of the works

The CEIO convened all the European institutions, embassies, permanent and regional representations of the European Quarter to a meeting to present the works planned on and around the Schuman roundabout. Each institution was represented by a delegation: the Council of the EU, the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Council, etc. During these sessions, we asked the institutions, embassies and representations to share their remarks and observations concerning their safety and accessibility requirements during the construction period. They were therefore invited to give their remarks and details on the difficulties caused by the works as they are scheduled in relation to important events already planned (summits, meetings, deliveries, security, etc.) or to come. The CEIO passed these remarks on to the operator/project manager of the site. We have been monitoring the works closely ever since to ensure that they proceed as smoothly as possible for all parties involved.

Monitoring of the new and shared vision of the European Quarter

Through its role as a leading intermediary, the CEIO has made sure that the European institutions take part in the discussions on the territorial development of the European Quarter initiated by the Regional Government in 2021 and 2022. Today, the CEIO advises and supports the European Commission and the other institutions concerned so as to ensure the best possible integration in this quarter.

The CEIO has been involved in other projects relating to this emblematic district, such as the monitoring of the **"Luxembourg-Schuman" pedestrian-cyclist bridge project** intended to enable cyclists to link these two hubs of the European Quarter. We monitored on the needs of the various institutions and compiled a report for the Brussels authorities. The project is taking shape and is being continued with a feasibility study included in the Beliris Addendum n°15, which will be launched in 2023.



The CEIO is also taking an active part in the **redevelopment of the Paul-Henri Spaak (PHS) building**, which houses the **hemicycle of the European Parliament**. The CEIO is stepping up its contacts and acting as a facilitator to support the administration of the European Parliament in order to carry out the renovation of the building in optimal fashion and in a reasonable timeframe.



The CEIO has also been involved in other issues related to spatial planning and urban development throughout Brussels, such as those submitted by **NATO**, for which it is working to facilitate the process of making the area around NATO safer for its users: cyclists, pedestrians, etc., with the support of *Bruxelles Mobilité*.

ENVIRONMENT

Working closely with the Minister for the Environment, his cabinet and the regional administration, the CEIO was able to provide its expertise and contacts so as to enable the Brussels-Capital Region to achieve its environmental objectives by raising awareness among European and international institutions. For example, the CEIO has provided technical support to ensure the proper deployment of electric charging points at various sites of the European Commission.

SECURITY

Providing answers to questions relating to security in the public space and in the vicinity of international and European institutions is of paramount importance given the central and strategic role of our metropolis. To that end, the CEIO has joined all the circles of reflection and action aimed at promoting security in the strategic areas that require it.

The CEIO therefore participates in a number of workgroups, including the '**Security Technical Committee**' with safe.brussels, to promote the consideration and proper integration of security measures in the public space and around strategic areas of the European Quarter. The '*security by design*' approach is often the one that guides the choices in many concrete cases of security in the quarter.

TOURISM, IMAGE AND CULTURE

The Brussels authorities and private operators have clearly understood the increasingly decisive impact of the tourism sector on the 'wealth' of our Region, its municipalities, as well as on employment, culture, multilingualism, leisure and the MICE sector. The CEIO is therefore working within its powers to promote this key sector in Brussels.

European Quarter Networking Events

In 2022, together with visit.brussels we co-organised further networking days, gathering institutional, cultural, tourist and commercial players in the European Quarter. The CEIO shares and transmits objective information on the district's offer to all institutional, cultural and tourist partners. The aim is to preserve, create and/or launch new projects that will contribute to the development of tourism in the European Quarter.

City Marketing & branding of the European Quarter

The development of the European Quarter and its emergence as a major diplomatic and tourist centre have led to a high concentration of real estate and infrastructure development projects. The quarter is seen as a perpetual construction site by its inhabitants, visitors and those who work there. This negative image contrasts sharply with the aspiration of the Region and the European institutions to capitalise on the tourist and cultural potential of this district by improving its image and quality of life. The development of cultural and tourist institutions with an international influence is in fact already generating significant tourist flows to this quarter, which has become the second most important tourist centre in the Brussels region.

