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Committee on Budgetary Control

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NOTICE TO MEMBERS

Subject: Answers to Questionnaire on the discharge for implementation of the European Union general budget for the financial year 2008.

Section I - European Parliament

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General questions

1. Rule 207, paragraph 1 of Parliament's Rules of Procedure

According to Rule 207, paragraph 1 of Parliament's Rules of Procedure the Secretary-General shall "perform his duties conscientiously and with absolute impartiality". "Impartial" means "not giving special favour or support to any one person or group"

Could the Secretary-General explain to the Committee his feelings about this requirement of "absolute impartiality"?

Would a professional manager from the outside world be in a better position to comply with this requirement than a manager with background in a political group? If not, why not?

According to art. 23.9 of the internal Rules of Procedure, the Bureau appoints the Secretary General. The Bureau is therefore also responsible for the choice of the most appropriate profile to cover this function and can judge upon the requirements of impartiality and professionalism of the candidates.

The present Secretary General has been appointed by the Bureau unanimously.

Doing so, the Bureau confirmed a tradition, in place for many years now, to entrust the position of Secretary General of the Institution - and indeed the position of Deputy Secretary General - to personalities with a proven track record both in the Administration and the political groups.

Both the two previous Secretary Generals, as well as the two previous Deputy Secretary Generals, had been Secretary General of a political group - in those cases the Socialist Group and the former European Democratic Group (Conservatives).

2. Administrative and political responsibility

In order to act in "absolute impartiality" it would seem necessary to distinguish between on the one side the professional administrative management of a parliament and on the other side, the political objectives set by the political leadership of the same parliament.

On the basis of which criteria is the Secretary-General able to distinguish between matters falling under the responsibility of the administrative managers and matters falling under the responsibility of the political leadership?

Could the Secretary-General inform the Committee whether the criteria used in the European Parliament to distinguish between the administrative sphere and the political sphere are in accordance with international good practice in this area?

Which good practices can be drawn from national parliaments' experiences in identifying the borderline between the administrative sphere and the political sphere?

As laid down in art.207 of the internal Rules of Procedure "the Secretary-General shall give a solemn undertaking before the Bureau to perform his duties conscientiously and with absolute impartiality".

When appointed, the Secretary-General has given such an undertaking and intends to keep this engagement.

The European Parliament has independently decided about the respective responsibilities of the political leadership and the Administration by adopting its rules.

The administrative management executes decisions taken by the political leadership and in the framework defined by it.

The Bureau and the Conference of Presidents are regularly informed about the decisions taken falling under the responsibilities of the Secretary General.

There are no international standards and it can be said that the EP as the only parliament organising a continental democracy and independent from the executives would be the American Congress, but the comparison would be difficult.

On the other side, the administrative culture and historical experience in national parliaments varies so much between them that no standard model can be identified that would serve as a benchmark.

3. Article 199 of the Treaty

Article 199 of the Treaty states that "The European Parliament shall adopt its Rules of Procedure, acting by a majority of its Members." This is the basis for what commonly is referred to as Parliament's autonomous right to decide its own internal organisation.

*How comprehensive is this right, according to the view of the Secretary-General?
Does the Secretary-General believe that there is some kind of limitation to this right - if so, which?*

The right to establish its own rules of procedure has served Parliament well in its history allowing it to more and more establish itself as a fully fledged legislator strengthening in relation to the other institutions. The struggle to establish a strong democratic Chamber for 500 million citizens has progressed very much but is not yet finalised so the instrument continues to be important and needs to be used with responsibility, creativity and imagination.

The limits are in the respect of the law, but also in the respect of legitimate expectations of smaller groups and minorities.

The responsibility for the amending of the Rules of Procedure lies with the Political Authority.

Art 202.2 of internal Rules of procedure, clearly states that: *"Any Member may propose amendments to these Rules and to the annexes thereto accompanied, if appropriate, by short justifications.*

Such proposed amendments shall be translated, printed, distributed and referred to the committee responsible, which shall examine them and decide whether to submit them to Parliament.

The same article adds that: (...) *"amendments to these Rules shall be adopted only if they secure the votes of a majority of the component Members of Parliament"*.

The General Secretariat, therefore, is not involved in this process.

4. Decentralisation of financial management

4.1. *Which measures have been taken in order to ensure that - after decentralization of financial management and control - administrative rules and procedures are implemented up to the same standards across the institution?*

The Financial Regulation of 25 June 2002, which came into effect on 1 January 2003, introduced fundamental changes in the concepts underlying internal control and in the implementation of the budget by all EU institutions. These changes reflect the principles of decentralisation and the assumption of full responsibility by authorising officers.

As a result of the changes, Authorising Officers by delegation are responsible for putting in place internal control and management systems that will give reasonable assurance of attaining the three key objectives of the process (compliance with laws, regulations and policies; reliable management information and recording systems; economy, effectiveness and efficiency of operations). Within Parliament's administration, the powers of authorising officers by delegation are exercised by the 11 Directors-General and by 1 Director.

However, as internal control is to be regarded as a process, effected by staff at all levels of the organisation, a decentralised system of this sort can only work effectively if complemented by a number of accompanying structures and measures. In Parliament, these are as follows:

- 1) a control framework headed by a Principal Authorising Officer by delegation (PAOD) who can call on AODs at any time for analyses and advice. The institution has adopted Minimum Standards of Internal Control, with which Authorising Officers by delegation must comply in implementing the process. The standards are based on five interrelated control components. Together, these five components and the three key objectives constitute the Internal Control Framework (ICF);
- 2) an elaborate set of regulations, rules and guidelines, available on the DG FINS website;
- 3) a central IT system for financial management, integrating both general accounting (FINICS) and budgetary accounting (FINORD), and designed to leave a detailed audit trail;
- 4) specific reporting requirements, as defined by the Internal Rules;
- 5) central support structures (Budget / Accounting / Central financial Units / the Legal Service, the Public Procurement Forum) which supply budgetary and financial advice to spending departments, oversee processes and procedures, set standards and advise on their implementation.

The oversight role implies a degree of central responsibility for the systemic adequacy of the ICF, which complements, but in no way reduces, the responsibility of individual Authorising Officers by delegation. This role is assumed, on behalf of the Principal Authorising Officer by Delegation, chiefly by DG Finance (in its role as principal advisor on budgetary implementation), and in particular, by its Central Financial Unit ("CFU").

6) internal and external auditors who target their checks on the basis of risk analyses, i.e. focussing on areas where the stakes are significant and where they consider that weaknesses might exist. Parliament's Internal Auditor has conducted several reviews of the Institution's Internal Control Framework. He reports to an Audit Panel made up of three of Parliament's Vice-Presidents. The Internal Audit Service was previously located within a Directorate-General but since 01/09/2009 has been attached at its own request to the Office of the Secretary-General. Attaching the Internal Auditor at the highest administrative level of the organisation ensures the Internal Auditor's independence and is in line with international auditing standards and best practices.

4.2. For several years the Committee on Budgetary control has stressed - in the context of the discussions on the Commission discharge report - that proper implementation of minimum internal control standards is not in itself and automatically sufficient to ensure the efficient and effective functioning of the internal control system. This is also reflected in Article 60 (7) in the Financial Regulation which states that the authorising officers shall in their annual activity report indicate

- "the results of the operations by reference to the objectives set"
- "the risks associated with these operations"
- "the use made of the resources provided"
- "the efficiency and effectiveness of the internal control system".

Were all the required analyses included in all annual activity reports for 2008? If not, why not?

Overall, the Secretary-General's instructions for establishment of the 2008 annual activity reports were respected, although there were variations with regard to certain sections. Thus, for example, while all DGs indicated the results of operations by reference to the objectives set and almost all reported on the use of resources allocated to them, fewer DGs indicated the risks associated with their operations or reported on the working of their internal control systems. This was no doubt due to the fact that the instructions for the drafting of the 2008 annual activity reports left the Authorizing Officers by delegation greater latitude in the manner in which they reported, notably on their internal control systems. The instructions for the 2009 reports were stricter in this regard.

4.3. What is the Secretary-General's opinion on the quality of the authorising officers' description of the "efficiency and effectiveness of the internal control system" having in mind that the authorising officers also are responsible for establishing "the control procedures suited to the performance of his/her duties" (Financial Regulation, Article 60(4))?

The Secretary-General's predecessor signed a declaration in February 2009 with respect to financial year 2008. That declaration contained no reservation or qualification. It was based on the declarations signed by the Authorising Officers by delegation, on the control framework put in place within the Institution, on the internal audit reports received and on all the other information available to the then Secretary-General.

The incumbent Secretary-General will be in a position to assess the process in relation to the Annual Activity Reports for 2009 and to the declaration which he will be required to draw up in that connexion.

The instructions for the 2009 reports were devised by the Secretary-General with a view to further enhancing and harmonising the information supplied in the reports, which underlies the Authorising Officers' declarations. Those instructions aim in particular to ensure fuller reporting on departmental control systems, to be assessed by reference to the Institution's Minimum Standards of Internal Control.

4.4. According to the actual wording of Article 60 of the Financial Regulation it appears that those responsible for the setting up of the internal control system are the same as those who shall evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the same system. In colloquial terms this set up could be described as a situation in which the inmates are running the asylum.

Bearing in mind that the Authorising Officers' Annual Activity Reports and declarations are the basis for the Principal Authorising Officer's declaration of assurance the Committee would like to know

- Whether the Secretary-General as principal authorising officer by delegation and as the one who gives an overall assurance declaration feels confident as to the Authorising Officers' management of what seems to be a conflict of interests?

Article 60 §4 of the Financial Regulation as adopted in 2002 required the Authorising Officer by delegation "to report to his institution on the performance of his duties in the form of an annual activity report" and specified that the report "shall indicate the way the internal control system functions".

In 2006, the EU legislator revised the wording of this provision to require that the annual activity report "indicate the efficiency and effectiveness of the internal control system". Parliament's Authorising Officers by delegation seek to fulfil this requirement as factually and objectively as they can.

However, as stated in reply to question 4 above, the Authorising Officer is not alone in evaluating his control system. This assessment is conducted at the technical level by the Secretary-General with the help of the central services, and at the political level of course by the discharge authority.

- Whether the Secretary-General carries out his own analysis of the quality of the Authorising Officers' declarations?

The general control framework put in place within Parliament is designed to ensure that the Authorising Officers' declarations satisfy the required quality criteria. To underline the importance of those quality criteria, the Secretary-General's instructions for the 2009 Annual Activity Reports drew Authorising Officers' attention to the need to respect those instructions including the standard format for the declaration. These are designed to permit analyses of the reports and declarations to be conducted in an appropriate manner as a basis for the Secretary-General's own declaration.

4.5. *Does the Secretary-General - having regard to the fact that all Parliament's activities are high risk activities - believe that there is a need to improve the **protection** of the institution's political and administrative leadership and if so how?*

The Secretary-General is aware that the Internal Auditor has drawn attention to the need to adopt and deploy an institution-wide risk management framework, which should go beyond purely financial risks to encompass all types of major risks to which the Institution may be exposed. Important steps have been taken towards introducing such a framework, and further decisions on the matter will be taken in the future.

The Secretary General intends to establish a risk management function directly attached to his office in the course of 2010.

4.6. *Does the accounting officer - or another "prudential function" next to management - assume responsibility for the integrity of the financial statements and the internal control system as a whole?*

Because of a revision of the Financial Regulation, the Accounting Officer has been required as from the presentation of the final accounts for 2005 to certify that he has "*reasonable assurance that the accounts present a true and fair view of the financial situation of the institution*". Amongst the most important of his prerogatives in this domain are those of laying down the accounting rules and methods and the chart of accounts; of keeping and presenting these accounts; and of laying down and validating the central accounting system, as well as validating departmental systems laid down by the Authorising Officers insofar as they supply or justify accounting information. The Accounting Officer is empowered to carry out any check he deems necessary in order to sign off the accounts. He shall make reservations, if necessary. This is the framework within which the Accounting Officer exercises his role as defined by the Financial Regulation.

Responsibility for the overall internal control system, which covers more than the purely financial side of the Institution's activity, lies with the Secretary-General, as principal Authorising Officer by delegation. Authorising Officers are indeed fully responsible for the funds they manage as well as the legality and regularity of the expenditure under their control.

4.7. *Would the institution's political and administrative leadership be better protected if Authorising Officers' declarations as well as the Principal Authorising Officer's declaration were countersigned by a "prudential function" - accountant, "controller", Chief Financial Officer - at the same level as the Authorising Officers and the Principal Authorising Officer?*

Does the Secretary-General believe that he would be in a more comfortable position when signing the assurance declaration if the institution's Internal Auditor issued a formal audit opinion on the declaration given by the "prudential function"?

The Secretary-General does not consider that such an arrangement would be in keeping with the principles underlying a decentralised system of management.

5. Derogations from and exceptions to the applicable rules and regulations

5.1. There is a relative big difference in the number of derogations/exceptions reported by the Authorising Officers (from 0 to 28).

What is the total of budgetary transactions against which the 28 derogations/exceptions should be mirrored?

These 28 derogations relate to 52 budgetary operations in one Directorate-General. These have to be set against a total of 3084 operations processed in 2008 (498 commitments, 2450 payment orders and 136 recovery orders).

5.2. *Does the high number of derogations/exceptions in some Directorates indicate that a culture of "management by exception" is developing in these Directorates?*

One of the principles of management in general is that top management should deal mainly with strategic issues, as well as with specific operational issues deserving their attention. Parliament's internal control system recognises the validity of this approach. Thus, for example, Article 8 §7 of the Internal Rules for implementation of its budget require Authorising Officers by delegation, in addition to their regular reports to the Principal Authorising Officer by delegation, to inform him of "*substantial transactions likely to have significant financial implications for the budget, and of how those transactions have proceeded, at the conclusion of those transactions*"; and to inform him "*in good time of any significant event that might jeopardise the sound management of appropriations or prevent the objectives set from being achieved*".

It should also be acknowledged that derogations may not always be avoided and are acceptable, provided that they are properly documented and justified. Where an *ex ante* verifier considers that a transaction does not comply with applicable rules or procedures, he should withhold endorsement. Withholding of endorsement provides evidence of the

proper functioning of internal controls and of management's concern for transparency. The absence of any withholdings of visa might in fact indicate certain malfunctions in internal controls. Having too few exceptions should raise questions in the same way as having too many.

5.3. *Which measures has the Secretary-General taken to strengthen central financial services aiming at 1) avoiding different management cultures in different Directorates-General and 2) ensuring freedom for management as well as transparency and sound financial management?*

As explained in the reply to question 4, the Secretary-General considers that Parliament's internal control framework is generally adequate. Nevertheless, as part of the process of continuous improvement of operations on which it is embarked, the Secretary General envisages the following action:

- further development of objective-setting, and the introduction of a general risk management framework;
- reviewing the minimum internal control standards;
- enhancing the control and risk self-assessment exercises;
- introducing peer reviews of Authorising Officers' annual activity reports and of their declarations to be coordinated by DG Fins.

5.4. *In 2008 the Director-Generals reported in total 78 derogations/exceptions as regards the applicable rules and regulations. Against how many budgetary commitments and payments shall these 78 exceptions be mirrored?*

The 78 derogations relating to 102 budgetary operations have to be mirrored against a total of 31.085 budgetary transactions (7.410 commitments and 23.675 payment orders) executed in 2008, i.e. 0,33% of that total. By normal standards, that percentage would be considered not material.

5.5. *The Committee would appreciate an overview of the 78 exceptions indicating in particular*
1) area of activity,
2) reason for the exception (political imperatives, objective urgencies, insufficient management and/or forward planning,) and
3) the lessons learned and actions taken by the Secretary-General to reduce the number of exceptions.

Overview of the 78 derogations per area of activity:

Area of activity	PRES	EXPO	IPOL	COM	PERS	INLO	TRAD	INTE	FINS	ITEC	SJ	Total
Procurement		13		2	6					2		23
Budgetary procedures	26	4	2	4		5			1	3		45
Others	2	1	1	3	2	1						10
Total	28	18	3	9	8	6	0	0	1	5	0	78
No. of commitments	498	271	494	1.684	656	1.508	347	310	123	1.439	80	7410
No. of orders	2.450	395	671	2.618	2.921	4.508	3.791	770	1.583	3.892	76	23.675
Total operations	2.948	666	1.165	4.302	3.577	6.016	4.138	1.080	1.706	5.331	156	31.085
Derogations as % of operations	0,950%	2,703%	0,258%	0,209%	0,224%	0,100%	0,000%	0,000%	0,059%	0,094%	0,000%	0,251%

The reported derogations relate to (a) *procurement*, (b) *budgetary acts*, and (c) *others*.

