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Activity report of the Local Staff Committee 2006–2009

1. MISSION

The Local Staff Committee represents all categories of officials, as defined in Article 5 of the Staff Regulations, and of other servants, as defined in the first paragraph of Article 7 of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants.

Article 9 of the Staff Regulations defines its task in the following terms:

"The Staff Committee shall represent the interests of the staff vis-à-vis their institution and maintain continuous contact between the institution and the staff. It shall contribute to the smooth running of the service by providing a channel for the expression of opinion by the staff.

"It shall bring to the notice of the competent bodies of the institution any difficulty having general implications concerning the interpretation and application of these Staff Regulations. It may be consulted on any difficulty of this kind.

"The Committee shall submit to the competent bodies of the institution suggestions concerning the organisation and operation of the service and proposals for the improvement of staff working conditions or general living conditions.

"The Committee shall participate in the management and supervision of social welfare bodies set up by the institution in the interests of its staff. It may, with the consent of the institution, set up such welfare services."

In 2006 it represented more than 27 000 staff employed in Brussels and at the Food and Veterinary Office in Grange (Ireland), as well as those at the Commission representations in all the Member States apart from France.

The Local Staff Committee elected its own internal Bureau and was allocated human resources to carry out the tasks assigned to it. The officers of the outgoing Local Staff Committee comprise:

- one Chair
- one Secretary

- nine Vice-Presidents
- two administrative secretaries
- one documentalist/archivist.

2. ONGOING WORK

2.1. Organisation of meetings

In accordance with its rules of procedure, the Brussels Staff Committee held at least one meeting per month. During the period in question it held 41 plenary sessions, more specifically:

- in 2006: 8 meetings, as it had been given its mandate in July
- in 2007: 17 meetings
- in 2008: 14 meetings
- in 2009: two meetings before the general meeting marking the end of its term of office
- the Bureau held regular meetings throughout this period to follow up the plenary sessions and to deal with general business.

At these meetings the Local Staff Committee dealt with 81 requests.

2.2. Monitoring the work of Local Staff Committee-dependent delegations

The Local Staff Committee held regular discussions with the delegations to take stock of problems encountered, particularly in the organisation of the work of the categories concerned. It organised the election for the delegations of staff representatives and contacted the administrative authorities on numerous occasions to ensure that the work of colleagues elected to these delegations was properly taken into account.

Following the organisation of elections, the following delegations were changed

- Interpreters: elections were held on 19 November 2008.
- Building superintendents: elections were held on 8 February 2007.

The Local Staff Committee supported the delegation of building supervisors in a working party set up by the OIB to define their tasks and responsibilities in relation to the execution slips for maintenance services for all buildings. This work made it possible to identify these tasks and the level of responsibility associated with them. Rotation of building supervisors remained limited and this type of post was not considered sensitive. The working party also studied the new cleaning contract and identified constraints in the management of inspections by building supervisors. Following this study, the OIB provided the building supervisors with the requisite additional resources and appropriate facilities to carry out their duties in more acceptable conditions.

- Drivers: elections were held on 19 November 2007.

The Local Staff Committee intervened to ask for corrections to be made to the calculation of drivers' overtime during the transitional period.

- Messengers

The Local Staff Committee invested a great deal of effort not only in preventing outsourcing but also in improving recognition of the work of these colleagues employed under the Staff Regulations. To this end, the Committee entered into talks with DG ADMIN on the duties of messengers and the outsourcing of certain tasks. Contacts were established in the context of the social dialogue to discuss their contribution to the distribution of mail, receptions and meetings.

Since the end of 2006, the Local Staff Committee has been asking DG ADMIN for a full list of colleagues who carry out messengers' duties at the Commission. In view of decentralisation and integration into the DGs, it has not been possible to organise elections.

- Crèches and after-school child-minding centres

In the absence of new elections to the delegation, the Local Staff Committee held a number of debates on persistent problems in the crèches and organised two meetings in July 2008.

In particular, it was called upon to help deal with the issue of overcrowding in both the crèches and the after-school child-minding centres. Meetings were held with OIB and parents, leading to solutions which were acceptable to all concerned, within a reasonable time-frame.

The Committee also supported the demands of staff in the crèches and after-school child-minding centres for rapid recruitment in order to alleviate staff shortages in these structures.