In order to implement one of the objectives set out in the government agreement, namely the fulfilment of a regional and European ambition to develop tourism in the European Quarter, visit.brussels and the CEIO have been working together with the quarter's key players over the past few years.

This approach has resulted in a document entitled "*Améliorer l'image et l'attractivité du quartier européen de Bruxelles : un enjeu, des acteurs, une méthode, des solutions*" [Improving the Image and Attractiveness of the European Quarter of Brussels: challenge, stakeholders, method, solutions], which spells out the main strategic lines for this quarter. This document was updated in 2022 in a strategic note entitled, "*Actualisation et analyse de la stratégie d'image du quartier Européen de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale*" [Update and analysis of the Image strategy of the European District of the Brussels-Capital Region] developed in coordination with hub.brussels and perspective.brussels. The strategic note proposes to improve the image and attractiveness via the following guidelines:



- Develop the European Quarter as a "cultural hub";
- Promote the quarter in terms of its European DNA which is multicultural, cosmopolitan and rich in history and diversity, and which must be reflected in its image;
- Capitalise on the major initiatives in progress in the region, both in terms of emotional bonds (e.g. via the events dynamic) and physical connections, particularly in terms of infrastructure;
- Continue, finalise and deploy the new European Quarter brand by creating a graphic universe;
- Maintain active and structural participation of stakeholders through shared governance.

Fully involved in this exercise from the outset, the European institutions are now well aware of the active role they must play in developing the image of this quarter and have consequently become full-fledged stakeholders in its harmonious development.

Branding the Brussels-Capital Region internationally

The Brussels Government approved the note on the regional city marketing policy on 6 May 2021. Under this decision, and in accordance with the Government Agreement, a strong and integrated city marketing policy is to be developed that would not only attract foreign investment and tourists, but also implement a common, cross-cutting strategy to promote the international influence of Brussels in all areas of competence concerned. The aim is to create a strong brand identity for the Brussels-Capital Region as a destination, one that all public and private stakeholders can use to contribute to the Region's international reputation. This will enable public (such as [hub.brussels](#), [visit.brussels](#), [brussels.international](#), CEIO, etc.) and private regional stakeholders to use a common, strong and commercially sound brand identity, storytelling and toolkit.

This joint marketing strategy will highlight the winning assets of Brussels and what makes it so unique as a tourist destination, investment location and gateway to Europe, a cultural, creative and innovative nerve centre, compared with competing cities in Belgium and abroad.

After all, Brussels is tantamount to London, Paris or Berlin, but not as big...and far less expensive.

The CEIO was involved in the workgroup, chaired and coordinated by [visit.brussels](#), and participated in all stages of this mission.



Inauguration of a mural entitled "Together for the forests" on the Chaussée d'Etterbeek, commissioned by WWF, 14 March 2022



Inauguration of Experience Europe, 11 May 2022, Schuman roundabout



New European Bauhaus Awards, 11 June 2022, Station Maritime (Tour et Taxis)



4 Regional and local representations

Brussels is a magnet **for regional and local lobbyists** as one of the top ranking **international capitals**. For the regions of the EU Member States, it has become the norm to establish a representation to the European institutions in Brussels.

However, regional offices have no official status and do not always operate in a legal form. As a result, they are often faced with **complex administrative problems** inherent in their establishment. To remedy these problems, the Region created the **regional certificate** in 1994. Although this certificate does not confer official status on delegations, it does indicate that the office in question is recognised by the Brussels-Capital Region as a body representing a sub-national authority. In practice, this certificate helps representations to solve administrative problems. It is conferred every other year to the **240 or so regional and local entities** and is signed by the Secretary of State for European and International Relations. The CEIO sees to all the administrative follow-up.

