**Restricted**

**Alumni Association**

**EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE**

**Executive Committee of the Alumni Association**

Minutes of the Fifth Meeting (2017-2018)

held on Friday, 24 August 2018, 3:30 pm CET via Zoom

**Present**:

Alumni Association Executive Committee:

BINDI, Federiga (FB)

CHIRICO, Alessandra (AC) (only present during first half of the meeting)

MARCO COLINO, Sandra (SM)

DI QUIRICO, Roberto (RQ)

**CHAIR**

FB chaired the meeting as the President of the Executive Committee (ExCo) of the Alumni Association (AA).

**WELCOME**
The Chair welcomed AC, SM and RQ to the meeting.

**M5-1 Minutes of the fourth meeting (2017-2018)**

The ExCo CONFIRMED the Minutes of the fourth meeting (2017-2018) held on 11 May 2018

**M5-2 Discussion with the EUI about the future relationship EUI-AA**

The ExCo discussed the best way forward regarding the AA’s future relationship with the EUI. AA members continue to ask for clarifications from the EUI on fundamental issues that have not yet been provided. While discussions in person with EUI representatives are clearly helpful, without something in writing then there is a risk of uncertainty. SMC recommended that after a meeting is held by any ExCo member with an EUI representative or member, that ExCo member send an email to the person with whom the meeting was held with confirming the main points discussed, so that this information can then be shared with Alumni.

SMC noted that no formal answer to the letter sent to the EUI President by FB on 5 June 2018 explaining our members' unhappiness with the changes was ever received. FB agreed to follow up on this by sending a chaser. Some of the important questions that would need to be clarified are:

* whether the @eui.eu email addresses will continue to work after they implement the intended change to @alumni.eui.eu (as was the case with the change from @iue.it). While it appears that verbal confirmation has been granted, there is nothing in writing yet;
* confirmation from the EUI that they will continue to inform new Alumni about the existence of the AA;
* since the EUI has stopped responding to the correspondence it receives at alumni@eui.eu, how AA members may communicate with the EUI going forward in relation to issues that the ExCo and the AA cannot resolve.

**M5-3 Communication strategy with AA members**

The ExCo members expressed assorted opinions as to how best to communicate with AA members. They agree that email should be kept to a minimum, yet the current level of communication needs to be increased. An email was sent by FB on 14 June 2018 with some very general information, and SMC put together a detailed memo (see attachment 1) which was circulated to the rest of the ExCo members but never sent to the AA members.

The ExCo agreed on the need to keep the AA members informed of all developments affecting the AA, and to establish channels for AA members to express their views and opinions on the future of the AA and what they expect from the now independent Association. On May 16 2018 a closed Facebook group was created under the name ‘European University Institute Alumni Association’. Membership requests are only accepted from those who specify when they were at the EUI and what they studied.

SMC suggested the possibility of sending out bi-monthly updates via a newsletter. The proposal will be discussed in the future.

**M5-4 Channel of communication between ExCo members**

The ExCo members have been communicated via Zoom. However, FB’s Zoom Pro subscription recently expired. She asked the ExCo members to approve the renewal of her subscription (circa 140 USD) to organise future meetings, to be paid with AA funds. SMC voted against this, explaining that there were other free ways to communicate which would be equally effective and would not have an impact on the AA’s budget. Since AC had left the meeting at this point, the measure did not gather enough support.

**M5- Next meeting**

The next meeting of the ExCo will take place in a month.

**M5-3 Any other business**

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

Confirmed on this of 2018

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Chair

**Attachment 1: Proposed Memo for AA Members (by SMC)**

**Update from the AA’s Executive Committee on the ‘New Relationship’ between the EUI and the AA**

Dear Alumni Association members,

As most of you are aware by now, the EUI is in the process re-defining its relationship with the Alumni Association (AA). This was discussed in the AA General Assembly held on 12 May 2018 (2018 GA), and will affect our rights and benefits. On 14 June 2018, an email was sent by Mr. Marco Incerti, the EUI’s Director of Communications Service, with some details that have further raised concerns among the AA members and the Alumni community. As your Executive Committee (ExCo), we write to you to 1) inform you of the situation, 2) express the concerns of AA members who have reached out to us, and 3) seek your views on these important changes, and 4) decide on a course of action for the AA that adequately defends your (our) rights.

