



His/Her Excellency
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Brussels, 30 June 2016

Your Excellency,

On behalf of the 23 member countries of the European Union Foreign Affairs Spouses, Partners and Family Association (EUFASA), this year's Belgian and European Union co-Chairs would like to inform you about the principal topics discussed at the EUFASA Annual Meeting that was held in Geneva on 18-20 June 2016.

Topic 1: Meeting the needs of national Associations

The national Associations attending the meeting presented their achievements and setbacks at national level, including financial support to their association, language and professional training, allowances, improvements to the status of the spouses and partners, compensation for loss of pension rights, bilateral agreements for spouse employment, children's education, health insurance and legal insurance.

Within Europe, levels of support for national Associations vary widely: some Ministries offer considerable support to their spouses, partner and family associations, as well as attractive expatriation and repatriation packages - others offer very little - and many have cut back.

Recommendations to the Ministries:

- To provide equipped office space for its national Association, access to the Ministry's staff contact lists and communication channels (intranet) as well as financial support for the basic activities of the Association such as: participation in EUFASA's annual conferences, the national Association's General Assembly, the Association's website and any newsletters produced.
- To give spouses/partners access to training activities organized by the Ministry prior to foreign assignments such as language classes, pre-posting seminars, protocol seminars.
- To offer proper compensation for the impact that the diplomatic assignments have on families of foreign affairs officers, including financial compensation for loss of pension rights, spouse/partner allowance and education allowances that reflect the actual cost of international schools abroad.

Topic 2: “How to lobby an administration”, presented by guest speaker Mr. Francesco Caleprico, Responsible for Rights & Obligations at the European External Action Service of the European Union (EEAS).

Mr. Caleprico outlined the possible avenues for cooperation among the member States and the EEAS to improve the living conditions of families of foreign affairs officers. The National Associations agreed to provide input to the agenda of future meetings of the “Human Resources Network”, which brings together the Human Resources Directors of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of European Union member States and the EEAS.

Recommendation to the Ministries:

- The exchange of information between Ministries and the EEAS regarding vacant contractual positions in Embassies of member States and EU Delegations, in view of providing additional employment options for spouses/partners of foreign affairs officers.

Topic 3: “The Legal Status of the Diplomatic Spouse and Partner”, presented by Portugal

Some EUFASA member States have acknowledged the “legal existence” of the diplomatic spouse/partner explicitly. That is the case of Switzerland, which has recently adopted a comprehensive “policy for accompanying partners” and of France that applies the regime of the “*collaborateur occasionel du service public*” (“occasional representative of the state public service”) when the spouse/partner is on official duty. Yet most countries do not have a set of rights and obligations for spouses/partners, arising from the fact that they are living with a diplomat.

It was therefore proposed to draft a EUFASA Declaration of Rights of the Diplomatic Spouse/Partner” which will be formally adopted at the 32rd EUFASA Conference in Helsinki in 2017.

Topic 4: “The EUFASA Welcome Team”, presented by Germany

The aims of the EUFASA Welcome Teams are to greet newly arrived families of foreign affairs officers on posting, to share practical information, to provide continuity through post reports and to show solidarity. The German delegates presented the new consolidated structure of the EUFASA Welcome Teams, the 13 national Associations post reports and the templates available to volunteers wishing to create a Welcome Team in their current posting. There is now a direct contact possibility through the official EUFASA Website to the German Welcome Team. It will be regularly monitored and maintained by them.

Topic 5: “How to make Associations more attractive to future generations”, presented by Spain

As most Associations have faced problems recruiting young members over the past decade, Spain presented several ideas on how to keep the Associations attractive to younger generations. First, the recruitment of younger generations must be done through talks to the newly appointed diplomats

and through training courses which, as we have seen, do attract new members; second, the support for families coming home is very important and can be reinforced by providing social activities, language courses, a lawyer and psychologist (in Spain's case); finally, social networks (Facebook) and online courses for members anywhere in the world are useful tools to reach out to members.

Topic 6: “EUFASA Work and Employment”, presented by Switzerland

“Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.” (Article 23.1.)

— *Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations General Assembly*

It is difficult to reconcile the right to work with the life of trailing spouses/partners, which have to quit their employments every few years, are faced with clear impediments such as language barriers, non-recognition of diplomas and difficulties in finding employment opportunities in new postings. The EUFASA Associations are working hard to find solutions to maximize the employment opportunities for spouses/partners of diplomats: a “job bourse” will be created and published on the EUFASA website in 2017.

As the nature of diplomatic work is changing, the status of spouses has to adapt too. EUFASA’s aim is to provide solutions to adapt diplomatic life to the demands of the 21st Century.

Therefore we take this opportunity to publish issues of concern for spouses and propose multiple solutions to help identify possible reforms and enable administrations to move forward on a broader national or European level.

We focus on efficient, feasible and affordable solutions and we hope you remain attentive to our aspirations. We request to receive feedback from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs to the issues raised at this conference.

The next EUFASA conference will be held in Helsinki on 28-29 March, 2017.

On behalf of EUFASA



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