



XXXVIII EUFASA AISBL Conference

Paris, 2-3 May 2022

Conference Report

The 38th annual EUFASA AISBL Conference took place in Paris on 2 and 3 May 2022. It brought together delegates of 20 EUFASA AISBL Affiliated Member Associations. At the invitation of the EUFASA AISBL President, an observer from the Netherlands Embassy in Paris attended the conference. The Dutch association was welcomed back as a returning Affiliated Member of EUFASA AISBL.

The President of the EUFASA AISBL Board, Zoé Meyer welcomed all participants. *The welcoming speech is available on the EUFASA Box intranet under:*

<https://app.box.com/file/973235183529>

The conference was formally opened by Mr. François Delattre, Permanent Secretary of the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs.

The Permanent Secretary (PS) welcomed the delegates and emphasized the importance that the French MFA gives to the wellbeing of diplomatic families which results on positive repercussions on Officers when they are posted abroad. He pointed out the importance of keeping a balance between professional and private life.

He mentioned that diplomacy is a demanding profession: for the diplomat for having made this choice of career and for the spouse and family for having to deal with uncertainty and with the prospect of having to reinvent their lives with every expatriation.

The creation in 2016 of the Family Office at the MFA has proved to be an important link between the MFA and AFCA. This department deals with issues such as employment, preparation for expatriation, education and welfare, training sessions, finding a job in the MFA or in diplomatic missions, in close collaboration with AFCA.

The PS next expressed his interest in the work of the EUFASA Paris conference and the opportunity which is given to exchange good practices and to observe the progress made on subjects such as education for children with special needs, the ERD, the fight against climate change. EUFASA has, in all these subjects, a special role to play with the topics of presentations on the agenda which are of great importance and interest.

The Permanent Secretary's speech is available on the EUFASA Box intranet under:
<https://app.box.com/file/973195495404>

1. Tour de table

An interesting tour de table gave the opportunity to all participating associations to give updates of their activities and achievements since the Lisbon Conference last year. Topics mentioned by the delegates included increasing younger members' involvement in associations and the offer of more language courses, negotiating training programs for spouses/partners in MFAs as well as introducing the online offer of cultural conferences, coaching sessions and courses on security, tax, finance and medical issues. Associations also highlighted updating their association's database and reviewing their Statutes and Rules of Procedure. Some associations drew attention to the productive collaboration with their FOs, setting up WhatAspp groups both nationally and locally and welcoming foreign diplomatic spouses in their capitals. Positive views were also shared concerning the creation of groups for foreign born diplomatic spouses and events for children (summer camps, preschool care.)

The steps taken in terms of lobbying included negotiating for more bilateral agreements, pension reforms, unemployment benefits for spouses returning from posting. Concerning children, certain associations had succeeded in requesting that MFAs establish agreements with international schools in capital cities and facilitate policy for children with special needs.

2. EUFASA AISBL Working Group on Legal Matters (ELM)

EU (Chair), Austria, Belgium, France, Hungary, Italy, Switzerland

To comply with the mandates voted at the Lisbon conference in 2021, the working group presented the updates of the EUFASA AISBL Glossary and the Conference Planning Timeframe Document. The purpose of the updates was to reflect the new terminology in line with the Statutes and Rules of Procedure and also the steps taken by the ELM to incorporate EUFASA as an AISB.

This initiated a consultation process with delegations regarding the changes of both documents which were last updated in 2017. The structure and key changes were included in the presentation. For the Glossary, the necessity to add the new terms required to facilitate communication between members by providing common terminology for use in AISBL documents and at annual conferences. Concerning the Conference Planning Document, the key changes were to the existing templates and now include a 12 month pre-conference check list to improve user friendliness highlighting the logistics involved in organizing the Board Meetings and the annual General Assembly.

The WG reminded delegations that modifications of the 2022 Glossary and the Conference Planning Document are now under the responsibility of the EUFASA AISBL Board in consultation with Affiliated Members and the documents would undergo a review every two years.

As EUFASA AISBL is subject to data protection rules in the EU, the group also presented their research into the different data protection legislation for Switzerland and the UK.

The WG proposed two new mandates for 2023 : to conduct a GDPR compliance review of the EUFASA AISBL's main digital platforms (internet, website) and also to prepare a data protection notice of the EUFASA AISBL for consultation by all EUFASA AISBL Affiliated Members. The working group also proposes to assist the EUFASA Work & Employment group in their study of the rules and policies in the EU relating to online work. Both documents will be submitted to a vote at the EUFASA AISBL conference next year.

