



AIACE

International Association of Former Staff of the European Union

More than 12.500 members – open to former employees of the EU institutions and all bodies

12/2020(V/EN)



March 2020

Declaration on the European Public Service (EPS)

AIACE International¹ is an organisation which brings together former officials and agents of the European Public Service who are bound by statutory ties but above all by their strong feelings of belonging to Europe and by their professional experiences within the European institutions.

Whilst AIACE continues to demonstrate its firm commitment and positive involvement in matters which most directly concern its members such as the Method, the EU Pension Scheme and the Joint Sickness and Insurance Scheme, the consideration of wider issues are also very pertinent to the Association. To reflect on the nature and effectiveness of our institutions and their administration is certainly part of its mission.

In this context and to mark its 50th anniversary, AIACE launched an initiative to begin a process of reflection on the EPS, beginning at its Lisbon Congress of 2019 where a panel discussion was held on this topic. Following these panel discussions, AIACE wishes to make its contribution and bring its reflections and thoughts on the European Public Service to the attention of the institutions.

Ever since the founding of the European Communities, the European Public Service (EPS) has closely paralleled the building of Europe, as a driving force serving the institutions. Right from the start, Jean Monnet wanted an EPS that could serve as an essential element for the European project. In addition to **professional competence**, the EPS should thus be characterized by **independence from the Member States, multilingualism and European conviction**. The need for independence meant that instead of using officials seconded from national administrations, officials would be recruited mainly through competition and appointed to permanent posts.

*

The staff of the European institutions have had to adapt to many new challenges over the past decades, especially because of the evolution of the institutions' responsibilities. This change has been accentuated by the administrative reforms which followed the resignation of the Santer Commission, further emphasised by the 2004 and 2014 reforms of the Staff Regulations.

Our European Public Service remains robust. The EU administration continues to be known for its high degree of professional competence and the wide geographical and linguistic coverage amongst its officials, who remain politically independent of the Member States.

However, there are several alarming reports^{2 3} indicating that the situation is deteriorating. The number of applicants for posts in the European institutions has been decreasing. In particular, the

¹ The International Association of Former Officials of the European Union

² COM (2018) 377 final/2

³ https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR19_15/SR_Staff_reform_EN.pdf

number of qualified applicants from the “old” Member States has diminished considerably which in the longer term jeopardizes the geographical balance of the EPS. Also, many of the officials recruited since the reforms in 2004 and 2014 have tended to stay in the European institutions only for a short period of time, then moving on to more attractive jobs elsewhere. This trend is worrying, as it undermines one of the particular strengths of the European civil service - the experience, acquired over many years.

It is plain that the 2004 and 2014 reforms of the Staff Regulations have seriously reduced the attractiveness of the European Public Service. In addition, the 2004 reform of the Staff Regulations has created many tensions between officials recruited before and after that year.

There are further major concerns that need to be addressed, such as:

- The 5% decrease in staff numbers has created enormous difficulties for the working lives of existing personnel of the institutions;
- The considerable resort to temporary and contract agents, within a multiplicity of agencies. Tasked from the start with “non-core business” jobs, the distinction between officials and temporary/contract agents has steadily become more and more blurred;
- The agencies have become closed “silos”, with little prospect for staff mobility.

*

The European Public Service must of course continue to adapt to the new circumstances of integration, requiring an increased political responsibility for the EU institutions. It is then of uttermost importance to ensure that the defining characteristics of the EPS - professional competence, independence from the Member States, multilingualism and European conviction – are safeguarded, as an essential part of ensuring the proper functioning of the Union.

Decisive measures are needed to make working in the European institutions attractive, not only for current staff but also and especially for future generations. Attention must be given to remuneration levels, working conditions, recruitment procedures, career prospects and job stability. Some of the required measures are obviously urgent and need to be addressed in the immediate term.

Other questions require a deeper reflection on the European Public Service, in partnership with all the institutions and in liaison with other initiatives which have already been started.

AIACE therefore invites the Union’s institutions to commit to an examination and comprehensive analysis with an updating of all relevant factors. This exercise would aim to draw up conclusions pointing towards the desired design of the European Public Service, in the light of the policies to be implemented and their management. This would build on the experience of past achievements regarding human resources, on-going reflections and existing studies.

Within the limits of its resources, AIACE proposes that it should be associated with such an exercise.