



Open call for tender - COMM/DG/AWD/2015/598

Der Generalsekretär

Annex IV

D(2015) 4041

21 AVR. 2015

NOTE TO THE MEMBERS OF THE BUREAU

Subject: *Visitors strategy*

SUMMARY

A visit to the European Parliament is a unique opportunity for citizens to find out at first-hand about the work of elected representatives. As such, it is an important underpinning of European-level democracy. Parliament makes a considerable investment in the services it offers to visitors and the impact of this investment is clear: it attracts very large and steadily growing numbers of visitors from across Europe and beyond. The range of services and facilities on offer to them is almost unmatched among similar institutions across the world.

In order to ensure a coherent and resource-efficient management of visitor services into the future, a comprehensive Visitors Strategy has been prepared, which also identifies a number of improvements that can be made in the overall visitor experience. Two main strategic axes of action are foreseen: internal - improving horizontal management and coordination of visitor services, and external - streamlining and upgrading communication channels targeted at visitors and potential visitors.

At its meeting of 20 January 2015, the Bureau Working Party on Information and Communication endorsed the proposed Visitors Strategy and recommended its approval to the Bureau, subject to the incorporation and clarification of a number of points. These points are reflected in the present note.

The Bureau is invited to:

- ***take note of the overall Visitors Strategy for the European Parliament; and***
- ***mandate the Secretary-General to present a financial overview before its final adoption.***

I. BACKGROUND

1. The European Parliament organises a wide range of information and communication activities targeted at visitors. In the last few years, they have grown in significance and scope along with the Parliament's increased efforts to communicate directly with citizens and to involve them as closely as possible to its democratic life and activities.
2. Services to visitors are currently offered in Brussels, Strasbourg and at Parliament's Information Offices in the Member States.
3. In Brussels, the current offer consists of: conferences for groups and individual plenary chamber tours (managed by Visits and Seminars Unit - Vissem); the Parliamentarium; the Esplanade Solidarność 1980 and the Info Point. In 2016, the House of European History will open. The total number of visitors to the European quarter in Brussels has increased enormously since 2011 (mainly due to the opening of the Parliamentarium but also the growing number of activities on the Esplanade). There were 450,000 visitors to the European Quarter in 2011, which increased to 750,000 in 2014 (a 69% increase), according to the tourism bureau Visit Brussels. The European Parliament itself currently receives more than 600,000 visitors annually in Brussels. The Vissem Unit welcomes 220,000 visitors a year, of whom about 50% are invited by individual Members. The Parliamentarium, which recently received its one millionth visitor, now welcomes more than 350,000 visitors a year, an increase of 100,000 since 2012 (it opened in October 2011). It is one of the leading tourist attractions in Brussels. The House of European History is expected to receive a further 300,000 visitors per year. The flow of this volume of visitors and tourists, on top of employees and passers-by, on and around the campus of the Parliament has a significant impact.
4. In Strasbourg, group visits are managed by Vissem during plenary sessions and by the Strasbourg Information Office at all other times. During session weeks in 2014, 60,000 people visited the Parliament (more than 80% of whom did so as part of a group invited by an MEP). Outside sessions, around 90,000 visitors were welcomed. In 2013, the President signed an Agreement with the Port of Strasbourg allowing visitors taking a boat tour through the city to disembark at the Parliament for a guided tour. A separate Agreement was signed with the Region of Alsace to grant visitors to Parliament free access to the *Memorial d'Alsace-Moselle*, which offers an insight into the region's war-torn history from 1870. In addition, in early 2017, a "mini Parliamentarium" will open in Strasbourg.
5. Parliament's Information Offices in the Member States manage their own visitors and in total welcome over 350,000 visitors each year to their premises. In early 2016, a 360° cinema will have been added to the offer in Berlin. As the Bureau has previously discussed, if this experience is successful, an extension of similar facilities could be envisaged for other Offices, subject to the availability of suitable space and the necessary resources.
6. The total is a remarkable aggregate number of over a million annual visitors, which is likely to rise to as many as 1.5 million in the coming years.