Regional representations were created for **specific reasons**, such as obtaining European funds, influencing European policy, the geopolitical visibility of the region in question and the possibility of being part of the networks and the international community in the sphere of the European institutions. They are consequently recognised as partners in the European political community, with the core activity of **collecting, processing and filtering information on EU policies and institutional developments that may be of interest to their region**.

The Brussels-Capital Region does not have this type of representation to defend its interests in the EU. The Brussels delegation to the EU is integrated into the Belgian Permanent Representation (which has different tasks).

5. Conclusion

Ever since it was created 2014, the CEIO has endeavoured to build up an image as a quality intermediary and a robust interface with its many interlocutors, thereby managing to fulfil and strengthen the policies for hosting international institutions – a responsibility incumbent upon Belgium in general, and the Brussels-Capital Region in particular.

This essential aspect of the host region policy pursued by the CEIO has recently attracted more attention from all the Belgian authorities through the creation of the "Europe in Brussels" platform. This was a long-standing demand of the CEIO, which called for a better collective and harmonised consideration of the issues relating to the hosting of the various institutions and the international influence of Brussels. The CEIO is proud to see this position strengthened by the appointment of the Commissioner as co-chair of this structure with the Prime Minister's Office. This stated and desired synergy is epitomised by the strengthening of coordination processes between the various levels of government.

The deployment of dialogue and coordination mechanisms, in which the CEIO plays a leading role, contributes in fact to making Belgium an even more attractive location for international organisations.

We believe that the expertise of the CEIO and the various fruitful contacts it has established with its interlocutors at both the Belgian and the international level over the past few years should indubitably be developed and put forward in this new body so as to build the Host Region Policy of tomorrow.

We will therefore continue to work together with the competent federal and Brussels authorities to bolster our welcome policy and offer, but also to defend the international status of Brussels and its many winning assets.



PART 3

EXPAT WELCOME DESK

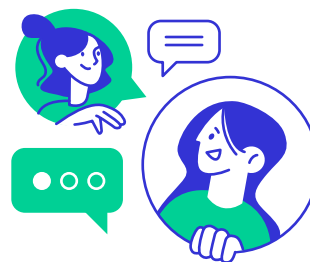
The Expat Welcome Desk (EWD) is an integral part of the host policy operated by the Office of the Brussels Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations (CEIO).



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.).

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



4 WAYS TO ASSIST YOU

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



Our target audience

- Staff of European institutions: officials, parliamentary assistants, seconded national experts, contracted staff and trainees
- MEPs
- 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

- | | |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR services of all European institutions • NATO human resources service • Office of the Secretary-General of the European Schools • Brussels Ministers • Immigration and population services in the 19 Brussels communes • Mayors and Aldermen of the 19 Brussels communes • Regional Ministry of Economy and Employment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal Interministerial Committee for the Host Nation Policy • Federal Public Service of Foreign Affairs • Federal Public Service of Finances • The Belgian Immigration Office • The tenants' federation ("Syndicat des Locataires") • The regional tourism agency (visit. brussels) |
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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 contacts 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 – Bureau 00H160

3 TEAM MEMBERS

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

After working in our office for more than 20 years, our colleague Hélène Jacub went into well-deserved retirement at the end of 2022. We thank her most warmly for her professional and dedicated work with the international community over these years.

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 GATHERS 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.

