

NEWSLETTER FOR SNEs AUTUMN EDITION NOVEMBER 2013

WHAT IS CLENAD?

CLENAD is a network of SNEs/ENDs from all 28 member States, EFTA and candidate countries in all European institutions - covering more than 1500 SNEs.

With a growing voice for SNEs in the Commission we are able to better identify, prevent and resolve problems that we face, share our experiences, and add more value to the Commission's work.

We aim to make the whole SNE community more visible and to highlight its added value and evolving role in these times of constraints.

A further important and continuing priority for the CLENAD bureau is to strengthen the links between SNEs, the EU institutions, and the Permanent Representations by supporting the setting-up of national sections for all Member States and associated countries.

CLENAD provides a welcome brochure to give new SNEs a taste of what to expect when they come to work in Brussels.

Foreword by the President of CLENAD, Lucie Lekešová (CZ, EC/EAC)

Dear colleagues,

I would like to take the opportunity in this newsletter to welcome some new faces into CLENAD Bureau and thank our leaving colleagues. I would like to introduce our new three vice-presidents who were appointed this summer: Gilda Carbone (IT, EC/Regio), Augusto Firmo (PT, EC/TAXUD), Philippe Collin (FR, EEAS).

I want to thank Herman van der Plas (NL) for his outstanding cooperation in the post of Secretary General and thank the outgoing President of the Polish National Section Arek Plucinski and welcome Agnieszka Konkel who has just replaced him for further cooperation. I would like to thank Arek for all his hard work and good sense during renewing the Polish Section, and wish him the best of luck in the future position.



You will be aware that changes to the staff regulations have been agreed. While these don't affect SNEs directly, there are likely to be some minor indirect effects on us. CLENAD is currently liaising with DG HR to ascertain the specifics of these potential changes and will inform you of the details in due course.

In this issue you can read about the EC Staff Regulations which was prepared by Helen FASHAM (UK) and Gilda CARBONE (IT); about the Survey 'SNEs' enhancement upon return' summarised by Gilda CARBONE (IT); and about the 7th Conference for German employees in international organizations and European institutions - 30/31 May 2013, written by Sylvia BINGER.

Lucie Lekešová

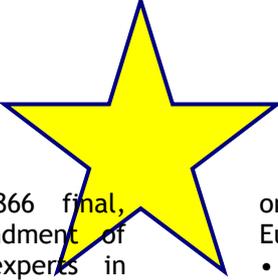
EC Staff Regulations: which impact on SNEs? -

by Helen FASHAM (UK) and Gilda CARBONE (IT)

You will be aware that changes to the staff regulations have been agreed. While these don't affect SNEs directly, there are likely to be some minor indirect effects on us. CLENAD is currently liaising with DG HR to seek clarifications, to ascertain the specifics of these potential changes and will inform you of the details in due course.

The new Staff Regulation has been agreed and will come into force on 1st January 2014.

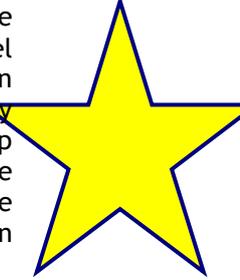
The impact of the new rules on SNEs arise where the legislation applying to SNEs



(Commission Decision C(2008) 6866 final, laying down rules on the secondment of national experts and national experts in professional training to the Commission) states that the SNE will be subject to the rules currently in place for Commission officials. We think that the following issues may affect SNEs and are currently liaising with DG HR to determine whether they will definitely apply to us:

- Working hours to be increased to 40 hours per week without compensation;
- Annual travelling time to be replaced by an allocation of “home leave”, limited to a maximum of two and a half days (instead of the current allowance of up to 6 days based on distance). When the place of employment is within the territories of the Member States, home leave will be limited to a maximum of two and a half days for every official entitled to the subsistence allowance. In practice, this will be a flat rate of 2 ½ days for everyone. When the place of employment is outside these territories, the duration of home leave shall be fixed by special decision, taking into account particular needs.
- As of 1 January 2014, a specific reference to flexible working hours arrangements to be introduced in the Staff Regulations. Assuming that SNEs are considered to be staff up to AD/AST 8, we will have the possibility of flexitime recovery in entire working days. In practice many SNEs already benefit from this, depending on the policy of your unit.
- Parental leave to be extended for a further 6 months' period in addition to the current 6 months. The periods are doubled for single parents or parents of children with disabilities or serious illness.
- As of 1 January 2014, women whose maternity leave would begin before the end of their contract would be entitled to maternity leave and maternity pay.
- Two cases for special leave will be added: (i) birth of a disabled or seriously ill child: 20 days, to be taken during the fourteen weeks following the birth and (ii) in case of exceptional work which goes beyond an official's normal obligations. Such special leave shall be granted at the latest three months after the Appointing Authority has taken a decision on the exceptional character of the work of the official. Revised rules provide that, when special leave is granted in pursuance of this section, any home travelling time shall be fixed by special decision, taking into account particular need.
- Payments to staff will not only be possible in the currency of the country where he/she carries out his/her duty (as before) but also,

on request, in euros in any bank within the European Union

- SNEs are currently entitled to reimbursement of the cost of their travel between their place of origin and the place of secondment, at the beginning and end of their secondment (if their home employer does not pay). This is currently reimbursed on the basis of the first-class rail fare between the place of employment and the place of recruitment or origin. Currently, where the route exceeds 500 km and in cases of sea crossing, the reimbursement is based on the cost of travel by air in business class or equivalent (on production of the tickets). As of 1 January 2014, the cost of travel expenses on taking up appointment or end of service will be compensated by a per kilometre allowance plus a lump sum if the distance is more than 600 km.
 - SNEs in delegations. There are fairly significant changes to the rules applied to staff in delegations. All of those relating to expenses appear to apply to SNEs.
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"SNEs' enhancement upon return" Survey: the outcomes - - by Gilda CARBONE (IT)

In the second half of last year, the CLENAD-Italy section launched a survey for all SNEs of all nationalities on SNEs' enhancement upon return.

The study was aimed at addressing a general concern among the SNEs, which is one of the purposes of CLENAD!

We thank all who helped!

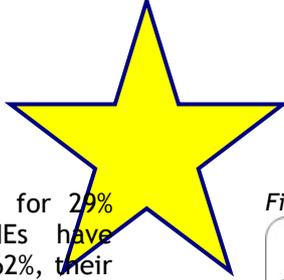
Why this Survey?

In 2011, CLENAD-IT section carried out a questionnaire for Italian SNEs at the end of their secondment and upon return to Italy.

The outcomes of the questionnaire¹ showed that 44% of the SNEs stated that their experience was not enhanced by the national

¹ The outcomes of the questionnaire are part of the CLENAD-Italia Annual Report 2011, published on the website of the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs:

http://www.esteri.it/MAE/opportunita/Nella_UE/Nelle_istituzioni/Esperienze_Nazionali_Distaccati/RapportoEND_2011.pdf



administration upon return, while for 29% only partially. 62% of the SNEs have undertaken new tasks but for this 62%, their responsibilities have remained the same (40%) or even decreased (22%) in comparison with those held before the secondment.

Although all the relevant institutional partners recognise the specific and unique 'value added' of the SNEs in terms of knowledge, experience and professional capacities acquired during the secondment, at national level there is no formal way in which this value is then effectively used by the national administration once the SNE is back to her/his country.

This can result in negative consequences for SNEs in terms of - inter alia - no adequate professional development and disparity of treatment towards officials 'remaining at home' and negative consequences for the MS in terms of - inter alia - missed opportunities to benefit from their investment SNEs, and SNEs leaving the national administration because of a lack of opportunities.

