

INFO SENIOR



Bimonthly information bulletin from DG HR

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2014 #4

For any questions not relating to the JSIS, retired staff from institutions other than the Commission must contact their institution.

JSIS: certificates of treatment in Belgium



In Belgium, a certificate of treatment ('attestation de soins') will be required from January 2015 in order for **medical expenses to be reimbursed**. Your medical expenses are reimbursed on the basis of supporting documents which must be in line with the legislation in force in the country in which the care was provided. When you consult a doctor, dentist, physiotherapist, or any other health-care provider registered with the INAMI [national institute for health and disability insurance], you are given a certificate of treatment ('attestation de soins'): a green, white, orange or blue document. If up to now your doctor or health-care provider has not always given you this document, you will now be entitled to insist on receiving it, and it will be obligatory for all requests for reimbursement from 1 January 2015. This obligation has been approved by INAMI, the official body in Belgium for ensuring the correct application of the rules in this regard.

This measure will not pose a problem to your doctor, as all doctors and other health-care providers qualified to exercise their profession have an official certificate pad. We have already informed them of the new practice. As a JSIS beneficiary, the certificate of treatment, which will have to include the amount paid, will better protect you from the excess fees charged by some doctors. This practice will only be obligatory from 1 January 2015.

- i JSIS ONLINE**
- i PMO CONTACT ONLINE**
- i TEL. PMO CONTACT: +32 (2) 29 97777 (MONDAY TO FRIDAY, 09:30 TO 12:30).**

JSIS tips



- Never send **reimbursement requests** WITH **requests for prior authorisation/dental treatment estimates/serious illness/direct billing/letters** or **proof of income for your spouse**.
- Do not use staples on supporting documents: use paper clips.
- Prior authorisation confers entitlement to reimbursement of the treatment. It is therefore always necessary to wait for a decision on a request for prior authorisation before submitting medical expenses. You may start treatment before being sent the decision, but you will not have any guarantee of the amount to be reimbursed or even that any reimbursement will be made.

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Using JSIS online



You have a computer and you use **JSIS online** – that's great! Please continue to do so and encourage other retired staff to use it too. However, if for any reason you don't choose to or are no longer able to use the application, you can revert to the **manual system** (sending paper documents) without any problems, even if you previously used JSIS online. The reimbursement calculation will be sent to you in paper form, however you submit your request for reimbursement (manually or online).

How many pairs of glasses?



Reimbursement of the cost of **spectacles** is limited to two complete pairs every two years, consisting of a frame and corrective lenses regardless of type:

- either one pair of spectacles with single-vision lenses for near vision and one pair of spectacles with single-vision lenses for distance vision,
- or one pair of spectacles with multifocal or progressive lenses and, if necessary, one pair of spectacles for near or distance vision.

The JSIS does not reimburse:

- spectacles with non-corrective lenses,
- sunglasses.

The minimum renewal periods are one year for under-18s and every two years for over-18s, unless there is a change in dioptre or axis of 0.50 or more, attested by an ophthalmologist or ophthalmic optician.

In order to be reimbursed, the original invoice must show: the type of vision to be corrected (distance, near, multifocal), a description of the lenses (strength of each corrective lens and dioptres), the price of the lenses, and the price of the frame shown separately.

How much? The reimbursement rate is 85 % for frames, with a ceiling of € 120.

For single-vision lenses:

- € 110 per lens up to 4 dioptres
- € 140 per lens from 4.25 to 6 dioptres (inclusive)
- € 180 per lens from 6.25 to 8 dioptres (inclusive)
- € 300 per lens from 8.25 dioptres upwards

For multifocal or progressive lenses: € 350 per lens.

The cost of an examination by an ophthalmic optician, in the absence of a prescription or examination by an ophthalmologist, is reimbursed at 85 %, subject to a ceiling corresponding to that for a consultation or visit by a general practitioner. Costs relating to tests of central vision or measurements using electronic equipment carried out by an optician or an optometrist are included in the ceiling for lenses. In the event of loss or damage to the frame or lenses before the end of the minimum period for renewal, the cost of repair or replacement is reimbursed up to the value of any previously unused portion of the ceiling for that period.

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Asbestos screening: reminder



Asbestos was the reason for the evacuation of the Berlaymont building in 1992. However, this was not the only building affected. Asbestos was widely used in insulation (flocking) of ducts and pipes, in lift brakes, and in many other areas. During drilling or demolition works, fibres are released into the air and can cause fatal illnesses, even years later.

