



Activities in and around ETTW

No 14– September 2017

I. News from Board and Working Groups

ETTW Board meeting 19 September 2017

The Board met for the first time after the summer break on September 19. and had several important topics on the agenda.

Consequences for expatriates of the demographic development in most European countries.

ETTW members had had a useful meeting with the President of the European Seniors' Union on the rights of EU senior expats.

The discussion in the board focused on the increased number of elder citizens and various European governments' measures in the areas of pensions and taxes, relevant for expats. The board found that this would become an important issue in near future. Research i.a.in Malta and Denmark would be used as sources for an ETTW paper on these questions, and it was agreed to try to have a well documented presentation on the subject in one of the coming board meetings.

Current issues in member organizations

Several member organizations had experienced problems with passport renewals and other formal services for expats, and the possibility of finding solutions via the exchange of best practices at European level was discussed. The success of 'flying suitcases' and 'mobile stations' are yet to be seen and considered. Several associations will have contacts with their foreign services and report back to the ETTW board.

Educational questions, especially in the areas of teaching mother tongue languages to young expats, are at the forefront of member organizations'



concerns. Sharing experiences with teachers' training courses on this and related subjects were of specific interest to members.

Issues related to homecoming and re-integration of expats were also raised and here too the sharing of methods and best practices was recommended.

Success stories, such as attribution of prizes as 'Swede of the Year' or 'Dane of the Year' etc. was highlighted by several members as important elements in the public debates about diaspora and migration issues. In the same context, the board discussed how the current Brexit negotiations are setting the scene for future solutions to migration problems and diaspora policies. The board agreed that also in this perspective it is necessary to follow the talks between the UK government and the EU closely.

Revamping the ETTW Website and the i-voting campaign

The new ETTW website was presented by consultant Yanina Trubchanka, *Y&N Partners*. The revamped site will be launched shortly. Priority has been given to a new design, communication of ETTW priorities, linking to member organizations and info directly to the expatriates, especially the young.

The Board encouraged ETTW member organizations to establish links from their webpages to the ETTW website and to indicate contact persons and mail addresses for their organizations on the new website.

The preparatory work for the crowd funding campaign for i-voting is almost finished and ready to be launched. The activities promoting awareness in the European expat community for updated voting methods will be events, conferences, seminars and social media campaigns. So far, expat organizations in Sweden, Finland, Romania, Malta and Ireland have expressed an interest in co-organizing such activities. The degree of involvement of ETTW will be determined by the success of the crowd-funding campaign.



ETTW Education Projects

Pierre Mairesse (PM) presented the outcome of a useful meeting with the EU Committee of the Regions to the board. The SEDEC commission of the CoR deals with social policy, employment, education culture and research. Its focus and interests in a future cooperation is determined by the level of benefit for regions and cities and the cross-border effects of events and initiatives.

ETTW's president and the president of SEDEC will meet in order to consider joint actions within the areas of monitoring mobility statistics, internet voting, participation of COR members to future events organized by the ETTW to raise awareness of the specific challenges faced by expatriates in education. Other partners to be invited would be managers of networks of schools abroad and education services for expatriates.

The board noted that increasing costs of studying at university level have proved to be a problem in particular for young expats. This issue will be discussed at the next board meeting in November.

Diaspora policies

ETTW president Raymond Xerri reported from the Council of Europe conference on diaspora in Lisbon on 7-8 September. He underlined the growing interest in Diaspora questions all over Europe in sync with the rising attention of the migration challenges.

Final Statement of the conference focused on:

- Promoting political co-operation between countries of origin and host countries
- Promoting democratic participation of diasporas
- Strengthening dialogue between members of the network (COE) and diaspora associations



These are all ETTW diaspora priorities and our association will follow up on the useful contacts made with Council of Europe parliamentary assembly members during the conference.

The board also discussed a Draft Internal Concept Note on a strategy for the European Diaspora, drawn up with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development. The strategy will be further developed in the framework of the yearly ICMPD conference on Migration issues: 'Safe Orderly and Regular Migration' in Vienna 32-24 October.

