Ghent, the cradle of the cooperative movement in Belgium

The Mayor of Ghent, Daniel Termont, opened wide the doors of his City Hall to launch the 5th AMICE Congress. The opening cocktail reception was held in the magnificent Salle de la Pacification, in reference to the signing of a peace treaty between Spain and the Netherlands in 1576.

Hilde Vernaillen, President of AMICE, and Bernard Thiry, President of the Association of Belgian Mutual and Cooperative Insurers (UAAM/VVOV), both highlighted the importance of the city of Ghent for Belgian mutualists. It was in this very city that the cooperative movement was born in Belgium at the end of the 19th century, starting with the bakers’ and weavers’ co-operatives.

They also pointed to the beauty of Ghent, which is every bit as impressive as Bruges, its neighbour known as the Venice of the North. Ghent is indeed one of the European cities that must be seen.

The evening was also the occasion for Sarah Goddard, the future Secretary General of AMICE, to be introduced. She will be taking up her duties on 1 August.

#MutualValues: securing the future

#AMICECongress
General Meeting

Hilde Vernaillen, President of the Association since 2013, opened the General Meeting by sharing her vision for the partnership between AMICE and ICMIF. The outgoing President stressed that by working together, these two associations will be stronger, bigger and have a global scope, by developing coherent and joint messages for the attention of political decision-makers and both the European and international media, sharing their resources, and establishing a wider network.

Commissions & Secretariat

The Chairs of the Association’s three Commissions, Grzegorz Buczkowski (Promotion), Patrik Schinzel (Advocacy) and Jorge Vázquez (Assistance), reported on the activities and results recorded in their respective areas of responsibility since the last General Meeting. Next, Helen Sheppard, Deputy Secretary General, reported on the activities of the Secretariat and informed the participants about the affiliation of two new members to the association since May 2015, namely Curalia (BE) and Previsión Sanitaria Nacional (PSN) (ES). This raises the number of members in the Association to 104 plus three observers.

Treasurer’s Report

The Treasurer of the Association, Robert Lilli, presented the financial report and the 2015 accounts were approved by the General Meeting. A deficit of 199,772 EUR was recorded in the financial report and the 2015 accounts were approved by the General Meeting. The Treasurer of the Association, Róbert Lilli, presented the Treasurer’s Report.

Changes to the statutes of the Association

In order to allow AMICE and ICMIF to become combined, the General Meeting approved modifications to the articles of association and the addition of a transitional provision as proposed by the Board.

Budgets

The revised budget for 2016 and the budget for 2017, set at 998,000 EUR and 1,087,000 EUR respectively, were approved by the General Meeting.

Changes to governing bodies

The General Meeting took note of the end of the mandate of the current Board and approved the election of new members for a three-year term.

Hilde Vernaillen thanked the outgoing members of the Board: Arnaud Chneiweiss (GEMA, FR), Patrice Forget, (Covéa, FR), Markus Hongler (Swiss Mobiliar, CH), and Patrik Schinzel (Folksam, SE), and congratulated the new members elected to the Board: Odilo Bürgy, (Swiss Mobiliar, CH), Stéphane Cossé (Covéa, FR) and Anne Mounolou (AAM, FR).

The General Meeting elected Grzegorz Buczkowski (Tuw Skok, PL) from among the members of the Board as the new President of the Association for a three-year term. Christophe Ollivier (FMNF, FR) was elected to the position of Vice-President, and Wolfgang Weiler (HUK-Coburg, DE) was re-elected as Treasurer. The outgoing President congratulated them and wished them success in guiding the burgeoning partnership between AMICE and ICMIF.

Finally, the General Meeting elected the Nominations Committee, which is made up of Huub Arendse (Achmea, NL), Grzegorz Buczkowski (Tuw Skok, PL), Robert Lilli (KÖBE, HU), Christophe Ollivier (FMNF, FR), Ann Sommer (Länsförsäkringar, SE), and Wolfgang Weiler (HUK-Coburg, DE).

The next General Assembly will take place on 8 June 2017 in Brussels.

QBE Re Workshop, Thursday, 2 June at 8.00

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An illustration of the impact of open borders on the insurance sector

The free movement of persons is a fundamental right guaranteed by the European Union to its citizens. The Schengen Area was established in order to facilitate trade within Europe. This influences our everyday lives and leads us to reflect beyond our borders. Through the example of road accidents in other countries and the green-card system, this session, organised by QBE Re, was designed to illustrate the impact of free movement on third-party liability insurance as well as to explain its impact on reinsurace prices. Aurélien Dubois, Senior Technical Advisor at QBE Re since 2010 led this workshop with 25 participants this morning. He will also present a case study on optimising reinsurance to free up capital during the session IV of the Congress.

QBE Re is the reinsurance division of the QBE Insurance Group, one of the world’s top 20 reinsurers.

From past to present: a valuable model

While mutual and cooperative insurance companies are active in Europe and throughout the world and the sector has grown steadily since the most recent financial crisis in 2008, there are still many people, including many policymakers, who are not familiar with the business model of mutual and cooperative insurers and how it works.

In order to overcome this lack of knowledge or understanding, the Promoting working group decided to offer a panorama of mutuals and cooperative insurance companies and to raise the awareness of the public and policymakers by means of a publication on their origins and their current activities.

The working group and the Secretariat have worked in close cooperation with the AMICE members in order to collect their stories. This publication, which contains 18 stories from 13 different countries, sheds light on the unique features of the mutual and cooperative insurance sector. All these companies are united by their common mutual values although each one of them has a unique history and diverse activities that deserve to be known and recognised. Solidarity and collaborative values are the foundation of the mutual insurance movement and have kept it alive to this day.

The publication was presented for the first time to members and participants of the AMICE Congress in Ghent. It will subsequently be sent out to all members of the Association as well as to all stakeholders. Over the summer, a digital version of this brochure, including all the articles that AMICE members have sent to the Secretariat, will also be published.