2.3. Appointments to committees and selection boards

During the period under consideration, the Local Staff Committee appointed 605 representatives to the various joint committees and 317 representatives to competition selection boards, selection committees for temporary staff and ad hoc working parties. This day-to-day work is particularly important for ensuring that recruitment is transparent.

For the selection of contract staff, the number of appointments were as follows:

	<i>No of requests</i>	<i>No of responses</i>
2006 ¹	443	437
2007	473	413
2008	656	648
2009 ²	17	15
Total	1589	1513

Representatives were also replaced as and when required. In view of the large number of new agencies set up by the Commission over this period (and especially in 2008), the Local Staff Committee Secretariat, together with the trade unions and staff associations, was confronted by major constraints due to the difficulty of finding colleagues available to take part in the selection committees for contract staff.

The Committee would like to thank all those colleagues who gave their time unstintingly in the interests of the Institution and agreed to take part in the selection committees.

The members of the Local Staff Committee were actively involved in the evaluation and promotion committees.

2.4. Relations with DG ADMIN and the Offices

The Local Staff Committee was in permanent contact with the departments concerned with staff policy in ADMIN and the Offices.

In addition to the 54 delegates invited to each plenary session, a large number of colleagues from ADMIN, the OIB and other Commission departments attended Committee meetings. Fruitful discussions were held with a large number of invitees, including parents and future parents of European School pupils.

The Committee held regular meetings with the upper echelons of the administration to discuss topics such as EPSO, contract staff, outsourcing, mobility and the issue of reimbursing transport costs, flexitime and many other subjects affecting the daily lives of staff.

Joint Local Staff Committee–ADMIN working parties were set up to help resolve individual or collective problems, in particular regarding the European Schools, the works at the Albert Borschette Conference Centre, the tasks of building supervisors, noise nuisance and other problems at B-100, and outsourcing of the medical service, messengers and mail.

Local Staff Committee representatives regularly attended meetings of the OIB and PMO Management Committees and reported back to plenary on progress. In the case of the PMO, the Local Staff Committee's suggestion that a contact

¹ As at 15 June 2006 (figures for the full year being 774 and 757 respectively).

² As at 13 January 2009.

person be nominated by the Office to deal with staff questions was implemented.

Ad hoc meetings were held to discuss the crèches, the telephone switchboard, the medical service, funds from the former Economat, and children with disabilities.

2.5. Relations with the Central Staff Committee

The Local Staff Committee coordinated the decisions on staff policy adopted by the Central Staff Committee and their implementation at local level. The Local Staff Committee reported to every Central Staff Committee meeting on the activities of the Brussels section.

The Local Staff Committee received many specific and general questions relating to 3a and 3b contract staff both at headquarters and in the delegations. As the majority of questions relating to contract staff are dealt with at Central Staff Committee level, the Local Staff Committee has consistently cooperated with the CSC in dealing with problems such as EPSO selection methods, career development, especially regrading, recognition of experience, pensions, mobility and various social security matters.

The Local Staff Committee was involved in the organisation of the general assemblies on the European Schools held by the Central Staff Committee in 2007 and 2008.

2.6. Relations with EC Representations in EU Member States

The Local Staff Committee followed up the individual dossiers of colleagues in the Commission Representations in the 27 Member States.

3. MAIN ACTIVITIES DURING THE PERIOD FROM 2006 TO 2009

During its time in office, the Local Staff Committee was called upon to deal with a number of questions relating to various areas of the Institution's staff policy. These activities can be broken down as follows:

- **institutional matters:** 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome: the Local Staff Committee was involved in the commemorative activities. Social dialogue: Europe–Third World; multiculturalism: the Local Staff Committee invited the Member of the Commission responsible for multiculturalism to one of its plenary sessions to discuss the practical application of this principle in daily life in Brussels (contact will be made with his Cabinet in February 2009).
- **social matters:** spouses from the new Member States: the Local Staff Committee wrote to the Vice-President of the Commission asking him to press the Belgian authorities for a solution like the one obtained in Luxembourg whereby such spouses would be able to seek work; crèches: when a problem arose with the recruitment of nursery nurses for the Commission's crèches, the Local Staff Committee contacted the Director-General of DG ADMIN and the OIB – a solution was found which seems

to be acceptable; outsourcing: aware of the dangers of outsourcing, the Local Staff Committee contacted DG ADMIN on several occasions to underline the additional costs of outsourcing and the mediocrity of the service provided by outside contractors (cafeterias, etc.), as well as the closure of reception desks in Commission premises; use to be made of the money from the former Economat (€2.7 m), which are *hors budget* funds: the Local Staff Committee adopted a unanimous opinion which was followed in part by COPAS and Vice-President Kallas – the Local Staff Committee also met a member of Mr Kallas' Cabinet and negotiated hard for the best possible use to be made of these funds.

