

# Generation 2004

## Newsletter

### Luxembourg Special Edition

July 2016

### TOP STORY

#### **Upcoming General Assembly: Electoral system of the Luxembourg Local Staff Committee**

The Luxembourg Local Staff Committee (LSC) has convoked a General Assembly (GA) for Commission staff for the 14th July 2016 at 14:30-16:30 in the JMO canteen. Since the GA will take place during core hours, DG HR has created an event in Syslog so that staff can register to justify absence from work. Please follow the link and register:

[http://intracomm.ec.testa.eu/di/syslog\\_formation/demande/newdemande.cfm?langue=EN&arg\\_cou\\_id=211633&arg\\_cor\\_id=514838](http://intracomm.ec.testa.eu/di/syslog_formation/demande/newdemande.cfm?langue=EN&arg_cou_id=211633&arg_cor_id=514838)

**Please participate so that your opinion can count!**

In this special edition, we look at the proposals and correct some misinformation that has been floating around in order to help you make up your mind.

#### **1. Why a General Assembly?**

**One of the main aims of the assembly is to decide on a possible change of the electoral rules.** At the GA that took place shortly after the last elections, the LSC was mandated to review the rules in order to improve proportionality. To this end, the LSC has set up a working group. While Generation2004 participated in this working group, our main objections against the current electoral system were not taken on board. The working group's proposal to change the electoral rules was subsequently accepted by majority in the LSC and will be presented to the GA.

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Local Staff Committee  
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In our view, the changes by the LSC proposal are purely cosmetic, and **fail to address the main problems**. Therefore, Generation2004 has decided to submit a proposal of its own, as did also two other OSPs. All three counterproposals have in common that they introduce a truly proportional distribution of seats in the LSC. While the LSC proposal has been sent to staff as email attachment, the counterproposals are only posted at the LSC wiki (for printing please first download by clicking on the down arrow icon on the top right corner):

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/wikis/pages/viewpage.action?pagelId=148408823>

*By the way, you might have noticed that in the call for the GA that the new proposed system is allegedly "neither endorsed nor opposed" by the "third list" (i.e. Generation2004), but the truth is that we spoke against and we voted against! So we ask ourselves, if voting against is not an opposition, what else are we supposed to do to? Print out the proposal and demonstratively burn it in front of the now nearly-deserted JMO building? It is true that it was not easy to express our opposition. When the proposal was voted on in the LSC, a Generation2004 representative requested the floor for two minutes to say a short statement before the vote. Only after around 10 minutes of arguing he was allowed to do so. The statement included the words "My organization cannot support this proposal".*

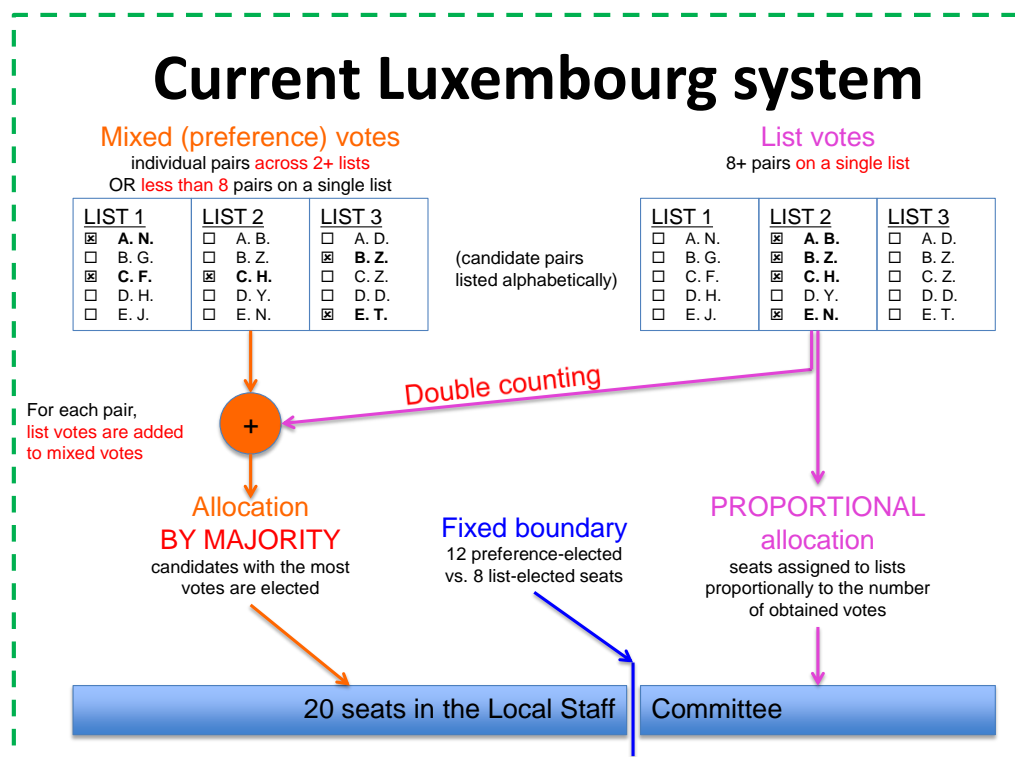
*You might have also noticed that the LSC communication stresses the "representativity" of organizations which support this or that proposal. Do not let that fool you – alleged support is not a guarantee of quality or fairness of a proposal. In the end, all counterproposals were supported by at least 30 signatures. And we assure you that we have not lost weight (☺) and our representativity in Luxembourg is still 19% (not 17%), even though we only have 10% of seats "thanks" to the current electoral system.*