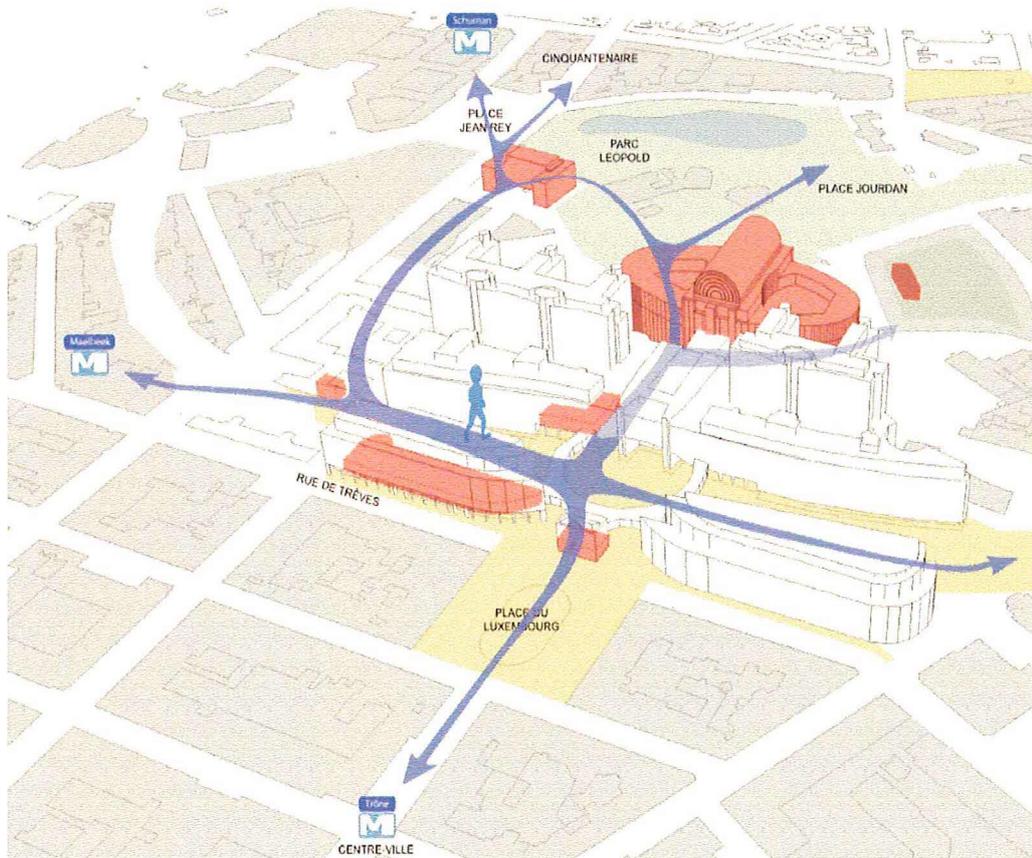
II. WHY A COMPREHENSIVE VISITORS STRATEGY IS NECESSARY

7. Compared with other EU institutions and national parliaments, the European Parliament's visitor offer is difficult to match. However, there remains scope for further improvement both in some specific services and in their integration, allowing them to be offered, promoted and exploited as a coherent package. This would generate synergies and gains in resource efficiency, facilitate coherent management and above all, enhance the overall experience for the visitor.
8. To bring about this improvement, DG Communications (DG COMM) has developed a comprehensive visitor strategy. Its main objectives are:
 - To upgrade facilities and improve the attractiveness and interactivity of communication channels and tools,
 - To strengthen relations and create lasting bonds with visitors,
 - To mobilise synergies by introducing and reinforcing coherent management and coordination mechanisms,
 - To better embed the EP in Brussels into the broader European area and reinforce cultural cooperation with local authorities, and
 - To optimise the use of available human and financial resources.
9. Two main axes of action are foreseen: internal - **improving horizontal management and coordination of visitors' services**, and external - **streamlining and upgrading communication channels targeted at visitors and potential visitors**.
10. This Visitors Strategy is strategically aligned with DG COMM's overall strategy for the coming years and based on the principle: "produce less and communicate better". DG COMM ensures that its communication actions are fully justifiable in terms of efficiency and are result-oriented. The resources needed for the implementation of the Visitors Strategy as presented in this note have been identified within the existing DG COMM budget for visitor activities and there is thus no impact on the overall budgetary appropriations. Once the overall approach has been approved by the Bureau, it will be vital to detail the resources required, lines of responsibility and implementation timelines for the various actions and projects.
11. At its meeting of 20 January 2015, the Bureau Working Party on Information and Communication endorsed the proposed Visitors Strategy and recommended its approval to the Bureau, subject to the incorporation and clarification of a number of points. These points are reflected in the present note. The Working Party will be regularly informed about the ongoing implementation of the Visitors Strategy.

