



QUESTIONS/ANSWERS

AT THE HEART OF THE ACTION

Union Syndicale
is there for you



Union Syndicale

A union that listens, takes action
and gets results.
A union for the future.

Glossary for newcomers

ACRONYMS

US: Union Syndicale

OSP: Organisations Syndicales et Professionnelles (Trade Unions and Staff Associations)

LSC: Local Staff Committee

TFPE: Tribunal de la Fonction Publique Européenne (European Civil Service Tribunal)

HoU: Head of Unit

AST: Assistant

AD: Administrator

PPP/CC: Purchasing Power Parity / Correction Coefficient

CA: Contract Agent

GIP: General Implementing Provisions

ECS: European Civil Service

PMO: PayMaster Office

AAA: Anti-Acronym Association 

AIACE: Association Internationale des Anciens des Communautés Européennes (International Association of Former Officials of the European Communities)

AIPN: Autorité Investie du Pouvoir de Nomination (Appointing Authority)



Union Syndicale

PRESENTATION INFORMATION

What is Union Syndicale?

What are the areas where Union Syndicale can take action?

Who are my local contacts in the buildings?

Can I call them 24/7?

What is the role of the Staff Committee?

What are the differences between a trade union and a staff association?



> It is the most representative trade union at the European institutions in Luxembourg. It is one big family, with a presence in all the institutions and other Community bodies. Union Syndicale has over a thousand members in Luxembourg.

> Any area relating to working life, and beyond. At every stage in your career: before recruitment, when preparing competitions, throughout your career, until retirement, and much more besides.

> There is a delegate in each building. To find out who it is, contact the Secretariat on 43 25 79 or via the website: www.uslux.eu

> Yes, except on 31 December between 11 p.m. and midnight.

> It is the permanent, active link between the staff and the Administration. It passes on to the hierarchy all the problems facing the staff. It calls for and participates in the improvement of the organisation of the institution's services, working life and work/life balance. If you like, it's a sort of "hotline" for the staff.

> A staff association usually has a corporatist vision and approach. A trade union, while upholding the interests of the group that it represents, will always seek to relate to civil society. Union Syndicale can define itself as a secular and progressive union.

TRADE UNION LIFE

Is US an American trade union?

What relationships are there between Union Syndicale, the other unions and civil society?

Does Union Syndicale participate regularly in the concertations with the Administration?

I am not a member of the trade union: can I ask Union Syndicale for help?

Could membership of a trade union be bad for my career?

Are the members of Union Syndicale friendly?

Does the Staff Committee have a budget for actions for the benefit of the staff?

> No, Union Syndicale has been an independent trade union since 4 July 1776.

> Union Syndicale is a federative and open union. In line with its principles, Union Syndicale is in constant contact with civil society. Union Syndicale has a cooperation agreement with OGB-L, the largest trade union in Luxembourg.

> Active involvement in all concertations, despite the human investment which that represents, is definitely a point of honour for Union Syndicale.

> Yes, no problem.

> No, civil servants have a right of association; in particular, they may be members of trade unions or staff associations of European officials (Article 24b of the Staff Regulations of officials of the EC).

> Yes, although not all of them ... but we're not going to tell you which ones...

> There is only a budget for missions relating to the social dialogue, which is managed under the control of DG HR.

TRADE UNION LIFE



Why vote in the Staff Committee elections?

> An election is the foundation of any democracy, and provides legitimacy for the staff representatives. A high turnout of voters reinforces that legitimacy.

Why vote for Union Syndicale?

> Because it listens, acts and gets results. To safeguard your future.



HEALTH

What kind of financial shape is the Health insurance fund in?

> It's healthy, although it does have the occasional feverish moment.

Does our health and safety have to be guaranteed in the offices?

> Health, safety and welfare at work are an obligation of the employer; Union Syndicale monitors compliance with these obligations (Article 1e of the Staff Regulations of officials of the EC).