People who started working at the Commission before 1992, and in particular those who worked in the Berlaymont building in Brussels, are therefore the most likely to have been exposed to asbestos. In Luxembourg, measurements of asbestos fibres present in the air

have been regularly taken since 2005 in all parts of the **Jean Monnet building**. They show no asbestos fibres in the air, except in two isolated cases. It can therefore be concluded that there is no imminent danger to the health and safety of staff. In spite of this, the Commission considered that because asbestos was present in the building, it was impossible to guarantee zero risk to the health and safety of people using the building. It therefore decided in July to move the departments located in the Jean Monnet building, as a precautionary measure.

Former officials who think that they have been exposed to asbestos can request a medical check-up. This concerns in particular former officials who worked in the Berlaymont building in Brussels before 1992 or in the Jean Monnet building in Luxembourg. The check-up screens for any illnesses linked to asbestos. It is not compulsory. You can have the screening at the Commission at the expense of the medical service. If you prefer to do it elsewhere you will be reimbursed afterwards. No travel or related expenses are reimbursed. If the screening tests are positive, a request for recognition of an **occupational disease** can be submitted to the PMO.

The PMO processes requests for recognition of a **serious illness** or **occupational disease** once the complete file has been submitted.

The essential points of this information were sent to retired staff in February 2014, in **Administrative Notice 07/2014** of 6 February 2014. The following documents are available for reference:

- a **Vade Mecum** detailing the various aspects of the medical check-up and procedures to be followed,
- **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**, setting out the most common questions and answers as well as contact details for the departments involved.

i **MEDICAL SERVICE BRUSSELS: + 32 (0)2 292 03 00**
@ HR-BXL-HEALTH-ADVICE@EC.EUROPA.EU

i **MEDICAL SERVICE LUXEMBOURG (ALSO FOR KARLSRUHE, GEEL AND PETTEN): +35 (0)2 4301 2588 / +35 (0)2 4301 32589**
@ HR-LUX-SERV-MEDICAL@EC.EUROPA.EU

i **MEDICAL SERVICE ISPRA (ALSO FOR ISPRA AND SEVILLE): +39 (0)332 789965**
@ JRC-MEDICAL-SERVICE@EC.EUROPA.EU

i **PMO – ACCIDENTS AND OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES: PMO-3-AMP, SC-27 03/49, B-1049 BRUSSELS - +32 (0)2 29 97777**

@ PMO CONTACT ONLINE

Serious illness vs occupational disease



What is the difference between a **serious illness** and an **occupational disease**?

A serious illness is defined by the conjunction of the following four criteria: shortened life expectancy, illness which is likely to be drawn-out, the need for aggressive diagnostic and/or therapeutic procedures, and the presence or risk of a serious handicap.

An occupational disease is one contracted in the course of work in (the buildings of) the European Institutions. The diseases contained in the 'European schedule of occupational diseases' annexed to the **Commission Recommendation** of 19 September 2003 and any supplements to it are considered occupational diseases to the extent to which insured parties have been exposed to the risk of contracting them in the performance of their duties with the European Institutions. Any disease or aggravation of a pre existing disease not included in the schedule referred to above is also considered an occupational disease if it is sufficiently established that it arose in the course of or in connection with the performance of duties with the Institutions.

In both cases, there is a time limit for recognition. Medical expenses relating to a recognised serious illness or occupational disease are reimbursed at a higher rate.

i PMO CONTACT ONLINE

i TEL. PMO CONTACT: +32 (2) 29 97777 (MONDAY TO FRIDAY, 09:30 TO 12:30).

Wheelchairs: purchase, hire and repair



For the purchase of a wheelchair, a medical prescription and a **request for prior authorisation** (which is valid for five years) must be submitted. The reimbursement rate for a wheelchair is 85 %, with a ceiling of € 650.

A medical prescription is sufficient for reimbursement of wheelchair hire for less than three months (reimbursed at 85 %). If the wheelchair is hired for three months or more, a request for prior authorisation must be submitted in addition to the medical prescription. The reimbursement rate is 85 %, with a ceiling of € 650.

If the request for reimbursement relates to repair of a wheelchair, prior authorisation is required. The reimbursement rate is 85 %.