- **salaries:** the Local Staff Committee drew the administration's attention to a large number of specific issues including: flat-rate payments to drivers, electronic pay slips, and the reimbursement of medical expenses in the Representations.
- **working environment:** the Local Staff Committee raised a large number of problems, particularly in the context of the Health and Safety Committee (see 4.1).

4. MONITORING THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE JOINT COMMITTEES

4.1. Committee on Health and Safety at Work (CSHT)

The Local Staff Committee reminded the administration of the need to take steps to ensure that staff working for the Commission enjoyed working conditions that did not damage their health. In particular, during its time in office the Local Staff Committee found that an increasing number of colleagues had been forced to finance reports and studies out of their own pockets to ensure that the conditions in which they worked were not harmful for their health. On this point, the Local Staff Committee stressed that the Commission had the specialist knowledge and expertise of the specialised departments at ISPRA at its disposal, particularly in the field of "indoor pollution", and that this be put to use.

The Committee raised the question of the independence of the CSHT with DG ADMIN, in view of the fact that the members appointed by the administration came from the administrative departments of OIB and DIGIT, and stressed the importance of enhancing the role of the Medical Service.

The difficult working conditions in the print shops following their move to **DAV1** were raised with the Local Staff Committee, which asked for and obtained action from OIB to introduce measures to compensate for the problems of noise and to provide a shuttle to enable staff to reach their workplace and the European quarter more easily.

Following the health problems experienced by dozens of colleagues working in **G12**, the Local Staff Committee arranged for additional tests to be carried out in September 2006 into air quality in the building. Since the root of the problem was the fact that the windows could not be opened, the Local Staff Committee successfully lobbied DG ADMIN to take the decision to replace the current windows with opening ones and to allocate the necessary funds.

To protect the **health of the children in the European Schools** and in particular in the Commission's after-school child-minding centres, the Local Staff Committee asked DG ADMIN to step up cooperation between the Commission's CSHT and the European Schools. Thanks to the efforts of Local Staff Committee representatives on the CSHT in 2008, work is to be carried out on the nurse's office at the day-care centre in Overijse.

The Local Staff Committee voted unanimously to adopt a resolution opposing the installation of **indoor GSM masts** in Commission buildings as a precaution, given that the health effects are as yet unknown.

The installation of a **defibrillator** was requested and obtained in the Borschette Centre, Charlemagne and Madou buildings.

In December 2006 the Local Staff Committee organised a general assembly with the delegation representing SCIC staff and interpreters with a view to the adoption of urgent measures following the deterioration in the state of the building and **working conditions in the Borschette Centre**. An urgent meeting between the Local Staff Committee and the Director-General of DG ADMIN, Mr Chêne, led to a plan of action and the creation of a monitoring group.

Also in December 2006, the file on **B-100's "sick building syndrome"** was presented to the administration. In January 2007, our colleagues in DG ENTR refused to move into this building because of the poor health and safety conditions and in particular the very high noise levels in the offices. The Local Staff Committee organised a number of general assemblies for staff in the course of 2007; the very high noise levels were confirmed, as were a number of structural faults with the windows, problems with the air conditioning system, the presence of unpleasant odours, etc. The Local Staff Committee asked the Commission to give up this building or to put it to a different use. The Committee successfully called for a working party to be set up to try and remedy some of the drawbacks of the building pending a final decision on its future.

In January 2009 the Local Staff Committee asked DG ADMIN to report on the illnesses caused by exposure to **asbestos** suffered by colleagues who had worked in Berlaymont. It also called for the commissioning of an independent authority to carry out an epidemiological study of the entire population potentially exposed. Statistics were also requested on the number of colleagues suffering from depression or burn-out.

4.2. Medical Service

In April 2008 the Local Staff Committee delivered an opinion for the attention of Mr Kallas on the reorganisation of the Medical Service (PROLOG report). A Committee working party drew up recommendations designed in particular to bring all the departments together in a single identifiable and independent Directorate-General to prevent the dispersal of health and welfare policy among different departments, to allow the laboratories to be maintained, to take welfare considerations into account and to continue the prevention policy.

