



# Generation 2004

## Newsletter no.27

February 2018

### TOP STORY

#### **MFF 2021-2027: Heading V of the EU budget**



In the framework of the next multiannual financial framework (MFF 2021-2027) Commissioner Oettinger invited the staff representations in January to provide suggestions concerning heading V of the budget which covers the administrative costs of all EU institutions (salaries, pensions, buildings, IT and security). We very much appreciated Commissioner Oettinger's willingness to consult the staff at an early stage of the MFF drafting procedure. Generation 2004 has responded to this call and will defend staff recruited after 2004 (including new recruits) and low income staff.

Generation 2004 is aware of the fact that the Brexit will have some negative impact on the EU budget. As mentioned in our last newsletter [here](#) according to Commissioner Oettinger there will be a net revenue gap of 12-14 billion Euros per year. This amount represents the loss of income caused by Brexit. If one takes a more optimistic view, Brexit will also lead to a reduction on the expenditure side.



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Indeed, UK's net contribution (contribution to EU budget minus EU money spent on UK entities) can be estimated to be around 8 billion € (the net contribution varies significantly from one year to another). Taking into account that the EU is facing new challenges (such as migration, defending the external borders, fight against terrorism and the European defence policy) and salaries in the public service of the Member States are increasing, any reduction in heading V - which makes up only 6% of the total EU budget – would be counter-productive.

**We need to remember to the numerous restrictions that have been imposed especially on staff recruited after May 2004 and 2014:** we recall that entry grades have been lowered and pension accrual rates have been decreased for newcomers, a solidarity levy has been imposed on staff, the working time has been increased (which corresponds to 5 % pay decrease) and the number of staff has been reduced by 5% in the last 5 years. Further measures may actually not lead to significant savings for the EU taxpayers in the short term but they might lead to the demotivation of the EU civil service as a whole and as a result generate inefficiencies.

Therefore, Generation 2004 insists that **an impact analysis should be carried out for heading V** of the new financial framework and the results of this analysis should be shared and discussed with the staff representation.

One particularly controversial issue, often subject of pressure from the Member States – is our **pension fund**. Even though the fund is reported to be in actuarial balance, the fact that staff contributions are increasingly coming from permanent officials and contract agents recruited since 2004, with significantly reduced salaries leads to a decreasing staff contribution. However, **the Member States should be reminded that most pensioners have retired with pensions that are equal to or higher than the salaries of the majority of active staff**, and these current high pensions are not even subject to the solidarity levy. This is a structural problem that cannot be solved by cuts imposed on newly recruited staff. Indeed, the most recent cuts in pension rights for staff recruited since 2004 and since 2014 will show their effects only in the long run, when those affected staff members reach retirement age in big numbers. In other words, reforms of the pension scheme applied only to newcomers and younger staff do not have a significant short-term impact because the big bulk of the current pension expenditure is paid to pre-2004 staff members.

Generation 2004 recalls that salaries only represent about 50% of the spending under heading V. The residual part of heading V includes the allowances paid to MEP's, building costs, the IT system etc. Those costs could be better controlled provided the political will is there. For instance, the regular trips of the Parliament to Strasbourg are said to cost 200 million euros per year. These trips could be avoided if the Parliament would recognise Brussels as its only seat. Similarly, rents in Luxembourg are much higher than in most places in the EU, which increases the costs of buildings and the cost of living for the staff. In addition, the excessively high prices charged for medical services in Luxembourg create a heavy burden on the Joint Sickness Insurance System. **This raises the question of whether the current trend of transferring more services to Luxembourg is justified.** This trend is even more questionable when taking into account costs for missions between Brussels and Luxembourg and the significantly lower level of staff satisfaction in Luxembourg which results from limited career possibilities as well as difficult and expensive living conditions due to the limited infrastructure offered by the host country.

**Another idea to save money is to reduce the number of DG's through mergers.** By reducing the number of DG's the number of managers and office space as well as other related costs could be also reduced. Along the same lines, the number of Commissioners and cabinets could also be reduced. But this is a political discussion which mainly takes place in the Member States between politicians who think first about their national interests being represented by a Commissioner in Brussels, at whatever cost.

**Generation 2004 will continue to actively contribute to the MFF discussions by defending the interests of staff recruited since 2004 and of course we will keep you informed.**

## Modernisation of HR: the experiment goes on

Once upon a time, there was an administration which struggled to reform and modernise...