The WG PowerPoint presentation is available on the EUFASA Box intranet under:
<https://app.box.com/file/951442034609>

3. EUFASA AISBL Working Group on The Mobility of Children With Special Needs ***Improving information for diplomatic families who have children with Special Educational Needs*** UK (Chair) Czech Republic, Portugal, Switzerland

The Presentation outlined the steps taken to improve the communication tools and support network for diplomatic families who have children with disabilities and different needs. The research undertaken by the WG spanned feedback from 16 different countries with data collected from 6 specific cases of children with additional needs including ADHD, Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Down's Syndrome, Pragmatic Communication Disorder, Dyspraxia, Depression and Self-harming. Testimonials from the families of EUFASA Affiliated Members were also included in the presentation.

The WG's findings have now been published in a comprehensive guide entitled "*Tips for the international transfer process for foreign service families with children with disabilities and different needs*" which was presented at the conference. The guide contains information on understanding children's needs, assessing schools, therapists and specialists and navigating medication and potential problems. It also includes a list of resource material in different languages and recommendations for support and solutions for MFAs.

The WG PowerPoint presentation is available on the EUFASA Box intranet under:
<https://app.box.com/file/945118055233>

4. EUFASA AISBL Research Department (ERD) *Ireland (chair), Austria, Czech Republic, EU, Finland, Iceland, Switzerland, UK*

The presentation firstly summarized the WG's objectives which are to conduct quantitative and qualitative research to inform evidence-based policy making. The WG also endeavours to translate findings into policy recommendations and actionable information and collaborates with academic institutions. In 2022 the WG conducted a follow up survey on burn out and

resilience following the pandemic and the impact of the war in Ukraine. The results demonstrated that overall resilience had improved since late 2020 / early 2021, burn out levels had fallen a few points but still remained high and remote work had now created new opportunities for MFA spouses and partners. The presentation included a list of relevant results for MFAs such as a need for information and clear guidelines in a timely manner, crisis training an access to vaccinations, health insurance and other preventative care measures. The results were translated into a policy paper with recommendations for MFAs on supporting partners and spouses during a crisis which was distributed at the conference. The working group also presented research guidelines in the form of practical tips and information in order to assist working groups when carrying out surveys. The document entitled "*Research Basics for EUFASA partners' and spouses associations*" was also presented at the conference.

The WG PowerPoint presentation is available on the EUFASA Box intranet under:

<https://app.box.com/file/950303013769>

5. EUFASA AISBL Working Group on the UN Agenda 2030 : A Call to Action: *From Mediation & UNSCR 1325 to the UN Agenda 2030* Italy (chair) Belgium, France

The WG which was established in 2019 firstly presented an overview of the cycle of webinars which were proposed by the Italian Association in partnership with *Luiss University* in Rome to the spouses partners of EUFASA Affiliated Members this year. The presentation focused on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as defined by the UN Agenda 2030. The presentation went on to outline the major events and summits which have taken place in chronological order for the path to 2030 centred around 5 Pillars : People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace & Partnership.

The 3 webinars which were organized in in January, February and March 2022 were entitled:

- "*An Overview of the UN Agenda 2030. From MDGs to SDGs : New Challenges and Opportunities by Professor Alfonso Giordano*
- "*SDGs and Human Rights*" by Professor Francesco Cherubini
- "*SDG (Gender Equality) by Professor Emiliana De Blasio*

Continuing the partnership with *Luiss University*, nine webinars will be offered to the spouses/partners of EUFASA AISBL Member Associations from 2022-2024.

The Italian Association went on to give examples of best practices which they have introduced within ACDMAE with a view to achieving sustainable development goals at a local level, which include recycling, progressively eliminating hard copies, using low consumption light bulbs encouraging members to car share to reduce carbon footprint reduction. Details of the association's involvement with other diplomatic institutions in Rome such as *Farnesina Verde* and *Retake Roma* were also presented. As a topic for the working group for the coming year, the list of objectives of the UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) entitled *Greening the Blue*, was brought to the attention of delegates in order to initiate a call to action for all EUFASA Member Associations to implement the 17 SDGs of the UN Agenda 2030.

