

AIACE-UK
Minutes of the meeting of the National Committee,
held by hybrid in-Person and Zoom video-conference, 4 April 2023

Present

Tom Kennedy (Chairman, TK), Pernille Andersen (PA), John Claxton (JCI), Martin Clegg (MC), Jane Cornelius (JCo), Michael Hocken (MH), Bob Hull (BH), Alan Huyton (AH), Gail Kent (GK), Brian Porro (BPo), Belinda Pyke (BPy), Emanuela Savoia (ES), John Wiggins (JW)
Apologies had been received from Louise Overbury.

1. Agenda

The draft agenda was agreed.

2. Minutes of the last meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 30th January 2022 were agreed. There were no matters arising not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda.

3. AIACE-UK AGM

3.1 Details

TK reported that he had approached the EEAS Ambassador to speak at the meeting. Regrettably, his diary did not coincide with the availability of the meeting room, which was free only on the 30th May and 13th June (and both dates had been reserved as a precaution by TK).

The meeting agreed that the latter date was preferable but that the decision would depend on the main speaker. It was also noted that both the Ambassador and the President of AIACE International might be willing to make cameo appearances and speak, briefly, to the meeting.

BH would contact potential keynote speakers and notably Martin Westlake.

The EEAS staff had confirmed to AH that the meeting room was well equipped for a hybrid event.

For the registration, TK would discuss with the Membership team bilaterally. Several others had offered to help in this process.

For the lunch, this could be expensive depending on which caterer was selected.

3.2 Timetable and reports

AH would update the timetable once a date was settled.

TK would draft the Committee report and circulate for comments. In the meantime, he invited contributions, including on basic membership statistics.

3.3 Expenses

The meeting agreed that for the healthy functioning of the organisation it was reasonable that Committee members, including the co-opted ones, could claim for travel and accommodation expenses for attendance at general meetings.

3.4 Proposed changes to the Constitution

The meeting agreed with the proposal from the Chairman to shelve proposed changes pending clarity on the new Association Articles being adopted by AIACE International, which would in turn require a change to our own Constitution. Among possible changes was a three year mandate for Board members, which could be beneficial if applied to our own Committee, for example through use of a rolling three year mandate.

3.5 New Committee

A full Committee would be elected at the AGM and nominations would be invited when the invitations were issued to all members.

4. AIACE International

4.1 Malaga 2 seminar for ambassadors and volunteers on the subject of social care etc.

PA and JCI reported that the seminar had been useful, permitting them to meet key contacts. There had been constructive discussions on the question of the problem caused by the administration's changes to mailboxes, which were being closed down, and planned restrictions on paperless communication which would be a problem for some members. The minutes and presentations had been distributed to Committee members.

4.2 AIACE International Management Board meeting, 27th March

The meeting thanked BH for his clear and concise report of the meeting. Discussion took place notably on the question of Data Protection (DP), where it was felt that the UK section would need to take some measures to be better compliant. These included the appointment of a DPO to help the organisation find and implement proportionate but secure DP measures, reviewing the statement on the membership application form and including a notice on the website.

On the Assises (the next to be in Sicily in 2024), the meeting considered the suggestion of a meeting of UK attendees at a future event to make it more sociable for the shy members.

MC reported that it was not yet clear whether there would be a further intermediate adaptation to salaries and pensions this Summer, given the inflation rates in Luxembourg and Brussels and the falling purchasing powers of national civil servants.

TK reported the formation of a new AIACE section in the Czech Republic.

4.3 AIACE International AGM, 27th April on Zoom

TK reminded the Committee of this event. All members had been informed by email and by post (the latter from AIACE International).

5. UK Branch matters

5.1 Membership team

JCo and ES reported the ongoing work of maintaining the database and dealing with new and departing members. JCo had chased those members who were late with payment and there now remained just 40 payments outstanding out of 805 members, of whom 84 were survivors. Of these, 16 had not paid either in 2022 and therefore were at risk of being considered resigned. JCo would circulate the list of the latter group so that Committee members and/or regional coordinators could contact them.