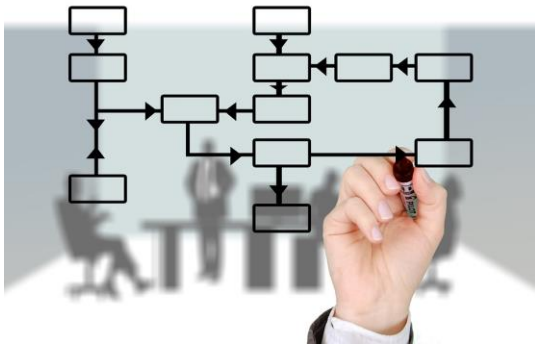
Let us take a trip back in time. The main character of our story is the EU Commission. The year is 2002. The drive for administrative reform after the resignation of the Santer Commission has already given birth to the Kinnock Reform programme enshrined in the White paper of 2000. Put aside the well-known dramatic consequences for the new recruits and the fragmentation of the workforce, this reform also suggested a decentralisation for the administrative and financial services of the Commission. The underlying idea was that such a **decentralisation** would lead to **modernisation and more efficient use of resources**.

Coming back from our trip in time and reading a document from 2015 announcing the so-called HR modernisation process, we read that the Commission administrative (HR) services will be **centralised** to achieve **modernisation and more efficient use of resources**!

Well, yes, a U-turn in policy based... on the same arguments 15 years later!

From the onset Generation 2004 reacted, with a letter to Mrs Georgieva, the Commissioner for Human resources at the time. We expressed our fear that the project was badly prepared and that we expected it to lead to the opposite effect: less efficient use of resources. What followed was ... nothing. Put aside the fact that the Commission demonstrated once again its notorious approach of "*Hear me what I say, don't look at what I do*", it now appears that we were right. Once again, the Commission let a long-term policy fall victim of the needs for short term financial savings.

At this stage, the main result of the project is irritation for colleagues who do not know anymore who is responsible for what and an unbearable workload for the members of the AMC teams. Indeed, there is still ambiguity about the distribution of responsibilities between AMCs, business correspondents and corporate HR. There is a multiplication of communication chains and increased complexity of procedures. There is a lack of internal guidance, manuals and coaching. The proximity and specialisation of the service is lost, etc., etc...



On the positive side, DG HR still accepts to regularly discuss the project with staff representatives. One of the latest events of this kind was a series of bilateral meeting at the end of 2017 between Mr Magenmann, DDG of HR and representative trade unions/associations, including Generation 2004. Generation 2004 used the opportunity to explain all its concerns and arguments to Mr Magenmann. We conveyed to him that we considered the justification for the current exercise rather slim and bearing a hidden agenda for cutting posts, in particular in the AST category. Further on, we presented the main problematic issues based on first-hand feedback from staff (both users of HR services and AMC teams). We were positively surprised to find out that Mr Magenmann was well aware of the main problematic issues. There was an apparent willingness to search for workable solutions such as: cutting the length of

some procedures and limiting the number of actors involved as well as putting in place clear guidelines and competence distinction. It seems that we can allow ourselves some careful optimism, at least as far as the AMCs are concerned.

On the negative side, things are not improving in terms of application of HR policies across the DGs. For example: vacancy notices for AST/SC whose job descriptions assume university degree and AD9 responsibility levels, recruitment procedures in which candidates do not receive any feedback, consecutive *interimaire* contracts for the same job and person for years... and many more examples that show that DG HR lacks information or energy or mandate to impose a uniform application of rules across the house.

On 23 January, DG HR met staff representatives for the 6<sup>th</sup> time for an update on the process. All pending issues communicated many times by all stakeholders were raised once again before the Director General of HR, Mrs Souka, and her deputy Mr Magenmann. The main message from the meeting remains the promise to fine-tune the process. The learning & development and Time management fields still need to be analysed and included in the new system, and before summer the Corporate part will also be launched. The position of Business Correspondents close to Director-Generals was presented as determining the good outcome of certain activities within a matrix-structure (read between the lines: nobody is responsible for anything, this is what DGs have decided). There was one thing that surprised us: the praise expressed by some staff representatives on the staff cuts resulting from the centralisation.

The experiment will continue in the foreseeable future. After all, our institution was never capable of openly admitting a wrong step even in presence of ample evidence. So, the best we can expect is to manage having the machine partially fixed while in motion...

Aiming to get the full picture and to listen to everyone concerned, at the end of 2017 G2004 initiated a blitz survey for AMC team members, asking them to point at the most prominent problems they faced. The replies were pretty consistent and confirmed all our points!

Because our colleagues in the AMC teams act as service providers but – as all of us – are just officials acting under instructions from the hierarchy, we decided to give them a voice and pass the conclusions of the survey to those of you sending a request to the AMCs:

- 1) AMCs colleagues are HR professionals honestly dedicated to deliver a good client oriented service but currently working under very challenging circumstances.
- 2) As a consequence of HR Modernisation, AMCs are currently understaffed and undergoing continuous changes in staffing and procedures, which makes time to reply longer than in the past.
- 3) While confirming their commitment to effective HR service, AMC colleagues ask us all to send our requests well in time, to make sure the request is sent to the right team, and to be patient and indulgent when sending e-mail reminders to FMBs or to the person in charge.