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II. News from Member Organisations

Danes Worldwide

Reduced pension scheme after 5 years abroad?

As mentioned in previous issue of ETTW News, the Danish Government and its supporting party, the Danish People's Party, reached before the summer holidays a preliminary agreement, which – if adopted in its current shape – will reduce the possibility for earning full rights to public pension when living abroad for a period. Concretely, the proposal is that in future you could maximum live abroad for 5 years before you get reduced public pension, while the rules at present allow a stay abroad for 10 years. Further to a meeting with the Finance Minister on June 27th, Danes Worldwide has over the Summer asked our members to comment on how they would be affected by the new proposal. On the basis on these replies, Danes Worldwide sent on September 9th a letter back to the Finance Minister. In this letter we point to three groups, which would be particularly hit if the new proposal is adopted:



- 1) Students and researchers, particularly the latter group are for professional reasons often required to stay abroad for more than 5 years throughout their career.
- 2) Accompanying partners/spouses
- 3) Citizens in the age group between 50 – 60 years. This group is not covered by the foreseen transition clause of the pension agreement, but these people are too late in their time on the labour market to earn sufficient to make private pensions as compensation for the lost public pension.

Danes Worldwide fully recognizes, that the Danish welfare society is based on the principle that “you must contribute in order to benefit”. Hence we have asked the Minister to clarify the proposal’s text on exemption for people “serving Danish interests”. Finally, Danes Worldwide offers to inform Danes abroad about the importance of taking responsibility for old age by signing up for a private pension scheme.

Danes Worldwide member meeting

Danes Worldwide organized on August 10th a meeting for our members. The meeting was divided into two: an afternoon at the Confederation of Danish Industries, where we discussed political issues related to our diaspora. Here we had divided the participants into five working groups, which all came with ideas for news issues, Danes Worldwide should focus on in the years to come. It was furthermore confirmed, that all issues brought up in the 2016 report “Expat Denmark – an untapped resource?” (carried out in cooperation with the Copenhagen Goodwill Ambassadors), should still be a part of Danes Worldwides focus areas in our political work.

The afternoon was followed by a dinner where the award “Dane of the Year” was given to the chef de cuisine and entrepreneur Mr. Claus Meyer for his outstanding efforts to promote the Nordic cuisine, not least by opening the already now acclaimed restaurant “The Agern” at the Grand Central Station in New York.

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Swedes Worldwide

The 6th Swedish Expats Parliament

On 21-23 August, the Summer Program 2017 with its sixth edition of the Swedish Expats Parliament took off filled with many important issues. For the past twelve years, this Expats Parliament has been a democratic platform and a way for expats to express their opinions and make their voices heard. Four working groups developed resolutions that will guide Swedes Worldwide's business for the next two years. Invited politicians and experts commented and discussed these suggestions.

New resolutions

The four working groups of the expats' parliament discussed taxes and welfare, mobility, family and education, and citizens' rights. Below you can read about some of the issues we will be working on in the future:

- Designation of a responsible for issues concerning expats in the government. Swedes Worldwide suggests that a special minister or contact person (such as a government secretary) within the Government should be appointed to be responsible for all issues concerning Swedes abroad.
- Valuation of competencies from studies abroad The Expats Parliament considered that exams from abroad and International Baccalurate were undervalued in the Swedish school system and therefore wishes to review the evaluation of these competencies and grades.
- Swedish citizenship after 22 years of age. Swedes residing abroad who have received Swedish citizenship at birth will lose it at the age of 22 if they do not apply for retention. Swedes Worlwide is of the opinion that no application should be required to retain their Swedish citizenship.
- Lower SINK tax. The government has once again proposed an increase in the SINK tax. The SINK tax, the special tax for Swedish residents abroad, was reduced from 25 to 20 percent in January 2014, but now it will again be raised to 25%. Members of Swedes Worldwide adopted a resolution



that primarily opposed this increase, but also suggest that if the tax is raised, the basic deduction should also be increased.