III. THE MAIN COMPONENTS OF THE VISITORS STRATEGY

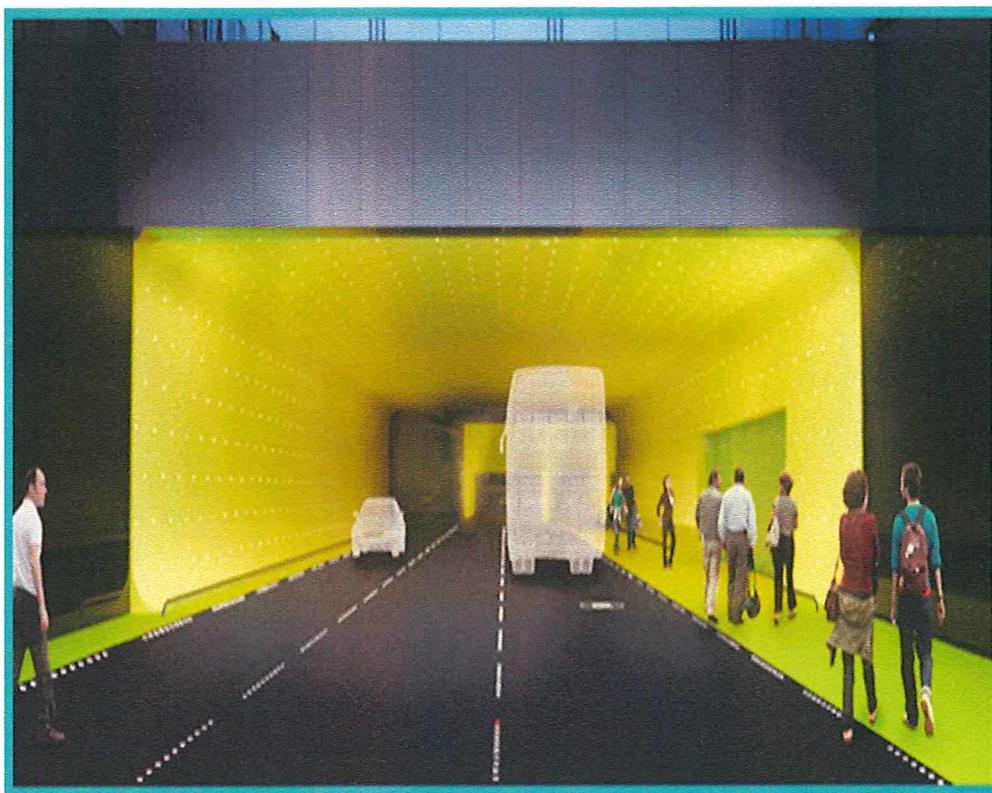
12. The main projects and clusters of projects have been identified to guarantee successful and measurable implementation of the strategy. Most of these projects are of a cross-cutting and inter-service character, so cooperation between Directorates-General is a prerequisite for success, particularly between DG COMM and DG Infrastructure and Logistics (INLO). There are four main areas: the Visitors Pathway in Brussels; Visitor facilities in Brussels; the Visitors Loyalty Programme; and Communication and Promotion of global visitor offer.
13. All the proposals made in the strategy fully respect the existing security arrangements and rules in place. Clearly the situation may evolve, and so utmost attention will continue to be given to security and safety issues through the permanent involvement of the Directorate-General for Security and Safety (DG SAFE).