4.3. Buildings policy

The Local Staff Committee has played an active role in the OIB Management Committee in recent years. In this context, Committee representatives supported staff demands on the buildings policy matters referred to in the CSHT section (work on Genève, DAV, B-100, and the Borschette Centre).

Particular attention was devoted to space management and the creation of open-plan offices. Local Staff Committee representatives obtained agreement that such offices may not be created unless certain indispensable conditions, such as minimum space requirements, suitable furniture, appropriate lighting, etc., are met. Until these standards have been laid down in the forthcoming Housing Conditions Manual (Part 2), the Committee has obtained an undertaking that every departmental request for the creation of open-plan offices will be analysed by an ad hoc joint committee.

4.4. Mobility

In view of the saturation on Brussels roads, the Local Staff Committee has contacted DG ADMIN on numerous occasions to call for the reimbursement of staff public transport costs, as provided for in the 2006 Commission mobility plan.

In November 2007 the Local Staff Committee sent an opinion to Mr Kallas stressing the discontent among staff and calling for the creation of a working party on mobility to formulate the appropriate measures.

Despite its persistent efforts, the Committee is forced to note that the budgetary authority has systematically rejected all proposals for reimbursement. An initial result is nevertheless in the pipeline for 2010. This item will remain on the Committee's agenda.

In May 2007 the Local Staff Committee asked OIB to renegotiate the terms of the contract covering free travel on bus routes 21, 22 and 12 to enhance mobility for colleagues working at sites far removed from the European quarter by providing access to line 12 for colleagues working at the Genève-DAV site and changing the route of line 22. OIB was unable to deliver, as the STIB did not agree to the proposed changes.

4.5. Social policy (COPAS)

On the basis of the Local Staff Committee opinion, COPAS delivered its opinion on the use to be made of the *hors budget* from the former Economat (€2.7 m). All the Local Staff Committee's suggestions were taken over by COPAS and the Commission gave its approval for the financing of all the proposals that could be implemented.

Unfortunately, and against the wishes of the Local Staff Committee, a large part of the "ex Economat" funds have been allocated to the European Parliament to finance its fitness centre.

The Local Staff Committee called for the creation of a working party to establish the conditions and times for use of the centre by Commission officials.

Vigorous action by the Local Staff Committee contributed to the decision to renovate the Overijse centre: this is particularly important for the family life of a great many colleagues (daycare, outdoor activities and a meeting-place for colleagues).

The Local Staff Committee, concerned as it is about staff welfare, was also involved in a great many activities in the social sphere, sometimes jointly with the Central Staff Committee, including:

- participation in the interinstitutional meeting of social welfare services in Alicante in September 2007 and follow-up to this meeting (meeting and contacts in Brussels); this enabled the Local Staff Committee to intensify its contacts with the psychosocial team, which is part of the Medical Service, and with the Commission's social welfare services;
- active participation on 5 and 6 June 2008 in the social policy assembly.

In 2008 the administration organised a meeting with the families of people with disabilities: a large number of Local Staff Committee colleagues were present to listen to and help these families; they observed the diverse nature of the problems, which will lead to specific rather than general meetings, depending on the type of disability.

The Local Staff Committee contacted the administration about the problem of assaults in the European quarter.

The Local Staff Committee took part in the work to set up a joint mediation service for all the institutions.

4.6. Joint Management Committee for Restaurants and the Economat (CPRE)

The Joint Management Committee for Restaurants and the Economat (CPRE) has functioned well and has held regular meetings throughout.

The health and safety rules in the self-service facilities and cafeterias are being complied with, as is the cold chain for the conservation of food and products.

The Committee took part, together with OIB and the contractors, EUREST and SODEXHO, in drawing up the questionnaire for the restaurant survey, which took place in 2008. Following this survey, which revealed problems regarding quality in the restaurants, the Committee helped to draft an action plan with the OIB in order to improve the quality of the food, widen the choice of dishes offered and reduce waiting time at the tills.