Clenad-IT intended to look into this issue by launching a comparative survey on how the value of the SNEs is viewed and used in other Member States.

The objective of this study is to identify formal and non-formal mechanisms procedures and practices in place at national level that apply once the SNE returns to their national administration.

The survey questions

The survey was split into 5 sections related to:

- 1 - Good practice;
- 2 - Legal acts of a binding nature;
- 3 - Legal acts of a non-binding nature (soft law);
- 4 - Administrative procedures;
- 5 - Suggestions.

The outcomes of the survey were based on the replies provided by the SNEs. As a consequence, the replies could not be considered to fully reflect all experiences, but nevertheless they give an important insight into the perception of SNEs and of their knowledge of the situation.

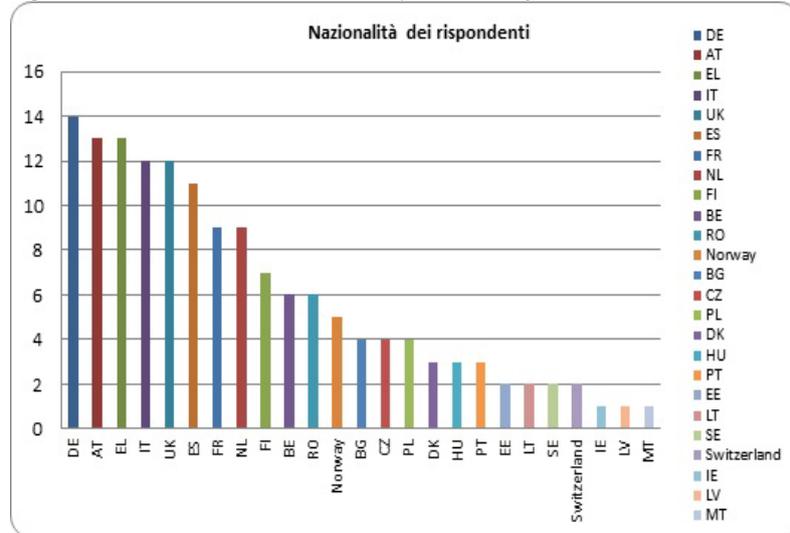
For that reason the outcome has significant value.

Who replied?

The survey was sent to the mailing list of CLENAD International, comprising around 1000 SNEs, mainly working at the Commission.

149 SNEs replied from 25 different countries: 23 Member States and 2 extra EU countries.

Figure 1: distribution on the basis of nationality



The two non-Member States (Norway and Switzerland) counted for 7 SNEs.

Main outcomes

As a preliminary outcome, it should be noted that not all the respondents had a complete knowledge of the rules and procedures that apply once the SNE is back home. The share of people who replied who stated that they knew the rules, procedures and good practice varied from 19% to 39%.

Nevertheless, some good practice has been reported in reference to:

UK and DE (regular contacts with PERM REP and 'home' administration to pave the way for the return);

FI (evaluation of experience by an ad-hoc committee, under the responsibility of the Prime Minister);

NO (regular meetings every 6 months organised during the secondment by the Ministry for Education);

NL (cases where someone could move to a different institution from their 'home' institution if that uses their experience more effectively);

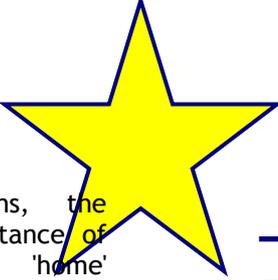
FR (cases of SNEs assigned to high level positions at the General Secretariat for European affairs);

IE (cases of SNEs assigned to high level positions)

As far as soft law acts are concerned, the replies suggest that in many Member States there is special treatment for SNEs upon return. In fact, some soft laws in DK, FR, ES, NL and NO have been reported, recognising the importance of the secondment for a career.

The most advanced soft law reported is in FR (Circulaire 29 Septembre 2006).