The WG PowerPoint presentation is available on nth Box intranet under:

<https://app.box.com/file/949349346618>

6. EUFASA AISBL Working Group on Web Solutions (EWWS)

UK (Chair), Finland, Poland, Spain

The working group firstly presented reminders on the procedure for formatting and filing to facilitate communication between all EUFASA AISBL Affiliated Members. An update on activities were also presented on the new *Website Live Preview*, listing the different pages which have been created under the following headings : ERD, Latest news from EUFASA and EUFASA Related Events, Secure Members Area and Resources.

The WG also called for input, contributions and volunteers from all associations to launch EUFASA social Media on Youtube, autofeeds and links to similar organisations.

The WG PowerPoint presentation is available on the EUFASA Box intranet under:

<https://app.box.com/file/947316668722>

7. EUFASA AISBL Working Group - Welcome Team (EWT) *EU, Finland, Italy, Spain*

The presentation drew attention to the fact that the strength of EUFASA is based on the number of members joining our association and attending the annual conference. In Lisbon in 2021 a new working group was set up to assist candidate members. Representatives from Malta, the Netherlands and Slovenia were invited to the annual conference.

In March 2022 the Dutch MFA gave official recognition to the Dutch *Foreign Affairs Partners Council* and EUFASA AISBL was delighted to welcome back the Dutch association as an Affiliated Member. Slovenia has now obtained formal recognition and undertaken the necessary steps to become a member. Malta has established contact with the *Maltese Committee for Diplomatic Missions* which is currently building its own core structure and the association hopes to join EUFASA AISBL in the near future.

The WG proposed the following mandates for 2023: the creation of Face Book Group for potential EU spouse/partner interest groups to interact with EUFASA AISBL. A welcome video outlining the structure and operating mode of EUFASA AISBL to be shared on the internet and on social media. It was also recommended that Affiliated Members host post conference briefings to inform interested spouses and EU and EFTA member states about action points and conference decisions. Finally, the idea of setting up online workshops on career development was highlighted as employment still remains a major challenge for all associations.

The WG PowerPoint presentation is available on the EUFASA Box intranet under:

<https://app.box.com/file/952176424891>

8. EUFASA AISBL Working Group on Work & Employment (EWE)

EU & Germany (co-chairs) Austria, Hungary, Italy, Spain

The presentation focused on the results of the survey sent to associations on the topic of "Online employment options for spouses and partners : challenges and ways forward." The survey was designed as a preliminary investigation to gain insight into the opportunities and

challenges for working online when posted overseas. The subject was chosen because of the Covid 19 pandemic and the expansion of online work in many areas of employment.

The results of the survey firstly revealed that 58% of respondents felt that seeking for a job abroad is challenging due to local regulations, language barriers and lack of work experience. The survey also clearly demonstrated that 85% of respondents indicated that their MFA does not offer sufficient support, information or incentives to help support a career change when on post. In theory online work is enabling more spouses and partners to keep their jobs however none of the bilateral work agreements in place relate to online work and there are no specific guidelines from MFAs.

Finally, for the 2023 conference in Madrid the group proposed the mandate for an in-depth study of online remote work with an investigation of the rules and policies in the EU to formulate a policy of recommendations for all EUFASA Affiliated Members.

The WG PowerPoint presentation is available on the EUFASA Box intranet under:

<https://app.box.com/file/955359292763>

9. Online presentation on the topic of "Tax & Social Security challenges for diplomatic spouses & partners" by Mr. Gottfried Schellmann, from WTS, Tax Service, Vienna

The presentation focused on the different forms of legislation in place concerning taxing rights. Mr. Schellmann explained that the taxing rights of a home country rely on specific rules. If a diplomat or a family member generates income in a host country from business or other employment activities, diplomatic immunity is removed and the person can be taxable to the laws of the host country. In such cases, a double taxation convention could be concluded on a bilateral basis between home and host country. The presentation went on to explain the rules governing double taxation conventions and social security charges.

The final part of the presentation drew attention to the fact that some countries have bilateral agreements but outside the EU personal contributions into social security can dissolve if a minimum timeframe of contributions is required.

The PowerPoint presentation of G.Schellmann is available on the EUFASA Box intranet under:

<https://app.box.com/file/953520617657>

10. The General Assembly of EUFASA AISBL

The General Assembly Meeting of the EUFASA AISBL was held on Tuesday 3rd May. The 20 EUFASA Affiliated Member Associations present at the meeting voted on the 2022 agenda, the activity report of the Board for 2021-2022, the financial report, the EUFASA AISBL Glossary 2022 and the Chair Timeframe Conference Planning Document.

