



## THE UFE MEETS THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION



Fernand Muller

Lotte Taylor

Serge Colin

Giving a positive answer to the President of the UFE, M. Algirdas SEMETA – the European Commissioner for Tax and Customs Affairs – set up a meeting in Brussels on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 2011. He previously gave floor to Mrs Lotte TAYLOR, one of his assistant, for collecting all the claims of the UFE that were included in the resolutions voted during the Conference of the UFE hold in Lisbon last September.

Mr TAYLOR welcoming was warm and she paid thorough attention to the different subjects presented by Serge COLIN and Fernand MULLER, the President of the Tax Committee.

At first, Serge COLIN reminded that our organisation was claiming for a stop in job cuts in the European tax and customs administrations. He also stressed the need to fight efficiently against tax fraud especially in this period of international crisis when issues such as budgets deficits lead to specific consideration on tax and customs income.

The President of the UFE quoted, in this way, the former European Commissioner, M. Lazlo KOVACS' survey, which was mentioning the lack in staff in the financial administrations in the various member States, as the main cause of the rise of fraud and VAT fraud particularly. It seems that this survey, conducted for the European Council and Parliament, was currently left unanswered by the politicians.

Mrs TAYLOR took good note of the intention of the UFE of re initiating this debate throughout the questioning of the members of governments and the Europeans deputies, in particular by asking them for meetings and throughout press release with the aim of making public opinions aware of this problem.

Then the conversation went on the need to value the “output” of the financial staff compared to their number, their efficiency in terms of tax yield (tax bases, tax collected and audits) at a period when reduced budgets are striking almost every financial administrations throughout Europe.

On these topics, Serge Colin and Fernand Muller attempted to demonstrate that in front of the spending constituted by the wages paid to the employees, there really was an identified economic social yield and that the rate of profitability could be stated in between a bracket from 2 to 10 - even more! – for, if the fight against tax fraud were more efficient there would be a definitive demonstration (should that be still necessary!) of the extreme usefulness of the financial employees in the good management of the public finances of the European states.

Fernand Muller, moreover, underlined the main points of the final resolution voted by the Conference of the UFE, by stressing for instance that the UFE was in favour on the implementation of a tax on financial transactions. Mrs TAYLOR added that this particular point, was carried forward by several heads of governments and that the works were going with real chances of success.

As regard the customs issues, the President of the UFE (our friend Klaus-Hilger LEPRICH- the President of the Customs Committee - detained in Berlin because of an overbooked agenda) insisted on some topics such as the safety of the staff (but also the one of the consumer) linked to the use of toxic gas in goods containers. Mrs TAYLOR agreed on the reality of this matter and stressed that this latter was cause of concern. She invited the UFE to get into contact with Mrs Eva TOROK (whose addresses she gave at once the following day, by e-mail to Serge COLIN). Mrs Eva TOROK, is the Labour and Social Affairs European Commissioner, M. ANDOR's principal private secretary. We, therefore, will very quickly ask for an interview both to carry on to heighten the public awareness on this serious issue and to bring forward the claims of our customs colleagues on their working conditions as well as the health concerns for them and for consumers of the goods transported in those containers.

Beyond the discussions on the claims of the resolution that the Customs Committee of the UFE had prepared, Mrs TAYLOR, took notice of the wish of the President of the UFE to meet as soon as possible her colleagues in M. SEMMETA team, in order to deal with specific topics such as fraud or the actual trend of tax and customs rules within Europe, for instance.

She said that she would do all necessary to make the contact easier in the short time.