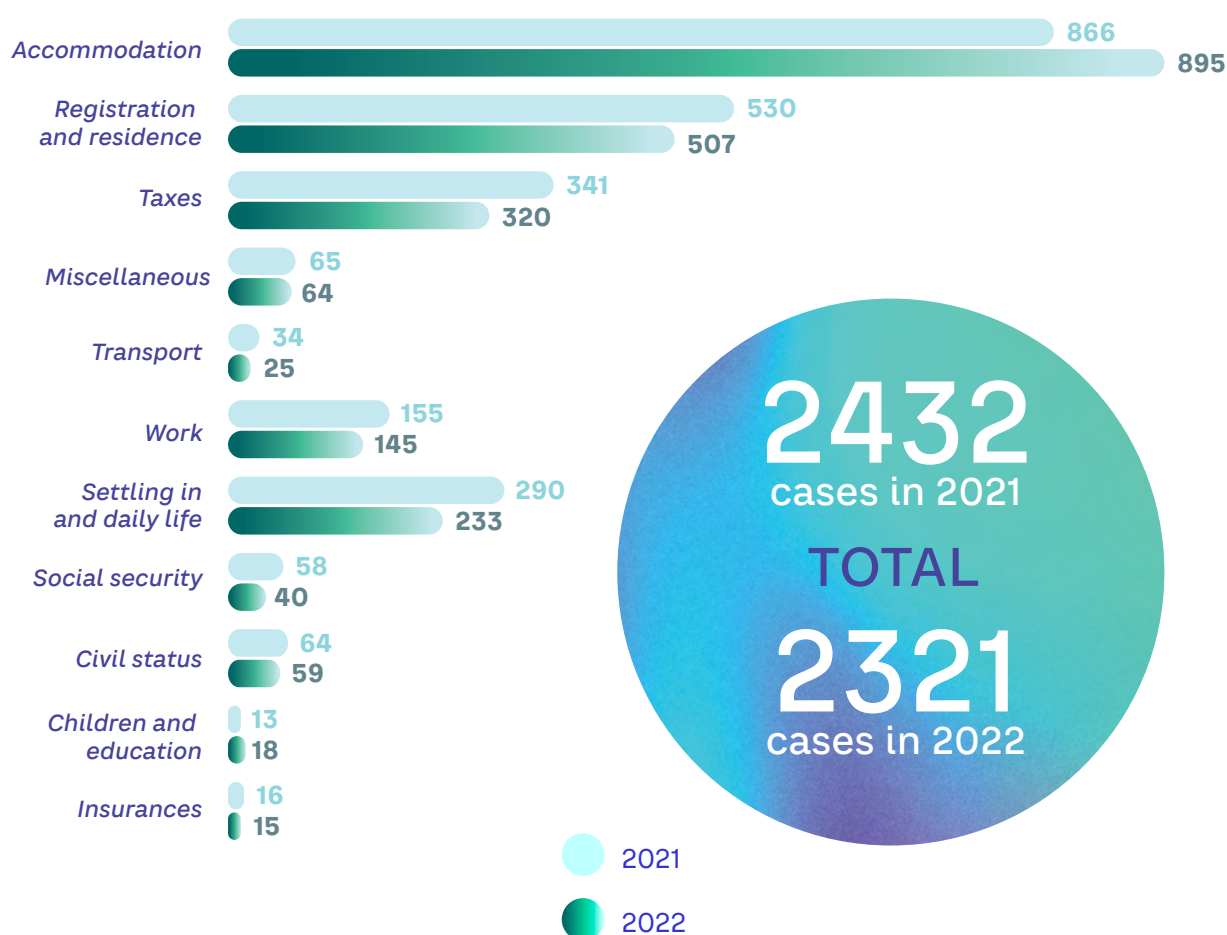
EWD CONVEYS A POSITIVE IMAGE

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 2022

2.1 Statistics

Number of EWD cases by type, over two years (2021 et 2022) :



We noted a significant drop in Covid-related questions during the year 2022 (listed in the "settling in and daily life" category), a happy consequence of the fact that the epidemic was gradually stabilising. The war in Ukraine, on the other hand, led to several questions from Ukrainian citizens (mainly trainees from the EU institutions) in the "residence formalities" category, especially related to applications for temporary protection.

The housing category has been growing steadily and takes up most of the time of our EWD team. We receive ever more requests to read lease contracts and we notice that many short-term leases (for trainees in particular) do not comply with the Housing Code. We also dedicate a lot of time to dealing with tenants' questions about problems with their landlords concerning the amount of rental charges, indexation, the rental guarantee or the non-reaction of the landlord in case of problems with the premises. During 2023, a review will be conducted to see how the EWD's work can be restructured to effectively deal with this issue, which is of great concern to our clientele.

