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WILL OUR PENSION SCHEME BE REVIEWED?

In the context of the mid-term review of the multiannual financial framework in 2023, the Commission stated that it will reflect on the feasibility of setting up a pension fund based on capital formation. However, this pension fund already exists! It is capitalized in each of the Member States treasuries since they no longer transfer the money to the community budget! This proposal, like many others, adds nothing more to the current system!

The 2014 reform predicts savings of 15 billion € over 50 years. Expenses will increase until 2047 and decrease until 2064.

Our pension scheme is based on a capitalization system. We pay a monthly contribution (currently 10% of salary). Our contribution represents 1/3 of the pension fund and the MS contribute 2/3 (in fact, the MS have not been paying for ages).

Member states have a debt of 73.5 billion euros, which should appear as an asset in the budget, but appears as a liability!

This money goes directly into the Commission's budget. The pension fund is virtual, in balance because every year there is an update calculation. This year, the monthly contribution should even be less. Sign that everything is under control.

The retirement age for staff recruited after 2014 is 66 years. The annual accumulation rates vary between 2%, 1.9% and 1.8% depending on the year of entry into service.

This virtual fund is safer than a pension fund placed on the financial markets (stocks, bonds or other products). If this pension fund were placed in a bank, none of the Member States would discuss our pension system.

This fund is in balance because each year there is an actuarial calculation, which, in case of need, adjusts the parameters (the monthly contribution rate or every five years, the retirement age).

• There is no need to worry about the balance of the system, even if staff recruited after the 2004 and 2014 reforms start with lower wages, Eurostat's forecasts provide for a balanced system until 2064 and beyond!

• In case of a reform, staff must remain monolithic. Despite the cleavage created by the 2004 and 2014 reforms, and although it is true that colleagues recruited after the administrative reforms have a slightly lower annual accumulation rate (1.9% and 1.8% instead of 2%), the real losers would be colleagues recruited post 2004 and 2014. They will soon represent the majority of the personnel in service. In addition to a longer career, they will also have to pay a solidarity tax (which if voted will be compulsory to everyone, not just the older colleagues) and imposed a lower accumulation rate than the actual one, 1.8%!

TAO-AFI reaffirms that our pension system is balanced and should remain so!

BELGIUM COURTS PUTS A HALT TO THE SMALL EUROPEAN MANHATTAN PROJECT ON LOI 130

A few years ago, the European Commission launched an architectural competition to rebuild the aging buildings of Loi 130 where DG AGRI is located. This project, assigned to the Spanish office Rafael De La-Hoz Arquitectos, foresees a deep transformation of the 10 blocks situated within the perimeter around Rue de la Loi, Avenue des Arts and Chaussée d'Etterbeek including a multiple combination of housing, shops and offices.

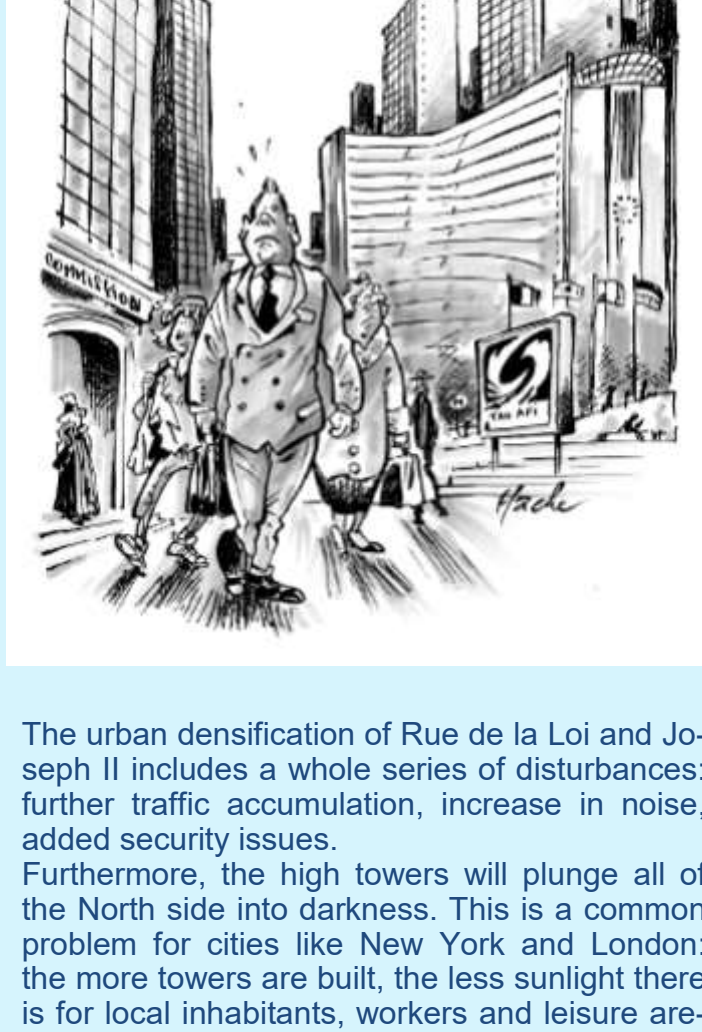
The development height of the future constructions would reach near to 155 meters! A small Manhattan...