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Medical equipment



A list of orthopaedic appliances, bandages and other medical equipment reimbursed at 85 %, or 100 % in the case of a recognised serious illness, is published on **My IntraComm**. This list shows whether or not a medical prescription and prior authorisation are required, the reimbursement rate, the maximum reimbursable amount and any renewal periods for the equipment.

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The Commission's historical archives



The historical archives of the EU are opened to the public 30 years after they are created, under **Regulation No 1700/2003** amending Regulation No 354/83. Each EU institution has **its own archive service**. The **Commission's historical archives** service was created at the start of the 1980s. It is responsible for managing central stores and processing dossiers transferred to the historical archives by the Commission departments. It therefore acts as an intermediate archive service for the Commission departments and helps to ensure that the Commission's historical archives are open to the public in line with the thirty-year rule. Once they have been opened to the public, the archives are deposited at the European University

Institute in Florence (Italy), where they are made available for consultation. A large number of EU institutions and bodies have also put in place rules allowing the public to request access to documents less than 30 years old that are not yet available to the public.

The **Historical Archives of the EU (HAEU)**, located in Florence, is a research centre dedicated to the archival preservation and study of European integration. It brings together the official historical archives of the EU institutions and more than 150 private archival deposits from eminent European figures, movements and associations, as well as a rich collection of documents from national archives and the archives of ministries of foreign affairs. It also has an '**Oral History**' section, containing nearly 600 interviews relating to European integration.

Reminder: after leaving the service, officials remain subject to the obligation to refrain from any unauthorised disclosure of information received in the line of duty, unless that information has already been made public or is accessible to the public.

If a former official possesses this type of information, he or she is required to submit it to the **historical archives service of his or her home institution**. For submission of personal documents, officials may contact the historical archives service in Florence.

i HISTORICAL ARCHIVES OF THE COMMISSION: TEL.: +32 (0)2 299 99 66

@ OIB-ARCHIS-BASE@EC.EUROPA.EU

i AHISTORICAL ARCHIVES OF THE EU (HAEU): VILLA SALVIATI, VIA BOLOGNESE, 156, I-50139 FLORENCE. TEL.: +39 055 4685 661.

@ ARCHIV@EUI.EU

Solidarity with former colleagues



Unfortunately no one is immune from personal or material problems. Some of our former colleagues may feel isolated, suffer from serious disabilities or illnesses, or have difficult family situations and be in need of assistance. Even when the situation becomes critical, they may not have the courage to seek help. If you are aware of a former colleague in this type of situation, please inform the **Commission's social welfare service**. They will get in touch with the person in question and offer assistance.

i SOCIAL SERVICE BRUSSELS + 32 (0)2 295 90 98

i SOCIAL SERVICE LUXEMBOURG + 352 4301 33948

i SOCIAL SERVICE ISPRA + 39 0332 78 59 10

Retired staff of an institution other than the Commission should contact the **social welfare unit within their institution**.

Right to freedom of expression



The Staff Regulations grant you the right to freedom of expression 'with due respect to the principles of loyalty and impartiality' (**Article 17a(1)**). As a former member of staff, you therefore have the right to publish or cause to be published, alone or with others, a text, such as an article or work concerning any matter that interests you, including European issues, with or without a connection to your past work. This also applies to speeches and any form of public or private communication, including blogs.

However, it should be noted that after leaving the service, former staff members are still bound by the duty to behave with integrity and discretion (**Article 16** of the Staff Regulations). When you leave the Commission, you sign a form declaring that you are aware of your continuing obligations towards the Commission (under **Articles 16, 17 and 19** of the Staff Regulations). In particular, you must refrain from any unauthorised disclosure of information received in the line of duty, unless that information has already been made public or is accessible to the public. Within this framework, you act under your own responsibility.

If the publication or speech (including at the drafting/preparation stage) can be linked to an external activity (for example, as part of a contract with a publisher or an oral contribution to a public meeting), during the two years after you leave the service you must request prior authorisation from the Commission in accordance with Article 16 of the Staff Regulations. After the two years following your departure, you no longer have to request prior authorisation.

If you have any doubts, please contact DG HR's 'Ethics' team.

 **CONTACT: HR-B1-ETHIQUE@EC.EUROPA.EU**

 **TEL. + 32 (0)2 29 53132/87837/84075**

Testifying in legal proceedings



Article 19 of the Staff Regulations states that 'an official shall not, without permission from the appointing authority, disclose on any grounds whatever, in any legal proceedings, information of which he has knowledge by reason of his duties'. An official is still bound by this obligation after leaving the service.