Now, let us have a look at the proposals.

## 2. The current system

The LSC is made up of 20 seats which have to be distributed among candidates from different lists. You can cast a **list vote** or a **preference vote**. This distinction is, however, well-hidden since you still make crosses to individual couples of candidates: if you make at least 8 crosses for candidates on the same list and no cross on any other list, then you have cast a list vote. Otherwise you have cast a preference vote.

**Out of the 20 seats, 12 are distributed by majority** according to preference votes and **8 are distributed proportionally** to list votes. But there is a catch: list votes still consist of crosses for individual candidate pairs, and they also count as preference votes! So, if you cast a list vote, your vote has an influence on all 20 seats of the LSC, but if you cast a preferential vote, your vote influences only 12 seats. **The list votes are double-counted**, and they help to achieve majority in preference votes. In the end, this mechanism very effectively ensures that the list with just slightly more votes than the others (say, 35% in total), especially if these votes come from the "devoted followers", gets an absolute majority in the LSC (e.g. 70% of seats).



Whenever we challenge this mechanism, we always hear the argument that having a majority is good for ensuring smooth running of the staff committee. Besides a philosophical standpoint – **we are convinced that a plurality of opinions is necessary to have a truly “representative” staff representation** – there is also a practical consideration. The lowest possible quorum for the LSC plenary sessions is 11 couples represented. However, there was often a problem with achieving the quorum in recent meetings, despite your Generation2004 representatives having a very good attendance record and despite the fact that the strongest list from the 2013 elections controls 13 seats – more than enough to achieve the quorum just by itself. So, **a majority is clearly not a guarantee of efficient operation.**