**This is a crucial, delicate moment for the AA, and we need the support of all our members if our concerns are to be taken into consideration by the EUI. We therefore urge all of you to participate and engage in the discussion**.

**1. Changes to the AA and membership benefits**

* 1. The EUI no longer offers administrative support to the AA

Until now, the EUI took care of the day-to-day operations of the AA. This included, *inter alia*: running the AA website, <https://www.eui.eu/About/Alumni> (currently still active, but with no updates since July 2017); providing an online platform for membership renewal; alerting AA members of the expiration of their membership; managing the AA funds; organising AA ExCo elections; sending out Alumni cards to its members; keeping the AA database, with the personal data provided by AA members upon joining the AA.

The EUI has informed the ExCo that it will no longer be providing such services, and the AA will have to operate independently from the EUI. Thus far, the EUI has: transferred the AA funds into the AA’s bank account, opened by the ExCo earlier this year; and transferred some of the personal data of current AA members (see X below). On its part, the ExCo is in the process of creating an AA website, hiring a [PLEASE INSERT INFORMATION ABOUT THE PERSON WE HAVE HIRED FOR THIS], and setting up all the necessary ‘infrastructure’ for the AA to remain operational.

Complying with the mandate we were given by unanimity in the 2017 GA, the ExCo also obtained legal personality for the AA earlier this year—an essential step in the light of the future envisaged by the EUI for the Association. Moreover, having legal personality should also allow the AA to engage in a wider range of activities involving its members (e.g. by creating Alumni chapters and other gatherings), and to seek funding from external sources (e.g. grants, scholarships, etc).

* 1. The EUI will no longer provide the benefits that were previously attached to AA membership

Until now, the EUI provided AA members with the following benefits: the maintenance of the @eui.eu email address; library access, including the right to borrow books; WiFi access at the EUI premises; an annual printing quota of up to 500 pages.

The EUI will no longer provide these benefits to AA members. Instead, during the AA Mr. Incerti explained that the intention is to create a broader ‘Friends of the EUI’ (FoEUI) category, independently from the AA, which extends also to, *inter alia*, Fellows (Jean Monnet, Max Weber, Fernand Braudel, Marie Curie) and former Faculty members. It would offer the FoEUI the following benefits, free of charge: an email address which clearly reflects that FoEUI are not currently employed by the EUI (current proposals are @alumni.eui.eu and @friends.eui.eu); and library access, without the right to borrow books. The printing quota will be abolished, and it is currently unclear whether WiFi access at the EUI premises would be provided. Moreover, AA members (and/or FoEUI) are no longer to be automatically invited to the EUI’s Summer Ball or the State of the Union annual conference, as was the case until now.

In his email of 14 June 2018, and in response to some of the concerns raised by the AA President and various Alumni, Mr. Incerti explained that the EUI High Council had decided that those who have completed a PhD or LLM at the EUI would be provided with an @alumni.eui.eu email address, free of charge. The right to borrow books will be maintained for the same collective. No reference is made to the invitations to the June Ball and the State of the Union conference.

* 1. The definition of Alumni adopted by the EUI is much narrower than that in the AA Statute

The privileges referred to in Mr. Incerti’s letter of 14 June 2018 will only be granted to those holding a PhD or an LLM from the EUI.

**2. Concerns**

The AA members have expressed concerns about the changes imposed by the EUI. The ExCo has received substantial feedback from many AA members via email, the AA Facebook page, and during the 2018 GA. The main concerns are summed up below.

2.1 AA members value current membership benefits

It is clear that AA members greatly value **all** membership benefits the EUI plans to remove. Crucially, the @eui.eu email address is particularly important. AA members have paid for these for years, in some cases decades, in the reasonable expectation that they would be able to preserve them indefinitely. Moreover, AA members also see wish to continue to be able to participate in the Summer Ball and the State of the Union conference, which are occasions to keep in contact with and return to their *alma mater*. Since none of these perks will be given to the FoEUI, they will simply be lost.

The AA members we have heard from thus far prefer to continue to pay for these benefits rather than see them being drastically reduced/removed through the FoEUI initiative.