Visitors Pathway – connecting visitor services in Brussels



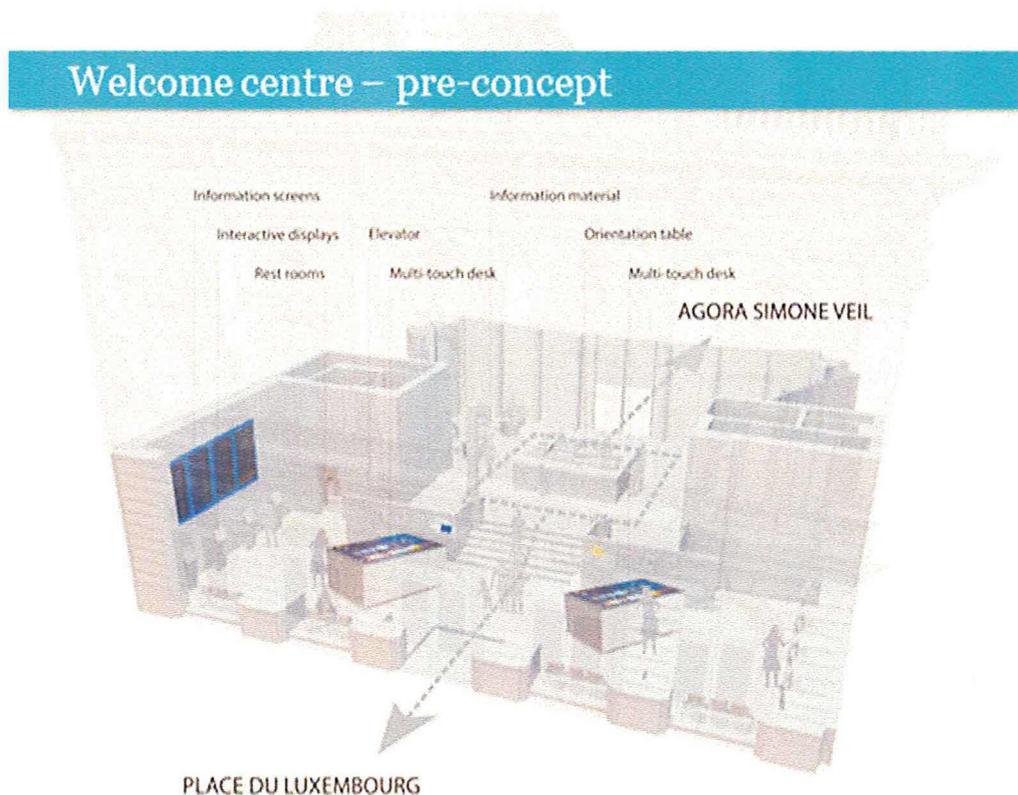
Visitor Facilities in Brussels

17. Following approval by the Bureau on 15 April 2013, a project, managed by DG INLO, is currently underway to improve the reception arrangements for visitor groups arriving by coach and headed to any of the visitor facilities. The current bus arrival and departure zone (in *Rue d'Ardenne* and *Rue Montoyer*) provides neither a welcoming atmosphere nor a safe arrival area in which visitors can easily find their way around the campus. From the end of 2016, a visible, safe and comfortable reception area where visitors can feel welcome upon arrival and directly access the Esplanade via the Sakharov Lounge will operate in the lower part of the Atrium Building.



18. As part of the same project, by 2019, a suite of sixteen seminar rooms will be created in the Atrium building in which Members will be able to meet with their visitors, replacing the current facilities in the Spaak building. In the meantime, those existing visitors' seminar rooms in the Spaak (PHS) building are rather tired and not particularly welcoming. It is therefore proposed that in the immediate future they be subject to superficial refurbishments, such as repainting the walls, changing some of the furniture and renewing some technical equipment.

19. For the particular benefit of visitors not arriving as part of a group, the ground floor of former Luxembourg station should become a central welcome and orientation point for the entire campus to be known as Station Europe. According to visitor flow studies, the vast majority of independent visitors to Parliament (those not arriving by tour bus) arrive from the *Place du Luxembourg* side of the campus, coming either from the city centre or from one of several public transport options. Station Europe will be immediately identifiable upon arrival and offer visitors a personalised welcome. It will enable them to plan their visit to the EP and the wider European quarter according to their own particular profiles, needs and wishes using interactive terminals and screens. Space in these premises will also be made available to the local authorities to provide tourist information of a more general nature. Relations with local authorities have developed considerably over recent years and our Belgian partners show great interest in cooperating with the Parliament to achieve a better use of the Esplanade Solidarność 1980, notably because of the increasing pedestrian traffic generated by the success of the Parliamentarium.