FR is also in the lead for binding acts in favour of SNEs (law n. 86-76 of 17/01/1986)



Under the 'suggestions' sections, the respondents highlighted the importance of maintaining contacts with the 'home' administration, the PERM REP and relevant Ministries, and to include the secondment in a more general career path defined to improve the experience of SNEs for the benefit of both the SNE and the 'home' administration.

In conclusion

Improving the position of the SNEs upon return and efficiently using their experience is part of the life-cycle of the secondment. This is in the interest of both the SNE and the 'home' administration. Where it is not properly applied whether by binding rules, good practice, soft laws, etc, it represents a missed opportunity.

The national sections and PERM REP should work together for promoting the acknowledgement of the value of SNEs after their secondment.

CLENAD IN CIRCABC - by Augusto FIRMO (PT)

We call on every SNE, within every institution, body or agency, to register him or herself in CIRCABC to help the bureau maintain a good overview of the distribution of SNEs in different EU institutions and related agencies. How do you register for it?

URL to access CLENAD on CIRCABC:

<https://circabc.europa.eu/>

First: choose **Login** on CIRCABC;

Second: access via **ECAS**:

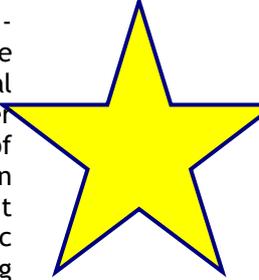
If you do not have a username/password on ECAS then choose "Sign Up" option on ECAS interface.

Third: **apply for membership** to CLENAD on CIRCABC.

The leader of CLENAD on CIRCABC, Augusto Firmo (Taxud), will receive a notification and grant access to the requester by e-mail.

7th Conference for German employees in international organizations and European institutions, 30/31 May 2013 - by

Maike KOOPS (DE)



The event "SNE - Intermezzo Brussels - Seconded National Experts between the poles of the EU institutions, national European policy making and personal career prospects" was the first exchange of experiences between German administration sending SNEs and the receiving institutions. It aimed at better coordination and strategic use of the programme, with ever-shrinking resources yet increasing demand for European skills of the German public administration.

Representatives of the Federal Foreign Office, the German SNEs, the Federal Ministry of the Interior (BMI), the State Ministry of Baden -Württemberg and a representative of the European Commission's Human Resources department participated in the panel.

The discussion was based on the main concern of the Federal Government to increase the German staff presence in international organizations and EU institutions.

Figures from the European Commission (COM) showed that among 1166 SNEs Germany covers 130 posts in absolute data (May 2013), this implies an "underrepresentation" of German SNEs in relation to the German population and also in comparison to the quota of SNEs and population from other European countries.

The SNE instrument is seen extremely positive within the European Commission (COM). However there is no approach to career development of SNEs within the COM and the other European Institutions. Challenges that have been identified by the German SNEs are the following:

- In consequence of an extremely complex situation a lack of a unified strategy in the German public administration can be stated. SNEs are seconded from federal or regional ministries or other public institutions to different departments in EU institutions (Commission, Parliament, Council and advisory committees).

- Secondments occur mainly at the request of the staff member, in consultation with the thematic units as well as human resources departments from the ministries, yet there are no centralized strategic assignments.
- Promotions are generally not performed during the time preparing for a secondment and the assignment itself, but a positive experience gained abroad is taken into account after return, for example, assigning of unit management positions related to Europe.
- Return options that are available after the secondment need improvement from the perspective of the SNE.
- The EU institutions may also pay more attention to the specific expertise each SNE brings from his home administration, particularly when it comes to specialised areas. The importance of the contribution of SNEs in EU legislative procedures and policies is often underestimated.
- In addition, despite a federal structure inter - governmental communication should be improved to skim better the upgraded expertise of SNEs and their added value for public administration after their secondment.

The workshop resulted in a document, comprising some discussion points and ideas which came up. It has already been distributed to Human Resources Units in German administration for further exploitation.