But on 25 September, the Belgian Council of State delivered an unequivocal judgment in the case opposing neighborhood associations to the Region concerning the Urban Planning Regional Regulation Zone (RRUZ) of rue de la Loi: "Ruling of the Brussels-Capital Region Government of 12 December 2013 approving the urban planning zone and the application for a certificate and planning permission for the perimeter of the Rue de la Loi and its surroundings is canceled".

This judgment follows the EU Court of Justice ruling of 7 June 2018, sanctioning the Region's attempt to circumvent a prior assessment of impacts in line with EU directives: "A regional planning regulation, such as that at issue, setting down certain requirements for the implementation of building projects, falls within the concept of 'plans and programmes', for which some may have significant effects on the environment, and in the sense of that directive, must therefore be subject to an environmental impact assessment."

The Region would have preferred to avoid such a study, dispensing themselves the time to examine environmental issues, together with the question of mobility in an already completely saturated neighborhood.

After more than five years of proceedings, carried out to the highest jurisdictional level, it is considered as a victory for the Brussels associative tissue and in particular Coordination Europe / Coordinatie Europa, which brings together the Leopold District Association (AQL), the BRAL Stadsbeweging voor Brussel, the European District Animation Group of the City of Brussels (GAQ), Inter-Environment Brussels (IEB), as well as residents of the rue de la Loi.



The urban densification of Rue de la Loi and Joseph II includes a whole series of disturbances: further traffic accumulation, increase in noise, added security issues.

Furthermore, the high towers will plunge all of the North side into darkness. This is a common problem for cities like New York and London: the more towers are built, the less sunlight there is for local inhabitants, workers and leisure areas such as parks and terraces.

Employees of the European Institutions are not well informed of the social and real estate arrangements this project holds, in a neighborhood that continues to close upon itself, instead of favoring a better integration of the institution in the urban context of Brussels.

TAO-AFI regrets that the European Commission, site owner, has not taken into account these important elements: The environmental impact and the challenges of users and inhabitants. This gap is likely to affect the image of our institution in the eyes of the citizens of the city of Brussels. The project of the future Law 130 has even been the subject of an official exhibition!