- a) As regards procurement, some AODs stated that they had not always been able to use the procurement procedures required by the Financial Regulations for the cases in question. Most frequently, highly specialised services or products with few potential suppliers, or short notice periods, were given as grounds for not adhering to the rules.
- b) A majority of exceptions concerning budgetary procedures related to breaches of the rules regarding prior budgetary commitments or annuality, and the use of inappropriate budget lines.
- c) Other exceptions related to the absence of appropriate delegations, inventory management, or differences between goods or services ordered and those actually delivered.

As stated in reply to the previous question, the volume of derogations at 0,33% of all operations does not give rise to particular concern. The low level of derogations itself reflects the fact that measures have been taken over the last few years, at both central and departmental levels, to remedy systemic shortcomings identified in Parliament's internal control framework. Nevertheless, Authorising Officers by delegation draw the necessary conclusions from any derogations arising and take such measures as they can to prevent recurrence.

6. The declaration of the Principal Authorising Officer by delegation

As Principal Authorising Officer by delegation the Secretary-General shall issue a declaration as to whether Parliament's budget has been implemented in accordance with the principles of sound financial management and as to whether the control framework put in place provides the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of the underlying operations (Internal Rules on the Implementation of the European Parliament's Budget, Article 8, paragraph 9-11).

This declaration shall be sent to the President of the European Parliament and the Committee on Budgetary Control and the former Secretary-General's declaration regarding the financial year 2008 was sent on 4 March 2009.

In his declaration of 4 March 2009 the former Secretary-General

- *certified* that he has a reasonable assurance that Parliament's budget has been implemented in accordance with the principles of sound financial management and that the control framework put in place provides the necessary guarantees as to the legality and regularity of the underlying operations
- *noted* that no authorising officer had entered formal qualifications in his or her declaration.

On the other hand: In the Internal Auditor's Annual Report for 2008 the Internal Auditor informs that 88 recommended actions and four recommended critical actions are still uncompleted.

6.1. *How it is possible to have reasonable assurance when a large number of actions aiming at tightening the internal control system have not been carried out and when there still is a rather important number of "Exceptions to the rules"?*

(See also reply to Question 12 on outstanding central action plans)

In no internal control system, no matter how sophisticated and costly to run, is it possible to guarantee that processes will be error-free. Authorising Officers by delegation declare that they have a "reasonable assurance" that the information included in their reports is free of material mis-statements or error, and that all relevant information has been included. This does not mean that no errors have been made or that there is no room for improvement. The answer to question 12 outlines that most of the actions pertaining to Parliament's internal control framework have been implemented. The remaining actions have been assessed as less urgent and will be implemented as soon as possible taking into account external developments.

The declarations signed by Authorising Officers by delegation / Directors-General certify that, in their respective fields of responsibility, the resources made available have been used for the appointed purposes and in accordance with the principles of legality, regularity and sound financial management.

Within their areas of competence, Authorising Officers constantly strive to improve the operational processes. They are helped in that respect by the central support services and by the recommendations of the internal and external auditors aimed at reducing their exposure to risk.

6.2. Under which circumstances shall qualifications/reservations be mentioned? Are there common rules on when qualifications/reservations shall be entered or is it a matter for the individual Authorising Officer's appreciation?

Article 8 §11 of the Internal Rules for implementation of Parliament's budget provides as follows on this point:

"The declaration may be accompanied by specific reservations drawing attention to risks associated with the transactions and measures managed by the directorate-general or service concerned. Such reservations may contain remarks by the authorising officer by delegation on the management of operations inherited from his predecessor(s). Reservations must not have the effect of negating the substance of the declaration but may draw attention to inadequacies in the planning or implementation of internal control and management systems, in which case, the measures which the authorising officer by delegation has taken or proposes to take to remedy the situation shall also be indicated (as shall the time scale for their implementation)."

Further guidance on the subject of reservations was provided in the Secretary-General's instructions for establishment of the 2004 Annual Activity Reports and is annexed to the present document.

7. Objectives for 2008 - 2009

By note of 19 November 2007 (D(2007)70542) to the Directors-General the Secretary-General set the following objectives for 2008 - 2009:

- Preparing for application of the Lisbon Treaty
- Preparing for the 2009 European elections so as to help reverse the voter turnout trend
- Stepping up services for Members
- Reforming and consolidating the General Secretariat of Parliament.

Which criteria for measuring the degree of success were established?

On the basis of these criteria, how well did the Secretariat-General achieve the objectives in 2008?

Which lessons has the Secretary General drawn from any unsatisfactory achievements of the objectives in 2008?

Lisbon

While interrupted because of the negative outcome of the Irish and Dutch referenda, the preparation for the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty was resumed by the present Secretary General. These measures were already reflected in the 2010 budget and the main part of it will be decided and financed through the 2010 Lisbon Amending Budget. The preparation of Parliament for the new Treaty will be completed in the framework of the 2011 budget. It is therefore too early to draw conclusions.

Preparation for European elections

During one of the incoming meetings, the Bureau will discuss the outcome of the information campaign for the European elections 2009, based on the works of the working group of the Bureau on Communication policy. The results of such an evaluation will be forwarded to the Committee on Budgetary Control.

Services for Members

During the last years the stepping up of services for members has become a priority for the Secretary General.

Several measures and new projects have been established (such as, for instance, the "ad personam" interpretation service and the Briefing Service of the Library). Beside, the majority of the new posts were allocated to the services more closely involved in the legislative activity (parliamentary committees).

This process is not over and will be continued in the forthcoming year.

Reform of the General Secretariat

A complete overview of the restructuring measures adopted in 2008 is provided for in point 16. All of these decisions taken by the Bureau have been successfully implemented.

8. Risk based sound financial management

The financial resources of the European Parliament are taxpayers' money. Any institution using public funds has an obligation to explain how these funds have been used and to give comprehensive, objective and relevant information on the degree to which the funds have been used for the intended purposes and in accordance with the principles of sound financial management (Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness).

In this perspective and having regard to the well-known high reputational risk involved in the activities of the European Parliament it would have been ambitious and forward-looking to include in the objectives new ideas and strategies aiming at strengthening the European Parliament's accountability towards European taxpayers.

However, the identification and achievement of world class sound financial management in the European Parliament and full transparency to European citizens on how Parliament uses public funds was not among the objectives for 2008 - 2009.

Which measures has the Secretary-General taken or will he take in order to bring risk-based sound financial management in the European Parliament higher up on the list of priorities and objectives and will he present to the Committee a list of actions to be carried out in order to achieve this objective?

Risks

At present, individual Directors-General/Authorizing Officers by delegation identify and manage risks in their respective operating environments in the framework of the internal control systems which they have each put in place.

The Internal Auditor has drawn attention to the need for an Institution-wide approach to risk management.

On 30 June 2008, the then Secretary-General and the Directors-General agreed on a general framework for risk management combining decentralised management of sectoral risks with central management of horizontal risks, based in both cases on central methodological support. A harmonised methodological approach to risk identification, classification, prioritisation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting remains to be developed, formally adopted and implemented. These tasks will be entrusted to the official soon to be appointed and whose role will include that of institutional risk manager.

Sound financial management

Sound financial management is one of the eight fundamental budgetary principles. It is therefore included in the Financial Regulation, together with the other seven budgetary

principles.¹ The principle of sound financial management relates to economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources.²

The Financial Regulation is the basis for the implementation of the budget of the European Parliament. Therefore the objective of sound financial management is implicitly included in every decision which has budgetary and financial implications. Sound financial management is therefore, together with the other budgetary principles, the basis for all budgetary and financial management in the European Parliament and as such is implicitly included in the annual objectives.

9. Ex-ante and ex-post verifiers' staff reports

Can the Secretary-General confirm that both ex-ante and ex-post verifiers' staff reports are drawn up by the same person as the one whose decisions they are supposed to verify? If yes, does the Secretary-General see this as a weakness in the internal control system and a risk for the achievement of sound financial management?

Parliament's Authorising Officers by delegation/Directors-General carry full responsibility for implementing the budgetary appropriations allocated to their sectors of activity. They have put in place, in compliance with the minimum internal control standards, organisational structures appropriate to their respective operating environments. Within those structures, *ex-ante* and *ex-post* verifiers have direct access to Authorising Officers by delegation and sub-delegation. The task of the *ex-ante* verifier is to check, before the AO approves any transaction, that it respects the principles of legality, regularity and sound financial management. Thus, the role of the *ex-ante* verifier is one of support for authorizing officers.

Performance reports are drawn up by hierarchical superiors; and Article 6 §3 of the Internal Rules for implementation of Parliament's budget provides that staff members responsible for *ex-ante* verifications shall not come under the authority of those whose operations they verify. In addition, Minimum Internal Control Standard N° 4 on staff performance, together with the rules governing staff assessment, provides a number of other safeguards for staff, including - in the last resort - appeals procedures.

The Secretary-General considers that these arrangements create an environment in which *ex-ante* and *ex-post* verifiers feel able to perform their duties in all objectivity, in line with the code of conduct adopted by the Institution for those agents.

¹ Financial Regulation, TITLE II, article 3.

² Financial Regulation, TITLE II, CHAPTER 7, article 27.

10. Standard financial statement

Article 8 of the Internal Rules on the Implementation of the European Parliament's Budget states that: "*A standard financial statement shall be drawn up for all proposals for decisions by the Bureau, the Conference of Presidents and the Quaestors and requests for authorisation submitted by other parliamentary bodies (committees, political groups) or the Secretariat-General that have budgetary implications.*"

The absolute respect of this requirement seems to be one of the conditions for ensuring respect for the principles of sound financial management and for the carrying out of ex ante and ex post verification.

Were decisions and requests with budgetary implications taken or submitted in 2008 without the corresponding standard financial statement and if yes which decisions and requests and for which amounts?

In 2008, 29 meetings of the Conference of Presidents, 22 meetings of the Bureau and 14 meetings of the Quaestors took place, with, on average, 10-12 decisions taken per meeting. It is the responsibility of the service concerned to ensure that a financial statement accompanies proposals for decisions with budgetary implications.

In the three cases listed below, a financial statement did not accompany the decisions taken. Two cases related to authorisations for delegation travel which for urgent political reasons or time pressures had to be treated within very short deadlines. A further set of decisions related to the exceptional situation following the collapse of part of the ceiling of the Strasbourg Chamber.

1. 22.05.08 - the Conference of Presidents authorised, while minuting that a financial statement was still pending, the sending of a 4-member delegation to a conference on food security organised in Rome by the UN FAO on 3-5 June 2008.
2. 11.12.08 - the Conference of Presidents authorised, exceptionally, the sending of a delegation of the High-Level Contact Group for relations with the Turkish Cypriot committee in the northern part of the island to Bratislava.
3. 27.08.08 - In light of the partial collapse of the ceiling in the Strasbourg Chamber, the Quaestors adopted certain decisions concerning the relocation of the September I part-session from Strasbourg to Brussels (flexible arrangements re visitors' groups, a derogation to the usual PEAM rules on intermediate travel for Members who had already booked travel to Strasbourg, a derogation to the usual rules on participation in roll-call votes for those Members who had visitors' groups in Strasbourg in the week concerned). It should be borne in mind that the then Secretary-General had officially launched the crisis contingency plan on 18 August 2008 which entailed certain exemptions for the application of the Financial Regulation.

More detailed questions

11. Information Offices in the Member States

11.1. *The Committee would appreciate an overview of the costs of running the information offices in the Member States.*

TOWNS	2008		Operating appr. (Information) ⁴
	PROPERTY COSTS ³	STAFF COSTS	
ATHENS	€256.200	€1.035.430	€436.500
BARCELONA	€197.007	€0	€122.600
BERLIN	€737.674	€1.343.257	€1.051.900
BRATISLAVA	€146.680	€308.346	€252.495
BRUSSELS	€0	€980.362	€326.005
BUCHAREST	€657.600	€244.812	€278.000
BUDAPEST	€130.850	€414.925	€308.500
COPENHAGEN	€199.688	€780.226	€370.100
DUBLIN	€382.070	€503.854	€453.063
EDINBURGH	€219.982	€0	€94.500
HELSINKI	€233.728	€668.952	€256.550
THE HAGUE	€152.049	€594.011	€578.100
VALLETTA	€48.500	€244.890	€168.050
LISBON	€178.951	€654.474	€366.900
LJUBLJANA	€132.025	€262.666	€226.350
LONDON	€1.085.877	€1.488.273	€1.388.613
LUXEMBOURG	€111.239	€71.796	€214.630
MADRID	€923.451	€1.386.611	€825.500
MARSEILLE	€91.926	€0	€249.500
MILANO	€88.974	€0	€138.500
MUNICH	€106.085	€0	€159.862
NICOSIA	€92.190	€189.341	€225.100
PARIS	€1.278.922	€1.501.055	€557.500
PRAGUE	€220.521	€294.459	€257.000
RIGA	€99.055	€291.519	€183.600
ROME	€626.452	€1.115.484	€772.150
SOFIA	€657.600	€253.912	€188.300
STRASBOURG	€0	€1.035.465	€316.100
STOCKHOLM	€399.688	€562.267	€307.725

³ Property costs shown in this table include: rental costs; amortisation costs; furnish and re-refurbish of the places; cleaning and maintenance costs; energy consumption; security and surveillance of the buildings.

⁴ Operating costs in this table include: costs of information and communication activities and administrative costs.

TALLINN	€146.400	€361.186	€206.200
WARSAW	€163.285	€375.692	€399.650
VIENNA	€841.761	€433.923	€340.537
VILNIUS	€167.550	€151.747	€209.800
MISC.	€477.820	€0	€0
TOTAL	€11.251.800	€17.548.935	€12.229.880

NB: as far as the staffing is concerned, the offices of Barcelona, Edinburgh, Marseilles, Milan and Munich are included in the figures for Madrid, London, Paris, Rome and Berlin

11.2. *Which criteria have been developed in order to assess the qualitative results - not number of brochures distributed - of the activities carried out by the Information Offices?*

The Information Offices of the European Parliament (hereafter EPIOs) are responsible for the delivery in the 27 Member States, their regions and localities of European Parliament's overall information and communication strategy. The EPIOs strategy focuses on citizens and on the best way to make them informed of EP decisions and role. In each Member State and in each national context, tools and instruments work differently. Therefore the global strategic approach is adapted by the EPIOs to the respective needs in the Member States.

The main focus is on relations with citizens, press and media. Each EPIO has its own website for communication with the general public. They cooperate with the Commission Representations in the framework of the interinstitutional communication strategy, decided by the Interinstitutional Information Working Group, chaired jointly by the responsible Vice-President of the European Parliament, the correspondent Commissioner and the Presidency-in-office of the Council. EPIOs also ensure contacts with local authorities in Member States, develop relations with civil society, monitor trends in public opinion and give support to members having an institutional role in the EP when visiting the different countries (such as Members of the Bureau, Conference of Presidents, rapporteurs, etc.). Their activity is based on an annual working programme, communicated to all the Members of each country, in time to allow them to include into their own planning initiatives they are interested in.

With regard to the information and communication activities carried out under the mission statement and all administrative costs (excl. staff and property costs), the total expenditure amounted to € 12.229.880 in 2008. With this relatively low budget, the EPIOs carried out around 1400 information and communication activities in the 27 Member States.

In 2008, direct contacts with EU citizens were enhanced and further developed mainly by Citizens Fora. The latter have been implemented as part of the EP's contribution to the reflection period on the Future of Europe and have been proven to be a success tool in increasing qualitatively and quantitatively direct contacts with citizens. By its decentralised "go local" main feature, an open and direct debate with citizens and civil societies in regions has been achieved. In total, 77 Citizens Fora were held in 2008 in 19 Member States. The number has since then continuously increased and extended to all Member States.

According to the Mission Statement, MEPs are informed on EPIOs yearly working programmes and are involved in a maximum of activities. Their positive feedback shows the overall consent and satisfaction with EPIOs information and communication activities in the Member States.

DG COMM uses different means to supervise and monitor the execution of EPIOs communication activities in order to guarantee good qualitative results (from the procurement procedure till the reporting system). In order to ensure the implementation of a coherent information and communication strategy in the different Member States, EPIOs have been reinforced with Press Officers working closely together with their colleagues in the Media Directorate.

However, it is not so easy to measure the results of any communication and information activity and not only at EPIOs' level. Therefore, within the range and spread of communication activities, the best indicators are still, at this stage, the number of media and citizens reached by the EP decentralised activities. In 2008, figures show that:

- Overall, more than six million citizens were reached directly via communication activities like conferences and seminars. In addition to that, we estimate that several million European citizens were reached via TV, radio, newspapers and internet for which precise figures are often difficult to obtain because of the nature of the actions and of the lack of resources.
- The attempt to increase the interest of regional, national and online media through decentralised activities has considerably increased the outreach and impact of the EP strategy: over two thousand new different media, as well as new 260 Web media has started in 2008 to cover the EP activities in the 27 Member States reaching millions of citizens via their multiplier effect.