INTERVIEW with: Outgoing General Secretary of CLENAD, Herman van der Plas (NL) - back in the Netherlands



Goodbye speech...

Herman, how long have you been in Brussels, and why are you leaving us now?

I started my secondment in August 2009, to work on a post-Lisbon Treaty initiative to coordinate national research policies better in order to shape the European Research Area (ERA). I worked in the DG Research and Innovation (RTD) of the European Commission. My aim was to stay for the regular maximum period of 4 years. I achieved this with the consent of both the European Commission and my employer, the Dutch ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW).

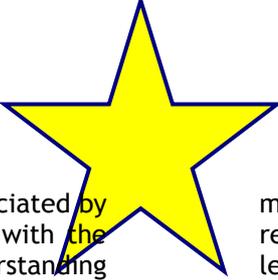
Incidentally, my hierarchy would have appreciated a continuation of my stay beyond the regular 4 years. However, I was satisfied with the duration of my secondment, and felt the need for a change. I decided to take up the opportunity of an interesting vacancy back home - I will tell you more about this job later - rather than extending my stay for 2 more years with a less secure return thereafter. Because I had already noticed some big changes in the organisation of my ministry, including in my former hierarchy, which I considered could be an increasing risk to a smooth return.

Are you satisfied with your achievements as SNE?

As I said, I was expected to work in 2009 and 2010 on an initiative regarding research policy. But this initiative was delayed because of the arrival of the new Commission in 2010, with Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn becoming responsible for innovation policy. The priority was logically in 2010 on preparing the Innovation Union Flagship initiative under the EU 2020 strategy, but my work was put a bit on hold then.

Only with the request by the European Council to “complete” the ERA by 2014, “my” file started to move again. I worked on a Communication which in the end was presented in summer 2012. I also helped to prepare a first progress report to be presented to EP and Council by 18 September this year.

Maybe I should be satisfied with this result, but I missed, for example, the direct contacts with my DG and Cabinet and involvement in the preparation of the new Horizon 2020 programme (2014-2020). This is different to the Netherlands, where communication lines are much shorter. And of course my SNE status played a role in this as well. In any case, from the reactions during my goodbye reception, I understand



that my contribution was well appreciated by the Commission. My good relations with the Member States, and thorough understanding of national policies and sensitivities were particularly mentioned by my acting Head of Unit.

How do you look back at your working environment in the Commission?

It was an experience I would definitely not like to have missed! Although I was an experienced bureaucrat after 23 years in the Dutch civil service, I needed to fully calibrate my compass as a civil servant again to be effective in such a large, complex international environment. Looking back, it is amazing how smoothly I was able to function in this totally different environment, but at the same time I learned a lot about how the Commission works internally. My writing skills in English have also improved considerably, my French skills however remained relatively poor... The most surprising discovery for me was the efforts I needed to make to stay well informed about the developments outside my unit or directorate. I noticed the limitations of being an SNE despite the large room for manoeuvre I had. Finally, our DG moved to a new building in Square Frère Louis Orban last December. I really felt uncomfortable in this building.

What do you notice in this respect after your return in the Netherlands?

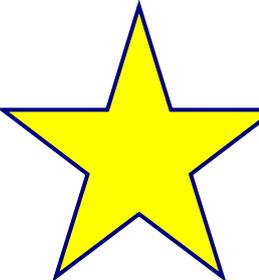
The civil service in the Netherlands has changed profoundly during my absence - a change I do not observe at all in Brussels. First of all of course, there has been a continuous decrease in the number of civil servants - and there will be more to come. We don't have our own rooms any more, only big open plan rooms where you need to find a place every day. I notice the positive impact of this, as I am more informed about my colleagues' work. You are also encouraged and supported technically to work from home, which is called the "New Working" or "Smart working". Different ministries are also housed together in the same buildings, so inter-ministerial coordination is easier than between DGs in the EU institutions. The architecture of my ministry building and some others (see pictures) is impressive, as is the view over the North Sea. Organisations have become more flexible and fluid, boundaries less rigid, and as a consequence information flows quickly. Interesting for DG Research and Innovation, which is in the process of becoming more of a policy DG, but my

ministry does not fulfil any tasks relating to research programmes, this is all put at arm's length in agencies or other policy bodies. So we can fully concentrate on our policy tasks.