Is the thermal shock between the offices and the outside taken into account by the health insurance scheme?

> No, the overheating is compensated by the excessive cold, thus achieving a reasonable average.



HEALTH

If I fall sick, can I seek treatment in another country, or my own country?

> Yes, subject to authorisation for certain treatments.

Is the staff involved in the management of the health insurance scheme?

> Yes, staff representatives are on the management committee. They are working to uphold a "sustainable" health insurance scheme.

What are the risks to the current benefits?

> The average contribution per member is going down. The rising cost of modern medicine and the ageing population have produced some imbalances in recent years, which need to be monitored.

Does a European official pay more than a member of a Luxembourg health insurance scheme for medical consultations and hospitalisation?

> Yes, unfortunately. This practice of overcharging was condemned by the European Tribunal. Corrective action is ongoing as far as medical consultations are concerned. Union Syndicale is fighting to eliminate discrimination in Luxembourg in relation to all treatment and hospitalisation.

Can my spouse and my children benefit from the same medical cover as me?

> Dependant children yes, up to 26 years of age. As for spouses, that depends on their work situation, their income and their own sickness cover. Supplementary cover is also provided for.





LEGAL ASSISTANCE

How much does a complaint under Article 90 of the Staff Regulations cost?

> Nothing if the official arranges it. Around 1 200 EUR, to cover fees for the intervention of a lawyer.

How much does an appeal to the European Civil Service Tribunal (TFPE) cost?

> An appeal costs between 5000 and 7000 EUR, depending on the degree of difficulty.

How does Union Syndicale support its members when they make a complaint or an appeal?

> Delegates from Union Syndicale are always at the disposal of colleagues to listen to them and advise them. In the event of a dispute, Union Syndicale offers a free consultation with lawyer to anyone, including non-members. For its members, Union Syndicale may agree to sponsor and provide financial support, depending on the extent to which the appeal is in the general interest or the interest of the individual. If a trade union interest is at stake, it may even pay 100% of the cost.

Am I covered in the event of a domestic accident?

> Any official or other servant is covered by an accident insurance, both at work, and in private and home life. Permanent or partial invalidity resulting from an accident gives rise to the payment of a lump sum. Medical expenses connected with an accident are reimbursed 100%.

What is the role of a European official in the context of compulsory care insurance in Luxembourg?

> In Luxembourg care insurance is compulsory, except for European staff. Union Syndicale is aware of the importance of this subject, and is fighting to set up a care insurance scheme within the European institutions.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Do the Staff Regulations apply in the same way in all the European institutions?

Who tells me what my rights are?

Can I complain about harassment at work through the Luxembourg courts?

Can I use my private car on mission?

As a European official, do I have the right to strike?

Am I allowed to drink decaffeinated coffee all day long?



> In general and in theory, yes. In practice, the autonomy of the institutions sometimes produces divergences. There is only one set of Staff Regulations for all the European Civil Service but in reality, there are some subtleties in interpretation.

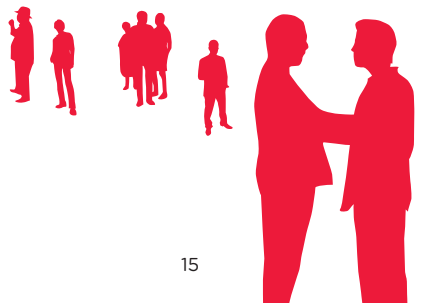
> The institution has this obligation to inform you. Union Syndicale informs, listens and defends.

> In principle no, but if it involves a criminal charge, yes.

> Yes, but at your own risk! Union Syndicale has been calling for appropriate insurance to cover this type of risk for a long time.

> Yes, but it must be borne in mind that in any strike, a certain number of people must provide the vital services of the institution, in particular, concerning the safety of persons and property.

> Of course, but we strongly advise you not to exceed 60 cups per day.



PRACTICAL/SOCIAL

What help is there with my integration into life in Luxembourg, for me and my spouse?