Therefore, in addition to the above-mentioned figures, one has to bear in mind that a great many of other communication activities addressing e.g. the youth (lectures, Euroscola, Spring Day etc.) and/or visitors groups as well as media and journalists in the EPIOs and EP's working premises have been carried out.

It should also be pointed out that with regard to media activities, including not only the promotion of the EP, but also the rebuttal of inaccuracies and distortions either after publication or during research by journalists on certain subjects before publication, many time consuming efforts are made by the EPIOs which are "invisible" and not measurable although they are of highest importance for an accurate image of the EP in the media.

11.3. *Could the objectives be met more cost-effectively by other means than Information Offices?*

The choice between the information offices and other forms of information and communication is taken by the Political Authorities, namely the Bureau and the Plenary. Expenditure related to information and communication activities carried out under the mission statement and all administrative costs of EP Information offices budget appropriations amounted in 2008 to 2€/citizen reached (without counting the media

impact). In total, the overall budget in 2008 amounted to 12 229 880 €, which guaranteed the EP to outreach more than 6 million citizens in 27 Member States at the same time.

EPIOs are undoubtedly the forefront actors in the Member States which can provide non-partisan information about the European Parliament and raise awareness of citizens and media. For example, they play an important role in implementing the institutional information campaign for the European Elections 2009.

In accordance with the mission statement the 'go local' approach is a priority with a view to provide information and create debate about Europe through decentralised events at local level (Citizens' fora, etc).

In detail, the current mission statement of the Information Offices was adopted by the Bureau on 18 June 2007. The modifications made by the Bureau at that time mainly underline the Offices' role vis-à-vis citizens.

Whereas of course the European Parliament is represented by the Members who play a political role, the European Parliament Information Offices are responsible for delivering coherent information about decisions taken by the European Parliament and promoting and projecting as widely as possible the Parliament and its activities in an institutional and non-partisan way. Of course, Information Offices involve Members in the activities they organise. In this regard, programming activities must take account of the European Parliament agenda and meetings calendar in Brussels and Strasbourg.

In accordance with the mission statement, the Information Offices concentrate on relations with citizens and media relations. In this context the organisation of citizens' fora outside the capitals in the regions has been very successful. Members are of course fully involved in these fora as well as national/regional/local bodies. The purpose is to deal with issues of importance in the region concerned and to ensure a broad audio-visual and press coverage.

The offices provide regular press reviews for members, organise visits and seminars for journalists in Brussels and Strasbourg (to which members are invited) and play an active role in rebutting inaccuracies and distortions in press coverage concerning the European Parliament.

In addition, EPIOs ensure cooperation with the European Commission Representation and a high profile presence of the European Parliament in Commission activities in the member states. Offices are also maintaining contacts with the national and regional public authorities and in particular the respective parliaments in their host country. They also give support to visits by Members who fulfil an institutional role (e.g. members of the Bureau, the Conference of Presidents, the Conference of Committee Chairmen, the Conference of Delegation Chairmen, rapporteurs and official Parliament delegations). Thus, the role and missions of the EP Information offices complement with their activities in the capitals and at local level the political role of Members (MEP) who are involved in these activities, as only elected MEPs can represent the European Parliament.

In terms of seeking the decrease of costs, the European Parliament and the Commission developed in 1994⁵ the concept of a common location for their external offices in the member states ("Houses of Europe"). Therefore the Information Offices of the European Parliament in the capitals of the member States are located - with the exception of Athens - together with the Representation Offices of the Commission in a single building in order to take advantage of the possibilities to make financial savings through sharing common areas, and create a unique image of the European Union towards the general public in the member states.

12. Implementation of outstanding 2008 Internal Audit recommendations

Which initiatives have been or will be taken aiming at a more rapid implementation of outstanding 2008 Internal Audit recommendations (88 uncompleted actions and 4 uncompleted critical actions.)?

The actions referred to are those remaining from the central and departmental action plans agreed by the Secretary-General in 2004 based on recommendations by the Internal Auditor following his review of the Institution's internal control framework.

The 452 approved actions were recognised from the start as not all being of equal weight, and the time-scale for their implementation was differentiated accordingly (short-, medium- and long-term).

364 (80%) of the actions had been implemented as at 31 December 2008 and a number of those outstanding at that time will have been realised in the intervening year. Meanwhile, a substantial number of the remaining actions are on hold pending the Lisbon-related revision Financial Regulation, of the internal Rules of Procedures and of some subordinate texts, as well as the modernisation of the relevant IT applications).

The Secretary-General nevertheless recognises the need for the outstanding departmental actions to be implemented at the earliest opportunity and will continue to monitor progress in this respect.

As regards central actions, the Secretary-General intends to devote particular attention to development of appropriate planning, programming and objective-setting mechanisms; development and implementation of a harmonised approach to risk management; and the review and enhancement of IT applications for financial management.

⁵ European Parliament Resolution on the Draft general budget for 1995 (A4-0105/94) adopted on thursday 15 decembre 1994, para 35

13. Vacancies

13.1. *For how many months has the post of Head of Unit in the Committee on Budgets been vacant and what are the reasons for not filling the post as soon as possible in order to ensure the quality of the work?*

In order to guarantee the high and professional level of service to Members, appointment procedures of Head of Units in Committee secretariats should take into consideration the parliamentary context. Delays in filling vacancies may therefore occur, justified by the need to fulfil appropriate requirements.

The post of Head of Unit in the Committee on Budget is vacant since 16 June 2008,. When the former Head of Unit was appointed to the post of a Director for budgetary Affairs, it seemed to be suitable to let her continue in heading the secretariat and running the work of the committee in the interest of the smooth resumption of the ongoing budgetary procedure. **This decision followed a request by the committee's authorities.** In 2009, when the publication of the post was planned for the beginning of the year, it was decided to postpone it to the time after the elections for the same reason mentioned above. Hence, the post has been published on 7 September 2009. The recruitment procedure is close to be finalised.

13.2. *For how many months has the post of Head of Unit in the Committee on Budgetary Control been vacant and what are the reasons for not filling the post as soon as possible in order to ensure the quality of the work?*

The post of Head of Unit in the Committee on Budgetary Control is vacant since 1 May 2009. To ensure the continuity of the Committee work within the Secretariat, a senior administrator was appointed Head of Unit (FF) on 6 May 2009 acting under the supervision and guidance of the Director. When the post became vacant, it was decided to open it after the elections. The post has also been published on 7 September 2009. The recruitment procedure is about to be submitted for decision.

13.3. The fact that Head of Unit posts as well as Director posts are vacant for several months is clearly not in harmony with the objective of "Stepping up services to the Members" in so far as services not fully staffed cannot deliver the same quality of work as fully-staffed services.

Which measures is the Secretary-General envisaging to limit the vacancy of posts to a strict minimum - and not more than two months - and thereby significantly contribute to improving the services to Members?

Vacant middle management posts mostly concern the language units and are accounted for primarily by the lack of candidates with the requisite qualifications.

The level of vacancies is substantially lower than in previous years. For instance, on 18 November 2009 only 16% of middle management posts were not filled, or were filled by officials on an acting basis.

As of the same date all senior management posts were filled, with the exception of the post of Director-General of DG PERS, which is in the process of being filled and in respect of which a decision will be submitted to the Bureau in the near future.

It has to be recalled, however, that 7 director posts have been filled before the summer 2009 as were 2 director general and 1 director posts *in* November 2009 through *mutation*. Furthermore, 2 directors general and 3 directors will be appointed probably in February this year.

14. Carry-overs

According to Article 9 (2a) of the Financial Regulation, differentiated commitment appropriations and non-differentiated appropriations not yet committed at the close of the financial year may be carried over in respect of amounts corresponding to commitment appropriations for which most of the preparatory stages of the commitment procedure have been completed by 31 December. Such amounts may then be committed up to 31 March of the following year.

Were all the 2007 appropriations carried over to 2008 in accordance with Article 9 (2a) used before 31 March 2008?

Were all the 2008 appropriations carried over to 2009 in accordance with Article 9 (2a) used before 31 March 2009?

In any cases where such appropriations were not used before 31 March the Committee expects full information as to which cases and the reasons why.

Situation in respect of non-automatic carry-overs from 2007 to 2008

1. **Purchase of the Vienna Information Office**

Line 2003 'Acquisition of immovable property': € 23 500 000

Take-up: 96.03%

Line 2008 'Other expenditure on buildings': € 1 500 000

Take-up: 42.63%, owing to a lower use of appropriations than had been expected

2. **Lease on Eastman Building in Brussels**

Line 2001/03 'Lease payments': € 18 500 000

Take-up: 100%

3. **Renovation of Valetta Information Office**

Line 2007 'Fitting-out of premises': € 220 036

Take-up: 100%

4. **Renovation of Sports Centre in Brussels**

Line 2140 'Technical equipment and installations': € 80 000

Take-up: 99.85%

Situation in respect of non-automatic carry-overs from 2008 to 2009

1. **D5 Audiovisual Centre**

Line 2140 'Audiovisual equipment and installations': € 3 850 000

Take-up: 95.73%

2. **Visitors Centre**

Line 3243 'Visitors Centre': € 4 465 729

Take-up: 75.10%

The take-up in respect of line 3243 'Visitors Centre' is 75.1% owing to the cancellation of a procurement procedure. The multimedia content could not actually be produced within the time limits which were initially laid down. Parliament has to supply the contractor with written material to enable this to be converted into multimedia content, but the finalisation of the various packages of content presenting Parliament's powers, how it works, its history and the political groups and Members fell behind schedule. The explanation for this is, in particular, the adjustments to the new parliamentary term and to the constitutional changes associated with the Lisbon Treaty, as well as the need to ensure high-quality translations in a user-friendly style. As a consequence, an amount of € 1 111 967 could not be financed by carry-overs.

15. Costs of translation and interpretation

The costs of the necessary translation and interpretation (meetings, documents, interpreters) into all official languages of the European Union have increased in 2008 compared to 2007.

- *Does the SG have any insights regarding possible reduction of costs in this area?*
- *Is the SG aware of the fact that there are numerous meetings where cabins are in use by interpreters while there is no member or assistant of that language attending the meeting?*
- *Does the SG agree that indicating their attendance for meetings by MEP's or assistants of smaller countries could be an instrument to avoid unnecessary presence of certain interpreters and therefore an instrument to lower the costs of translation?*

Interpretation

The EP's policy on multilingualism is based on its Rules of Procedure which stipulate that "*All members shall have the right to speak in Parliament in the official language of their*

choice. Speeches delivered in one of the official languages shall be simultaneously interpreted into the other official languages".⁶ The revised Code of Conduct on Multilingualism has been adopted by the Bureau in late 2008. The Code of Conduct on Multilingualism foresees more effective measures to streamline the scheduling, coordination and processing of requests for meetings with interpretation. Through these measures the resources of the service can be better planned and it can be avoided to a great extent that interpreters participate at meetings where their services are not needed, leading to a reduction in costs. However, the costs will never be completely eliminated as some flexibility is needed and unforeseen events can not be excluded. The implementation of the Code of Conduct will be monitored throughout 2009 in order to assess its effectiveness. Therefore it is for the moment too early to propose any changes and all changes will have to be approved by the Bureau.

Translation

Although the overall costs of the translation service rose in accordance with inflation between 2007 and 2008 the overall production rose by 34%, resulting in a reduction in the price per page. The increase in productivity was due, to a large extent, to the move toward a systematic use of translation memory software (Euramis) for all legislative texts and to a service wide IT training programme to ensure that translators are able to make maximum use of the technologies available.

The continued use of Euramis and its extension to all document types offer significant potential for further reduction of costs in the area of translation.

Efficiency gains can be achieved by adapting the staffing levels of the language units to the number of pages submitted for translation instead of having a one size fits all approach.

16. Organisational questions

16.1. How many new staff were recruited in 2008? How many of those new staff were recruited to replace staff members leaving their posts? How long on average did it take to fill posts which became vacant in this way? What measures did Parliament take to coordinate its personnel policy with the other institutions?

Between 1 December 2007 and 30 November 2008 the Secretariat recruited 392 members of staff (274 officials, 105 temporary staff and 13 contract staff under Article 3a of the CEOS). One hundred and forty-two officials terminated their service over the same period. The number of terminations of service registered between 1 December 2007 and 30 November 2008 represented 51.8% of the number of appointments of probationary officials (274) during that period.

⁶ Article 138 of the Rules of Procedure

The length of time taken to fill posts can be estimated at around five to six months on average.

The Secretariat is in close contact with the other institutions, notably through its presence on many interinstitutional committees, in particular the Preparatory Committee for Statutory Matters (French acronym: CPQS) and also the College of Heads of Administration. One of the key elements in coordinating personnel policy with the other institutions is DG PERS's relations with the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO), with the aim of optimising planning of the selection of officials and staff under contract.

16.2. *What organisational changes (merging/splitting) occurred at unit level within the individual directorates-general? What were the reasons for these changes?*

The main organisational changes which took place in 2008 are set out below.

DG PRES:

- Directorate for Legislative Acts: reorganisation of the language sectors through the creation of three units
- Creation of new services within the Directorate for the Library
- Transfer of the Directorate for Relations with National Parliaments from DG IPOL to DG PRES
- Transfer of the Library from DG INFO (COMM) to DG PRES

DG COMM:

- Reorganisation of the DG and creation of the Directorate for Relations with Citizens

DG TRAD:

- Internal reorganisation of central services

DG INTE:

- Creation of the Directorate-General (formerly Interpretation Directorate within DG INLO)

DG ITEC:

- Creation of the Directorate-General (merger of the former Information Technology Directorate (DIT) in DG PRES and the former Publishing Directorate in DG TRAD)

All these changes/restructuring operations were aimed at improving the efficiency of services and were approved by the Bureau.

16.3. *How high were staffing levels at the beginning and end of 2008 in the units in the Directorates-General for Finance and Personnel affected by the introduction of the Members' and Assistants' Statutes in 2009?*

DG PERS

In order to cope with the major challenge that the recruitment and administrative management of approximately 1400 accredited parliamentary assistants represented, between 2008 and 2009 12 additional staff joined the units directly concerned within DG PERS.

DG PERS	Situation 1/1/2008	Situation 1/1/2009
Brussels Medical Service	13	16
Dir. for Adm. Mgmt. of Personnel	4	4
Payroll Unit	15	14
Individual Entitlements Unit	18	24
Professional Training Unit	34	34
Staff Management and Careers Unit	23	19
Information Technology Unit	15	16
Missions Unit	12	13
Pensions and Social Insurance Unit	19	20
Recruitment and Transfers Unit	29	31
Unit for Rels. with Personnel in BRU	23	26
	205	217

The units listed in the table above were, of course, also responsible for the administrative management of other categories of Parliament staff (officials, temporary staff and contract staff).

For this reason, the table below gives an estimate of the staff directly concerned by the introduction of the statute for assistants. The table sets out only figures relating to 2009, since under the previous arrangements DG PERS was not responsible for managing assistants in 2008 (DG FINS was responsible at that time). An overall estimate is that, depending on the kind of activities carried out by the various units in DG PERS, around 12% of the total staff of the units concerned are involved directly in managing the accredited parliamentary assistants.

It should be noted that the incorporation of the accredited parliamentary assistants into the Conditions of employment of other servants (CEOS) represents an increase of some 25% in the number of European Parliament staff coming under the Staff Regulations who are managed by DG PERS.

Staff working in DG PERS who are responsible for the administrative management of the accredited parliamentary assistants may be redeployed within the Directorate-General, depending on changing needs associated with that management activity; the initial

emphasis was on the units responsible for the main recruitment stages (Recruitment and Transfers Unit, Medical Service, Individual Entitlements Unit).

DG PERS	Estimated no. of staff responsible for assistants within units in 2009
Brussels Medical Service	3
Payroll Unit	2
Individual Entitlements Unit	5
Professional Training Unit	2
Staff Management and Careers Unit	2
Missions Unit	3
Pensions and Social Insurance Unit	2
Recruitment and Transfers Unit	3
Unit for Rels. with Personnel in BRU	3
Total	25

DG FINS

DG FINS	Situation April 2008*	Situation 31/12/2009**
Director/secretariat	3	4
Members' salaries and Social Entitlements Unit	17	19
Parliamentary assistance and Members' General Expenditure Unit	18	23
Members' Travel and Subsistence Unit	22	23
Total	60	69

* In the beginning of 2008, the services in charge of the allowances and social entitlements of Members were part of two different units with a total of 49 officials covering the sectors concerned. Through the filling of 9 new posts received in the 2008 budget and redeployment inside the DG, a separate directorate with 60 officials dealing with the Members' financial and social entitlements deriving from the Statute could be created in view of the coming into force of the Members' Statute. The figures in the table reflect the situation after the restructuration.