Dutch ministries in The Hague

What will your new tasks be?



I started directly after the end of my secondment as Coordinating Policy Officer of EU Affairs, in the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. I have left the research domain and enter general international policy. My tasks will be threefold. Firstly, following the Dutch decision making process by the Dutch government on all EU files. Secondly, preparing Council matters, mainly regarding education policy. Thirdly, I will support our Director General on the international aspects of Higher and Vocational Education, and Science and Emancipation policies (gender issues, gay and lesbian rights, etc.). Last but not least, I will be preparing the Dutch EU Presidency in 2016. I will work again with a young team, and will be sharing the knowledge and experience I gained here in Brussels with them. That is essence of the secondment of national experts!

Do you consider your return as a best practice?

I do, in fact. My new experience is well appreciated and was required back home, rather than staying longer in the EU institutions. I invested a lot in keeping good contacts with my employer, and the fact that I applied for a job in the Permanent Representation helped in a way to get into the picture again and get my present challenging job.



Herman, *will there be another active Dutch member in the bureau? Who will be your successor?*

Let me first say that I regret I only contributed one and half years to the CLENAD bureau. I am proud that we were able to organise a General Assembly again, the first since 2008! CLENAD Netherlands consists of around 110 SNEs in the Commission, and is a well-functioning network with a bureau of five persons. I am sure it will continue to be involved in CLENAD International. But unfortunately, nobody will be available as General Secretary.

To conclude, Herman, what does the change of job mean for your private life?

I felt very happy in Brussels. I have been active for CLENAD, the Dutch CLENAD section and a Dutch political party. It was a big risk, but in 2009 my partner and I bought a nice house near Schuman. We could sell it again under good conditions and given developments in the Netherlands in real estate, we managed quickly to find a similar property. I am very happy I will be more together with my partner again, who remained active as a management consultant in the Netherlands during our stay in Brussels.

Herman, what advice would you have for your successor and the bureau of CLENAD more in general? Do you have proposals for future priorities?

I think that CLENAD should now take benefit of the brainstorming sessions in the bureau over the last months, to give a proper follow-up to the General Assembly. The results should be communicated to the community, including national permanent representations, as soon as possible. As said by other departing colleagues before (Finn and Matthew), supporting the development of more national branches should be priority number one, and there may be some more attention to support SNEs in their return to their home countries. Perhaps not a next General Assembly, but at least some social events should be considered where SNEs can

meet each other, especially those with less active national sections. I hope I can contribute to a good communication between the Dutch administration and the SNEs in the institutions from my new position!

WANTED!!!

With the departure of Herman van der Plas and the forthcoming return of Augusto to Portugal, CLENAD International is looking for two new volunteers to take on the roles of Secretary General and IT specialist. If you are interested, please contact Lucie on lucie.lekesova@ec.europa.eu who would be happy to explain what these positions involve over a coffee:).



DID YOU KNOW?

The Brussels Liaison Office gives advice to expats in Brussels and can inform and help you with registering in the Commune, getting an ID card, checking lease contracts, family issues, offering general information on cultural offers, etc. Their website offers a lot of useful information. You may help them to improve your living and working conditions in Brussels by giving them your opinion on living in Brussels in a survey. See www.blbe.be.

Would you like to contribute to the newsletter and share your views or experience? Please contact us!! www.clenad.eu or directly: lucie.lekesova@ec.europa.eu. The deadline for your contribution to the next edition of the newsletter is: 30 January.