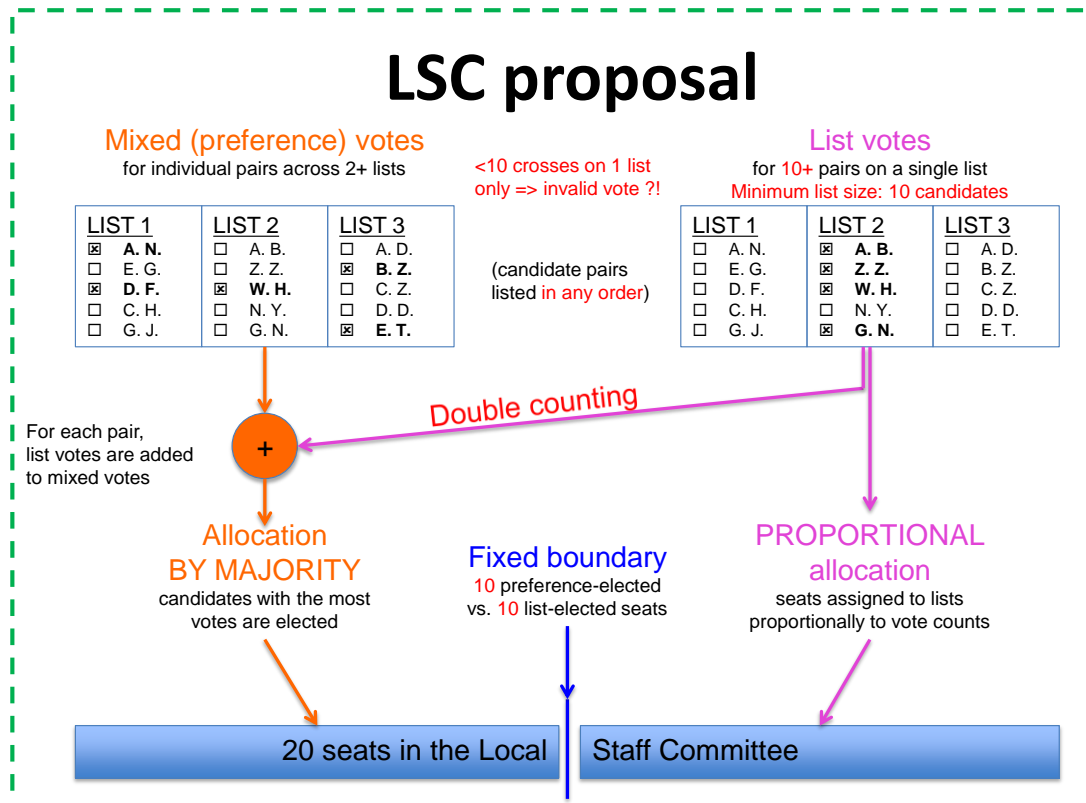
There are other relatively minor issues, such as the lists being sorted alphabetically (so that we cannot show you who are our most committed people by putting them on the top of the list), **seniority in service and higher age criterion in case of equal votes** (giving preference to candidates recruited before 2004 and to should-be pensioners), and French being the only authentic version of the electoral rules.

### 3. The LSC proposal

The new LSC proposal slightly changes the ratio between “list” seats and “preference” seats: 10 seats shall be allocated by majority and 10 proportionally to lists. The proponents claim that this improves proportionality. However, while the number of seats distributed proportionally increases from 8 to 10, if you do not cast a list vote, the number of seats you will have influence on decreases from 12 to 10. Furthermore, the double counting still remains, so the strongest list can still achieve absolute majority.

Additionally, the LSC proposal introduces a **new serious problem**: If you vote for less than 10 candidate couples from one list only, **your vote would be invalid** (see Article 8, 'Modalités de vote').