** DG Finance received 7 new posts in the 2009 budget, which were attached to the Directorate for Members' Financial and Social Entitlements. At the end of the 2009 budget exercise, two additional posts were attributed to DG Finance given the supplementary work load that has been experienced following the coming into force of the Statute on 14 July 2009.

16.4. *How high were the costs for staff interpreters and translators in 2008? What was the total number of hours worked by staff interpreters and the total number of pages translated by staff translators? How high are the costs for external interpretation and translation and how many hours worked/pages translated do they account for?*

Interpretation

According to Pericles, DG INTE's internal work management system, DG INTE employed in 2008 a total of 364 permanent staff interpreters, of which approximately 25 were in administrative posts and not working mainly as interpreters (Director-General, Directors, Heads of Unit, Programming, Recruitment, Meetings & Conferences etc.). The total number of interpreting days provided by DG INTE in 2008 was 103.007, of which 51.8% were provided by staff interpreters. The remaining 48.2% were provided by ACI interpreters at an average cost of 1 015 EUR per interpreting day which includes travel allowances, per diem, etc.

It has to be underlined that the percentage of days covered by staff interpreters has risen, showing a rise of their productivity. This can be explained because, when there are no meetings in EP, staff interpreters work for other institutions thus further increasing cost effectiveness for interpretation.

An awareness-raising quarterly information note is sent to all users concerning language facilities requested but not used. A biannual report on the respect of the Code of Conduct is drawn up for the attention of the Secretary General and for information of the Bureau.

Translation

In 2008, a total of 689 translators were employed as officials in DG Translation. This represents a staffing cost (including overheads) of € 120 792 724.

Expenditure on external translation services totalled. € 22 036 824.

A total of 1.8 million translated pages were produced, of which 39 % (705 000 pages) were outsourced.

It should be borne in mind that translators also carry out duties other than translation. A working time-analysis carried out over 2008 and 2009 has shown that, on average, a translator is available for translation for 80% of his/her total working time.

It should also be borne in mind that the externalisation of translation involves a certain administrative burden, the cost of which has been calculated at some €30 per page, and that the quality control and revision of texts translated by external contractors also represents an additional work load for the internal service.

The following table summarises the answers to these questions

EP staff 2008:

Interpreters	Translators
€ 37,8 Mio	€120.792.724
Interpretation days: 53.357	Translated pages: 1.095.000

External staff 2008:

Interpreters	Translators
€46.178.220	€22.036.824
Interpretation days:44.642	Translated pages: 705.000

16.5. *How many posts were there in 2008 in Parliament's information offices in the Member States? In which towns or cities do Parliament and the Commission share buildings and other facilities? Are there institutionalised arrangements governing the sharing of buildings and facilities?*

Staff in EP Information offices in 2008 was composed by 235 officials: 72 AD (from which 24 press officers and 9 with temporary contracts) and 128 AST (from which 15 with temporary and 11 with term contracts).

A code of conduct to manage the inter-institutional cooperation was agreed by both EC and EP institutions at high level in 2001. Due to the development of cooperation and new context, the EP proposed a revision. The inter-institutional competent services from DG COMMs of both institutions worked on the new code of conduct all along 2008, which came into force in February 2009 (see annex).

In addition, as a follow up of the White Paper on a European Communication Policy⁷, under European Commission proposal, a pilot project of 'European Public Spaces (EPS) in the Houses of Europe' was set up from July to September 2007. The pilot projects run in Dublin, Madrid and Tallinn.

In June 2008, the Inter-Institutional Group on Information and Communication (IGI) adopted an intermediate report jointly prepared by the EP and EC. In September 2008 a set of specific rules on the working methods to run EPS was agreed by EP and EC DG COMM.

At the same time, EP's and EC's DG COMM also agreed on a list of further eleven (11) EPS to add: Berlin, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Lisbon, Luxembourg, Nicosia, Prague, Riga, Rome, Stockholm and Vienna.

16.6. *What are the arrangements for exchanging information among the committees and their secretariats, in particular as regards hearings and the commissioning of studies? What measures were taken to improve the flow of information?*

Concerning Public Hearings organised by the parliamentary committees' secretariats:

Each year in November, committees have to submit to the Conference of Committee Chairs and to the Conference of Presidents their planning for public hearings to be held the following year. The annual hearings programme consists of all committees' projects

⁷ COM (2006) 35 – 1 February 2006

and enables transparency, exchange of information and possible cooperation between committees which have chosen the same or similar topics. The Conference of Committee Chairs as well as regular meetings of the Committees secretariats' heads of units are also ensuring the permanent flow of information.

Concerning studies:

Requested by parliamentary committees and organised by the policy departments, external expertise is commissioned in the form of studies, briefing papers, panels and workshops. In order to exchange information on requests and projects, the heads of units of all policy departments are meeting on a regular basis. A number of common studies, co-financed by the expertise budget of two or more committees, proved that cooperation between committees has been undertaken successfully. The visibility of the studies and the accessibility to them via both Parliament's public website and the DG's Intranet pages has been also improved.

16.7. *How many posts/staff members does the President's Cabinet have? How are duties allocated within that Cabinet?*

The establishment plan of the President's Cabinet is appended to this document.

17. Questions relating specifically to staffing levels

17.1. *How many duty-related journeys between Brussels and Strasbourg did officials and other servants make in 2008 in connection with plenary sittings? On average, how many overnight stays did each mission involve?*

In 2008 there were 11 803 duty-related journeys between Brussels and Strasbourg in connection with plenary sittings. As you can see from the figures below, overnight stays on a flat-rate basis predominate.

No. of missions = 11 803

No. of missions entailing hotel stays = 9 586

No. of flat-rate overnight stays = 27 278

Average no. of overnight stays = 3

17.2. *What are the average figures for periods of sick leave and numbers of persons on sick leave?*

During the period from 1 December 2007 to 31 November 2008 the Secretariat recorded 8275 medical certificates in respect of 4738 members of staff, covering a total of 64 009 days' absence.

These 64 009 days' absence include:

- 47 781 (75%) working days' absence owing to illness
- 9997.5 (16 %) working days' absence owing to maternity leave
- 3754 (6 %) days' absence owing to accidents
- 2476 (3%) other absences.

Taking into account the number of sick staff over the period in question, the average length of absence on sick leave is 10 days.

Please see also reply to Question 27.

17.3. How does Parliament document the performance of standard working hours and overtime? What is the average number of hours of overtime worked? What measures is Parliament taking to ensure that overtime is kept to a minimum?

Overtime and its monitoring are essentially the responsibility of the Directorate-General (and the Director-General) in which staff work. However, the Directorates-General must work within a limited budget allocated by DG PERS on the basis of their annual requirements. As from 2010 the Directorates-General will have a new electronic management module (Streamline) available, which will facilitate the declaration, payment and monitoring of overtime worked.

On the basis of the monthly overtime declarations submitted by staff, the average amount of overtime worked and indicated in each declaration is 11.93 hours/month.

Where keeping overtime to a minimum is concerned, and as indicated above, it is for each Directorate-General to ensure its own organisation and the veracity and legality of the overtime worked by staff.

17.4. What is the average age and average length of service of staff members leaving the service? How many staff members were granted early retirement and in how many cases was early retirement justified on medical grounds?

The average age of the 142 officials who terminated their service between 1 December 2007 and 30 November 2008 was 62 years.

In 2008 38 members of staff applied for early retirement. Terminations of service on medical grounds correspond to staff being invalidated out. Eleven officials were invalidated out between 1 December 2007 and 30 November 2008.

17.5. Between now and 2012, how many staff members (in absolute terms and as a percentage of the total staff complement) will leave the service after reaching statutory retirement age?

On the basis of the information currently available 157 members of staff will have reached the statutory retirement age between now and 2012. This represents 1.95% of permanent posts in 2009. These figures do not take into account potential early retirements.

18. Voluntary pension fund

18.1. *Which measures will be taken to limit the risks for the EP budget stemming from the actuarial deficits of the voluntary pension fund, considering that the EP has to guarantee the acquired pension rights to individual (former) MEPs?*

During its meeting of 01/04/2009, the Bureau has taken the following decisions, which limit the risks, ensure clarity, reflect the long standing position of Parliament's Legal Service and complies with the obligation contained in the new Members' Statute:

- The option of drawing a reduced pension from age 50 (Article 3 of the rules governing the (Voluntary) Additional Pension Scheme) and the option of receiving a lump sum equivalent to 25% of pension rights (Article 4 of the rules) - both these options having already been suspended by decision of 9 March 2009 - are now abolished in order to improve the liquidity of the Fund and avoid premature dissipation of the capital;
- Subject to the transitional measure for certain Members who have already reached the age of 60 years, and with effect from the first day of the parliamentary term which starts in 2009, the retirement age for the Scheme would be raised from 60 to 63 in accordance with the Statute for Members which enters into force at the beginning of the new parliamentary term, in order to safeguard the Fund's capital;

Furthermore, the President, in his letter of 4 May 2009 to the managers of the Fund called upon to adopt a more prudent and balanced investment strategy and to avoid exposing the Fund to risks of fluctuations in exchange rates.

18.2. *Does the Secretary-General consider reviewing Parliament's commitments due to the fact that it has not full control over the investments made by this private fund which is guaranteed in fact with public money? Will the Secretary-General forward the latest figures concerning the fund to the Committee before it concludes its discharge procedure?*

Parliament's responsibility to ensure that the acquired rights of the members of the additional pension scheme are maintained stems from the decisions taken on this issue by Parliament's bodies in the past. The Bureau confirmed in its meeting of 1 April 2009, taking into account a note from the Secretary-General on the Voluntary Pension Scheme for Members (PE 421.873/BUR), that Parliament has to assume its legal responsibility to guarantee the right of members of the Scheme to the additional pension which could be retained after exhaustion of the Pension Fund and that, equally, any capital remaining in the Fund after all pension entitlements had been honoured would be transferred to the

European Parliament. At present, the legal basis provided by Article 27 of the Statute for Members increases Parliament's responsibility.

The Secretary-General has had an update of the independent study of the fund's financial situation carried out and has commenced contacts with the fund on the steps to be taken.

18.3. *The Committee would be interested in an estimate of the annual costs born by Parliament due to the in house activities of the fund - office space, meetings interpretation, printing, notifications.*

Apart from the administrative expenditure incurred by the management work carried out by the fund itself, the day-to-day administrative management tasks carried out by the European Parliament require the assignment of one full-time AST post. The costs can be broken down as follows:

- annual cost of one AST post:	€ 60 743
- 20% of the annual cost of a head of unit post:	€ 32 901
- annual cost of associated administrative expenditure (offices, administrative infrastructure, cost of IT applications)	€ 30 205
- cost of 5½ days of meetings with interpretation:	€ 21 414
- estimated cost of internal use of rooms for 5½ days of meetings (including cost of conference technician and security):	€ 4630
TOTAL	€ 149 893

18.4. The changing of the procedure for paying contributions to the voluntary supplementary pension fund gave rise to "additional, unplanned administrative work" according to DG Finance's annual activity report (paragraphs 44, 45 and 46).

What is the cost - in hours and Euros - of this "additional, unplanned administrative work"?

The additional workload following the change in the procedure for paying pension contributions by Members began in October 2008, should continue throughout 2009 and will come to an end in the first few months of 2010. It may be equated to one full-time AST post, entailing an annual cost of approximately € 60 743.

These additional tasks are associated with monitoring payments of Members' contributions. More specifically, it involves payment reminders to Members, checking payments made, assigning undue contributions and replying to requests for information from the Members concerned.

It should be stressed that, in accordance with the wishes expressed by the Committee on Budgetary Control, it is no longer possible to make payments from the general expenditure allowance.

19. Parliamentary assistance allowance

19.1. *The Committee would appreciate a first assessment of the implementation of the new statute for assistants with focus on any identified shortcomings?*

Since the start of the new parliamentary term accredited parliamentary assistants working on Parliament's premises in Brussels, Luxembourg or Strasbourg have been engaged by the European Parliament at the request of the Members whom they are responsible for assisting; it is understood that the recruitment of such staff is financed from the parliamentary assistance expenses of the Members concerned. The Directorates-General concerned by the recruitment of accredited parliamentary assistants (DG PERS and DG FINS) have met the major challenge represented by the recruitment, within a very short space of time (less than three months) of more than 1300 assistants, i.e. a number of staff equivalent to more than 22% of the staff of Parliament's Secretariat in employment on 15 September 2009 and exceeding the total number of staff recruited to the Secretariat in connection with the most recent enlargements (EUR 10 + EUR 2).

More than 1300 contracts with accredited parliamentary assistants were in force at the end of November 2009.

Parliament's Bureau has set up a Temporary Working Group to assess the implementation of the new Statutes, for Members and for assistants, and to propose, if appropriate, changes to the implementing measures relating to the new Statutes, which were adopted by the Bureau in 2008 and 2009, respectively. This Temporary Working Group is chaired by Mrs Dagmar Roth-Behrendt. Its work, which began on 29 September 2009, is continuing at the time of writing.

The Temporary Working Group could state that, in general, the implementation of the new statute has proceeded well. Amongst the positive aspects of the implementation one can note in particular the assurances the statute provides for greater transparency, legality and sound financial management of the parliamentary assistance allowance. At the same time, a number of issues have been identified, mainly due to adaptation difficulties with the new system.

On proposal of the Secretary General and the Temporary Evaluation Group, the Bureau took several decisions in its meetings of 11 and 23 November 2009 to modify the implementation of the Members' and Assistants' Statutes. On issues concerning problems with the implementation of the new rules for accredited and local assistants, the Bureau took the following decision to overcome the shortcomings:

- (a) to amend the implementing measures of the Members' Statute to provide Members with the possibility to carry over a part of the parliamentary assistance allowance (maximum one months' worth) from one calendar year to the next,
- (b) to amend the implementing measures of the Assistants' Statute in order to enable accredited assistants to receive, on request, advances on mission expenses,

- (c) to amend the implementing measures of the Members' Statute in order to allow local assistants to be reimbursed on a flat-rate basis (maximum €100/month) for minor travel expenses within the Member's constituency with the aim of reducing the administrative burden on Members' paying agents,
- (d) to amend the implementing measures of the Members' Statute in order to reduce the administrative burden for members' service contracts, insofar as the requirements concerning verification are concerned,
- (e) to amend the implementing measures of the Members' and of the Assistants' Statutes in order to allow Members to replace assistants after two months instead of three months in cases of long-term sick leave or maternity leave and to be allowed to have short-term replacements.

19.2. *Have approved paying agents been selected in all Member-States?*

The administration has assisted the Members in finding appropriate paying agents and has made a preliminary assessment of their professional capabilities before accepting their contracts. In this way more than half of the re-elected members could keep their previous paying agents.

In addition, within the framework for the preparation for the implementation of the new Statute and in conformity with the Financial Regulation the administration launched two procedures of call for tenders aiming at the creation of a pan-European network of paying agents. Since these procedures have not achieved the desired objectives, mainly due to a lack of interest of prospective candidates, the Working Group on the Implementation of the Members' Statute is currently reviewing the situation.

19.3. *With reference to paragraphs 52 - 59 in DG Finance's Annual Activity Report the Committee would like to know the amount actually paid back by how many individual Members of Parliament by September 2009.*

78 Members have reimbursed approximately 455.000 euro by September 2009 in relation to the Parliamentary Assistance Allowances received. The amounts were higher in 2007 and 2008 (about 1.01 million euro and 1.88 million euro resp.) which results *inter alia* from the regularisation conducted in 2008 by the services for the years 2004-2007 following the report of the Internal Auditor on this sector. It can be stated that the need for reimbursement has been significantly reduced following the regularisation exercise for the year 2008.

19.4. *In how many cases was OLAF involved? How many cases have been forwarded to the national judicial authorities?*

The Secretary General will answer orally and "in camera" to the questions related to OLAF.

19.5. *How many assistants employed by Members of the European Parliament in 2008 were directly related to the Members (spouses and others)?*

As no restrictions for the employment of family members existed before the coming into force of the Members' Statute on 14 July 2009, such information was not collected by the administration. No figures are available in the Parliamentary assistance database for the period before 14 July 2009.

20. Travel allowances

Since the new statute for Members is in force Members are paid out the actual (real) travel costs.

Considering the fact that there are less Members of Parliament than in the last legislature will the Secretary-General explain why the total sum of travel costs will rise above the total paid out on an annual basis under the old system of travel allowances?

