



Liaison Committee of
Seconded National Experts

Verbindungskomitee für
Nationale Experten

Comité de Liaison des Experts
Nationaux Détachés

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NEWSLETTER FOR SNEs

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

Dear colleagues,

In this newsletter I would like to take the opportunity to welcome the new Secretary General Dejan Flasker (SI, EC/CNECT), with whom I am looking forward to a close cooperation! I would like to thank our leaving Vice-President Augusto Firmo (PT, EC/TAXUD) for sharing his extensive knowledge of SNEs issues, for hard work and outstanding cooperation and wish him the best of luck back in Portugal. I would also like to welcome three new heads of national sections, Dimitris Axiotis of the Greek section Dejan Flasker of the Slovene section and Eva Ejdrup Winther of the Danish one. For all of them - good luck!

In this issue we would like to update you on the changes to the staff regulations. Also thanks to intervention from CLENAD and of many of you, all cost-free SNEs are entitled to home leave. Originally, DG HR applied the rules so that no cost-free SNEs would receive this kind of leave. However, they have recently reversed their decision and cost-free colleagues should receive it soon.

We are keen on supporting national sections and we are excited to see more of them arising! Let us know if SNEs of your nationality are not organised, we help you to get together! Or is your section active but not yet represented in CLENAD International? Get in touch!

Lucie

Annual Meeting of the French section

- by Pierre Darbre, FR

The annual meeting of French SNEs took place on December 18, hosted by the French Perm Rep, and co-organised by the French section, the French Perm Rep and the Secrétariat Général des Affaires Européennes. The event brought together 120 SNEs. The bureau of the French Section opened the meeting, presenting initiatives to assist SNEs throughout their secondment. French CLENAD also maintains a guide to newcomers in Brussels. Participation in CLENAD actions regarding SNEs' general interests was also explained.

SNEs engaged in workshops with representatives from respective ministries to discuss both policy and HR issues, especially those related to their return in France at the end of their secondment. The Deputy Permanent Representative praised SNEs' role, and insisted that SNEs should keep in touch more often with the relevant attachés. The current number of SNEs should be maintained and staff swaps between the French administration and the institutions should be developed.

A panel discussion followed, with a former SNE in DG ENV who came back to the French ministry of environment and a former SNE in DG HR, now member of the cabinet of Vice President Šefčovič. Both insisted on the strengths that former SNEs can build upon in subsequent jobs: intimate knowledge of European decision making, multicultural experience, ability to anticipate and to help national administrations to solve litigation with the Commission.

A second panel discussion brought together Directors of EEAS, DG HOME and DG JUST. Out of a staff of 1000 in EEAS, there are 400 SNEs (43 French). SNEs bring multiple benefits to the Commission at a lower cost, and an increase in their use in the Commission is expected, depending on the willingness of the Member States. On the other hand, it was mentioned that because SNEs have to leave after 4 years, this entails a high turnover which can be difficult to manage. There are mutual benefits, both for the EU institutions and MS which should perceive SNEs as fruitful investment.

The meeting ended with two presentations on transatlantic trade negotiations and economic governance in the Eurozone, by representatives from the French Treasury. Finally all participants enjoyed a cocktail, eager to attend the next annual meeting.



INTERVIEW with:

Outgoing Vice-President of CLENAD, Augusto Firmo, PT - back in Portugal

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

I started my secondment in April 2008 and I worked in DG TAXUD. My job was to provide IT project management and support in Trans-European Taxation projects, which was a big challenge for me. Initially, I was planning to stay only 2 years but I was lucky to extend my secondment for 4 more years. I would prefer to stay longer but this is not possible. Hence, it is time to go back to my Portuguese Customs and Tax Administration; they are expecting me!

Are you satisfied with your achievements as SNE?

Yes, fully. Professionally speaking, these were my best 6 years ever! I could understand better how the European Commission services are working, and I intend to use all this knowledge when I am back to my National Administration. I could also improve my language skills, the IT knowledge, and so many other positive aspects. I believe that I did my best during my secondment and I am very satisfied with the compliments that I have received from my management.

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

I can still remember that I was very anxious and nervous when I started working in Brussels, but with the friendship and professionalism of my colleagues I could overcome all fears that I had in the beginning. Looking back, it amazes me how I was able to work in a totally different environment, in a completely different language and with the very different Brussels weather... I would say that to overcome all these was the biggest challenge of my life!

What are you going to do after your return to Portugal?

As I said, I have already contacted my National Administration and I have expressed my desires to return to my previous duties or maybe going to different duties. I know that they are willing to receive me because the lack of resources is a real and serious problem over there. I will be very pleased to go back and to meet all my old colleagues and also start working in projects related to the knowledge that I have acquired in the European Commission. I am very confident and pretty sure that I can help my National Administration to fulfil their goals.

And what about your CLENAD activities? What can you share with us?

