



Union  
Syndicale  
Fédérale  
European Training  
Foundation

**Torino, 23 November 2018**

Dear Cesare,

The Union Syndicale ETF (hereinafter US ETF) is building day by day on strong commitment of our members spite, as you well know, we are not walking an easy way in the process of being recognised as an institutional partner for developing social dialogue at ETF. Nevertheless, within such process, the ETF US in very short time is composed by 40 staff members whilst other colleagues are progressively expressing their interest on our activities, as well as conveying us their views on the constructive role we can play today and for the best future of our agency indeed.

For this reason, we decided in our last assembly (held in Europa room on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018), to conduct a transparent election process for selecting our first formal Executive Committee. The Executive Committee is officially representing the voice of our 40 staff members and it is composed as follows:

- J. Manuel Galvin Arribas (President).
- Roberta Brusato (Vice-President).
- Liia Kaarlo (Executive Secretary).
- Roberta di Monte (Executive Councillor).
- Pasqualino Mare (Executive Councillor).
- Alina Codrescu (Executive Councillor).

In such assembly, ETF US affiliates kindly asked us to have a meeting with you before the end of the year to start building dialogue on following issues:

### **1) US ETF brief position on the key issue of forthcoming HR Strategy: holistic remarks**

This is more than ever before a key issue for our colleagues, in particular, after results of ETF *staff engagement survey* (shared in-house on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2018). As far our US ETF local section understands, HR strategy has been postponed till June 2019 in order to run in parallel with the forthcoming ETF Strategy. In this respect, affiliated colleagues are concerned on how temporary measures will be adopted in this transition period, as a new HR strategy better based on transparent, accountable and effective staff policies should be key pillar to support, among other aspects, sound HR, ETF Managers and staff actions and decisions for unleashing the potential of the ETF talent. Smart HR strategy should contribute on improving staff motivation and satisfaction standards indeed.

In fact, during this period up to June 2019, the working and living conditions of the staff, under umbrella of the agency, must go on. The ETF will have to manage recruitment procedures, retirements, career development opportunities, continuing training, training and/or personal leaves, re-classifications and promotions, (etc.). In this context, temporary policies addressing vertical and horizontal dimensions to support human capital development and mobility in the agency might be discussed and put in place, as *pilot policy initiatives* for helping on the transition towards June 2019.

Following views expressed by our affiliates, all this should be better agreed with different actors and staff representatives for delivering relevant criteria's which have to open room for equal opportunities and encouraging sound free competition processes at ETF. All these should be better facilitated by transparent communication plan for (re)building trust among (and within) different staff layers and professional groups. In summary, the US ETF do believes that policy tools can help a lot on supporting both management and staff performance: the forthcoming HR Strategy should become the key pillar for reforming Human Capital Development policies at ETF.

## **2) Specific issue: sickness leave rules**

This is also for US ETF members an important issue to be carefully taken into account as part of the future ETF HR Strategy. We do believe also that temporary measures should address this sensitive issue and we kindly would like to invite ETF to adopt effective policy to manage sickness absences.

In this regard, a kind of *guidelines* for line managers to manage staff absence, delineating a clear distribution of roles of managers, HR and staff members, medical staff (etc.) might support a lot on improving current process. Managing sickness absence of the staff requires that managers develop high level skills and competences of interpersonal communication as well as planning and working organisation (etc.). Managers should be in the position to deal with the period of absence and, sometimes, exacerbated by difficult return at work of the concerned staff. This is trickier after long term absence due to physical or psychological reasons.

In some cases, after long absence period, staff colleagues returning at work may not be not completely fit to (previous) working position indeed and ETF should have clear position for deal with it and avoiding that colleagues might feel themselves stressed (or even harassed) once again. For example, it is possible that staff is asking for part time for medical reasons or it is also plausible to assume that staff returns to work in medical part time.

Further, sometimes staff returning at work might deploy same tasks they had before sickness leave period. However, this principle should not be applicable when illness causes are linked to conflictual working relations. In such cases, HR should mediate for finding accurate solutions and accompany staff for their best reintegration in the organisation.

The ETF should avoid to allocate tasks distributed on the basis of 8 hours *per day*, to those staff whose are in medical part-time and/or part-time for medical reasons. Perhaps, those tasks with demanding deadlines should be better reviewed or re-assessed by those managers whose are accompanying colleagues in their reintegration at work. Staff back to work after illness period must not be isolated neither considered nor essential for ETF as they might be perceived by other colleagues as not reliable staff due to the absence period. In the contrary, they are ETF colleagues who need to be reintegrated at work under fair basis.

As source of inspiration, we invite ETF to consult EU Commission document providing guidelines to managers and HR to deal with such cases <sup>(1)</sup>. Thus, in order to support managers, HR and ETF, the US ETF position is that it is crucial acknowledging clear guidelines for steering an effective policy to support dealing with this issue.