The President of EUFASA AISBL presented the activity report of the Board for 2021-2022:

- Finalization and completion of the incorporation process of EUFASA ASIBL in Belgium, submission of AGM documents to the Registry of Legal Persons at the Tribunal of Commerce of Brussels, submission of a first income tax declaration
- Opening of a bank account at *Wise* and organization of a transfer of funds from the "old EUFASA" to the new EUFASA AISBL, including the admission of a new MFA Spouses Association (the Netherlands)
- Continuation of communication with the EEAS on Spouses Action Plan
- Promotion of EUFASA and meetings with interested candidates (Slovenia and Malta)

Results of the votes:

EUFASA Affiliated Member Associations: **20**

Member Associations participating in the AGM: **19**

Proxy forms: **1**

- A)** Do you approve the Agenda of the Annual General Meeting of EUFASA AISBL 2022?
YES: **20** NO: **0** ABSTENTION: **0**
- B)** Do you approve the Activity Report 2022 of the Board of Directors?
YES: **20** NO: **0** ABSTENTION: **0**
- C)** Do you approve the Financial Report 2022 of the Board of Directors, including the annual accounts of 2021 and the budget for 2022?
YES: **20** NO: **0** ABSTENTION: **0**
- D)** Do you approve the EUFASA AISBL Glossary 2022?
YES: **20** NO: **0** ABSTENTION: **0**
- E)** Do you approve the Chair Timeframe Conference Planning Document 2022?
YES: **20** NO: **0** ABSTENTION: **0**
- F)** Do you agree to discharge the EUFASA AISBL Board of Directors 2021/2022?
YES: **20** NO: **0** ABSTENTION: **0**

Results of the Elections of the Board Members for 2022-2023:

The following new board members were elected unanimously:

President: Chench Garcia Cutillas (Spain)
Vice-President: Fabio Melchiorri (Belgium)
Vice-President: Zoé Meyer (France)
Member of the Board and Treasurer: Daiga Bondare (Latvia)
Member of the Board: Nadia Von Bassewitz (EU)
Member of the Board: Revaldo Walters (UK)
Member of the Board: Nicki Epinay (France)

The AGM PowerPoint presentation is available on the EUFASA Box intranet under:

<https://app.box.com/file/952185208571>

11. Topics for the Annual Conference 2023

The following mandates were voted by the EUFASA Affiliated Members for 2023.

EUFASA AISBL Working Group on Work & Employment (EWE):

"An in-depth study of online remote work with rules and policies in the EU to formulate a policy of recommendations."

EUFASA AISBL Working Group on Legal Matters (ELM)

"Conduct a GDPR compliance review of the EUFASA AISBL main digital platforms and to prepare a data protection notice for consultation of all EUFASA AISBL members."

The composition of the Working Groups will be as follows in 2022-2023:

- a) Website & Web solutions (EWS): UK (chair) CZ, IR LT, ES, CH
- b) Work & Employment (EWE): DE (chair) AT, EU, ES, HU, IT, LU, NL, UK
- c) Legal Matters (ELM): EU (chair) AT, BE, FR, HU, IT
- d) Research department (ERD): IR (chair) AU, BE, FR, CZ, EU, FI, HU, IC, LT, LU, CH, UK
- e) Children: PT (chair) CZ, LU, ES
- f) Welcome Team: (EWT) EU (chair) FI, HU, IT, ES
- g) UN Agenda 2030: IT (chair) AT, BE, FR, PT

12. Collaborative Session with the Family Officers

With the invited FOs from Austria, Czech Republic, Estonia, EU, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, UK

The French Presidency of the 2022 annual conference welcomed the opportunity to meet the Family Officers (FOs) from 11 EUFASA AISBL Member States and to discuss with them how can both, FOs and FAs, work together in order to support diplomatic spouses and partners. In preparation for the meeting, the EUFASA AISBL Board asked FOs to fill in a questionnaire covering a range of subjects including specific tasks, the relationship with MFA unions, if contact can be directly established with spouses/partners and who are considered to be the main stakeholders for family policies within MFAs. As most FAs struggle to reach out to the population of partners and spouses, it was decided that the focus of the session would be to discuss the topic "*How to increase the outreach and establish a direct communication channel between diplomatic partners and MFA / FOs and FAs.*"

As the UK is the only EUFASA AISBL Member Association in a position to collect and retain contact details from all spouses/partners, they were invited at the request of the EUFASA AISBL board to give a presentation of how they proceed with data collection. The EUFASA delegate for the UK explained that despite the fact the checklist for an MF Officer's notification of posting includes contacting the DSFA, the association does not formally request Officers to forward information to spouses/partners. In order to benefit from their services, the latter have to register via the DSFA Website and details of the entire family data base is entered including the Officer and spouse/partner which is then vetted with the FCDO internal system.