4.7. Crèches and after-school child-minding centres (Joint Committee on the Management of the Early Childhood Centre – COCEPE)

The Joint Committee for the crèches and after-school child-minding centres discussed, supported and monitored the following:

Crèches:

- integration of the Clovis crèche as an inter-institutional crèche under the direct management of the OIB
- the new educational programme for the crèches amended following the integration of the Clovis crèche
- waiting lists
- the new projects underway and the opening of the crèche in Rue de Genève
- problems with recruiting suitable staff from the EPSO lists
- costs for users

After-school centres:

- criteria for the enrolment and assignment of children
- the decentralised sites and especially the Berkendael after-school centre at the beginning of the 2008/09 school year
- problems with recruiting suitable staff from the EPSO lists
- increase in the working hours of the supervisors (structural part-time)
- proposal for raising the age of children admitted to 14 (a feasibility study has been carried out)
- proposal for organising Wednesday lunches in the after-school centres rather than at the schools

Outdoor child-minding centres

- enrolment criteria
- changes in the supervision provided owing to the temp agency ending its contract
- addition of a new centre (Parc Parmentier) for around 50 children
- renovation of the EIC, state of play and provisions to be made when the centre is closed during the works
- special activities at extra cost (football and tennis courses, etc.) during opening of the outdoor child-minding centres - feasibility.

4.8. Committee on Part-Time Working

The Committee on Part-Time Working meets whenever a complaint is submitted following a refusal by management to agree to part-time working. One case was referred to the Committee during the LSC's term of office.

Overall, progress has clearly been made regarding:

- buildings management through close monitoring of decisions taken in this area and in the related area of health and safety;
- problems connected with the management of the European Schools, with the Local Staff Committee having some influence (although as observer only) on the central enrolment authority regarding enrolment policy issues and follow-up on the Berkendael school;
- social infrastructure and the use of the €2.7 million from the former Economat, half of which the Committee was able to use for specific welfare projects focussing on children, the disabled and pensioners, including the admission of disabled children to the crèches, the renovation of the Overijse centre and the centre for pensioners.

Lastly, the Committee also dealt with various requests for individual assistance.

5. INTERNAL FONCTIONING OF THE LOCAL STAFF COMMITTEE

5.1. Better communication with staff

In order to inform staff better, the Committee now has a website, which complies with latest standards and is accessible to the disabled. The latest news and current topics can thus be regularly posted online. Over 100 news items have been posted since the new website was launched, including important outgoing Committee mail directly concerning staff. Now that the Committee is in line with the latest IT standards, some of these items are channelled to the Intracomm home page.

A procedure has also been set up simplifying sending of messages to all.

Finally, the Committee regularly participates in the welcome programme for new colleagues where it has the opportunity to introduce the role of staff representation at the Commission. A contact address is given to new staff in case they have any questions or problems.

5.2. Modernisation of the organisation

5.2.1. Compliance, filing plan, administrative procedures and procedures for the transmission of Commission mail

In line with the NomCom rules, a standardised filing plan - for paper documents, electronic filing and electronic mail - was established and applied retroactively to all documents processed by the Local Staff Committee since 2004. This plan was also sent for incorporation in the automatic registration of electronic mail in Adonis (*Adolook*).

This allowed the Committee to comply with the Commission's procedures in this field.

In addition, methods for registering mail have been reviewed with a view to improving monitoring and traceability.

5.2.2. *Drawing up of job descriptions – allocation of tasks and objectives for staff on secondment*

In order to comply with the rules in Articles 43 to 45 of the Staff Regulations and to improve the efficiency of the secretariat, job descriptions were revised and tasks allocated between the three staff members seconded to the people released from duties for the Local Staff Committee.

For the same purpose, secretariat tasks were extended to include those of a documentalist.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The Local Staff Committee carried out its mandate in accordance with the rules and with due regard for colleagues' interests. The work accomplished over the last three years would not have been possible without the active participation of all colleagues assigned to the various joint committees dependent on it (CSHT, COPAS, COCEPE, CPRE, the Part-Time Working Committee and flanking committees, the ACI and European School monitoring group) and the CSC (JEC, promotion committees, CDF, CASS, COPEC).

Thanks to the Local Staff Committee Bureau, it has been possible to implement Committee decisions and to guarantee its smooth running during this period. We must also thank the administrative staff for their effective cooperation.

The Bureau will soon hand over to a new team, and we would ask you all to participate in the upcoming elections to the Staff Committee so that we can serve our colleagues even better in the future.

Local Staff Committee