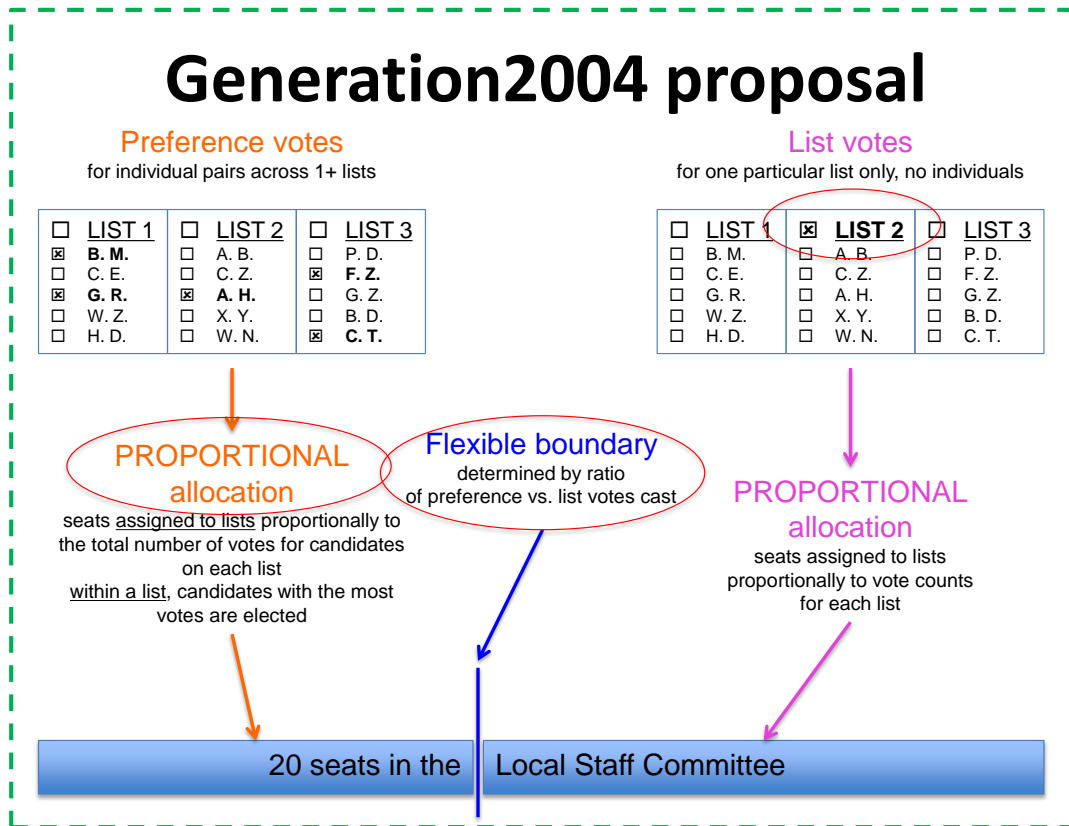
There are a few other cosmetic changes, some for the better. For example, the lists can be presented in any order, not just alphabetically. Still lists will not be able to show preferences.



### 4. Generation2004 proposal

**Our proposal is based on the system used in Brussels, Ispra, and maybe other sites, with eliminated paper ballots and an unambiguous “replacement procedure”** (e.g. in the case that a staff category, such as contract agents, would not be represented). It still distinguishes list votes and preference votes; however, these two are strictly separated. **There is no double-counting, and also no opacity** – a “list vote” is simply a single cross for the whole list. The ratio of list-assigned vs. preference-assigned seats is determined by the ratio of votes of each type. Moreover, both types of seats are distributed proportionally with respect to lists.

As far as the minor issues are concerned, lists can be presented in any order, there is no age or seniority criterion, and all language versions are equally authentic.



### 5. FFPE proposal

This proposal seems to be a **mixture of the current Luxembourg system and the Brussels system**. The list votes and preference votes are cast just as in the current system (the distinction is in the crosses), but the counting is proportional according to the Brussels rules, perhaps with some changes in marginal cases (the proposal goes into details concerning e.g. the rounding of numbers). In case of equal number of preference votes, seniority in service and age still play a role, and French remains the only authentic version.

### 6. Save Europe proposal

This proposal **uses “preference” votes only** (and not list votes as mentioned in the LSC mail). Seats are then distributed proportionally to lists, and within each list, the candidates that have received the most preferential votes are elected. Essentially, it is the “preference” half of the Brussels system, applied to all seats. In case of equal number of preference votes, seniority in service and age still play a role, and French remains the only authentic version.

## A good use of your time?

'If you're going to get really involved in staff representation, it takes time ... a lot of time', warns **Josef Hlaváč**, a Czech translator. 'I am lucky to have the support of my Head of Unit in this regard. But, for me at least, it makes an interesting change from the translator's everyday routine and a great opportunity to find out how some other parts of the institution work'.



Josef admits that his experience as a staff representative has been mixed: 'The work we do is important; for example, we examine appeals against promotion decisions in the relevant committees. We are also consulted on the implementing rules for various aspects of the Staff Regulations. On the other hand, I sometimes feel that I'm wasting my time in unproductive meetings that are just held for the sake of it. I have met a lot of people who genuinely care about principles such as equality and fair working conditions. But I've also come across people who take every opportunity to deliver fiery speeches but in the end feel comfortable with the status quo and don't want any real change'.