- Renewal of passport abroad. Renewing their passport at an embassy is not only time consuming but also more costly than in Sweden. In addition, you may need to travel far if you do not live near an embassy or mobile station. Swedes Worldwide therefore want this cost estimate to be reconsidered and, in addition, that opening hours for embassies should be expanded, there will be more mobile passports stations and that there should be an opportunity to electronically renew the passport.

All resolutions will be published in full at www.sviv.se in the autumn.

Swede of the Year 2017

Swedes Worldwide has since 1988 honored a Swedish citizen who has made outstanding efforts to profile Sweden internationally in business, science, culture, sport or in the humanitarian area. Through her outstanding career as a football coach and football player, Ms Pia Sundhage has become one of Sweden's most appreciated and beloved sports women. Her long international career as successful leader of some of the world's best national teams has made her a strong and successful brand for Sweden. With solid integrity and fine moral compass, Pia Sundhage has contributed to a more equal society.

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Vlamingen in der Wereld

Mobility is key: How to manage your expats on the move

The Flemish Expats organisation is organising an international conference about global mobility on October, 26th in Brussels. The conference is targeting HR managers and will discuss current and new prospects in the ever-growing and complex field of expatriate management, focusing on describing and comparing cultural differences, as well as examining major challenges and obstacles surrounding international mobility.



Participants will be provided with practical tools, techniques, strategies, and guidelines from leading voices in the field and offers unique networking opportunities. This collaboration of minds promises to lead to new possibilities and solutions.

The admission is free, but you need to register. More info about the conference at <http://www.viw.be/nl/conference-international-hr-professionals-mobility-key>

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III. News from Partner Organisations and other Sources

Meeting of Maisons Basques of Europe, Asia and Oceania

On 13-14 May representatives of the Basque communities of 18 cities of three continents gathered at the Maison Basque in Paris

A delegation of the Basque Autonomous Government and representatives of the Basque Houses of Australia, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United Kingdom participated in the Meeting.

There is a total of 19 Basque houses located in 18 cities: Barcelona, Madrid, Mallorca, Valladolid, Valencia (two Basque houses), Saragossa, Bourdeaux, Marseille, Montpellier, Pau, Paris, Munich, Roma, Sydney and Tokyo.

Paris hosts a large community of Basque origin. Paris is also one of the main globalized metropolises: dynamic, open and integrated in the digital economy, which made Paris a very appropriate place to discuss a Basque network on the Internet: one of the key subjects of the Meeting.



Europe, new technologies and globalization

Basque emigration (on the French side as well as on the Spanish side of the Basque Country) has historically been oriented towards America. This phenomenon has since become a concern to major European cities. In addition, developments in new technologies and social networks over the last three decades suggest that for Basques living outside, meeting places are not only physical: they are also virtual spaces that can be accessed by a simple "click" on the Internet.

Thus, an "eighth Basque province" (composed of Basques scattered around the world) is emerging on the web in the form of a "virtual territory", an online territory.

Today, 190 Basque houses are recognized by the Basque Government throughout the world. This community composed of the Basques of the Diaspora constitutes an opportunity but also an immense challenge. But if these opportunities are more and more numerous, they are also more and more complex in this globalized world. These were the issues discussed at the meeting.

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The Foundation on European Citizens' Rights, Involvement and Trust (ECIT)

At the Final Session of the Summer University on 1 September, previously announced in ETTW NEWS No 12, it was suggested and immediately accepted to issue an appeal to European citizens to defend and promote Union citizenship, whilst urging them to take the immediate step of signing all the ECIs and petitions. ECIT took some time to formulate this **appeal under the acronym "CLAIM"** - a way of making it easy to remember, use and spread.

CLAIM stands for

Cherish EU citizenship - don't take it for granted

Learn about European citizenship

Act locally as a European citizen and across borders



Initiate reforms of the EU Institutions

Make the EU listen

Union Citizenship needs symbols and new ideas: a free movement solidarity fund, a citizens' card (to make it easier to claim European rights and sign appeals to the EU), full political rights (that allow citizens living in another EU Member State to vote in all national elections and referenda), a European citizens' house in every region to serve as an open space for information, advice and debate.