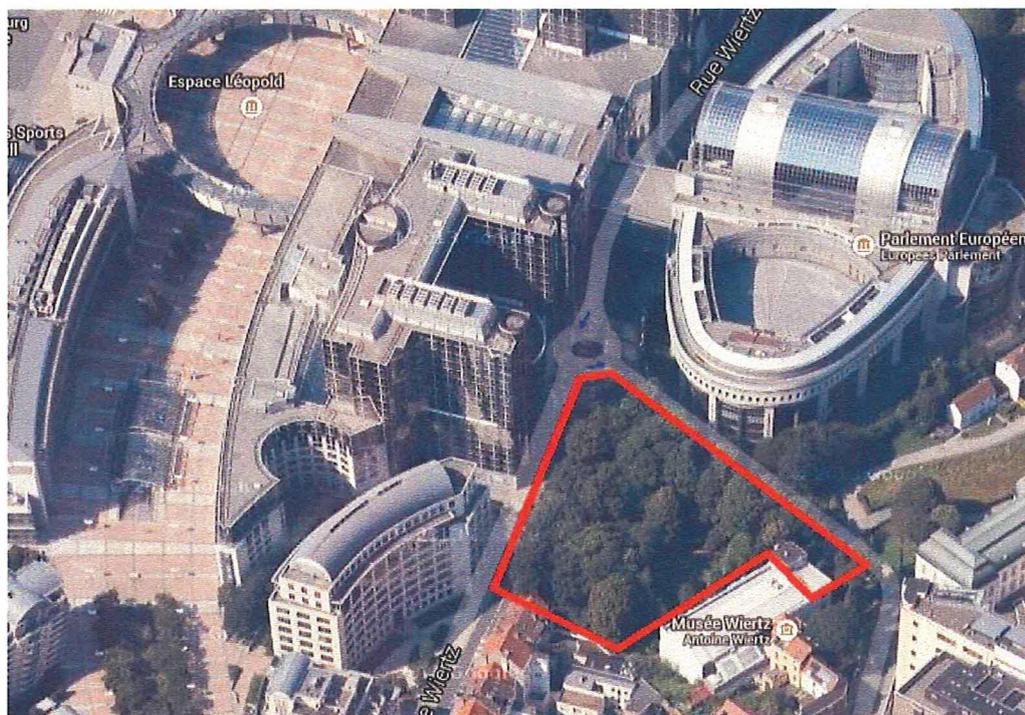
20. Several improvements are planned for the Esplanade Solidarność 1980 itself, not least through efforts to make it a more welcoming and pleasant area and in itself an integral part of the experience of visiting the Parliament. Currently, particularly in winter, it can be a rather inhospitable, windy environment. Better lighting, wind protection, green areas, benches and the installation of rubbish bins are among the improvements envisaged in the short term.

In parallel, events organised on the Esplanade should be better integrated into the visitor offer. A publicly available Wifi network should be installed on the Esplanade and on the campus of the Parliament (giving utmost consideration to all security issues) to enable visitors to take full advantage of the visitors offer, which includes a substantial online component (see below). DG COMM will need to collaborate closely on this initiative with the Directorate-General for Innovation and Technological Support (DG ITEC). It is important to underline, however, that any embellishment of the Esplanade cannot be decided unilaterally because it is not the property of the Parliament. In fact, the Esplanade is subject to a rather complex management mechanism, involving several local authorities, which will have to be adapted as well.



21. The service hitherto provided by the "Info Point" (which distributed printed material about the EP and EU) is obsolete. This space could be better deployed as an "Info Café" - a new, multi-functional area, open to the public. It would be a bookshop-café, where visitors to the EP and passers-by can take a break between different visits and activities, shelter from bad weather, or simply drop in for a coffee and snacks. Interactive screens will offer further information and show current debates in the EP live, and EU and EP-related books will be available. A selection of the EP-related materials previously available in the Info Point will be distributed via other visitor facilities such as the visitors entrance lobby in the Spaak building.