I joined CLENAD at the beginning of my secondment. I was firstly invited by the Portuguese CLENAD section to assist and take part in their activities, a few weeks after my arrival, and I can say that it was a pleasure to take part of such a group whose primary mission is to help newcomer SNEs, and to discuss and solve problems or issues that may happen during their secondment. I has also involved in other social activities like dinners and trips. In CLENAD International, I managed IT aspects like the CLENAD interest group on CIRCABC but I also took part in the discussions in bureau meetings and other activities. It was a great experience for me and I will miss it a lot! I wish all the best to my colleagues that will continue the existence and purpose of the CLENAD alive. Thank you!

Annual Event of the Italian section at the EP

- by *Gilda Carbone, IT*
Vice-President of CLENAD

The Italian CLENAD bureau, following its annual traditional and successful event, presented its 2013 Annual Report at the European Parliament, on the 21st of January 2014.

The conference, which registered more than 100 participants, was welcomed by high level representatives from the European Commission like the Vice-President Antonio Tajani, from the Italian Embassy, from the National Research Centre and from the National School for Public Administration, and other relevant Italian institutions.

All speakers had shown positive messages regarding the professional role of SNEs. It is, therefore, extremely important to enhance their experience, their expertise and their knowledge.

This potential added value of SNEs has to be capitalized at national level, after 2 or 4 (maybe 6) years spent working within the European institutions, considering also their strong engagement.

Indeed, thanks to their skills and to their true European 'formamentis', the SNEs can become the right interlocutor able to talk about Europe. In addition, using their comprehensive and motivated approach, they can communicate, teach, train and inform the EU citizens about the main European policies and activities, addressing all levels (political, administrative, and civil society).

At the end of the conference, and on the basis of those statements, all Italian SNEs (approx. 140) who still work at EU institutions in 2014, will hopefully expect a positive effect for them in the forthcoming months.

STAFF REGULATIONS CHANGES:

Impacts for SNEs working at the European institutions

- by *Helen Fasham, UK*

The new Staff Regulations have been agreed and came into force on 1st January 2014. While nominally, there are no direct impacts on SNEs, there are some indirect impacts. These arise where the legislation applying to SNEs (Com. Decision C(2008) 6866 final, rules on the secondment to the Commission of national experts and national experts in professional training) states that the SNE will be subject to the rules currently in place for Commission officials. These impacts are:

1. Working hours will be increased to 40 hours per week without compensation.
2. The annual travelling time allowance will be replaced by an allocation of "home leave" of a flat rate of two and a half days (instead of the current allowance of up to 6 days based on distance from home). This home leave can be claimed by almost all SNEs, with the exception of:
 - SNEs whose place of employment is within their home country, who do not receive home leave (for example, Belgian SNEs in Brussels);
 - SNEs whose place of employment is outside the EU (the duration of home leave is then fixed by special decision, taking into account particular needs).

Originally, DG HR applied the rules so that no cost-free SNEs would receive home leave. However, after complaints from individual SNEs, some national sections and the CLENAD bureau, they have recently reversed their decision so that all cost-free SNEs are entitled to home leave, which will be entered manually in SYSPER2 over the next few weeks.

3. Two cases of 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 that goes beyond an official's normal obligations. Such special leave shall be granted at the latest 3 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.
4. Payments to staff are only 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 interested in this possibility should check with the PMO whether this is also possible for the subsistence allowance.
5. 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 per kilometre allowance plus a lump sum if the distance is more than 600 km.
6. 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. We advise that SNEs in delegations check the changes for their particular cases: https://myintracomm.ec.europa.eu/hr_admin/en/staff-regulations-review-2013/Documents/SR_Fiche_Delegations_en.pdf

Establishment of the Greek section of CLENAD

The Greek CLENAD section was established on the 4th of March during a dedicated assembly of the Greek SNEs, which took place at the Greek Permanent Representation. During the same meeting a 3-member Managing Committee was elected and, in a subsequent meeting, the Managing Committee nominated its President (Dimitris Axiotis), its Vice President (Natasha Arvaniti) and its representative to CLENAD bureau (Nicolas Sifakis).

Establishment of the Slovene section of CLENAD

The Slovene CLENAD section was established on the 13th of March 2014. During the meeting it has been decided that Mr. Dejan Flaker will head the section and represent interests of SNEs from Slovenia.

New chairman for the Danish section of CLENAD

After a short period of time without a chairman for the Danish ENDS, the Danish Permanent Representation put the issue in the Agenda of the January END meeting with the Ambassador. At this meeting a new chair(wo)man, Eva Ejdrup WINTHER, was elected. Eva recently started as an END in DG-EMPL (Unit E.3), but knows Brussels well from earlier work at the Permanent Representation and the Danish 2012 Presidency. The Danish chairman's role is threefold: To represent the Danish ENDS in CLENAD, to be a contact point for new Danish END's in Brussels – and to initiate a few social get-togethers for Danish ENDS.

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.

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?

***Please contact us!! www.clenad.eu or directly Nicolas SIFAKIS (ERCEA) Nicolas.SIFAKIS@ec.europa.eu
The deadline for your contribution to the next edition is: 15 June 2014***