In accordance with the rules under the Statute for Members entered into force on 14 July 2009, travel and subsistence entitlements as recorded in budget 2009 and budget forecast 2010 have been evaluated taking into account the new Member's Statute and its implementing Measures.

According to this new legal framework and in particular the new allowance for travels inside the Member State of election (article 23 of IMS) additional credits have been calculated in order to cover these costs.

In addition to this, an increase has been considered in relation with the costs of the air ticket to which members are entitled. Under the former regulation the reference for calculation/reimbursement of the travel lump sum payment was the price of an "YY economic unrestricted fare ticket" but under the new regulations Members are entitled to reimbursement of a "Business-full-fare-ticket".

2009 and 2010 budgets include the necessary credits to cover the supplementary costs that could derive from these two new particular items.

Actually, the amounts paid for ordinary travel to Strasbourg and Brussels are 10 to 20% lower than the forecasts made. However, at this stage, it is not possible to draw an accurate trend in relation to the level of expenditure given the short experience in the implementation of the new Members Statute and the fact that Members may claim their travel expenditures of 2009 up to 31 October 2010. Consequently, the final figures related to the 2009 budget implementation can only be given after this date.

21. Buildings

21.1. *The suspended ceiling in the Strasbourg Chamber*

In August 2008 a part of the suspended ceiling in the Strasbourg Chamber of the European Parliament collapsed. The necessary repair work was carried out quickly to the price of € 8 812 631 and the October plenary session was held in Strasbourg as usual.

Who paid this amount?

Actually, the whole part of this amount was carried by the Parliament. But the Parliament had also sued the insurance company AXA, the architects, the contractors and a number of other parties responsible for the original construction work (approximately 40 parties) for compensation.

The legal proceeding is still pending before the French Court.

21.2. *Is this matter now definitively closed or are other expenses expected?*

The works concerning the suspended ceiling of the chamber are definitively completed. But some others works, resulting of some complementary damages discovered during these repairs works began in 2009 and will continue in 2010 (reinforcement of the metallic ceilings of the LOW buildings and fire protection of the metallic structures). (see note to the Bureau ref. D(2009)62763). A legal action had been brought by Parliament to win compensation also for these damages.

21.3. *Would the repairs have been less expensive if the works could have been carried out over a longer time-span?*

The major part of the repair costs concerns specific infrastructures needed in order to access the ceilings (scaffoldings, special equipment to work in high level.). This part of the amount had no links with the delay. Only the period (August 2008) and the obligation to find people in other places than the local area (Strasbourg) is linked with extra costs but it is not the main part of the costs. Moreover, and taking into account the clear political will to hold again the session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg as soon as possible, a longer time-span of works would have been led to higher costs, as a consequence of the necessity to ensure the security of people circulating inside the building.

21.4. *Asbestos*

The Parliament has been confronted with a number of cases of asbestos in several buildings it was planning to rent or buy or had already rented or bought.

Can the Secretary-General give an overview of total costs in connection with asbestos in the buildings, including costs of studies/expertise, legal costs, staff man hours, removal, cleaning, etc?

Strasbourg

On December 2007 TÜV Süd Industrie Service GmbH carried out an asbestos survey in all Strasbourg buildings. The cost of the surveys and expertises by TÜV Süd is 173.000 € and the cost of studies by consultant Habitat & Santé is 65.000 € and the cost for the inspection of the works by Envirotech is 92.000 €. Total costs for these consultants are 330.000 €.

The total cost estimate for the removal of asbestos in the Strasbourg buildings is 2.912.000 €. The Municipality of Strasbourg has agreed to pay 2.015.000 €. The asbestos removal works are currently under way and should be completed by the end of 2010.

Brussels

On December 2007 VINÇOTTE Environment was commissioned to carry out an asbestos survey of all buildings of the European Parliament in Brussels, based on the methodology mandatory by Belgium legislation. The cost of this survey, which has been completed by the end of February 2008, was 20.000 €.

On April 2008, TÜV Süd Industrie Service GmbH was commissioned to carry out an asbestos survey of all buildings of the European Parliament in Brussels, based on the methodology according to German legislation. The cost of this survey was 120.700 €.

Both surveys came to comparable results.

Although a very limited number of components including asbestos have been found, the TÜV concluded that there would not be any requirement to remove such asbestos products but only to reappraise them regularly at intervals of 5 years or in a few cases of 2 years. The cost for such an appraisal is estimated to about 3.000 €.

Luxembourg

On the Luxembourg site only the buildings Konrad Adenauer (KAD), Schuman (SCH) and Senningerberg (SEN) include a few asbestos applications which are well encapsulated and do not represent any immediate risk. The annual cost of the asbestos appraisal is about 4.500 €/year. The KAD building will be renovated (Project of new KAD), SCH and SEN building will be abandoned in a few years, for this reason there is currently no specific asbestos removing project planned.

21.5. *What is the total sum to be recovered, from who and which sums have already been recovered?*

As mentioned above, concerning the Strasbourg buildings, the Municipality of Strasbourg has agreed to pay 2.015.000 € for asbestos removal.

Asbestos surveys and appraisals mentioned above for Brussels site and Luxemburg site have been financed by the budget of the European Parliament.

21.6. *Which actions were undertaken so far in order to recover the costs of the collapse of the ceiling in Strasbourg falling under the guarantee clauses in the contracts?*

At present, the whole part of this amount was carried by the Parliament. But the Parliament had also put in place a legal procedure against the insurer and the constructors of the suspended ceilings to obtain reimbursement of the paid amounts.

21.7. *Has any money been recovered from insurance companies or others?*

The amount of 2.015.000 € that the Municipality of Strasbourg has agreed to pay for asbestos removal will be paid according to the progress of the works. The first part of 604.000 € has been submitted to the Municipality and payment is under way.

21.8. *Can the Secretary-General explain the reasons why on a budgeted sum of 143 million for DG infrastructure 58 million were carried over to 2009?*

Where carry-overs from 2008 are concerned, it should be noted that, out of € 59.5 million, a payment has been made in respect of € 51.5 million, while the remaining € 8 million has not been paid, for reasons outside the authorising officer's control, on account of non-acceptance of works.

The details of the main carry-overs are indicated below.

1. Item 2005-00: Construction of buildings

The contracts for the excavations and preparatory work for the extension of the Konrad Adenauer (KAD) Building in Luxembourg were signed in December 2008.

The preliminary work started immediately and was due to finish in 2009. As a result, appropriations amounting to € 8.6 million were carried over. However, following the discovery of soil pollution which had to be dealt with before the excavations began the work was suspended for several months and its completion postponed beyond 31 December 2009.

A portion of the appropriations carried over (€ 2.6 million) has therefore not been used and an expenditure commitment in respect of another financial year has been drawn up.

2. Item 2007: Fitting-out of premises

The carry-overs relate to large, complex projects extending over more than 12 months. The carry-over of these appropriations is needed in order to ensure continuity of budget cover for the contracts until their full completion in 2009.

Main projects:

- LUX: Président (PRE) Building: specific work connected with the start of the lease: € 1.9 million
- LUX: KAD Building: upgrading of cooling plant: € 0.86 million
- STR: work connected with the Chamber ceiling: € 4.22 million
- STR: work fitting out WIC Rooms 100 & 200: € 4.68 million
- STR: asbestos removal: € 0.604 million
- BRU: work on the Central Security Control Post: € 2.617 million; following a delay in the work it will therefore not be possible to use part of the appropriations carried over (€ 1.05 million) and an expenditure commitment in respect of another financial year has been drawn up
- BRU: work on airlock doors: € 0.995 million
- BRU: replacement of cooling plant: € 3.53 million
- BRU: Sports Centre renovation: € 1.356 million

TOTAL: € 18.76 million

The balance carried over relates to a number of small projects which had still not yet been invoiced to Parliament.

3. Item 2008: Other expenditure on buildings

The appropriations carried over relate primarily to the following two points:

- LUX: project management fees for the extension of the KAD Building: € 4.35 million

- invoicing has taken place and these appropriations have been used

- STR: household waste charges: € 1.2 million; appropriations committed to establish a financial guarantee in the context of the dispute between the European Parliament and the French authorities about this contested tax

- these appropriations will be cancelled.

4. Item 2022: Cleaning and maintenance

€ 7.1 million was carried over pending invoices for the last month of 2008, which were submitted to Parliament in the first few months of 2009.

5. Item 2024: Energy consumption

€ 3.8 million was carried over for the same reasons as Item 2022.

To sum up, carry-overs are needed for the following two main reasons:

- some legal commitments are entered into for a period covering more than one financial year. Consequently, the relevant commitment appropriations also have to be maintained over more than one financial year, which means that they are carried over automatically. This concerns primarily large, complex projects (works and studies);
- services performed at the end of the year are not always invoiced before accounts are closed. Consequently, the relevant commitment appropriations have to be carried over until the services are invoiced.

22. Cars, contracts awarded

Which cars - type and brand - were bought by Parliament in 2008 and 2009? What were the CO2 emission figures for these cars?

Which services are using these cars?

Is it correct that the prices for the acquisition of cars mentioned in the contracts awarded in 2008 are without tax and other levies/duties?

Which cars - at the same price or lower - were considered to be the most environmentally friendly cars available on the market during the same period?

Does the contract with the firm providing cars with driver for Members of Parliament, stipulate that environmental friendly cars should be used? Can the Secretary-General provide a copy of this part of the contract?

Will the vehicle fleet be renewed by renting or buying hybrid cars which are less polluting?

CARS PURCHASED

in 2008

	CO ₂ g/km	
▪ AUDI A 8 3.0 Tdi	224	} Assigned to the Political groups, to the President and to the Secretary General
▪ BMW 730 i	260	
▪ BMW 730 i	241	
▪ BMW 730 i	241	
▪ 2 x FIAT/Microvett (100 % electric)	0	Removers Service Supplies Service
▪ FORD Transit	(not available)	

in 2009

▪ AUDI A 8 90 Tdi	224	} Assigned to the Political groups, to the President and to the Secretary General
▪ AUDI A 6 3.0 Tdi	199	
▪ BMW 730 d	192	
▪ MERCEDES E350cdi	193	
▪ BMW 730 d	192	Pool
▪ BMW 730 d	192	Pool
▪ 4 x MERCEDES E250cdi	154	Pool

("assigned" means assigned in accordance with Art. 2 of the "Rules governing the use of officials cars by Members of the European Parliament" of 3 May 2004).

Yes, it is correct, that that the prices for the acquisition of cars mentioned in the contracts awarded in 2008 are without tax and other levies/duties. The EU-Institutions purchase all goods free of VAT.

Cars with smaller engines and/or with Diesel instead of Petrol engines were considered to be the most environmentally friendly cars.

All external cars used for the transport of Members must meet the Euro 5 standard by June 2010 in Strasbourg and by the end of 2010 in Brussels. Furthermore, by June 2010 the cars in Strasbourg may not be more than three years old when used, and CO₂ emissions may not exceed 140 g/km (130 g/km as from 2013). For Brussels, similar requirements will be imposed through the next procurement procedure programmed in 2011.

Regarding hybrid cars: the Administration will purchase or rent vehicles which are the least polluting while also meeting the minimal functional requirements (e.g. sufficient boot space) and price considerations.

23. Contracts awarded by the DG Presidency

Parliament has subscribed to a number of commercial databases like the Dow Jones, the Economist Intelligence, etc.

What are the total annual costs of these subscriptions?

Who have access to these databases?

Do Members of Parliament have access to these databases?

In 2008 the Library of the European Parliament had 75 subscriptions to commercial electronic information services – 51 databases such as the Economist Intelligence Unit's 'Country Reports' and 24 news agencies such as Dow Jones News 'Europa Aktuell'. The Library keeps a constant check on the market in information services in order to identify those which are of best use in satisfying client needs. The exact number of subscriptions

will therefore vary from one year to another as new services are added to the offering whilst others for which demand has fallen off are discontinued.

The total annual costs of these services in 2008 and 2009 are as follows:

	2008	2009
News agencies (sub-item 03220-02)	€ 874,849.37	€ 823,466.21
Databases (sub-item 03220-03)	€ 804,987.00	€ 970,484.62

The permitted users and method of access are defined in each contract but, broadly speaking, services fall into three categories:

- Highly specialised
for which the Library has access for one or two members of its own staff and, in some cases, the Legal Service,
- Specialised
for which the licence provides access to a limited group, e.g. officials from the relevant committee secretariat and policy department of DG IPOL or DG EXPO,
- General
for which the Library has taken out a site licence granting access to all MEPs and Parliament staff connected to Parliament's internal IT network.

Parliament is forbidden under its contracts and copyright law from passing material from these sources to third parties.

24. Contracts awarded for studies.

24.1. *What was the total amount paid on studies commissioned by the EP in 2008?*

24.2. *Which measures are in place to check whether a similar study is already available either in the European Commission or in research institutions?*

24.3. *Did the competent service in Parliament check whether the Commission had a study done on "the type approval requirements for the general safety of motor vehicles" before Parliament commissioned one?*

24.4. *Have arrangements been made between the institutions aiming at coordinating the commissioning of studies done by third parties?*

IPOL:

24.1: In 2008, DG IPOL has committed € 7.105.576,79 and paid € 5.447.804,14 for external expertise.

24.2: The policy department in charge, with support by the information specialists of the Library, is checking, on a regular basis as integrated part of the procedure, whether a similar study is available before taking a decision.

24.3: Yes. The Commission had already done an impact assessment study to its legislative proposal. As the responsible parliamentary committee aimed to come to its own conclusions, a study was commissioned in order to receive an assessment independently from the Commission's one.

24.4: No. Given the objective of almost all studies undertaken or commissioned by the Parliament to support parliamentary committees in its function as legislator, coordination between institutions can be useful to a certain extent in terms of an exchange of information but cannot serve Parliament's objective of taking its decision on the basis of an independent expertise.

EXPO:

24.1: In 2008, DG EXPO committed 499.423 € for external expertise. Altogether 80 studies were commissioned.

24.2: The policy department, with support by the information specialists of the Library, is checking, on a regular basis as integrated part of the procedure, whether a similar study is available before a decision is taken.

24.3: n/a

24.4: No. Given the objective of almost all studies undertaken or commissioned by the Parliament to support parliamentary committees, coordination between institutions could risk to impair the clear separation of functions and the visibility of each institution's own responsibility.

25. Staff matters

Are sign language interpreters used by Members of Parliament in official meetings recruited and remunerated under the same conditions as those applying for ordinary interpreters under the AIIC agreement? If not, why not?

No, because any external interpreter hired by DG INTE has to be hired according to the Inter-institutional Agreement between the EU-institutions and AIIC (International Association for Conference Interpreters), and on the basis of an inter-institutional

accreditation test. Any interpreter not being hired according to the Agreement and the recruitment criteria, i.e., being recommended or suggested by an MEP, would not comply with the basic principle of accreditation for the EU-institutions and the obligation of the services to choose according to quality (certified by tests), skills and professional domicile criteria.

The single payment office (created on the request of budgetary authorities for more inter-institutional cooperation and to avoid duplication of work) only pays external interpreters under this safeguard, pruned also by the Court of Auditors.

Therefore, in order to establish an own data-base of trained sign-language interpreters, which DG INTE has offered to provide, a decision must be taken by the Bureau and the necessary human and financial resources would have to be allocated to DG INTE by the budgetary authorities.

26. Social service

*How many persons are working in the Social Service Unit?
Is this number sufficient in view of the increased number of staff?
What is the ratio in other international institutions?*

The Crèches and Social Services Unit is part of DG PERS. This department, which comprises 51 staff (18 officials and 31 nursery staff under contract at the crèches), is the cornerstone of the social services run by the Directorate-General (financial assistance, *garderie* support, family assistance, procedures relating to deaths, etc.). Mention should also be made of the Brussels and Luxembourg Medical Services, the social workers in both Brussels and Luxembourg, as well as the social policies carried out, in particular, by the Pensions and Social Insurance Unit and also the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Unit (assistance for staff with disabilities, etc.). Some 75 to 80 staff in DG PERS may thus be estimated to carry out social service activities.

The level of human resources seems appropriate, given that they have been brought together in a specific directorate within DG PERS as from 1 January 2010.

The Secretariat has no similar information about other international institutions.

27. Sick leave

The Committee would appreciate a comprehensive overview of staff on sick leave during 2008 broken down in such a way that it gives a detailed view of the situation in the institution and at least as per number, reason, percentage of total, length of sick leave period, directorate, and unit.

The Committee would also appreciate an overview showing how many persons were on invalidity leave in 2008

The Committee would also appreciate a comparison with the situation in other international institutions.