5.2 Membership lists

It was agreed that such lists were often desirable for members, especially new members. However the circulation of the lists was problematic from a data protection standpoint. The current policy of only distributing lists to new members was agreed but, for the time being, these lists would be limited to the region in which the new member would be based.

AH/ES confirmed that they would investigate the possibility of making a list, perhaps with just name, city and email coordinates, available on the website. This might need changes to the password protocols. Consideration would also be needed in respect of members not using IT.

5.3 Insurance for AIACE members

Following a recent enquiry from a member about group travel insurance, JCo brought their question about the feasibility of negotiating a deal with a UK provider. It was, however, felt that this would be unattractive to the insurance companies. Concerning CIGNA and equivalent insurances aimed at AIACE members based in the EU, their insurances were not available or likely to be available to members living in a third country (although the previous travel insurance policy had covered members living in the UK). We might ask the AIACE International Working Group on insurance to include the topic in their deliberations.

5.4 Treasurer's Report

JW reported that the contribution to AIACE International remained at 18 euro pp this year. We would also receive the usual social and welfare grant in return. The meeting noted with interest that the French section had received a sizable additional grant to fund their training of volunteers.

Once again, AIACE UK were heading for a surplus this year, although decisions on expenses would mean this might be less than previously.

5.5 Connect

BPy announced that the next edition would be produced in June. She had articles in the pipeline on EU Login, Screening and Social Care. She would also start to publish lists of new members, to compensate partly for the loss of the printed membership lists. JCI responded to TK that Connect was distributed to the 80 or so non-email members using Docmail (not OIB) at an average cost of around £100 per issue, which was felt to be excellent value.

5.6 Vox

BPy felt that the proposed changes to VOX, aimed at reducing costs were acceptable. The deadline for the next issue was 8th May and AH would write a short piece for the News section. Colleagues were encouraged in general to write for Vox.

5.7 Screening

JCI announced the positive developments with Circle, who seemed to be willing to design a programme that was JSIS compliant (but without direct billing). The Committee welcomed his initiative. MH reported the surprising rumour that Spire were in discussion with the Commission to provide a screening service, and he would try to investigate. He also confirmed that the PMO were showing leniency in the matter of accepting the Screening reimbursement annexes signed by members 'on their honour' in place of the providers where the latter were sceptical.

5.8 Social Care

The meeting welcomed the proposal to appoint GK as our coordinator for this issue and thanked her for this commitment. TK reported that the draft questionnaire for members, proposed by P.Russell (PR), needed adaptation to make it more relevant to our principal objective, which was to get an overview of the level of care needed by our members and the geographical spread. He would discuss with GK and PR.

5.9 Website

The meeting thanked ES for offering her services with the website. AH would liaise with ES to pass over and/or share the responsibilities.

5.10 Regional Convenors

North - BH would check the situation.

Wessex - MC reported a potential replacement for Frances Wain and agreed to check the latest news.

The Committee agreed that a full discussion was needed at a future meeting. BPy proposed a meeting of and/or with the convenors and this was felt to be a useful idea.

5.11 Expenses

The Committee noted JW's helpful proposal, which gave him some flexibility to deal with expense claims, notably rail fares, and set new increased rates. See Annex One.

5.12 Future meetings

These were scheduled as follows. 20th June (Zoom), 26th September (hybrid) and 21st November (Zoom).

6. Any other business

On a proposal from BPy, the Committee extended its best wishes to MH for his forthcoming operation and wished him a speedy recovery.

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Annex One - Expenses

We agreed to review the rules about reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenditure. I attach our current rules, and the revised Financial Regulation of AIACE International, adopted last autumn. The amounts in the International rules are not very different from our current amounts. The International rules already include some flexibility in dealing with the costs of rail travel. I do not think we can expect to make hard and fast rules which will apply in all circumstances, and personally I am ready to bend the rules a little if there is a clear justification, and any unnecessary expenditure is avoided. We could increase the hotel and meal allowances a little: (hotel £130 a night, £165 London, daily subsistence £55, one meal £30).