What about the cost of living/PPP/CC in Luxembourg, particularly when it comes to housing?

Is my child entitled to register at the European School?

My colleague's office chair squeaks when he is working. What can I do about it?



> Language courses are organised for your spouse and the social service is available to everyone, for any help and/or support (in finding somewhere to live, formalities, contacts with sports and cultural associations). Union Syndicale sends a welcome letter with a CD-R introducing the host country to all newcomers to the institutions.

> A recent study highlighted a difference in purchasing power between Luxembourg and Brussels of the order of 5.8%. This difference in Purchasing Power Parity is exclusively due to the cost of housing in Luxembourg. Union Syndicale has made clear proposals in this regard, such as introducing a housing allowance for the colleagues assigned to and living in Luxembourg.

> Yes, but your child will not be registered automatically. Registration is individual and voluntary.

> Give him a can of lubricating oil!



PENSIONS

How should I prepare for retirement?

Do we have a pension fund?

Are our pensions in danger?

Is early retirement allowed?

I like my job so much that I would like to stay until I reach the age of 90. Is that allowed?



CAREER

Who is my employer?

> For example, by attending training given by the institution; by remaining a member of Union Syndicale; by contacting AIACE (International association of former officials of the European Communities).

> No. Pensions are paid from the budget, which comes from contributions from the staff (1/3) and the employer (2/3).

> In theory, no. The pensions are guaranteed jointly and severally by the EU and the Member States.

> Yes, the new Staff Regulations that came into force in 2004 provides for the possibility of retiring early under certain conditions.



> Yes, but you have to make the request before you reach the age of 20!



> It is the European Union. Contrary to what you might think, it is not the European Commission or the Parliament.

CAREER

A relative is going to take part in a competition to work for the EU. What can Union Syndicale do to help?

What does Union Syndicale do in terms of training?

How can I find out about the vacant posts?

Who decides about my advancement and the progress of my career?

How can I achieve performance levels IA/IB?

Can I change institution during my career?

How many promotions can I expect in the course of my career?

What are the prospects for contract staff?



> Union Syndicale can help him/her with training, buying books, and a simulation of the oral tests...

> US oversees and participates in drawing up training modules within the Joint Training Committees.

> They are published regularly in MyIntracomm.

> You advance automatically by one step every two years. Promotion is granted by the Appointing Authority based on merit and on the recommendation of the promotion committee.

> You need to have exceptional levels of performance and exceed your objectives.

> Yes, vacant posts can also be consulted via MyIntracomm.

> Depending on the grade of recruitment, Annex IB of the Staff Regulations list the guaranteed promotion rates for each grade.

> Union Syndicale defends the principle of "equal work, equal pay" and is fighting for greater job stability, as well as promotion rates similar to those of officials.

CAREER

What is happening about the 2009 pay increase?

How did Union Syndicale act on the pay issue?

I am an AST. How can I become an AD?

Do the offices (OIL, PMO) set the rules?

Why is my boss always right?

How do I become a Head of Unit?

What is the future of the European civil service?



> The application of the Pay Method as it was validated should have led to an increase of 3.7% of the pay scale. However, this method was not observed by the Council, which is why the Commission filed an appeal against the Council's decision with the Court of Justice of the European Communities.

> Union Syndicale did not take any risks in this field, and therefore took the three legal actions that were possible: application to act alongside the Commission, direct appeal to the CFI (Court of First Instance), individual action via a complaint under Article 90 of the Staff Regulations, and if necessary, having the matter referred to the TFPE.

> Via an Open Competition or a Certification Procedure..

> No, normally, they should just apply them.

> Because he's never wrong!

> The candidate must be at least at level AD9. Appointments are made by a decision by the Appointing Authority: after a call for candidatures and pre-selection by a panel which results in a shortlist.

> The European Civil Service is still young, and much more work is required for it to grow. Union Syndicale is fighting to defend the permanence, independence and competence of the European Civil Service as it works on building Europe.



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