The table details the **number of working days'** absence on medical grounds recorded from 1 December 2007 to 30 November 2008 for officials, temporary staff (Articles 2a and 2b of the CEOS) and contract staff (Article 3a of the CEOS).

As at 31 December 2008 DG PERS listed 376 invalidity pensions awarded under the old Staff Regulations and 50 invalidity allowances (new Staff Regulations).

The Secretariat unfortunately does not have data permitting a comparison with the other institutions.

	Sickness	Maternity	Accident	Medical part-time	Irregular absences	Total	% of total
01 - Directorate-General for the Presidency (DG PRES)	5520	969	426	366	43	7323	11%
02 - Directorate-General for Internal Policies (DG IPOL)	3196	589	299	397	87	4568	7%
03 - Directorate-General for External Policies (DG EXPO)	1302	497	214	62	0	2075	3%
04 - Directorate-General for Information/Directorate-General for Communication (DG INFO/DG COMM)	5492	1238	406	286	62	7484	12%
05 - Directorate-General for Personnel (DG PERS)	4449	428	482	296	15	5669	9%
06 - Directorate-General for Infrastructure and Interpretation/Directorate-General for Infrastructure and Logistics (DG IFIN/DG INLO)	5037	425	413	157	25	6056	9%
07 - Directorate-General for Translation/Directorate-General for Translation and Publishing (DG TRAD/DG TRED)	13369	3689	749	185	148	18139	28%
08 - Directorate-General for Finance/Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences (DG FINS/DG INTE)	3467	1452	220	103	28	5269	8%
09 - Directorate-General for Finance (DG FINS)	1195	282	110	10	10	1606	3%
10 - Directorate-General for Innovation and Technological Support (DG ITEC)	3849	180	407	123	12	4570	7%
20 - Staff Committee	27	0	0	0	0	27	0%
SJ - Legal Service	605	93	14	62	5	779	1%
CP - President	110	156	15	0	0	281	0%
SG - Secretary-General	113	0	0	0	0	113	0%
CV - Vice-President's Secretariat	22	0	0	0	0	22	0%
QS - Quaestor's Secretariat	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
SH - Directorate for Relations with the Political Groups	32	0	0	0	0	32	0%
TOTAL	47782	9998	3755	2044	433	64010	100%
%	75%	16%	6%	3%	1%	100%	

28. Nominations

Progress has been made as regards increasing the number of candidates for vacant management functions in the institution.

How many candidates applied per vacant posts - head of unit and above - since March 2009?

The figures concerning candidates for management posts since March 2009 are as follows:

- 40 head-of-unit posts published, generating 190 applications
- 5 senior management posts published, generating 35 applications.

29. Passerelle-procedure

What is the "passerelle-procedure"?

Why was it created?

When did it enter into force?

What is the number of temporary staff by grade who passed the passerelle-procedure since it entered into force?

How many succeeded their stage and how many were "seconded" back to the groups?

Are all grades entitled to take part in the "passerelle -procedure"?

If not why not?

The *passerelle* procedure is a competition procedure that Parliament may organise in accordance with Article 29(3) of the Staff Regulations: 'The institutions may organise internal competitions for each function group on the basis of qualifications and tests for the institution concerned which shall be at grade AST 6-level or higher and at grade AD 9-level or higher.

These competitions will be open only to members of the temporary staff of that institution engaged in accordance with Article 2(c) of the Conditions of Employment of other Servants of the European Communities. The institutions shall require as minimum qualifications for these competitions at least ten years of service as a temporary servant and having been recruited as a temporary servant on the basis of a selection procedure which ensured the application of the same standards as for the selection of officials in conformity with Article 12(4) of the Conditions of Employment of other servants. By derogation from paragraph (1)(a) of this Article, the Appointing Authority of the institution that engaged the temporary servant shall, before filling a vacant post in that institution, consider transfers of officials within the institution in parallel with successful candidates from these internal competitions.'

This procedure was introduced when the new Staff Regulations of Officials of the European Communities were adopted in 2004. Since 2004 Parliament has held two *passerelle* competitions: in 2006 and then in 2007. The number of successful candidates per grade in the 2007 competition and their subsequent professional situation is shown below. All the probationary officials completed their probationary period successfully. It should be noted that the list of successful candidates in the 2007 competition has been used only since 1 December 2009 (6 AST staff members began their probationary period on 1 December 2009 and 4 staff members – 3 AD and 1 AST – joined the Secretariat).

This procedure was introduced to enable staff in the political groups who have worked for those groups for more than 10 years to become officials and thus to have a more stable employment status than that of temporary staff working for a group. It is also intended to allow the Administration to benefit from the potential expertise within the secretariats of the political groups. In accordance with the legislator's wishes, only temporary staff in grade AST 6 or above or grade AD 9 or above may take part in these competitions.

Result of the *passerelle* competition

The result of the first competition, which took place in **2006**, is as follows:

GRADES	PPE	PSE	ALDE	GREENS/ EFA	GUE/ NGL	IND/ DEM	UEN	TOTAL	TOTAL STAFF
A* 12	4	11	4				1	20	20
A* 11	7(*)	2	1	1				11	11
A* 10	2(*)				1	1		4	3
B* 10	3	5	2	3	1			14	14
B* 08	1(*)	1(*)						2	2
B* 07	4(**)	1(*)	1				1(*)	7	5
B* 06	2(**)	1	1(*)		1(*)			5	4
C* 06	7(**)	5	2(*)		1(*)	1	2(*)	18	13
TOTAL	30	26	11	4	4	2	4	81	-
TOTAL STAFF	25	25	10	4	3	2	3	-	72

(*) including 1 candidate applying for two competitions

(**) including 2 candidates applying for two competitions

Of the successful candidates:

21 (29%) are officials in the Administration (11 AD and 10 AST), of which 14 became officials directly and 7 after completing the probationary period with the Directorate for Relations with the Political Groups

2 chose not to become established

2 were successful in the second *passerelle* competition (in a higher category)

2 asked to undergo their probationary period after the 2009 elections

45 (62%) (20 AD and 25 AST) are seconded to the political groups.

30. Parliament TV

*How have the added value of 'Parliament TV' been measured?
How many people watch the 'Parliament TV' every month?
What is the cost per viewer?*

Since its launch in September 2008, europarltv has been the object of a placement strategy which has given rise to a dissemination effort targeting both National Parliaments' channels and regional TV stations. The first step is an agreement with national television RTBF to take over programmes from europarltv in broadcast quality, which will be rolled out in 2010. Negotiations are ongoing with CIRCUM, an international audiovisual network of 376 TV channels in 38 countries.

Furthermore, these initiatives have been complemented by a strategy of distribution on sister websites of the European Parliament, Members websites, external websites, using the "embed" function of europarltv.

Crucially, the live section of europarltv is offering a wide range of streaming of live parliamentary activities, further enhancing the openness and transparency of business in the European Parliament.

A special campaign about the Commissioners' hearings has been launched in January 2010.

For the period between September 2008 and December 2008, an average range of 150000-300000 viewers per month saw europarltv programmes. These figures take account of europarltv programmes broadcast on television channels with high viewership rates such as Euronews, ARD and RTV, the Slovenian national television channel.

The cost per viewer for the period concerned was 9 cents without costs for the translation. However, taking on board the cost of multilingualism in 22 languages, the final cost per user was about 18 cents.

31. Election campaign

How much money was used for the 2009 election campaign, or preparing for it, in the 2008 budget?

DG COMM committed € 16.3 million (initial budget of € 10.3 million for the elections + a 'P' internal transfer of € 4 million + a 'C' transfer of € 2 million).

32. Visitors' centre

*What were / are the problems with the visitor's centre?
Why didn't it open as scheduled?*

The duration of the Visitors' Centre project depends on the following elements:

1. The ambition and complexity of the project

With a total of gross surface of some 6000 square meters and an estimated annual visitor number of up to half a million persons per year, the Visitors' Centre will be the largest parliamentary Centre in Europe and one of the largest in the world. It will contain 39 different multimedia applications and more than 150 interaction points which will explain the role and functioning of the European Parliament as well as the impact of its work on the daily life of citizens. The Visitors' Centre should be fully accessible to all and provide information for different target groups from children to experts in European affairs. It will be the first visitors' centre worldwide that endeavours to provide all content in 23 languages (plus sign languages and Braille for certain applications). These complex specifications have an impact on the duration of the project.

In particular, the management of multilingualism in the exhibition space is a major challenge. For example, to allow the visitor to automatically access all information in his/her language, a RFID triggered media-guide system had to be developed specifically for the Visitors' Centre. Another example is the production of the role-play game where school classes simulate law-making at EU level: To produce the game in all languages, more than 350 actors had to be casted.

2. The procurement environment

In order notably to maximise competition and to facilitate supervision by Parliament's administration, the project has been implemented by a series of successive tender procedures.

Since the start of the Visitors' Centre project, 12 procurement procedures have been completed, resulting in a total of 21 contracts with 15 different contractors. At the moment of the drafting of this note, two further tenders are awaiting award of contracts and two last tenders are in preparation.

The preparation, management and evaluation of these procurement procedures has been time-consuming. By the same token, the interdependence of several contracts has led to situations where lags in the award or implementation of one contract have affected the progress of implementation of other contracts.

3. The resources

In the period 2005-2007, the Bureau's decision to establish the Visitors' Centre was not reflected by the creation of additional posts in the establishment plan. Two posts (1 AD and 1 AST) allocated to the management of the project originated from internal redeployments. In 2008, DG COMM allocated two additional posts (1 AD and 1 AST) to the project, again without increase of DG COMM's human resources.

The budget 2009 foresaw for the first time the creation of posts in the establishment plan specifically for the purpose of the Visitors' Centre project.

4. Institutional changes

Recent institutional changes, in particular the re-constitution of Parliament after the European elections as well as the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty have a direct impact on the project schedule. As core facts and figures about the European Parliament and the institutional environment have changed (composition of Parliament, legislative powers and procedures, official terminology...), large parts of the exhibition narrative need to be overhauled and adapted.

The drafting of scripts relating to the organisation of the European Parliament could only start in September 2009 and integration of the Lisbon Treaty started at the date of its ratification.

Please note that the report established in response to the European Parliament's resolution on the Budgetary Guidelines of 10 March 2009 provides a more detailed description of the project implementation. The report is attached in the annex.

33. Sports centre

*How much has the renovation of the Sports centre cost?
What did the European parliament get for the money?
Has it been possible to rent the premises for a higher price, now that they have been renovated?*

The total cost for the renovation of the Sports centre was 2.660.306,48 Euro (218.850,92 Euro for studies and 2.441.455,56 Euro for works).

The existing Sports Centre has been completely renovated to make its premises more pleasant and spacious, and in particular:

- the entrance has been enlarged and completely refitted (to make it more visible)
- the changing rooms, showers and toilets have been restored to 'as new' condition
- the massage rooms have been restored to 'as new' condition and relocated adjacent to the main entrance
- the sports rooms and public areas have been renovated

- the electrical system, lighting and ventilation system, etc. have been improved
- accessibility for disabled persons has been improved.

34. The "mopping up" procedure

What is the "mopping up procedure"?
What is the purpose of this procedure?
Is the procedure transparent for the European citizens?
Are there alternatives to the procedure?
How much was transferred to 2009?

The 'mopping-up' procedure is a simple procedure for the transfer of appropriations based on Articles 22, 24 and 43 of the Financial Regulation. Its special feature is that this transfer, which is usually arranged at the end of the financial year, concerns many 'donor' budget lines from which any surplus appropriations available are 'mopped up'.

The purpose of the mopping-up transfer is to ensure optimum use of the budget resources authorised for the financial year. In a sizeable operating budget such as that of Parliament there are structurally 'technical' surplus appropriations of some 1%-2% spread across the approximately 220 budget lines. Since 1992 the annual mopping-up exercise has been used successfully to the benefit of property policy, and in this way Parliament has been able to purchase buildings at the three places of work. This property purchasing policy is now bearing fruit because, if there had not been early payments or purchases made in the past, in 2010 lease payments would account for an additional cost of € 100 million in the budget.

Since the procedure is a transfer of appropriations, it is completely transparent.

Theoretically, other options exist, such as more detailed scheduling for the budget line concerned or the postponement to the following year of the operations covered by a mopping-up transfer. However, these approaches do not seem to be either the least expensive or the most suitable to make it possible to react to opportunities which might arise during the financial year. Where no unforeseen need for financing arises Parliament does not arrange a mopping-up transfer and the unused appropriations are then cancelled as at 31 December.

In 2008 there was a single 'limited' mopping-up transfer of € 8 million to the information campaign for the European elections (€ 6 million for the political groups and € 2 million for DG COMM). These appropriations were committed before the end of the 2008 financial year and carried over to 2009, on the basis of Article 9 of the Financial Regulation.

35. Contingency reserve

How much of the contingency reserve of 10 million € was used during the 2008 budget?

The appropriations in Chapter 10 1 'Contingency reserve' amounted to € 5 million in 2008; € 4 920 000 was used, broken down as follows:

- C 5: Additional workload relating to the WebTV project: € 165 000
- C 10: Replacement of the ELS inventory system: € 500 000
- C 11: Initiatives in the context of '2008, European Year of Intercultural Dialogue': € 300 000 in total
- C 12: Detailed asbestos audit in Brussels: € 200 000
- C 13: Signature of the new contract awarded in Brussels and the extension of the service provided by the external security firm: € 1 500 000
- C 14: Presentation of reports requested on EMAS and covering additional expenditure on energy for Brussels due to the strong price rise: € 2 000 000
- C 18: Additional expenditure on external legal assistance: € 55 000
- C 19: Invitation to all previous winners to the 20th anniversary of the Sakharov Prize: € 200 000

36. The LUX film prize

*What was the total cost for the prize in 2008 and 2009?
How many Members of Parliament took the time to see the films and vote for their personal favourite?*

1. The total cost for the prize was as it follows:

- in 2008 : 297,500 euros
- in 2009: 338,000 euros

The prize itself, equalling to 87,500 euros, is included: as a reminder, it consists in (i) subtitling the laureate into the 23 official languages of the European Union, including an adaptation of the original version for visually- or hearing-impaired people and (ii) in producing a 35-mm print per member state or supporting the subsequent DVD release.

2. Members of Parliament who took the time to see the films and vote for their personal favourite were as it follows:

- in 2008: 131 Members, covering the 7 political groups and the Non-attached from 23 out of 27 member states.

- in 2009: 164 Members, covering the 7 political groups and the Non-attached from 24 out of 27 member states.

3. The LUX Prize is subject to a yearly report to the Members of the Bureau assessing the previous year and proposing key guidelines for the forthcoming edition.

37. Additional funding for local media

Is there a possibility for Members of Parliament to have additional funding for small local media to access to the European parliament as was suggested 2008?

Information Offices in the member States take in due consideration the suggestions made by Members of Parliament when it comes to deciding which journalists are invited to seminars organised in Brussels and in the member States. The number of local or regional press invited to participate in those seminars have increased in the last years. The budgetary line for their organisation has been in fact reinforced so that they now cover not only the plenary session but also particularly important events or the discussion or vote of a specific topic at the centre of EU legislation.

38. Knowledge Management system

Which progress has been achieved regarding the introduction of a Knowledge Management System?

This documentary management tool forms part of the new Information and Communication Technology (ICT) strategy, and will become a component of the e-Parliament programme under which the entire production chain for legislative documents will be handled.

It was during the 2008 budget procedure that Members first expressed their wish for a knowledge management system to be set up to enable them to access all the European Parliament's accessible documentary sources, which are currently rather scattered. To do this, an appropriate tool has to be developed which will allow the various existing documentary sources to be brought together and which will be accessible to different types of user (Members, assistants, political groups, committee secretariats), so as to make the services provided to Members more effective. However, the development of such a tool necessitates a degree of modernisation of the current document management structure, in terms of both logistics (classification and processing of information) and IT (the IT infrastructure and applications required).

The Bureau, with a view to improving document management, has actually brought together the departments responsible for managing the documents produced by Parliament (Register and Archives) and official mail arriving at Parliament within a single Directorate, the Directorate for the Library and Document Management. This should ensure that documents are more easily traceable at the various stages of their life.

The 2009-2011 administrative programmes set two objectives concerning this issue: 5 – 'Development of a document management system for the EP' (DG PRES), and 114 – 'Legislative Knowledge Management a unique tool to assist the legislative decision making' (DG ITEC). These form part of this approach and will be pursued on the basis of close cooperation between the two Directorates-General concerned.

On the basis of the conclusions reached by a study carried out in 2008⁸, Parliament decided to implement the first, essential stage entailed in getting such a knowledge management system off the ground, namely harmonised referencing of the documents associated with parliamentary activity and, consequently, enhancing and storing them in order to make them easily identifiable and thus retrievable.