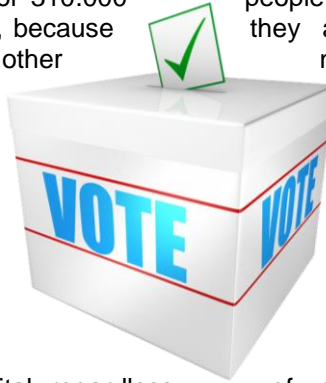
## Voting rights to all Brussels residents

Generation 2004 supports the campaign launched by some of our colleagues to get voting rights in the regional elections in Brussels.

On 7 February a campaign calling for the right for all Brussels-Capital Region (RBC) residents to vote, #1bru1vote was launched. It has been met with huge support from Belgians and non-Belgians alike. The campaign is of direct concern to those of us who do not have Belgian citizenship and who reside in the RBC.

Today, 1 in 3 Brussels-Capital residents – or 310.000 prevented from taking an active political role, because Union citizens and 90.000 citizens with other process. And yet they are Brussels love, work, study, pay taxes and contribute better home for everyone.

Without the right to vote, these 1 in 3 RBC that affect their day-to-day lives, such as and heritage, parks and green spaces, works, pollution and air quality, energy and and education as well as budget.



people – are denied the right to vote, and are they are non-Belgian. These 220.000 European nationalities are excluded from the democratic residents like everyone else—who live, in so many ways to make Brussels-Capital a

residents do not have a say on decisions mobility and public transport, urban planning waste and recycling, infrastructure and public sustainable development, family allocations

It is true that all inhabitants of Brussels-Capital, regardless of nationality, can vote in local « communal elections ». But this is an insufficient right because it is fragmented across the 19 communes. While it is at the level of the Brussels-Capital Region, one of the three federal entities in Belgium, that Brussels residents' life is really organised, and that significant decisions – and policy-making take place.

If you are resident in the RBC and care about this city-region, if you have opinions on issues such as for example air quality, mobility and public transport, and infrastructure and urban planning, if you want to have a say, then we encourage you to take a look at the campaign website [www.1bru1vote.be](http://www.1bru1vote.be) and to sign the petition <https://www.change.org/p/1bru1vote>.

## Today in Brussels – Wednesday evening! 1bru1vote event



**Escape from the cold this Wednesday at 18.30 at Flagey, Ixelles for the first #1bru1vote Town hall event!**

Public figures from Brussels who were some of the campaign's first 120 signatories will give a short pitch during an open mic session – such as Philippe Van Parijs, Eric Corijn, Alain Deneef, Christophe Leclercq and others – members of the audience will also have an opportunity to do the same! In addition, the campaign will launch its local groups. Join for a drink, discussion and some musical entertainment.

More info: <https://www.facebook.com/events/2024352624501036/>

**Press coverage has been widespread, including Spanish and European media:**

<https://www.politico.eu/blogs/playbook-plus/2018/02/belgium-parliament-pressured-to-extend-voting-rights-to-all-brussels-residents-1bru1vote/>

<https://www.lecho.be/opinions/carte-blanche/Un-Brusseleir-Un-Vote/9979048>

<http://www.levif.be/actualite/belgique/un-brusseleir-un-vote/article-opinion-795393.html>

<https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2018/02/07/naar-een-stemrecht-voor-niet-belgen-in-brussel--sven-gatz---agre/>

<https://www.demorgen.be/opinie/hallo-brussel-mogen-wij-meestemmen-b986a687/>

[http://euroefe.euractiv.es/3799\\_asuntos-sociales/5142630\\_un-bruselense-un-voto-una-campana-a-favor-del-sufragio-de-todos-los-residentes-en-la-ciudad.html](http://euroefe.euractiv.es/3799_asuntos-sociales/5142630_un-bruselense-un-voto-una-campana-a-favor-del-sufragio-de-todos-los-residentes-en-la-ciudad.html)

<http://plus.lesoir.be/138673/article/2018-02-07/droit-de-vote-des-etrangers-un-brusseleir-un-vote>

<http://www.lalibre.be/regions/bruxelles/un-appel-est-lance-pour-l-octroi-du-droit-de-vote-regional-a-tous-les-residents-bruxellois-5a7b4fc5cd70f924c7e5d79a#.WnyEqLcLJgU.twitter>



<https://www.bruzz.be/politiek/burgerinitiatief-voor-stemrecht-niet-belgen-brussel-2018-02-07>

<https://brussels-express.eu/1bru1vote/>

<http://www.xpats.com/let-foreigners-vote-brussels-regional-elections>

## Videos:

<https://bx1.be/news/campagne-veut-permettre-aux-etrangers-de-voter-aux-regionales-penser-de-cette-initiative-debat-m/>