2.2 Top questions treated in 2022



3. Meetings and other challenges

3.1 The EWD and international organisations

We are extremely often in contact with civil servants from the various European institutions, but we notice that employees of some of the other international organisations with offices in Brussels are less inclined to avail themselves of our services because they do not know us. We therefore held a meeting at the CEIO on 21 June 2022 to spell out our missions and the importance of the role of the EWD for the employees of all these international organisations present in Brussels. Eight organisations were present: NATO, the UN, Eurocontrol, the World Bank, EFTA, the ILO, the EPO and the WCO.

This meeting was an opportunity to bring to the fore the various problems encountered by the staff of international organisations who hold special identity cards (SICs) and the solutions we seek to provide in consultation with the competent Belgian authorities.



Meeting with international organisations located in Brussels, 21 June 2022, CEIO



3.2 Special identity cards soon to be fitted with an electronic chip

Granted on the basis of the *Royal Decree of 30 October 1991* to diplomats and employees of international and European institutions, the Special Identity Card (SIC) has the advantage of being issued directly by the protocol department of the embassy or institution for which the person concerned works. This means that the individual does not have to go to the municipality and deal with what can at times be complex municipal administrative procedures..

Apart from the "symbolic" aspect that it may have for some, it would appear that the disadvantages of the SIC outweigh the advantages. The recent pandemic crisis has indisputably highlighted the limitations of the SIC.

- The SIC does not have an electronic chip, thereby preventing access to the various online platforms of the Belgian administrative authorities (MaSante, MyTax, MyMinfin, MyRent, Irisbox....).
- The SIC does not mention the national register number of its holder, which caused huge problems during the vaccination campaign. People are sometimes unaware that they have such a number and often do not know how to obtain it.
- The SIC is not recognised as a legal residence permit to obtain Belgian nationality, despite some case law to the contrary (decision of the Court of Cassation of 7 December 2020).

For all these reasons, the European institutions have asked the competent Belgian authorities to fit the SIC with an electronic chip so that all their employees can obtain a residence permit that is as functional and practical to use as that issued by the municipalities.

At the level of the Protocol Department of the Federal Public Service of Foreign Affairs, the plan to introduce a smart card SIC was initiated as part of the global "E-Protocol". Tests will be launched when a new prototype of the "E-Protocol" platform, currently under development, is implemented in 2023. The project provides for the creation of interfaces with other platforms, in particular at the level of the National Register in order to speed up the processing of procedures. The project is expected to be completed in 2024 (subject to confirmation).

3.3 Fast-track procedure for transferring SIC to an E+ card

With the aforementioned limitations of the SIC in mind, and pending the introduction of SICs with an electronic chip, the European institutions encourage their employees to return their SICs and apply for an E+ card from the municipality where they live. This E+ card is a permanent residence permit granted to the person concerned after 5 years of residence in Belgium. However, the waiting period before obtaining this E+ card from the Immigration Office is 5 months, during which time the applicant is deprived of any residence card, having first had to return his or her SIC to the Federal Public Service of Foreign Affairs. This period of "limbo" creates problems for travelling, undertaking procedures at the Vehicle Registration Service, in hospitals, for driving licences, etc. Following a meeting between the CEIO, the Foreigners' Office, the Department of Protocol and the European institutions, it was decided that the transition from a SIC to an E+ card can be done quickly, without having to wait out the 5-month period. The Immigration Office sent instructions to all Belgian municipalities on this matter in December.

3.4 Mayor's Conference at Brussels City Hall

Le Commissaire a réalisé une présentation devant les différents bourgmestres de la Région bruxelloise le 1er juin 2022 pour souligner l'importance de l'accueil de la communauté internationale dans les 19 communes bruxelloises. Plusieurs points ont été mis en avant : l'utilisation de l'anglais dans une certaine mesure (pages web reprenant les informations importantes pour les étrangers, un contact au guichet service étranger,...), l'élargissement de la digitalisation (formulaires en ligne, prise de rendez-vous en ligne,...), et un renforcement des liens entre le CEIO et les 19 communes (contacts réguliers, formations, référence du CEIO sur les sites des 19 communes, etc.).



