

**AIACE-UK**  
***Record of the Autumn General Meeting***  
***held at Europe House and by Zoom video-conference, 21 November 2023***

Some 60 members were present plus a further 40 members on Zoom. The meeting was presided by AIACE-UK Chairman, Tom Kennedy.

**1. Presentation by Martin Westlake**

Distinguished speaker and author as well as former Secretary General of the Economic and Social Committee, Martin Westlake spoke on the theme of 'Brexit: the patriot's dilemma'.

Martin explained the historical background to Brexit, which had its roots in the historic fragility of support for the European project in the UK's political class. 2016 was the culmination of a long-term drift away from Europe. In the 1990s, traditional parliamentary democratic decisions became influenced or supplanted by the trend of calling referendums to deal with sensitive questions. All the major parties, eurosceptic or not, were attracted to this option. In 2015, Labour, Conservative and the Lib Dems supported a referendum on closer relations with the EU.

The 2016 vote was not a surprise to Martin. He noted that the 'Yes' support in the polls did not reflect what was being said on the doorstep. However, the vote was essentially a symptom of wider disaffection in society.

Following the referendum, Martin noted the astonishing behaviour of the UK negotiators who immediately gave-up their negotiating advantages. It was soon apparent that not only the referendum but also the terms of the withdrawal were shaped purely by party political concerns.

For the future, Martin was less optimistic than previous speakers. He argued that as a 'British Patriot, it would be perfectly possible to find solutions to the thornier issues of renegotiated EU membership. However, as a 'European Patriot', it would be difficult to take back a country whose political system and (absence of a) constitution could give no guarantees of long-term stability.

The audience greatly appreciated the erudite speech and answers to comments and thanked Martin for his excellent contribution.

Readers may wish to consult Martin's book on these themes: 'The UK's Long Drift Away From the European Union'.

## 2. Proposed Changes to the Constitution

The Chairman outlined the proposed changes (see Annex One), which had been circulated to all members. In addition to some minor changes (form and corrections), the proposal confirmed the status of participants via video-conference as equal to that of those 'physically present'.

The proposal was adopted unanimously.

## 3. Administrative Matters

**Pensions** - Martin Clegg outlined the proposal for the end-of-year adaptations of pensions. Depending on individual circumstances and when pension rights had been accumulated, this would result in a small increase to be paid as usual in December, backdated to July.

**JSIS** - Michael Hocken reminded members of the new form for submitting a claim for reimbursement of glasses. This was available on the AIACE International website. He explained that the plan to introduce changes to the Implementing Rules were on hold as there was no appetite to increase the costs of JSIS.

Reimbursement ceilings for some items, including private GP visits and hearing aids, were increasing.

Michael also reported that PMO seemed favourably inclined to reimbursing private treatment for spouses with complementary cover due to the NHS waiting list situation.

**Membership** - Jane Cornelius reported that membership was stable at 800 members.

**Treasurer's report** - John Wiggins reported that the finances were in good order and that a small surplus of around £2000 was expected this year.

**Volunteers** - The Chairman made a plea for colleagues to offer their time to AIACE-UK, noting the need for new Committee members and for new regional convenors (North Region and Kent Region). The organisation also lacks a volunteer to help members with JSIS-online and EU-login.

**Travel visas** - The meeting listened to John Horton's request that the Committee explore the possibility of requesting a derogation for the need for a visa to travel and stay in the EU beyond the current rules in place. It was observed that this would be a matter for Member States rather than the EU Institutions.

Alan Huyton  
22/11/2023

Annex One

| <b>Draft revision to AIACE-UK Constitution 21/11/2023)</b> |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <b>Article</b>   | <b>Existing Text</b>  | <b>Proposed amendment</b>   | <b>Explanation</b>   |
| 1.   | DEFINITIONS   |   |  |
| (b)  | "The Branch" means the United Kingdom Branch of AIACE established in London at the premises for the time being of the European Commission's Representation. | <i>Delete: "European Commission's Representation";<br/>Insert: "Delegation of the European Union to the United Kingdom"</i>       | After UK withdrawal from the EU the Commission's Representation was closed and replaced by the Delegation of the EU run by the EU External Action Service. |
|  | The name of the Branch shall be "The United Kingdom Branch of the International Association of Former Staff of the European Union".                         | <i>Add: "This may be abbreviated as "AIACE-UK""</i>   | For clarity since the acronym does not correspond to the initial letters of the full name.<br><br>Section is the terminology used by AIACE International.  |
| 6.   | MEMBERSHIP  |   |  |
| (d)  | It is possible to be a member of more than one <del>branch</del>  | <i>Replace "branch" with: "national section of AIACE"</i>   | For clarity.   |
| 7.   | APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP  |   |  |
|  | Application for membership shall be dealt * in accordance with this Constitution, <i>(omissis ...)</i>  | <i>Insert "with" in place of *</i>  | Correction of a typographical error.   |
| 10.  | MEETINGS  |   |  |
| (b)  | The quorum shall be 5% of the membership.   | <i>Add at the beginning: Members may attend meetings either in person or remotely using an Internet meeting platform. Members</i> | This brings our arrangements in line with the reality that, since the COVID pandemic meetings  |

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|     |  | <i>attending by remote means shall be regarded as “present at the meeting” for the purposes of establishing a quorum and for voting.</i>   | held remotely or as hybrid meetings have become the norm. The proposal improves inclusivity and makes a quorum easier to reach.   |
| 12. | VOTING AT MEETINGS   |  |   |
| (a) | Voting on any resolution at a meeting shall be by a show of hands. | <i>Add: The Committee may decide, in a particular case, that a vote should be taken by secret ballot. The voting procedure for members attending remotely shall ensure that all members are able to express their choices under equivalent conditions.</i> | To ensure equality of all members on the occasion of votes and legal certainty, procedures for casting votes both in person and remotely and for counting the resulting votes must be equivalent in both cases. |
| (b) | New  | <i>The procedure to be used for any vote shall be set out in the notification of the meeting concerned and announced by the Chair at the meeting ahead of the vote being taken.</i>  | For clarity and legal certainty.  |
| 23. | ENTRY INTO FORCE   |  |   |
|     | New  | <i>“This version of the Constitution shall enter into force on the first day of the month following the month of its adoption by a General Meeting”</i>  | For clarity and legal certainty.  |

Draft