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IV. Interesting Reading

Commission creates forum of experts to overcome cross border obstacles

To unlock the full economic potential of EU border regions, home to 150 million citizens, the Commission has launched the "**Border Focal Point**". It provides tailored support to regions to help them break down barriers to jobs and investments. For businesses, workers and students, navigating between different administrative and legal systems remains complex and costly. The initiative is part of a wider Communication on "Boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions", with a set of new actions and a list of ongoing initiatives, to help EU border regions grow faster and ever closer.

The Border Focal Point will be operational as of *January 2018* and will help border regions cooperate better with a set of concrete actions. It will contribute to:

- (1) improving access to jobs,
- (2) to services such as health care and public transport systems and
- (3) to facilitating business across the border.



Better access to jobs. 2 million workers and students already commute daily or weekly across the border. To help people find a job across the border, the Border Focal Point will support regions looking to deepen their cooperation. They can get advice on mutual recognition of qualifications, joint study programmes or coaching services for entrepreneurs. The Border Focal Point will centralise information on good practices in the field of cross border employment services, such as the joint network created by Spain's Galicia and the Northern region of Portugal and supported by the EU's job mobility portal EURES.

Better access to public services. To make border regions more attractive and more inclusive in terms of public services, the Border Focal Point will:

- Map existing cross border healthcare facilities, such as the cross border health care zones on the Franco-Belgian border.
- Study missing rail links along internal borders, for more efficient cross border public transport services.

Doing business across the border. The Border Focal Point will stimulate dialogue on cross border issues via the online network. Upon request, Border Focal Point experts will provide support for a greater alignment of rules for setting up businesses, share good practices from other border regions and promote an increased use of online procedures.

In addition to the creation of the Border Focal Point, the Commission will select up to 20 projects showcasing innovative solutions to deal with cross border obstacles. A call for projects will be launched before the end of 2017.

More information

Communication "Boosting Growth and Cohesion in EU border regions"

Memo: Overcoming cross border obstacles to boost growth in EU border regions

Factsheet – France and Germany: affordable tickets for local travel across the border

Factsheet – Denmark and Sweden: over the border for work, back in time for supper

Factsheet – Hungary and Slovakia: responding to emergency across the border *Factsheet* –

Spain and Portugal: train and qualify in your country, work in another

Factsheet – Latvia and Estonia: when the nearest hospital happens to be abroad

Source: European Commission - Press release IP/17/3270



BREXIT-The fate of 3 million European citizens living in the UK still uncertain

We are still waiting for a final breakthrough in the Brexit negotiations between the UK and the EU over the future status of the estimated 3.2 million European nationals living in Britain and around a million British citizens living in the EU.

Uncertainties and fear among EU citizens is underpinned by hundreds of "deportation warnings by mistake" sent out by the British Interior Ministry to EU citizens.

Meanwhile it has been reported that the number of EU nationals *leaving* the UK rose sharply to 122,000 people in the 12 months leading up to the end of March, in the biggest increase in a decade, after the country voted to leave the European Union.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported at the end of August that this figure was 33,000 higher than the previous year,

There was a particularly sharp rise, of 17,000 *departures* of citizens from eight of the countries which joined the European Union in 2004 - Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia -as compared to 8,000 for citizens of Bulgaria and Romania, which joined the EU in 2007.

There was also a 19,000 *decrease in immigration from the EU* to 248,000 people over the same period.

The results "indicate that the EU referendum result may be influencing people's decision to migrate into and out of the UK," said Nicola White, head of international migration statistics at the ONS.

Source: Euractive



V. Upcoming Events

- 18-20 October:** Council of Maltese Living Abroad Annual meeting in Valletta, Malta
- 26 October:** Mobility is key: How to manage your expats on the move, Brussels, ING Marnix Building
- 21 November:** ETTW Board Meeting, Brussels

Contributions to ETTW News Service from Member organisations and Partners are welcome to the ETTW News Editor: Ylva Tivéus ylva@tiveus.eu

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