## **3) Specific issue: Contract Agents reclassification exercise**

Another key specific issue that should be tackled urgently. This is due to the fact that some of our Contract Agents affiliates are suffering from their career stagnation. They have been blocked in the same contractual grade for many years without any career development perspective. They have the lowest contractual level (FG CA2) at ETF, although they are performing the same tasks of colleagues within the same unit/team with AST 4 temporary contracts or higher Contract Agent Function Groups (concrete examples can be provided).

In addition, their job description does not reflect the real tasks performed, but it is merely used to justify their grade (FG 2 vs. FG 3). Furthermore, they are sometimes commonly *used* for training and/or coaching other colleagues having higher contractual grades but performing their same functions. They have no career development prospects and in competing for a higher level as Contract Agents, they risk to waste their current pension conditions and rights if their contract is upgraded.

Further, they might be demotivated and/or depressed due to the unequal treatment received and the perception of being discriminated without any objective reason. In the *Open Selection Procedure*

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<sup>(1)</sup> Please, see attached document (in email): EU Commission Document (DG Human Resources and Security): *Fit@work Healthy people, health organisation. Managing sickness absences in the Commission (Guidelines for line managers)*.

launched by HR (2011) for FG Contract Agent 3 (reserve list), different profiles were requested and the ETF staff members who were successful in this competition were not required to change their contracts and/or their pension benefits. In absence of vacancies - no call for filling in new posts was launched, as they maintained the same role and position but with a higher contract level.

The FG2 contract agents would like to be informed on the steps that ETF (HR) has taken so far from February 2015, as an active member of the Standard Working Party, regarding the *model decision for Agencies* proposed by the Commission as an instrument for the reclassification of the contract agents. They are kindly asking to be informed on the current status of this problem.

Thus, considering that the situation of Contract Agents in the Commission is completely different from those in the Agencies (definite *vs.* indefinite contracts), we would like to know what ETF is doing to officially recognize the work done by this professional group during all these years. Indeed, they have been employed under inadequate contractual grades, whilst having received yearly successful performance appraisals, promotions and indefinite contract renewal. They have not only in-depth professional experience but also higher qualifications levels than those required to perform on-the-job.

In summary, ETF proposal on reclassification to face endemic situation of such Contract Agents is strongly needed. The Contract Agents involved are available to meet with the Director to provide him with further information that he may request. For the US ETF, perhaps, a possible driver for such discussion is how to apply a reclassification procedure by derogation of the article 110 of the SR.

#### **4) A big challenging issue: Brexit at ETF**

ETF US affiliates shared with you a note on 20 July 2018 which fully reflects our position on how this big issue should be managed, taking into account both interests of our British colleagues and ETF. Our colleagues on the Brexit working group, on behalf of ETF US, are ready and willing to continue being involved in constructive dialogue and good cooperation with you and other colleagues for sharing information and finding the most accurate argumentation for the best decision, whilst benefiting our affiliates and the ETF (and vice versa).

We acknowledge and welcome your intervention with local and national authorities to expedite British colleagues' applications for Italian citizenship. However, we further reiterate our position that all British colleagues be offered derogations, so they need not rely on obtaining another citizenship. Therefore, we request an update on the potential offering of derogations to British staff.

#### **5) Some other key issues**

Last but not least, our affiliates have also other concerns which might be also part of forthcoming ETF HR Strategy. These are: teleworking rules, decisions on mobility policies, training leave conditions, working organisation, and re-discuss promotions methodology (etc.). We think that on such issues sound dialogue is needed for refreshing and/or updating such policies whilst respecting the good governance principle of transparency.

Further, we would like to inform you that, starting from the next year 2019, we will organise thematic workshops (open to affiliates and all ETF staff) on *sensitives* issues such as for example pension rights, Joint Sickness Insurance Scheme *vis à vis* the national health system <sup>(2)</sup>, on the local system of taxation (etc.) for sharing Union Syndicale Federal (USF) expertise within ETF.

The first one will be probably in January on Pension Rights issue considering that many senior staff members are concerned. The workshops will be facilitated by the Vice-President of the USF, the legal adviser Mr. Niels Brake.

He would be honoured also to meet you for continue building trust and better understanding on our mission and constructive role we can play. This is supported and validated by our 40 qualified affiliates whose deserve and wish to express their institutional voice in-house.

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<sup>(2)</sup> Please, note that the US is in PMO/EC table of discussion of this topic (see annex in French attached to email).

Thus, we look forward your proposal for scheduling a meeting before Christmas break to discuss around all these issues.

We thank you very much for your kind attention and willingness to build together, with other relevant colleagues, a constructive social dialogue environment at ETF.

We profit this communication for kindly inviting you on 27 November morning to the US ETF breakfast in the Union Bar. With our best regards.

**US ETF Executive Committee**