22. A further opportunity exists to integrate some pleasant, green space into the Visitors' Pathway in the form of the Wiertz Park, directly bordering the Paul-Henri Spaak building and easily accessible from Parliament's main entrances. Discussions have started with a view to concluding a cooperation agreement with the Musée Wiertz to this end. Such an agreement may also offer scope for a wider cultural project to be developed.



23. Although the various attractions on the EP campus will be rendered easily accessible for the large majority of visitors, it is important to recognise that for visitors with reduced mobility, seniors and families, the distances, stairs and obstacles involved can render their visit more difficult or even prevent them from visiting all sites. A cost-effective and environmentally-friendly solution to this problem, in the form of a shuttle transport service, should be put into operation in time for the opening of the House of European History. An outdoor lift, connecting the Esplanade level to the Rue Montoyer level is also planned as part of the Atrium reception area project.

Visitor loyalty programme and segmentation

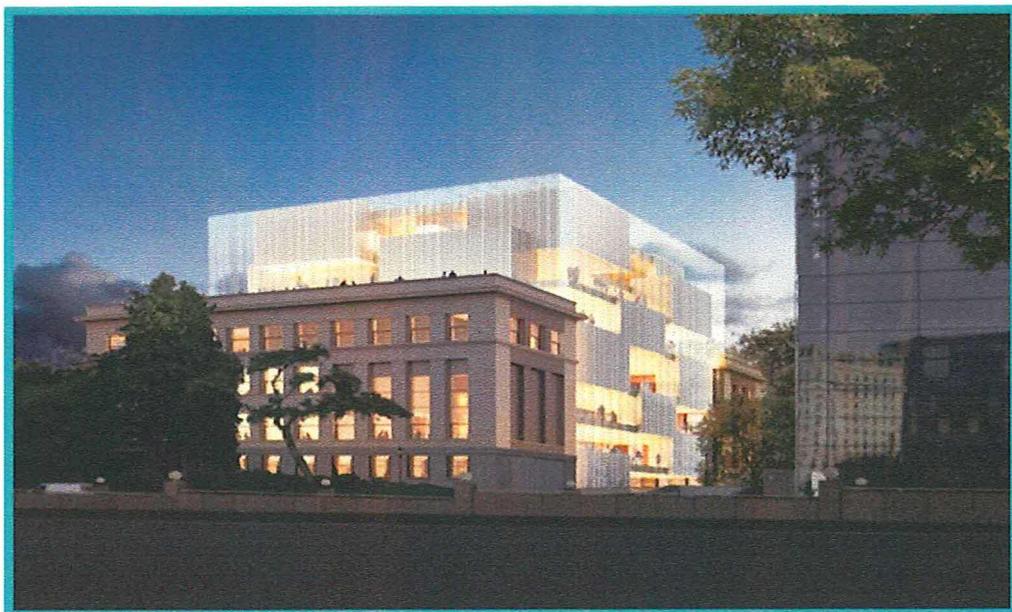
24. Currently, no consistent and comprehensive efforts are invested in maintaining relationships with visitors after they have completed their visit. Yet, as the Parliamentarium mission statement identifies: *“A visit should not be a one-time contact with the European Parliament, but the starting point for a lasting relationship with the Institution. It should incite the visitor to engage with the democratic life of Europe, to take an interest in the European Parliament and European policy beyond the visit and, in terms of the EP's wider information and communication policy, make the visitor a voice for the Institution in his/her home country.”*

25. The sheer number of visitors demonstrates how much interest the EP actually generates and how important it is to capitalise better on this group of potential EP ambassadors before, during and after their visit. The EP needs to create, sustain and subsequently exploit a network of citizen ambassadors and 'friends of the EP' to generate a multiplier effect from visitors.
26. An effective database contact management system will be customised for the needs of the visitors' services and will allow for the collection, analysis and segmentation of visitor data. The issue of data protection has already been carefully addressed in this context, and procedures are monitored on an on-going basis to ensure compliance with relevant legislation. Once data is collected, a carefully devised targeting approach needs to be put in place according to the profiles and interests of visitors. Moreover, tools such as satisfaction surveys, conducted professionally, will be used to enhance our understanding of the visitor experience and needs.