[https://www.rtbf.be/auvio/detail\\_bertrand-wert-plaide-pour-accorder-le-droit-de-vote-aux-etrangers-lors-des-elections-regionales-a-bruxelles?id=2308233](https://www.rtbf.be/auvio/detail_bertrand-wert-plaide-pour-accorder-le-droit-de-vote-aux-etrangers-lors-des-elections-regionales-a-bruxelles?id=2308233)

[https://www.rtbf.be/lapremiere/emissions/detail\\_soir-premiere?programId=4313](https://www.rtbf.be/lapremiere/emissions/detail_soir-premiere?programId=4313)

## Lunch-time events in Ispra and Seville



Generation 2004's conferences for contract agents in the EU service in ISPRA (Italy) on 2 February and in SEVILLE (Spain) on 8 February turned out to be a success with many colleagues attending them.

The aim of these lunch-time events was to hear from JRC contract agents (CA) their experience about the application of the new GIPs (General Implementing Provisions) adopted by the Commission in November 2017. We discussed the best way to prepare for the end of contract and to identify learning needs arising from the specific CA working conditions. These conferences were also a forum to bring together JRC people: researchers, scientists and administrative staff to share their professional experiences, discuss innovative ideas and diverse topics in the JRC services.

In addition multiple individual advice sessions were held.

If you have missed these conferences, you can still watch the Brussels lunch event for contract agents [here](#) and view the presentation [here](#).

Please send an email to our colleague [here](#) to arrange a meeting.

## Pensions, what are the true facts about your pension?



G2004 organised a conference on pensions in Brussels on 20 February. We thank the numerous participants who joined our conference also by web-streaming! Our pension's expert Pascal Le Grand is in the process of answering the numerous questions that he received following the conference.

If you have missed the conference you can still watch the recording [here](#) and view the presentation [here](#).

## Pensions Conference for Ispra, Geel, Seville & Karlsruhe!

Generation 2004 will host again the pensions conference in **Ispra TOMORROW 1 March at 12:30** having **Geel, Seville** and **Karlsruhe** colleagues connected through video conference from their locations.

**What are the true facts about your pension?**

### Agenda:

- ⇒ Pension Liability
- ⇒ Pensions and Heading V of the EU budget
- ⇒ Contract Agents 3b and Temporary Agents
- ⇒ Transfers of pension rights



**Tomorrow**

**Want to know more about your pension rights? Join us here:**

**Ispra** Room 1302 Building 101  
**Geel** Room 100-00/002/003  
**Seville** Room A41  
**Karlsruhe** Room VC3-C1.26

A life of an **AST**: is there hope in the tunnel?



**On 8 March** Generation 2004 is organising a **lunchtime conference for AST colleagues**. Join us, if you struggle to find a reply to the following questions:

- ⇒ *What is the truth about AST recruitment in the Commission since 2004?*
- ⇒ *What are the realistic prospects for career development for "ASTs (forever) in transition"?*

**Location:** Grand Salle CCP, (Rue de la Loi 80 Ground floor or Rue Joseph II 79 2nd floor)

**Time:** 12.30-14.00

## Goldman Sachs, the bank that runs the world



An interesting video from ARTE about Goldman Sachs' influence on the EU: A bank which rules the world.....

As of the 57<sup>th</sup> minute it is about Goldman Sachs and the EU and as of 63<sup>rd</sup> minute you will see which current or former EU leaders are interdependent from that bank: <https://vimeo.com/134308032>

The Vimeo video is only available in French but it is available with English subtitles on Netflix. (note: Netflix is a paying on-demand video streaming service): <https://www.netflix.com/title/80135268>

**Commissioner Katainen has probably not seen this [video](#), otherwise he would not have accepted to meet Mr. Barroso, now employed by Goldman Sachs, in a hotel in Brussels, would he?**

The ball is in the camp of President Juncker, not much we can do as civil servants to put an end to this kind of practice.

However, the Barroso issue is just the visible part of the iceberg. Many former senior managers in the Commission land lucrative jobs in the private sector after having worked for the Commission. Their activities, labelled "external activities" in DG HR's jargon, are supposed to be approved by one of the many joint committees set-up by DG HR. However, this committee has to deal with all sorts of requests for external activities, including the requests of the unfortunate CA3bs whose contracts have reached an end and have to look for a new job to feed their families. As a result, the committee is swamped under a large number of requests and does not have the resources to investigate the requests that really matter, i.e. the requests of former senior managers. Generation 2004 alerted DG HR during a recent social dialogue on this issue but with no success. DG HR does not seem to be concerned with this problem. Maybe Commissioner Oettinger would now be willing to reopen the issue after the bad publicity for the Commission created by M. Barroso?

## ..... and finally

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

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