2.2 The benefits attached to the FoEUI category are uncertain

No guarantees have been offered as to the **continuity** of the perks the EUI intends to give Alumni directly. Just like it has now unilaterally decided to remove AA membership benefits, in the future it could decide to stop granting FoEUI benefits, or to abolish all rights granted to Alumni. Moreover, there is no assurance that those benefits **will always be free of charge**. And if, at some point, they decide to start charging for these, the money will no longer be destined to Alumni affairs, as is currently the case under the AA.

2.3 Impact of the changes on the future of the AA

The ExCo has been working extremely hard to take all the necessary steps to ensure that the AA can continue to operate under these circumstances. Naturally, it is having to invest significant AA funds in setting up the necessary structure to operate without the administrative support of the EUI. Importantly, the EUI’s removal of the membership benefits also means that paying AA fees is now less attractive, and this could well have a significant impact on the AA’s finances—precisely at a time when we need financial resources more than ever.

Beyond the membership benefits dependent on the EUI, the ExCo has been actively organising activities and developing initiatives for the benefit of its members, and hopes that the next ExCo will continue to work to this end. But again, these require funding, and therefore we need to ensure that AA membership meets the expectations of current and future members.

2.4 The need for transparency and support from the EUI

It is clear that AA members wish to operate with, and not against, the EUI. In part, we are members of the AA precisely because we want to maintain close links with the Institute. And the AA **needs** the support of the EUI. In this sense, the unilateral decisions taken by the EUI with regard to the AA are rather disappointing, and to this day remain unexplained. While the EUI’s desire to liaise with a wider Alumni community may be well-intentioned, such an endeavour a) should not be incompatible with a closer relationship with AA members, and b) could even be achieved *in collaboration* with the AA. Trying to reach out to a larger community while ‘alienating’ an association with almost 1,000 members appears to be rather counterintuitive.

We need clarity and transparency from the EUI as to the future it envisages for the AA, and the extent to which it will continue to support the Association. We are told that the ‘new relationship’ imposed on us was discussed and agreed by former EUI President Joseph Weiler and former AA President Despina Chatzimanoli, but to this date we have not been given any specific details of these discussions. Moreover, Despina’s farewell message ([https://www.facebook.com/notes/european-university-institute-alumni-association/farewell-message-from-the-aa-president-and-next-elections-28-november-2016/1292452744108511/)](https://www.facebook.com/notes/european-university-institute-alumni-association/farewell-message-from-the-aa-president-and-next-elections-28-november-2016/1292452744108511/%29) paints a very different picture. In fact, she explains that the discussions with Weiler were veered towards making the AA ‘an integral part of the EUI’. Moreover, according to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) agreed by the AA in the 2016 GA, the EUI would continue to provide ‘financial, HR [and] organisational’ support to the AA. The MoU was, according to Despina, never approved by the EUI.

The absence of transparency and support from the EUI risks jeopardizing the efforts of the AA members to ensure the proper functioning of the AA. By way of example, in 2017, at a time when the EUI was still fully in charge of the administrative side of the AA, the EUI decided to stop notifying AA members that their membership was about to expire, and did so without informing the ExCo. The non-renewal of almost a third of memberships had a significant impact on the budget of the AA, and jeopardized the continuity of the membership privileges for those affected. We find this regrettable.

2.5 Transfer of personal data to the AA

Following multiple requests, on [INSERT DATE] the EUI finally transferred the personal data of the current AA members to the ExCo. [INSERT EXPLANATION OF CURRENT SITUATION, AND THE PROPOSALS PUT FORWARD BY THE EUI **OR** SAY THAT FURTHER DETAILS WILL BE PROVIDED ABOUT THIS LATER].

**3. Seeking your views**

In view of this situation, the ExCo needs to get a full understanding of the views of the AA members. The two issues that We have created a closed Facebook group to facilitate the discussion, and have asked you questions about membership preferences. Thus far, it is clear that you value your current privileges [INSERT MORE DETAILS RELATING TO THE COMMENTS RECEIVED THUS FAR]

**4. Course of action**

We would greatly welcome your suggestions for a course of action in order to raise our concerns with the EUI. We suggest the following:

* Comment on our Facebook group [INSERT LINK];
* Arrange a meeting [SUGGESTIONS: Zoom? Online “chatroom”? Date? Time?];
* OTHER?

We look forward to hearing from you very soon.

Best wishes,

Federiga, Alessandra, Sandra and Roberto