Conference of mayors, 1 June 2022, Brussels City Hall





4. Projects

4.1 Brussels Voice – opening a new democratic space for International Brusselers

In the government agreement, the Brussels-Capital Region committed itself to establishing a democratic participation platform to give a voice to Brussels residents with a non-Belgian citizenship. International Brusselers make up one in three inhabitants of the Region, but they do not have the right to vote in regional elections despite the fact that they live here, work here, study here and in most cases pay taxes here. We launched the participation project *Live Here. Speak, Hear.* in 2021 with the aim of increasing this community's democratic involvement in the regional policies that affect their daily lives. After an initial phase of digital consultation to gather and rank popular ideas, participants were able to join several policy co-creation workshops. Both phases were promoted through an ambitious outreach campaign, which combined press coverage, social media advertising and partnerships with European and international organisations.

The result of this intensive work was a set of 22 detailed policy recommendations, collected in the six chapters of the *Manifesto of the International Brusseler*. The Manifesto was published as both a report and an interactive website, and then presented to Members of the Brussels Parliament at a dedicated hearing on 28 April 2022. In total, this first cycle activated almost 1500 participants from many nationalities.





Brussels Voice is not an exclusively "European" forum. It is open to all International Brusselers who want to invest in the host region and have a say on policy in all its forms. The Manifesto identifies the needs and expectations of the international community and gives a broad cross-section of their hopes and concerns. This initiative thereby created a new space for democratic debate where committed International Brusselers who do not have a voice in regional elections have the opportunity to engage in dialogue with politicians. Indeed, we could consider Brussels Voice a testing ground for democratic renewal build on diversity, urbanity and citizenship.

Since the closure of the first cycle, we have kept the community of participants informed about regional policy news relevant to their proposals, while soliciting a clear response from policymakers. In 2023, we will examine how to build on the partnership with the Brussels Parliament as we explore how Brussels Voice can evolve towards a more structured footing with greater impact and legitimacy in regional policy.



4.2 Inform and advise British nationals - Brexit Adjustment Reserve

With the *Brexit Adjustment Reserve* (BAR), the EU helps its Member States to mitigate the detrimental economic and social fallout by the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the Union. Part of the budget is dedicated to actions intended to make citizens aware of the new challenges they face. Against this backdrop, the CEIO, and in particular its Expat Welcome Desk, has launched a project to inform and support British nationals living in the Brussels Region.

Brussels has a sizeable British expatriate community, which contributes significantly to the economic prosperity and intellectual capital of the Region. During the post-referendum negotiations, these residents found themselves in legal limbo, but the Withdrawal Agreement now guarantees their rights to stay and work. Administrative challenges and confusion in exercising these rights persist however, and the new status has sometimes had complex consequences. British nationals who moved to Brussels after the end of the transition period, or who are now considering doing so, are consequently subject to the conditions applicable to any third-country national.

Given its mission to inform and advise and guide expatriates in their daily administrative challenges, the EWD has received many questions and requests for support from the British community since the Brexit referendum. The team has become a real centre of expertise on this matter. The CEIO is therefore the ideal regional stakeholder to implement a BAR project devised to gauge the impact to mitigate the consequences of Brexit on British nationals in Brussels. Our ultimate goal is to help this community set sustainable roots and to put an end to a "Brexodus" that would harm the economic and social fabric of our cosmopolitan Region.

BREXIT ADJUSTMENT RESERVE



Funded by
the European Union



BRUSSELS-CAPITAL REGION



In concrete terms, this two-year project (2022-2023) comprises the following actions:

- The engagement of a legal firm to bolster the existing expertise of the EWD and the information we share on our website and in our individual consultations;
- Individual and personalised advice and guidance for British nationals who contact the EWD;
- The creation of a 'Brexit Desk' on our website where we will publish a series of useful pages for UK nationals who live or want to live in Brussels;
- The launch of a series of webinars and a newsletter (the *Brexit Brief*), as well as promotional campaigns, to disseminate this information to the target community;
- A '*Brexit Impact Scan*', based on survey and literature search, where we will analyse the consequences of Brexit for British nationals in Brussels and summarise the main challenges they face.