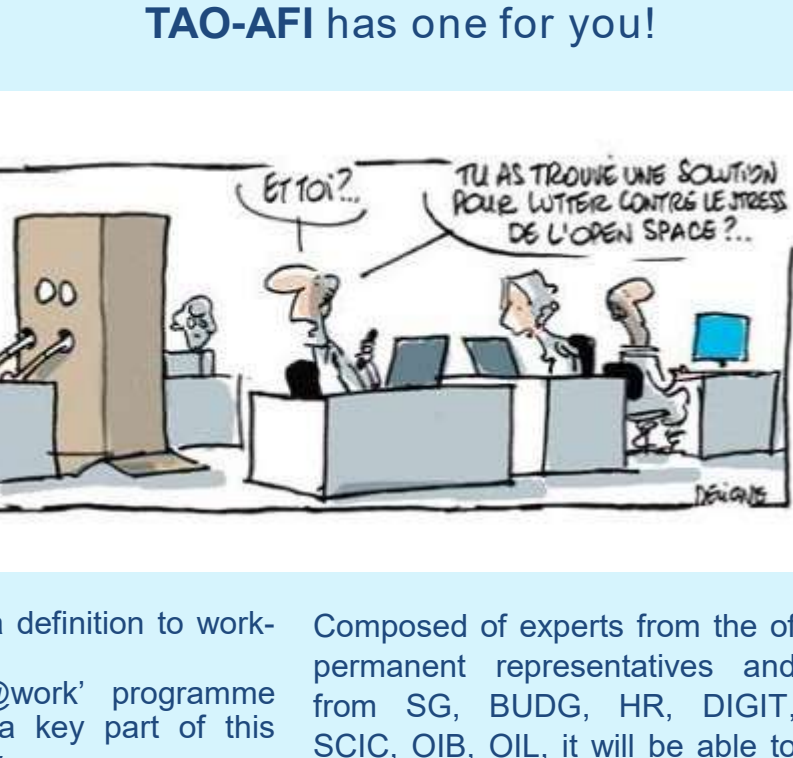
THINK GREEN — USEFUL DAILY TIPS

BYOC : Bring your own cup!

Think your daily coffee habit at work has no impact? Think again. It may not seem like a big deal, but single-use coffee cups have a significant, negative impact on the environment.

If you buy a single cup of coffee in a disposable cup each day, you generate 11.5 Kg of non-recyclable, non-degradable waste per year. Paper cups are lined with a plastic coating which makes recycling and composting impossible and poses a health hazard.

One paper coffee cup per day produces 39.5 Kg of CO2 and wastes 106 litres of water per year. If you save one cup a day for 40 years, you personally can save 24 trees.



You don't have a cup?
TAO-AFI has one for you!

THE COURT OF AUDITOR'S REPORT AND THE AGEING COMMISSION WORKFORCE

The Court of Auditor's report on the implementation of the 2014 staff reform, with a focus on its impact in the Commission, is a welcome wake-up call on many fronts. A key issue of comment among colleagues is the statistic that the average age of Commission staff is 48! TAO-AFI sees two important issues arising from this: on the one hand, there is the question of how well the Commission accommodates older officials; on the other hand, there is the wider question of how to ensure the EU institutions remain an attractive employer for graduates. The auditors recommend that the Commission establishes a workforce management plan:

TAO-AFI looks forward to working with DG HR and other unions to do this.

How to deal with an ageing workforce?

The Commission is faced with an ageing workforce, resulting largely from implementation of the 2014 strategy for 5% reduction in establishment plan posts, taken together with the increase in pensionable age from 63 to 66 (with transitional measures for staff recruited before 2014). The Commission is not alone in having to develop policies to deal with an ageing workforce. As western economies confront skills shortages and raised pensionable ages, human resources managers in both the private and public sector face similar challenges of adapting their workplace practices to accommodate older workers. How is the Commission doing this?

General feedback received by TAO-AFI is that it is not doing very well. Some colleagues report they face limited mobility within the Commission due to their age: "Heads of Unit prefer to take younger staff as they see them as being more flexible or having better IT skills"; "While I have all the experience and knowledge to do the job, I see



COUR DES
COMPTEES
EUROPÉENNE

the more interesting files going to younger colleagues". Other colleagues bemoan the lack of training opportunities: managers won't allow them the time to undertake training due to workload; the relevant sort of lifelong learning courses are not on offer; and giving older, experienced staff themselves a role in training younger colleagues is not a widespread practice. One colleague also mentioned the need for a better range of "Fit@work" courses for older staff.

There is also the question of more flexible working time. Most human resource literature recommends a more flexible approach to working hours, including increased use of part-time work, as a strategy for accommodating older workers. In the Commission there are currently limited possibilities to reduce working hours other than immediately before retirement.

"Managers don't generally want staff who are working part-time"; "Part-time work is sometimes accepted for parents with young children, but I wouldn't dare to ask for reduced hours due to the workload in my Unit".

Working hours and workload

The 2014 reform of course increased working hours for staff to 40 hours a week. This has had little effect on coping with workload: the Court of Auditors report states that almost one third of Commission staff feel that they have an unacceptable workload (27 % in 2016 and 31 % in 2018). The report also refers to the high level of sick leave in certain DGs. In its most damning part, the Court of Auditors found weaknesses in the Commission's monitoring of the main HR effects of the measures in the 2014 package, such as the increased working week and the 5 % reduction in posts.

TAO-AFI therefore asks DG HR to consider carefully the

question of working hours, workload and ageing workforce in the forthcoming workforce management plan. It is time to modernise, in working hours, change managers' mind-sets and at the same time use IT intelligently, combined with better training, to reduce unnecessary work (e.g. repetitive briefing requests).