Initially, Josef gave the unions a wide berth. 'But then, one organisation caught my eye: Generation2004. I thought, do these guys really care that I, like many other EU-10 colleagues, got taken on two or three grades lower than the competition notice promised, and want to do something about it?' Once elected to the LSC for Generation2004, Josef grew into the role and started discovering the complex mosaic of staff representation.

*Reprinted with permission from the DGT monthly newsletter of October 2015.*

## >>>> Dark Humour Corner <<<<



You have received an email from the internal communication service of the Commission proudly announcing the new Online Booking Tool (OBT) to book your missions. Generation 2004 has had a look and is not too impressed:

- You have to log in via your ECAS login but your ECAS password is not immediately recognised, you have to change it upon login. And presumably, every time you are forced to change your ECAS password, you will have to remember to change your OBT password too. Not particularly efficient...
- You have to choose between flights, trains, or rental cars. Why can't the system provide you directly with the best option? Moreover, if the Commission was a bit consistent, OBT would first search for trains as they are the greenest transportation mode...
- If you are a dedicated environmentalist, you press the train button. What options do you get? Essentially, Belgian cities and a handful of European capital cities. So if you are going on mission to Vilvoorde, the tool is great (although, for some of us, cycling to Vilvoorde looks like an even better option). If you are going further away, tough luck. Try for instance to type Lyon (the 3rd biggest city in France). There is a direct train every



day from Brussels to Lyon which does the trip in about 3 hours. Why is Lyon omitted from the list of destinations? By the way, do not type "Brussels", OBT can't manage a second language...

- If you are not a dedicated environmentalist, you press the flight button. There, you get a reasonable list of options, which is not surprising since the OBT tool seems to be powered by Amadeus, a well-known flight booking company (which probably explains why the tool does everything it can to discourage you from taking the train...). However, the most convenient flight option is flagged as "hors politique". What does this mean is not clear but presumably it means "too expensive"...

Some other staff organisations have accused DG HR of trying to discourage us from going on mission in order to save more money (it is true that the OBT tool came only a few months after the downward revision of the services provided by the BCC corporate card, maybe this is no coincidence). Generation 2004 has consistently explained that in order to save money, the best option is to scrap the "senior expert" scheme that DG HR is so fond of. But let's assume that the senior experts of DG HR are right and that anyway the Commission indeed needs to reduce the number of missions, why don't they just say so? Next time your boss asks you to go on mission on a Sunday so that you can be on the other side of Europe at 9 am on Monday, you will tell her/him: "Sorry, DG HR is broke and wants to reduce the number of missions, let's do a video-conference instead". Many of us will actually be happy with this solution, the carbon footprint of the Commission will go down and stingy DG HR will save money. A win-win solution, isn't it?

### **MESSAGE TO AST COLLEAGUES**

Many of you have approached us in the past weeks to express their deepest disappointment of now AST officials have effectively been prevented to take part in the internal competitions COM/03/AD/16 (AD6) published on 12 February 2016.

We do share your concerns and we react to your demands. We are convinced that the solution for AST and AST/SC categories should be sought at political level; we are also convinced that you have the right to have your voice heard.

At your explicit demand, [HERE](#) you will find a link to an Art. 90 template reviewed by our lawyers which you are free to use no matter if you are a member of G2004 or not.

*..... and finally*



**G2004 message song of the month** (with kind permission) – now click on our DJ, sit back, turn up the volume and listen well. (P.S. don't forget to work for an extra 5 minutes 28 seconds before you go home today).

Got any ideas for the G2004 newsletter? [Send](#) them along (with "Newsletter" in subject), together with any letters, articles, poems .... and other assorted forms of expression.

If you identify with what you have read, and share our objectives, **please give us your support TANGIBLY by becoming a member.** [Click here](#)

Whilst **Generation 2004** is the home of **EVERYONE** who believes in equality, justice and solidarity, it is

✓ *the natural home of ALL staff recruited after 01 May 2004*

*and de facto,*

✓ *the natural home of ALL staff recruited from the "new" (2004+) Member States*

### **Contact us:**

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