A study on the development of the technical platform allowing automatic indexing of documents is currently being finalised. As soon as this is commissioned, which should be in the summer of 2010, the parliamentary activities of the last two parliamentary terms will be indexed so that the support tool for documentary management is based on an already substantial documentary fonds. Parallel to this, all new documents associated with parliamentary activities generated with effect from that date will be indexed via the Publications Office and stored in the CMS, so that they will subsequently be accessible via the single document management portal. The documents archived in the Archive and Documentation Centre (CARDOC), which are already indexed on the basis of EUROVOC, will also be covered by this facility.

If the test of automatic indexation proves successful in practice, the achievement of this first step will allow a great progress in the management of documents. However, it has to be pointed out that additional staff with appropriate professional qualifications in indexing and additional financial resources may be required to validate and edit the metadata generated automatically.

⁸ The study led to the following conclusions:

- confirmation of the possibility of bringing together the various existing information systems in order to access the information available via a single portal;
- the need to contextualise the information to understand it better, keep it and retrieve it irrespective of the search language, and thus to introduce information processing 'governance';
- the need to keep the information in a flexible format (XML) and to store it in an appropriate repository (content management system) which meets the particular requirements of Parliament's documentary fonds;
- the need to develop a single search tool, designed using the web service principle and accessible via the Intranet.

39. Relations with the Belgian State

The Belgium State was supposed to pay back to the Parliament for buildings and work done on the Dalle due to an agreement between the Parliament and Belgium State.

How much money they paid in 2008?

The Belgian Government has tabled a draft amendment to its 2009 budget for a total of € 85 897 000. Parliament has received indications that the Belgian State will make a one-off payment to it of € 85 896 382 at the beginning of 2010.

Annexes

- A. ANNEX to Question 6
- B. ANNEX to Question 11-2
- C. ANNEX to Question 16-5
- D. ANNEX to Question 16-7
- E. ANNEX to Question 32

A. ANNEX to Question 6

Reservations in the authorising officer's annual declaration

A *reservation* in the annual declaration is a statement indicating an inadequacy or shortcoming in the internal control systems and/or a serious error which may have had a significant impact on the management of the Directorate-General's activities. To clarify this definition the concept of 'significant impact' and that of the term 'serious' are hereby spelled out:

- significant impact: the inadequacy, shortcoming or error concerns one or more of the Directorate-General's budget or operational activities and creates or substantially increases the risk of the management of operations departing from the principle of sound financial management and/or not complying with the principles of legality and regularity;
- serious: on such a scale that its implications may cause damage to Parliament.

If the impact is not deemed to be serious the authorising officer by delegation shall indicate this in the 'observations' section of the report.

Reservations should, as far as possible, attempt to quantify the amount or the budget concerned by the inadequacy, shortcoming or error. If it is not possible to cost the amount of the damage caused to the budget, but the authorising officer considers that this will be significant, the declaration shall include a reservation indicating the uncertainty about the amounts concerned.

Reservations shall be described clearly in the annual declaration, indicating their possible impact on the management of the Directorate-General's activities and on its budget, and setting out the measures taken or planned by the authorising officer by delegation to limit or even eliminate their effects.

B. ANNEX to Question 11-2

ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT OF DIRECTORATE COMMUNICATION DG COMMUNICATION - 1 JANUARY - 31 DECEMBER 2008

SYNOPSIS

Information Offices

- 27 main Information Offices in the Member States' capitals and 1 in the EP site (Strasbourg)
- 5 Member States have also regional offices (Munich, Milan, Barcelona, Edinburgh and Marseille)
- Staff in place - 235 officials: 72 AD (from which 24 press officers and 9 with temporary contracts) and 128 AST (from which 15 with temporary and 11 with term contracts)

This is a general overview of the activities carried out by the Information Offices from 1 January till 31 December 2008.

1. Missions

According to their mission statement, the European Parliament Information Offices hereafter referred as EPIOs, shall be responsible for the delivery of DG Communication's overall information and communication strategy in the Member States.

The Information Offices, located in all national capitals and in six regional capitals are there to inform and promote the European Parliament to the citizens in the Member States and to develop contacts with national and regional media outlets and with national, regional and local authorities.

2. Other major projects for 2008 - 2009

Information Offices

- Pursue and reinforce branding of Citizens' Forums
- Organisation and development of annual communication events (Year of Intercultural Dialogue, 50th anniversary of the European Parliament, 30th anniversary of the directly-elected Parliament, Open Days, Sakharov Prize, Lux Prize, Commemoration of victims of terrorism, Journalist Prize, Karlspreis, etc.)
- Implementation of revised mission statement of the Information Offices

3. Human resources

Altogether, the number of staff detached in the Information Offices is 235 officials (72AD, 128 AST- 9 under term contract). Within this staff, there are currently 24 press

officers in 24 Member States. Luxembourg will not have a press officer and, at this stage, only Bulgaria and Brussels do not have a press officer. At present 4 Information Offices have interim Head of Offices: Bucharest, Brussels, Luxembourg and Sofia.

4. Premises

Whereas DG INLO (Infrastructure and Logistic) is competent for the property management of Information Offices, EPIOs together with DG COMM central services are responsible for a sound and effective study and evaluation of local real state market and for the choice of premises.

Furthermore, evaluation and choice of premises is under the inter-institutional co-operation agreement with the European Commission, as today most of the decentralised premises are co-shared by the European Parliament and the European Commission in the "European Houses". At present, 28 out of 33 EPIOs share their premises with the European Commission Representations (ECRs). With the exception of Luxembourg, it is not envisaged that EP central places of work, Brussels and Strasbourg, will share common places with the ECRs because of their special nature/location. Apart of these 2 cases, just London and Edinburgh are still not in common premises. In Athens just the InfoPoint is shared by both institutions.

5. GENERAL OVERVIEW ON DECENTRALISED DG COMM ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTS IN 2008

Information Offices have implemented 958 activities for 2008 during the period 1 January - 31 December 2008. These 958 activities produced around 1350 information and communication actions.

Figures show that in 2008 there have been 1921 participations of MEPs in EPIOs activities. Some activities, e.g. Citizens' Forums, seminars, etc. have been attended by more than one MEP.

5.1. Information and communication activities

➤ Information activities targeting Media

Information activities conceived for *media*, written and audiovisual, are designed to maximise coverage of the Parliament and to take a more active role in rebutting inaccuracies and distortions in local press coverage of the European Parliament and legislative procedures.

Main information activities addressed to media, written and audio-visual are:

- press conferences with MEPs
- seminars for journalists in Member States
- development of contacts with senior editorial staff of the national and regional audiovisual media and press
- visits and seminars for journalists in Brussels and Strasbourg

In addition to the 900 journalists invited to cover the plenary session in Strasbourg and Brussels, a total of 102 activities directly addressed to media in Member States have been completed in 2008.

➤ **Information activities targeting Citizens, NGOs and Civil Society in general**

An increasing number of activities to enhance direct contacts with EU citizens have been developed, taking the form of:

- seminars / conferences and debates
- Citizens' Forums
- events or campaigns aimed at maximising publicity for the European

Parliament

During the whole year, 95 seminars/conferences/debates have been organised in most Member States.

In addition, Citizens' Forums, implemented as part of the European Parliament's contribution to the reflection period on the Future of Europe, proved to be a success tool to increase both qualitatively and quantitatively Parliament's direct contacts with EU citizens. By its decentralised "go local" main feature, Citizens' Forums not only endeavoured an open and direct debate with EU citizens, but reached mainly EU citizens who had never been involved in any previous EU debate. In total, 77 Citizens Forums were held in 2008 in 19 Member States.

Finally, around 381 information and communication activities (events or campaigns aimed at maximising publicity for the Parliament) took place in 26 Member States.

➤ **Fairs and Exhibitions**

Information Offices participate and co-organise fairs and exhibitions. The main purpose of these events is to publicise and raise awareness on the European Parliament and its activities. This is achieved via the distribution of promotional materials, publications and direct contact with citizens (replies to citizens' queries). Overall, EPIOs participated in 107 fairs & exhibitions in 17 Member States.

➤ **Audio-visual products**

The EPIOs, in coordination and with the support of central audio-visual services, may finance, when appropriate, audiovisual productions and co-productions on the work of the Parliament and its MEPs. Furthermore, EPIOs ensure as great presence of MEPs as possible on national, regional and local television and radio programmes. All in all some 211 audiovisual productions and/or co-productions have been completed in 2008.

➤ **Support products**

- Publications and Promotional products (PR material)

Traditional publications are a major educational tool for increasing citizens' awareness on the European Parliament and its activities, members and powers. Moreover, publications of EPIOs allow developing a single message determined by the European Parliament taking into account the specific national dimension. Whereas publications work as an information tool, promotional products are meant to publicise and create an image of the European Parliament.

These two information and communication activities are the main support tools for Fairs and exhibitions.

➤ **Internet**

Each Information Office shall have its own web sites which shall be the principal communication tool vis-à-vis the general public. The web sites main contents are: basic useful information for citizens on the Parliament; details about the respective EPIO current activities; information targeted at the media in the Member State; online publications and other online products, including where appropriate, interactive products and links to the other web sites of DG Communication and the Institution. At this stage, only 4 EPIOs have external websites not hosted in Adagio 4.

➤ **Co-operation with the European Commission Representations (ECRs)**

EPIOs shall ensure that MEPs are involved as much as possible in events organised under the aegis of the PRINCE programme as well as activities relating to the relays and networks. A number of joint events may also be organised each year between the Office and the Representation relating to themes of common or general interest.

All in all 267 activities were carried out in cooperation with the European Commission Representations.

➤ **Activities in relation to the host Member State**

EPIOs shall maintain contacts with national and regional public authorities, including national and regional parliaments, and with civil society. These contacts are increased in the scope of the coordination and implementation of Information strategy for 2009 EP elections.

Lastly, EPIOs provide logistical and, where appropriate, political back up for visiting parliamentary leaders and delegations.

Conclusions

Figures show that 2.136 media (946 regional media, 930 national media and 260 Web) have covered the information and communication activities organised and implemented by the EP Information offices in the 27 Member States reaching millions of citizens via their multiplier effect.

Overall, we calculated that 6.043.659 citizens were reached directly via communication activities. Though, we estimate that other several million European citizens were reached via audiovisual and press actions not included in the above number (TV, radio, newspapers and internet) for which precise figures are often difficult to obtain.

C. ANNEX to Question 16-5

4 February 2009

<p>Code Of Conduct For Communicating Together - European parliament Information Offices ("EP IOs") and European Commission Representations ("EC Reps")</p>
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In 2001 the EP and EC agreed a first Code of Conduct⁹. Since then the EU has grown to 27 countries, and the Institutions have agreed to communicate on European issues in partnership.¹⁰ Also the EP and EC have worked ever more closely together, for example, by setting up Houses of Europe.

This second, revised Code of Conduct reflects those changes, and aims to develop as much as possible new joint strategies and activities

1. ORGANISATION

There are three levels of EP-EC cooperation:

- a. Political: The Interinstitutional Group of Information (IGI) meets twice a year to define a joint communication strategy and inter-institutional communication priorities.
- b. Operational: DGs COMM of the two Institutions:
 - set the framework for organising cooperation;
 - plan, organise, monitor and evaluate actions;
 - organise joint working parties to develop actions and shared products and services
- c. Local: EPIOs and EC Reps manage the daily work in Member States and adapt guidelines to local circumstances.

2. COOPERATION AT LOCAL LEVEL

They cooperate in mutual trust, transparency and respect for the roles and agendas of each Institution and of their respective offices in Member States, as set out in their mission statements. EPIOs and EC Reps constitute the "Houses of Europe" in most Member States¹¹

Cooperation between EPIOs and EC Reps staff aims at:

- a. giving a coherent image of the EU

⁹ On the basis of a meeting held on May 15, 2001

¹⁰ cf Joint Declaration "Communicating Europe in Partnership" OJ C. 13 of 20.01.2009

¹¹ In April 2008 25 of the 27 Member States have a House of Europe

- b. improving communication with the public, and stimulating active European citizenship;
- c. increasing efficiency and effectiveness, by jointly developing products and services

3. PROCEDURES

- a. Coordination of activities:
The EP and EC inform each other on the activities programmed by their respective offices to which they endeavour to associate the other Institutions to a maximum. On that basis the EPIO's and EC Reps seek to develop synergies and joint activities, such as
 - definition of local/national communication priorities;
 - organisation of events and activities able to attract public interest and media coverage
 - development of products and services, both new and existing;
- b. Meetings
in Brussels:
in autumn, Heads of EPIOs and EC Reps and staff from DGs COMM of the two Institutions share information, evaluate state of play and plan next steps

at local level:
Heads of EPIOs and EC Reps:
 - hold regular, at least bimonthly, progress meetings;
 - forward main conclusions to the central coordination offices in Brussels.

4. DOMAINS FOR JOINT ACTIVITIES

4.1 Media and Public opinion monitoring

- a. Media reviews and press clippings
print - newspapers, magazines,
broadcast - radio and TV
online
- b. Research
share findings about how citizens, organisations or stakeholders use our information or communication products and services, organise research jointly.

4.2 Infrastructure, technologies

- a. Premises Houses of Europe
European Public Spaces (see separate code of conduct for EPS)

b. Online Links between EC and EP websites

4.3 Activities and Publications, as for example:

- a. Information Campaigns in the framework of management partnership contracts with MS or any other kind of agreement
- b. Events
 - Seminars
 - Conferences and exhibitions
 - 9 May Celebrations
 - Visits by Commissioners and MEPs
- c. Media
 - Press visits
 - Meetings
 - Press conferences and seminars
- d. Publications
 - press releases
 - brochures, audiovisual products, etc.

Specific working methods for European Public Spaces (EPS)

The present chapter only applies to those Houses of Europe that are formally hosting a "European Public Space", recognised as such by the headquarters of the two institutions.

Objectives and activities

1. European Public Spaces (EPS) are joint projects run by the Commission Representations (REPs) and by EP Information Offices in selected locations, following a pilot project launched in 2007.
2. The aim of the EPS is to encourage dialogue and democratic debate by creating public spaces in the Member States where the Institutions may interact with society, with an emphasis on politics, culture, education and civil society.

Working methods

3. The space would be run jointly by the two institutions according to the capacity of each office. Other partners can contribute to specific operations of the EPS, on an ad hoc basis and after approval from both partners.
4. In general terms, there can be no "one size fits all" approach as regards the resources to be dedicated to the European Public Spaces - since the operational budget and administrative resources vary considerably from one location to another.
5. In each EPS activity equal visibility should be guaranteed by both institutions.
6. The two parties should commonly adopt an annual programme of events to be organised in the EPS.
It should be adopted no later than November of the previous year. It can be revised at any time and be adaptable to changing priorities or to new emerging opportunities.
7. The REPs and EP Offices would be jointly involved in the organisation of events forming part of the annual programme of events. Whereas, given their greater financial and staffing resources, the logistical arrangements, including the recourse to additional staffing through outsourcing, will often be taken care of and managed by the European Commission, EP

Offices should also be involved within their individual financial and staffing capacities.

8. Both Institutions should have access to his space for activities organised on its own account when the space is available. Third organisations (students associations, NGOs, etc) may organise events in the EPS upon request and after approval by both institutions.
9. Each EPS will lay down practical arrangements for the operation of the EPS in terms of opening hours, security, staffing, etc.