Upgrading of communication platforms and promotion of the global visitor's offer

27. The standard of the individual visitor facilities and platforms needs to be periodically reviewed to guarantee they offer a uniformly high level of quality and remain up-to-date with visitors' expectations and needs. For example, a joint catering and merchandising approach is needed to ensure a commonly-branded, high quality offer in the different facilities. Similarly, a strategy for staff to welcome visitors to all EP premises in the best possible manner and with the same level of information on the services provided is needed and will be developed.
28. Ultimately, the target will be to achieve an overall high level of visitor satisfaction with both the individual and global offer, whilst communicating effectively to a maximum of diverse visitor audiences by ensuring the suitability of existing tools for different target groups (as well as identifying and closing gaps in the range of services and facilities on offer).
29. Structures and measures will also need to be put in place to ensure coherence of the offer to visitors with Parliament's communication priorities.
30. The "Visiting" webpage of the Europarl website will also need to be overhauled. It was created in 2011 to accompany the launch of Parliamentarium, and provides basic information about the global visitor offer. It now needs further development, for example through a more intuitive structure, greater use of multimedia, and greater responsiveness to the practical needs of prospective, current and past visitors (for example through the provision of online services, interactive features and downloadable material).
31. In addition, and notably in the perspective of the opening of the House of European History, a new approach to social media use will be defined and put in place, as will the creation of mobile applications such as an audio guide for the Visitors Pathway, streamlined online booking arrangements, virtual tours, feedback forms and subscription options.

32. Other materials, such as videos, leaflets and maps (including clear indications on access to the EP premises by public transport) will be produced and existing ones optimised to fill the communication gaps in the overview and promotion of the global offer. These materials will be targeted at diverse visitor audiences and available as toolkits that can be downloaded freely from the European Parliament's online Download Centre. This will accompany the communication plan for the opening of the House of European History.



IV. TIMELINE

- Setting up management and coordination mechanisms: immediate
- Streamlining communication tools and promotion of global offer: immediate
- Revamp of online presence: 2016
- Campus audio-guide as mobile application and wifi: 2016
- Upgrading of VISSEM facilities in SPAAK: immediate
- Permanent Visitors pathway (including Welcome Centre and new Info Café): summer 2016
- Cooperation Agreement on the Wiertz Park Project: end 2015
- Urban pedestrian signage: end 2015/beginning 2016
- New arrival/departure zone for coaches in Rue Ardennes/Rue Montoyer: open by June 2016
- Development of differentiated, targeted visits (segmentation): from 2016
- Loyalty programme, satisfaction surveys and segmentation: 2016-2017
- New seminar rooms for visitors in the Atrium building: mid 2019
- Full implementation of the Visitors Strategy: 2019.

V. CONCLUSIONS

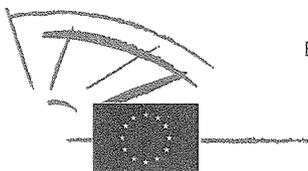
The Bureau is invited to:

- *take note of the overall Visitors Strategy for the European Parliament; and*
- *mandate the Secretary-General to present a financial overview before its final adoption.*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a series of connected loops and curves, positioned above the name Klaus WELLE.

Klaus WELLE

Annex: 'Bureau Note of 9 April 2013: "Receiving Visitors to the European Parliament in Brussels" (PE 508.817)



Der Generalsekretär

D(2013)2610

- 9 AVR. 2013

NOTE TO THE MEMBERS OF THE BUREAU

Subject: Receiving visitors to the European Parliament in Brussels

SUMMARY

For several years, a major preoccupation in the field of the reception of visitor groups has been the bus arrival and departure area. In the past, Parliament was able to use a car park in the lower part of Rue Belliard. The current bus arrival and departure area is located in Rue d'Ardenne and Rue Montoyer, with a longer-term parking zone an acceptable distance from Parliament's premises.

The current situation provides neither a welcoming atmosphere nor visibility and does not give visitors the chance to orientate themselves with regard to the site. It does not incorporate basic facilities for welcoming visitors. Furthermore, the current situation is not providing a safe arrival area which allows visitors to enter Parliament without crossing main streets, proving a security problem in particular for very junior and senior visitors.