We laid the foundations for the project in 2022. The results will be visible in 2023. The EWD issued an invitation to tender to recruit the necessary legal consultants, before starting to draft the texts that will form the 'Brexit Desk'. Together with these lawyers, we also planned the format of the webinars and newsletters and the topics to be broached. For the "*Brexit Impact Scan*", we created and launched a digital survey that collected more than 300 responses after a multi-channel promotion campaign. The results are already enriching our work and will be presented in a report in 2023. Finally, the day-to-day work of individual advice and guidance continued throughout the year, with several UK cases processed.



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 usually held at the premises of the CEIO, at the heart of the European quarter, but since the Covid-19 pandemic they regularly take place as video conferences (via the Webex platform).

15/02/2022

Webinar "How to acquire belgian citizenship"

150 PARTICIPANTS VIA WEBEX

26/04/2022

Webinar "An essential key for a successful expatriation: the fulfillment of the expatriate partner"

21 PARTICIPANTS VIA WEBEX



29/03/2022

Webinar "11th Networking Meeting of Diplomatic Liaison Personnel in Brussels"

19 PARTICIPANTS VIA WEBEX

24/05/2022

Webinar "Aspects of international occupation in Belgium: EU and non EU workers"

10 PARTICIPANTS



09/06/2022

Webinar "Filing your Belgian income tax return"

15 PARTICIPANTS

20/10/2022

Webinar "Family Law in Belgium: the ins & outs explained by notaries"

78 PARTICIPANTS VIA WEBEX

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 and administrative matters by the EWD).

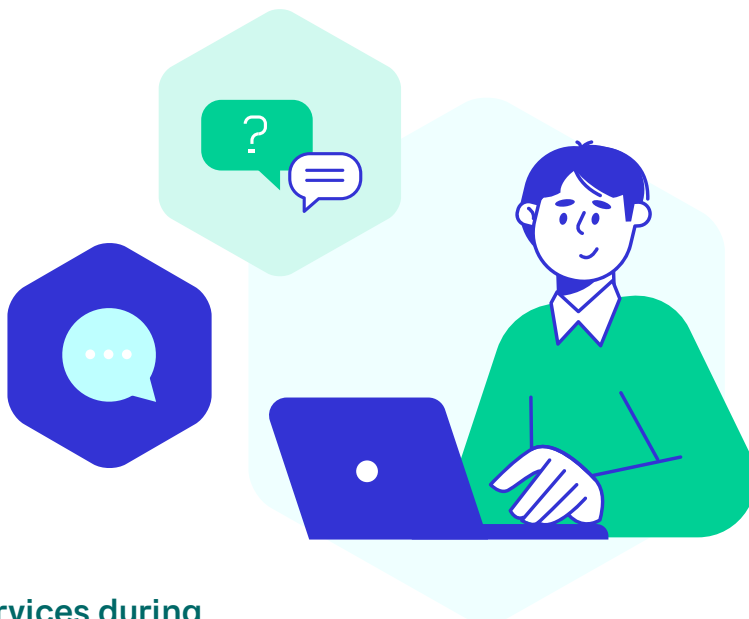
Due to the health situation, several events were once again cancelled during 2020, including the Info Day at the European Commission and the coffee mornings for the spouses of European civil servants.

Welcome for the official trainees of the European institutions

12/01/2022 and 19/09/2022
Welcome for students from the University of Kent

Information sessions
«How to fill in a tax return form as a trainee of an EU institution?»