Therefore, if you are called to testify in legal proceedings that relate to your work for the Commission, you must request permission from the appointing authority in advance. It should be noted that even if the interests of the EU require permission to be refused, the Commission will grant it anyway if its refusal could entail legal

action against you. These provisions do not apply to giving evidence before the Court of Justice of the European Union (including the Court of First Instance and the Civil Service Tribunal) or the Disciplinary Board of an institution on a matter concerning a staff member or former staff member.

 **CONTACT: HR-B1-ETHIQUE@EC.EUROPA.EU**

 **TEL. + 32 (0)2 29 53132/87837/84075**

Vehicle registration and taxes



Temporary stays

If you continue to reside in your Member State but stay in another EU country for less than six months, you do not have to register your car or pay taxes in that country. Your vehicle remains registered in your country of residence. If you are staying in another EU country for less than six months and have not registered your car there, you may neither lend nor rent your car to a resident of that country – they may drive your car only if you accompany them. However, you may lend your car to visiting

friends or family, provided they are not resident in your new country. If you are staying in another country for more than six months, you should normally change your place of residence to this country and you must register your car there.

Stays of over six months

If you move to another EU country and take your car with you, you must register it and pay any relevant taxes in the new country. You normally have six months to do this. Before leaving, you should check with the authorities of your new country when this period starts (from the date you leave your home country or the date you arrive in your new country). You should also ask what supporting documents you will need to provide. In some Member States, the deadline for registering your car is less than six months from the date of taking up residence in that country. Before you leave, you should check with the authorities of the new country whether shorter registration periods apply there. In some countries you may be eligible for a tax exemption on your vehicle registration when you take up residence, if you meet the relevant conditions and deadlines. You should contact the national authorities before moving to your new country.

VAT on vehicles purchased abroad



New cars

If you buy a new car in another EU country with the intention of using it in your country of residence, you are exempt from paying VAT in the country where you bought it. You must pay the VAT in the country in which you register your vehicle. A 'new car' means a vehicle less than six months old or with less than 6 000 km on the clock.

Second-hand cars

If you buy a used car from a private individual, you pay no VAT either in the country where you bought it or in your country of residence. If the seller is a car dealer, you must pay the amount of VAT applicable in the country where you buy the car. You do not have to pay VAT in your country of residence. A 'used car' is more than six months old and has more than 6 000 km on the clock. Wherever you buy the car, you must pay the registration fee in your country of residence.

With some exceptions, you are not required to pay VAT on the same purchase twice.

My IntraComm, the Commission's intranet



Who can access **My IntraComm** ?

Anyone entitled to a Community pension (retired staff from all institutions) has the right to request an access code for My IntraComm. This consists of a login and password specific to each individual. Once your request for an access code has been processed by our departments (which can only be done once you have left), you will be sent a letter containing your codes.

- TO REQUEST AN ACCESS CODE FOR MY INTRACOMM:**
- HR-INTRACOMM-CODE-PENSIONNES@EC.EUROPA.EU**

Access conditions

Along with your access code, you will receive an **individual declaration** regarding acceptance of the conditions for accessing the Commission's intranet. In particular, this draws your attention to the following principles:

- ethics:

- you are granted access to My IntraComm as a recipient of a pension from the institutions;
- you must respect individual property rights and, in particular, must not use a connection to the Commission's intranet to reproduce any information protected by copyright or a property licence;
- it is forbidden to use access to the Commission's intranet for financial or commercial gain or for illegal activities.

- security:

- access to the Commission's intranet must be made using your own personal identification code (login and password), and never using another person's code. You must not tell anyone else your password. You must not reveal any information that could facilitate attempts to access the Commission's network or internal servers.

What can you access ?

You have access to all the information that directly concerns you. In addition, a **retired staff portal** has been specially designed to help you find information. It is updated once a week and contains a 'News' section, where you will find the most recent items.

Have you lost your access codes or are they no longer working ?

Send an email with your details to: HR-INTRACOMM-CODE-PENSIONNES@ec.europa.eu

List of retirements and in memoriam section



You can find **a list** of the Commission staff retiring each month on the retired staff section of My IntraComm.

You can also find the **in memoriam** site here, an area reserved for the names of colleagues from the Commission and EEAS (European External Action Service) who have died while in service and of retired staff from all institutions who have died during the year. In this way they remain present in our memory.