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## **Belinda Pyke, 1952 - 2026**

Dear Members,

On behalf of the whole AIACE-UK national committee, I cannot overstate our shock and dismay as we learned of the death of our dear friend and colleague, Belinda Pyke, last week. Whilst attending a meeting of “Justice for Palestinians”, a cause that she was passionate about, on Thursday 26 March she collapsed and died in the early hours of Tuesday 31 without regaining consciousness.

Belinda was born in 1952 on the Wirral, close to Liverpool. After studies at the universities of Sussex and Warwick she worked for a maritime transport trade union which re-inforced her commitment to the UK Labour party. From the mid-1980s she worked in the private offices (*cabinets*) of three of the Commissioners nominated by the UK Labour party in the days when the larger Member States were allowed to nominate two commissioners each. They were Stanley Clinton Davis (responsible for transport, the environment and nuclear safety), Bruce Millan (regional policy) and Neil Kinnock (Commission Vice-President and transport).

When she joined the services of the Commission that variety of experience equipped her perfectly for senior posts in several directorates, culminating as Director for migration in DG Home. During her career she remained a staunch member of the Labour party and was president of the Brussels section of the party for over a decade.

She retired from the Commission in 2017 and immediately joined the UK section of AIACE, being elected a member of the committee at the AGM that year. From the outset Belinda was a lively and constructive contributor to our meetings and, in that first year, she and our Secretary joined forces to carry out a survey of the kinds of support that recent retirees returning to the UK might need. The results of that survey have informed our work ever since.

In 2022, after the pandemic, she took over the Editorship of “Connect”, our quarterly newsletter, and shortly afterwards became Convenor for the Oxford regional group, in which role her contribution was highly appreciated by members. Her successors in those roles will have big shoes to fill.

Outside AIACE Belinda was as active as ever, campaigning for the Labour party and standing as a candidate in local elections in Warwickshire. She was an effective fundraiser for a number of charities and following a three-month tour of duty with EAPPI (an ecumenical church programme dedicated to training human rights observers in Palestine and Israel) became a committed campaigner for a just peace settlement for the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank.

Belinda’s long career at the Commission and her dynamism made her many friends among staff of all nationalities. Many of them are now retired and members of their respective national sections of AIACE, they have sent us many generous tributes in her memory. A more comprehensive appreciation of her life and work than is possible in the confines of this letter will appear in the next issue of “Connect”. In the meantime, I will quote from the tribute to her by the President of the Italian Section:

*“ Belinda was a valued member of our wider European family — one of those rare individuals whose dedication to the ideals of European integration and to the community of retired EU staff was felt well beyond the borders of her own association. Her loss is a blow not only to AIACE UK, but to all of us who share the same mission and the same memories of a life devoted to Europe. ”*

Belinda is survived by her brother and a nephew. We extend to them our deepest condolences.

Yours in sorrow,

Tom Kennedy  
Chairman, AIACE-UK