D. ANNEX to Question 16-7

Cabinet of the President of the European Parliament

<i>Head of Cabinet</i>	Maciej POPOWSKI
<i>Assistant to Head of Cabinet</i>	Maja URBANSKA
<i>Protocol</i>	Lilian PHILLIPS
<i>Deputy Head of Cabinet</i>	Anthony TEASDALE
<i>Assistant to Deputy Head of Cabinet</i>	Claire MEYER
<i>President's Spokesperson</i>	Inga ROSINSKA
<i>General Adviser</i>	Javier POMES RUIZ

Political Strategy and Governing Bodies

<i>Team Leader (see above)</i>	Anthony TEASDALE
<i>Policy Advisers:</i>	
Special Adviser and speech-writer	Marek EVISON
Speech-writer	Witold NATURSKI
Policy Advisor	Fearghas O'BEARA
Policy Advisor	Astrid WORUM
Assistants	Monique BRASSEUR Daniela ROHRIG

Internal Policy and Legislative Affairs

Team Leader	Eschel ALPERMANN Annamaria FORGACS
Policy Advisers	Emanuela ILARIO Valeria FIORE
Assistant	Janeta DUFFY

External Relations

Team Leader and Chief Diplomatic Advisor	Alexandre STUTZMANN Levente CSASZI
Policy Advisers	Arnoldas PRANCKIEVICIUS Dariusz SEROWKA
Assistant	Anne-Marie BEYST

Communications, Visits and Events

Team Leader and President's Spokeswoman	Inga ROSINSKA
Deputy Spokesman	Robert GOLANSKI
Press Officers	Richard FREEDMAN Daniela SENK
Assistants	Charlotte DU REITZ Slawomir ROGOWSKI

Cabinet Administration

Team Leader

Assistants

Personal Usher

Driver

Eduard REIJNDERS
Antonia GIARRIZZO
Monique BRASSEUR
Jakub KAMINSKI
Francois AMBROSINI
Rudy VANHASSEL

Private Office and Protocol

Team Leader

Protocol

Assistants

Anna PARADOWSKA
Lilian PHILLIPS
Anna OWCZARCZAK
Lesya NEDELUCU

E. ANNEX to Question 32

Resolution of 10 March 2009:

§ 26: *"Deplores the fact that the visitors' centre will not be established before the 2009 elections and requests full information as to the reasons behind this delay."*

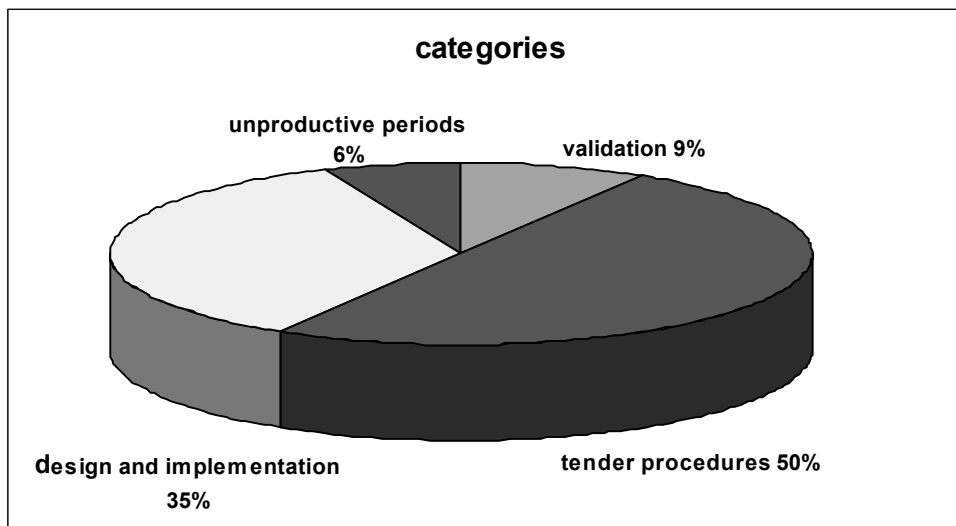
This note analyses project time spent per category of activity and describes the main elements that have influenced project implementation.

I. Breakdown by activities

The project reached an overall duration of 46 months at the end of April 2009.

The breakdown of project time into categories of activities shows the following:

- The main element determining project duration is time spent in managing **public procurement procedures**: The preparation and management of public procurement procedures accounts for **23 months or 50% of the overall project duration up until now**;
- In contrast to this the net productive time for the *development of the design and its implementation* accounts for no more than 16 months, equivalent to **35% of the project duration**;
- *Validation procedures* (4 months) and "unproductive periods" (miscellaneous preparatory work and closure days) account for the remainder of **15%** of project duration.



The following chapters examine in detail the critical elements and project progress with regard to the above categories.

II . Tender procedures

For reasons of compliance with the Financial Regulation and control over project implementation, the option of a turnkey-operation (one single tender for the entire project) had to be excluded. Instead the project is implemented in a series of successive tender procedures.

In general terms, the time necessary for tendering is a function of (1) the number of procurement procedures, (2) their complexity and (3) the market response to the tenders;

2.1. Number of procurement procedures

Since the start of the Visitors' Centre project, **10 tender procedures** have been completed, resulting in a total of **19 contracts** with **13 different contractors** with an overall financial volume of more than **11 mio €**. Three more tenders are currently open.

The tenders relate to the following three project phases:

The project started with the Bureau's decision of 4 July 2005. The first weeks after the decision were used for setting-up the project management, for strategy development and market prospection of what then was for Parliament's administration a genuinely new field of activity. It was also necessary to proceed to a rapid analysis of the building infrastructure, which was already under construction but had not been planned for the purposes of a Visitors' Centre.

Public procurement activities began only after this short start-up phase:

- (a) ***The concept phase*** started in October 2005 with the approval of the Centre's Mission Statement by the Bureau and was completed in June 2006 by the approval by the Bureau of the base concept for the Visitors' Centre. The report was based on an external consultancy report which had been commissioned through a first tender procedure (1);
- (b) ***The design phase*** started in June 2006 with the approval of the above mentioned base concept by the Bureau and was completed in December 2008 with the approval of the Final Design for the Visitors' Centre. During this phase three major tender procedures were concluded relating to the interior and exhibition design plus the production of a role-play game (2), research and provision of source material (3) and assistance in project management (4);
- (c) ***The production phase*** partially overlaps with the Design phase: A first series of infrastructural works started in 2008 (5) + (6), a second series of tenders relating to the supply of a media guide (7), a LED-mesh (8), media productions (9) and infrastructural adaptations (10) were concluded in March 2009. The last series of

tenders, concerning fit-out (11) and media hardware (12) are ready to be launched at the moment of the drafting of this note.

2.2. Complexity of the procedures

The Financial Regulation, its implementation measures and other administrative rules define the procedural steps for public procurement procedures and fix a number of compulsory *minimum periods*. In compliance with the minimum procedural thresholds, the minimum period between the launch of a tender procedure and the signature of a contract lasts approximately 100 days.¹² This period relates exclusively to the procurement procedure as such and does not take account of the time needed for drafting the tender specifications. In the case of the Visitors' Centre project, drafting of tender documents has taken between 1 and 6 months. The following elements are of relevance:

- (a) The tenders relate to such *heterogeneous deliverables* as architectural studies, research services in the field of history, sociology and European studies, media hardware, the production of films and audiovisual material, construction works, adaptation of technical installations, which make comprehensive inter-service consultations necessary;
- (b) Some of the tender documents are *voluminous and technical*, leading to long delays in translation and editing. Due to the volume and cost considerations the objective to translate all tender documents into all official languages had to be abandoned¹³;
- (c) In particular the specifications relating to infrastructural modifications require *knowledge of applicable legislation*. As such, the designers were obliged to subcontract an engineering company acquainted with Belgian legislation. Due to the strict financial rules, the sub-contractor could unfortunately not be the same as the one who designed the building. The need for the external engineering company to analyse the as-built files and become familiar with existing infrastructure has caused delays in the drafting of the tender documentation.

The last example also illustrates the complexity of a project in which firms from Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and Poland collaborate on a building site in Brussels.

¹² The absolute minimum period is 93 days: 12 days between launch of contract notice and publication in Official Journal Minimum period of 52 days between publication and deadline for submission of offers, 7 days between deadline for submission of offers and opening of offers, 7 days for evaluation of offers, minimum period of 15 days between contract award notification and signature of contract. In practice, site visits, translation periods, clarification of questions by tenderers/handling in of additional documents and simply the time needed to compare point by point individual offers lead to (sometimes substantially) longer periods.

¹³ The fit-out tender with its 600 pages, which could be compared with the REACH proposal, may serve as an example: Translation into 22 languages would take approximately four to five months and would cost approximately 1,2 mio €.

2.3. Market response to tenders

As with the tender schedule, the purchasing authority has no influence on the market response to tenders launched. In the case of the Visitors' Centre project, external factors negatively affected project progress in two instances:

- In one case (research framework tender), the award of a series of contracts had to be postponed by 6 months as a precautionary measure to guarantee equal opportunities and non-discrimination of all applicants. This had become necessary following an alleged incompatibility between two firms which had submitted offers for two complementary invitations to tender. The late award of the contracts had a direct impact on the overall project schedule;
- In another case, the purchasing authority was obliged to cancel the procedure altogether in order to protect the institution's financial interests: The offers received seemed to be overpriced and a possible collusion between tenderers could not be excluded. This market failure has resulted in a 2-4 months delay in the overall project implementation.

The tenders in figures¹⁴:

Number of tenders:	10
Number of contract signed:	19
Minimum tender duration:	93 days
Tender documentation:	2.613 pages
Pages translated:	11.273 pages
Number of applications:	97
Number of offers received:	58
Number of evaluation meetings:	56
Number of criteria evaluated:	300 sub-criteria (estimation)

III. Validation periods

3.1. Political validation

The project is steered by the *Bureau Working Party on Information and Communication policy* which continuously supervises project progress and endorses project milestones prior to their presentation to the Bureau. *The Bureau* has held so far seven exchanges of views on the project. In 2006, the project was also referred to the *Conference of Presidents*.

3.2. Academic validation

With regard to the academic supervision, an *Advisory Academic Committee* composed of leading European intellectuals and academics in the field of European studies, philosophy, sociology, economics and history, monitors project progress. This body has to date held 5

¹⁴ DG COMM tenders only

joint workshops with the Bureau Working Party on Information and Communication Policy. The modifications and proposals introduced by the Academic Committee were subsequently incorporated into the content development and design or further developed by the research teams. Whilst the advice of the Academic Committee has proven to be of great relevance, the members' multiple engagements have complicated the organisation of the meetings and have prolonged the time needed for consultation.

In total, validation periods account for approximately four months since the start of the project.

IV. Implementation periods

The Bureau's decisions of 4 July and 24 October 2005 set an ambitious framework:

With regard to the concept, the project has the following features:

- The Visitors' Centre is the **largest parliamentary Centre in Europe** and one of the largest in the world;
- It is the only centre of its kind worldwide that endeavours providing **full language coverage in 23 languages**;
- The concept of active citizenship through a combination of modern scenography and **interactive multimedia applications** is a completely new approach in institutional communication at European level;
- The narrative proposed by the advisory Academic Committee and endorsed by the Bureau is **interdisciplinary** and extends to themes such as history and diversity in Europe, subject matters which require outside expertise and source material.

With regard to the physical environment, it is useful to note that the space occupied by the Visitors' Centre had initially been designed to serve as an underground parking and was later adapted to the functional plan of an external museum project. The situation inherited at the start of the project represented a number of challenges:

- Since the start of the project a number of fundamental **infrastructural adaptations** have been implemented to establish full accessibility for disabled persons and to improve visitor flows;
- The **(re-)integration** of the Visitors' Centre as publicly accessible space into Parliament's security, technical and internal data network architecture raises a number of questions, in particular with regard to video surveillance, extension of EP internal telephone and data networks to the Visitors' Centre, integration and adaptations of heating, ventilation, air-condition and electricity supply networks;
- Finally, certain infrastructural works are subject to **public permits**. This is in particular the case for (a) the fire protection strategy, which had to be revised in light of the installation

of new staircases and lifts, and (b) the LED-façade installation on the external lobby which equally requires a public permit from the Brussels Region.

When put into relation with the above challenges, the progression of the project has followed a steady path and has been swift:

4.1. With regard to the concept phase:

A Mission Statement was presented to the Bureau less than a month after the project secretariat had effectively taken up its work (September 2006).

The establishment of the base concept (Master Plan) was completed in less than four months between January and April 2006.

4.2. With regard to the design phase:

The Final Design was completed in less than one year as of the contract signature with the design firm. The schedule of the various design validation steps is shown in the following table:

January 2008	Contract start with Atelier Brückner
March 2008	Hand-in of revised functional and interpretive plan
April 2008	Approval of functional and interpretive plan by Bureau
June 2008	Hand-in of Preliminary Design
September 2008	Approval of the Preliminary Design by the Bureau
November 2008	Hand-in and approval of Detailed Design
December 2008	Hand-in and approval of Final Design
March/April 2009	Hand-in of tender documentation (ca. 900 pages)

The above overview shows that it has taken less than 15 months from the first tender design proposal to the final tender documentation for the production of the Visitors' Centre.

4.3. With regard to the production phase:

The following elements are already in place:

- The first series of infrastructural works launched under the supervision of DG INLO (staircases, lift, external lobby) will be completed end of May 2009;
- More recently, three large tenders, for which a non-automatic carry-over had been requested, were successfully completed and signed within the regulatory deadline. They refer to media content productions, the supply of a media guide and the supply of an LED-mesh for the external lobby with a budgetary volume of 4,5 mio €. The implementation of these contracts has started and should be completed by the end of 2009.

V. Resource side

The intermediary results achieved so far have to be put into relation with the resources which have been made available for the project.

In the period 2005-2007, the Bureau's decision to establish the Visitors' Centre was not reflected by the creation of additional posts for this activity in the establishment plan. Two posts (1 AD and 1 AST) allocated to the management of the project originated from internal redeployments to the detriment of other DG COMM services. In 2008, DG COMM allocated two additional posts (1 AD and 1 AST) to the project, again without increase of DG COMM's human resources.

The progress achieved during this period, as outlined above, was only possible through recourse to a number of external consultancy contracts, internal redeployments within DG COMM and the attempt to establish an informal project team structure involving staff from various specialist services.

With 2 AD, 3 AST and 2 further temporary AST posts, the budget 2009 foresees for the first time the creation of posts in the establishment plan for the purpose of the Visitors' Centre.

The posts were published in January 2009 and the completion of the recruitment procedures for the permanent posts is imminent. In turn, the recruitment procedures relating to the two temporary posts have been fruitless and it remains doubtful whether qualified personnel can be found for the specific job profiles (communication assistant and media-technician) for a remaining contract duration of less than 8 months.

VI. The next steps

6.1. Completion of fit-out

Two further large tenders relating to the definitive fit-out of the Visitors' Centre and media hardware supplies are currently in inter-service consultation and will be published in May 2009¹⁵.

These tenders will inter alia incorporate the elements of the earlier tender on infrastructural adaptations which had to be closed without result (see point 3.3. above).

In line with the procedural rules applicable, these tenders could be completed at the earliest in September 2009. Subject to availability of the necessary budgetary funds, the works could start in September and be completed by March 2010.

6.2. Completion of content work

With regard to content, a number of works still need to be completed:

- (a) For most of the exhibition areas, the raw scripts will need to be finalised, refined, edited by professional script-writers and translated into all languages;

¹⁵ The procedures are already officially launched with the publication of pre-information notices in April 2009

- (b) The collection of external source material represents another challenge: More than 1000 photos and an estimated 250 audiovisual files will be used in the exhibition. Much of this material will come from external sources. The selection of the material, the identification of owners and the negotiation of individual copyrights will be one of the priorities over the coming months;
- (c) Part of the media production should be finalised before the end of the year. However, it should not be overseen that part of the production cannot be dissociated from the parliamentary life cycle: Certain sections, such as portraits of office holders and individual MEPs, interviews with the political group leaders or information on the composition of Parliament and political groups can only be developed after the European elections and the constituent meeting in July. The same applies to the envisaged 360° filming of parliamentary activities (plenary and committee meetings) which can start at the earliest in September 2009.

6.3. Future daily operation of the Visitors' centre

An external consultancy report on the staffing and organisational structure on the future Visitors' Centre was completed in March 2008, the findings of which were presented to the Bureau in April 2008.

An updated proposal on staffing and operational cost will soon be submitted to the Bureau for approval. Pending a final decision on this issue an amount of 3,1 mio € has been entered in the reserve for the 2010 budget.

The tenders to procure floor-staff and other services related to the operation of the Visitors' Centre, including the envisaged souvenir shop, will be launched in line with the Bureau's decision and its endorsement by the Committee on Budgets.

- Project milestones

July 2005	Bureau decision to establish Visitors' Centre
October 2005	Approval, by the Bureau, of a Mission Statement for the Visitors' Centre
December 2005	Signature of a contract with an external service provider on the establishment of a base concept for the Visitors' Centre
May 2006	Referral of base concept to the Conference of Presidents
June 2006	Approval, by the Bureau, of the base concept
January 2007	Launch of tender procedures on the design of the Visitors' Centre
November 2007	Approval, by the Bureau, of a progress report on the Visitors' Centre
January/February 2008	Signature of a total of nine contracts with external service providers on the design of the Visitors' Centre.
April 2008	Favourable opinion, by the Bureau, on the design, organisation and cost of Visitors' Centre
September 2008	Progress report to the Bureau Launch of 4 calls for tender concerning media production, the media guide, the LED mesh and infrastructural works.
October 2008	Launch of preparatory infrastructural works (Implementation phase 1)
December 2008	Completion of Design phase
March 2009	Launch of media production and further infrastructural works

	(Implementation phase 2)
September 2009	Start of fit-out of exhibition areas and installation of media (Implementation phase 3)
Spring 2010	Opening of Visitors' Centre