27/09/2022
Presentation of EWD's services during the Career Day hosted by the EU-Council



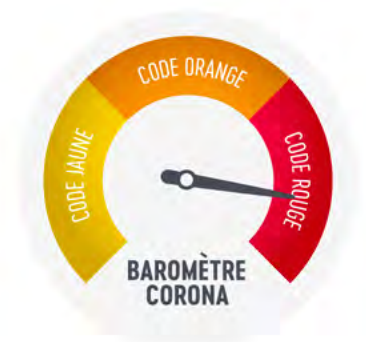


7 The Expat Welcome Desk facing Covid-19

The Expat Welcome Desk clearly witnessed a drop in COVID-related issues in 2022 following the stabilisation of the epidemiological situation. We have consequently also seen a clear decrease in the number of “corona news” articles (our ad hoc newsletter).

In January 2022 we communicated on the reinforced measures following the Omicron variant and the introduction of the coronavirus barometer. These sanitary measures came to an end with the deactivation of this barometer. Our last “corona news” newsletter on the autumn booster thus brought the COVID topics to a close for 2022.

Nevertheless, it is clear that our general pre-COVID habits have undergone great changes when it comes to how we organise our meetings with the expats who contact us. They now prefer to exchange information by e-mail or videoconference. The structural teleworking implemented in the European institutions and many organisations is the main cause of this change. Many municipal services in Brussels have also had to adopt digital methods since the pandemic and continue to develop in this direction in order to make their services more accessible.





Furthermore, our two face-to-face seminars in 2022 were not as successful as they used to be before COVID, when the room was usually full. Virtual seminars have clearly become more popular nowadays, with the advantage of saving time, being easy to organise and attracting more people than face-to-face seminars. Nevertheless, to accommodate those who wish to come in person, we are considering the possibility of installing a new video conferencing system in our meeting room, so that we can hold our seminars in a "hybrid" format.

Similarly, most information sessions continue to be held online in the wake of the pandemic, although there are some exceptions, such as the reception at Kent University and for the European Parliament trainees, where we are physically present.

Finally, our working meetings are increasingly organised in face-to-face format on our premises for a more friendly and warm contact with our partners and interlocutors.

Conclusion

The Office of the Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations (CEIO) has taken a long-term and in-depth approach ever since it was created in 2014. We have opened a new chapter in the relationship between the European and international institutions and the Brussels Region: a dialogue which has become permanent. The bolstering of the Brussels-Capital Region's international and European outreach goes hand in hand with the resolute desire of the Brussels authorities to turn greater Brussels into a metropolis on a human scale. Beyond the slogan, this widely shared desire is being put into practice on the ground through strong and ambitious policies and measures that enable us to tackle these different challenges.

In 2022, we noted that the European Quarter is undergoing a major transformation. It is facing substantial changes in the management of its assets by the European institutions in the aftermath of COVID. Several interesting projects are being announced that will restore the range of uses in the quarter. Housing is a key aspect of this development. Furthermore, the competition between the three European Parliament cities Brussels, Strasbourg and Luxembourg to attract additional EU services is more important than ever. We are aware of the many challenges facing the international position of our Region and want to tackle them head on with daring and ambition.

2022 marks the inception of a structured consultation by and between the Brussels and federal governments to pursue a policy that will anchor the European Quarter further in the societal, social and cultural fabric of the capital – in particular by making it more sustainable, improving its integration, capitalising more on its tourist winning assets and speeding up its opening to residential housing. Coordinated by the Chancellery of the Prime Minister and the CEIO, this platform will enable us to assert our Host Region Policy vis-à-vis the European institutions further and to perpetuate a structural and harmonised coordination with our European and international interlocutors.

In 2003, Neil Kinnock, Vice-President of the European Commission, underscored in his speech on the future of the European Quarter and stressed the fact that Europe's chances of success in Brussels would be greatly enhanced if we had a single mouthpiece.

Twenty years later, the CEIO has become that single mouthpiece who has succeeded in implementing this concerted policy between European and international organisations and the political and public authorities of Brussels. Such a synergy is essential in order to enhance the winning assets of Brussels as a region where it is good to live and work.



Karin IMPENS
Director

Alain HUTCHINSON
Commissioner

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



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