The results of the survey sent to FOs concluded that they consider that it is part of their job description to be a point of contact for families (MFA Officers and spouses/partners) and also for FAs. In a majority of cases the relationship between the FA and the FO is not officially defined or codified. The MFA provides financial support to the FA but in several cases this only covers travel expenses related to EUFASA conferences. With the exception of the U.K,

FOs do not have access to the contact details of all spouses and partners. Some stated that collecting data would be in breach of GDPR. For FOs the most common issues of concern for spouses/partners are employment and schools but they also see their role in terms of providing information in the event of crises. With a view to improving the collaboration and exchange of information, FAs are invited to attend the monthly meeting of the EU FOs.

The answers to the questionnaire sent to FOs are available on the EUFASA Box intranet under:
<https://app.box.com/folder/159433881496?s=zgkfn6hwe0g8shhb2nhisrkqt4v6izkl>

13. The signing of the EUFASA AISBL "Declaration of Rights of Foreign Service Families."

At the Lisbon conference in 2021, 19 EUFASA AISBL Affiliated Member Associations formally adopted the *"Declaration of Rights of Foreign Service Families"*, a non-legally binding document harmonizing the standards and the practices related to the State administrations and Foreign Service families. Copies of the document were distributed and one delegate from each EUFASA AISBL Affiliated Member Association present formally signed the declaration.

A copy of The Declaration of Rights is available on the EUFASA Box intranet under:
<https://app.box.com/file/953472218279>

14. AFCA-MAE (French Association) members' presentation of their international career path and summary by a professional coach

In this presentation, three AFCA-MAE members described how they managed, through the years and through the different postings of their respective spouses, to have a fulfilling professional career. Three different ways of navigating a career internationally which may inspire other spouses. The following testimonies prove that it is not altogether impossible to achieve this if one is really determined.

Pascale Cairot, MD, was able to negotiate her contracts in order to work part-time and thus be able to spend time with her spouse in a difficult posting.

Jean-François Barsacq was able to reinvent himself by following additional university degrees and changing jobs to suit the job offers at each posting.

Marie-Florence Astoin-Sadoulet has also been able to adapt to each situation (family circumstances or postings) by the reconversion in her professional skills.

Even though they have different paths all three have some things in common: All three have made the most and the best of their situation at each moment of their lives achieving at the same time professional fulfillment. A kind of positive belief and mindset that makes things come true. According to *Martina Kieser*, a professional career coach who summarized the 3 testimonies, the success of family fulfillment and the couple's projects depends largely on open and transparent communication. These three spouses *"have discovered new opportunities"* and *"new opportunities means also a discovery of hidden talents or skills that you have but really weren't aware of."* She concluded by saying that we all have the potential

to do many different things if we put our mind to it and take the time and that we should step out of our comfort zone in order to seize the moment and make time for introspection.

The presentations of the three AFCA-MAE members are available on the EUFASA Box intranet under: <https://app.box.com/folder/165442844533>

Conference conclusions

Mrs. Agnès Romatet-Espagne, Director of Human resources at the French MFA, delivered the closing speech. She highlighted the importance of the EUFASA Research Department, dedicated into proposing and impulsing new areas of cooperation so that we can offer better support to spouses, partners and families of diplomats. She then shared with the delegates some of the concerns that she believes could be the next areas of research for this Department.

The Covid pandemic, the repeated international crises that our diplomats have to tackle, the arrival in the labor market of new generations with different aspirations, the geopolitical instabilities, the diversity of family units, as well as other factors have accelerated and emphasized changes which we must take into account in human resources family policies.

In this context, there are two challenges for the MFAs and for EUFASA: First, to document these new trends and second, to share ideas and feedback on our experiments. She concluded by saying that her department would be ready to contribute to the research work of EUFASA.

The French DHR speech is available on the EUFASA Box intranet under: <https://app.box.com/file/973017507135>

The 38th EUFASA conference was closed by *Zoé Meyer*, President of the EUFASA AISBL.

The closing remarks are available on the EUFASA Box intranet under: <https://app.box.com/file/973237402290>