Recruiting more staff with a younger age profile?

The reverse side of the ageing workforce in the Commission is of course that the number of younger staff is declining. Indeed, in 2016 only 6.8 % of Commission staff were younger than 35 and in 2017 this fell to 5.3%. The Court of Auditors underlines in this regard the need to maintain competitive employment conditions in order to attract well-qualified graduates from across the Member States. It noted the Commission currently faces difficulties in attracting applicants from certain nationalities and with certain profiles. It recommends the Commission draw up an action plan to attract, develop and retain people from a broad range of professional experience and nationalities.

TAO-AFI with this ready to assist DG HR on this challenging task. We underline however the need, on the one hand, to improve working conditions in the Commission in order to enhance its attractiveness as an employer and, on the other, that any drive to recruit new staff should be made in full respect of the principle of transparency and equal opportunities.

TAO-AFI welcomes the Court of Auditors report which highlights several critical points of the 2014 administrative reform and its impact on staff management as well as attractiveness of the European civil service.

The full report is available [HERE](#)

LOCAL STAFF COMMITTEE CONFERENCE « STAFF REPRESENTATION & YOU »

On 17 October, the LSC organised a conference entitled "Staff Representation & You". Chaired by Mr Trujillo Herrera, and with the participation of several active trade unions.

The objective was to discuss the future of staff representation at the Commission.

Three main topics were addressed: Why a staff representation is needed? What are the priorities for staff representation in the next 5 years — how to improve the motivation and involvement of staff in trade union battles and activities of Staff Committees.

Here is a summary of TAO-AFI's views:

- Can we imagine an administration without trade unions? A contract between an employee and the employer establishes a relationship of subordination, which can sometimes drift towards arbitrary decisions. Trade unions help to rebalance this relationship. Democracy is at stake. A society without intermediary bodies cannot be considered.
- The priorities for the next five years are: preservation of acquired rights (refusal of yet an-



other unjustified administrative reform), negotiation of the new multiannual budget framework, working conditions, careers, the possibility for contract agents to become officials via a programme similar to the Junior professionals Programme, a bridge for AST/SCOs to evolve towards the AST category, coach staff towards new digital technologies, improving food quality in our canteens, a full reimbursement of 100 % of public transport and promoting cycling via allowances. A green strategy for our administration.

• Increase interest through a major information campaign especially aimed for young people (millennials).

TAO-AFI would like to thank the LSC for the organisation of this conference.

TAO-AFI SIGNS A CONFEDERATION AGREEMENT WITH CISL AT ISPRA

On 18 September, TAO-AFI signed a confederation agreement (CSE) in ISPRA with the Italian trade union CISL.

CISL was founded in 1944. It is built on democracy and solidarity values, pluralism and independence. Beyond negotiating, CISL places consultation at the centre of its trade union co-operation and promotes the idea of co-decision between social partners and political actors. CISL, like TAO-AFI, is a trade union which claims its autonomy and rejects any political or religious interference.

Thanks to this agreement, TAO-AFI will be able to join forces with the Italian trade union to find beneficial synergies in the representation of staff interests in ISPRA.

Marco Gemelli (ISPRA) and Rosario De Simone (BXL) have both been named co-presidents for the first year.



From left to right : Roberto Tedeschi, Rosario De Simone, Marco Gemelli, Raúl Trujillo-Herrera, Massimiliano Voinich



QUIZ TIME!

According to the Treaty on the European Union (TEU), any Member State who wishes to withdraw from the EU shall notify the European Council of its intention. The Union then negotiates with the Member State an agreement setting out the arrangements for its withdrawal.

This agreement requires:

1. European Council approval by simple majority and EP
2. The approval of the European Council by a majority of 85 %, the Court of Justice and the EP
3. The approval of the European Council by qualified majority and the EP
4. The approval of the European Council by qualified majority

Send the correct answer [here](#) and try to win a 35€ voucher at Filigranes!

Deadline to participate

14/11

Correct answers will be drawn 18/11



Your TAO-AFI team: Raúl Trujillo Herrera, Rosario De Simone, Marco De Stefan, Juan Luis Barbolla Casas, José Bello, Gailian More, Cristina Perret,

JOIN TAO-AFI, THE INDEPENDENTS, TO REINFORCE THE STAFF'S ACTION AND TO BE INFORMED OF YOUR RIGHTS!

KEEP THE INDEPENDENT SPIRIT UP!

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