Following the presentation of Vice-President Vidal-Quadras at the Away Days of the Bureau on 8/9 April, it is proposed to create a visible, safe and comfortable reception area where visitors would feel welcome upon arrival and directly access the Esplanade via the Sakharov Lounge. In addition, a series of meeting rooms would be provided to create facilities which will be all the more important during the period of renovation works on the Paul-Henri Spaak Building.

This concept was endorsed by the Working Party on Building, Transport and a Green Parliament at its meeting on 16 January 2013.

The Bureau is therefore invited to:

- take note of the logistical aspects of the reception of visitors at the European Parliament in Brussels set out herein;
- charge the Secretary-General to develop the feasibility studies in preparation of the project on the basis of this information.

Introduction

The European Parliament has traditionally endeavoured to promote contact with citizens by, for example, welcoming visitors to its various sites.

The public gallery of the Chamber, the Infopoint, the Parliamentarium, the Esplanade Solidarność 1980, the Simone Veil Agora, the Sakharov Lounge and the future House of European History are all points of interest at Parliament's Brussels site.

On 23 March 2011, the Bureau adopted the action plan put forward by DG COMM (see Annex 1). Point 17 of the action plan aims to improve citizens' experience of visiting Parliament's sites, for example by creating a route for visitors to follow, improving the visibility of the buildings and developing certain areas.

On 12 October 2011, the Bureau adopted a proposal for the installation of a fixed route for visitors to follow between the various points of interest.

On 16 January 2013, the Bureau Working Group on Buildings, Transports and Green Parliament examined the proposal for the visitors' reception centre.

It underlined that Parliament needs a visitors' reception centre which guarantees:

- (a) the welcoming and safe arrival of visitors to Parliament, which is not the case in the current circumstances;
- (b) a reception infrastructure including sanitary facilities;
- (c) back-up meeting facilities for the period of renovation of the PHS building in the coming years;
- (d) the better use of technical facilities via an improved use of available space.

Arriving at the European Parliament

As part of the procedure for applying for permits for the House of European History project, Parliament was required to produce visitor profiles. Based on information gathered, it became clear that there are two types of visitors: groups and individuals. Groups of visitors to Parliament arrive mainly by bus, whilst individuals make their own arrangements.

Individual visitors arrive at Parliament by public transport or car. A solution for parking spaces should be studied.

In the case of groups, the main issue concerns a proper arrival and departure zone for visitors travelling by bus. This issue has, at various times, been raised either as an internal matter (during discussion of the Parliamentarium and the House of European History, for example) or as an external matter (when the urban planning and environmental permits were being investigated).

In the past, Parliament was able to use a car park in the lower part of Rue Belliard. At the end of the rental period, the owner embarked on a construction project not including bus parking facilities.

The current bus arrival and departure area is located in Rue d'Ardenne and Rue Montoyer, with a longer-term parking zone an acceptable distance from Parliament's premises.

The current situation provides neither a welcoming atmosphere nor visibility and does not give visitors the chance to orientate themselves with regard to the site. It does not incorporate basic facilities for welcoming visitors. Furthermore, the current situation is not providing for a safe arrival area which allows visitors to enter Parliament without crossing main streets, proving a security problem in particular for very junior and senior visitors.

Proposal for development

Upon arrival at the European Parliament, visitors should feel that they are welcome. The Parliament reception area should be identifiable from a main road such as Rue Belliard. Visitors should arrive to Parliament in pleasant and safe surroundings near the welcoming facilities. At the end of the visit, they should have the feeling that they are still in Parliament until actually boarding the bus.

An analysis showed that the perfect place to install such a reception area is in the lower part of the Atrium building which, following suitable development work, will permit visitors to go directly to the Sakharov Lounge and access the Esplanade Solidarność. The project would result in greater visibility and be considerably safer,



would present a much more welcoming aspect,



and would make the different interest points of the European Parliament easily accessible to visitors. The initial orientation of visitors would be considerably facilitated.



In addition, a series of meeting rooms would be provided to create facilities which will be all the more important during the period of renovation works on the Paul-Henri Spaak Building.

According to preliminary evaluations and on the basis of currently-available data, the improvements could be made by 2015 and the work would cost around EUR 4.2 million.

This would involve the transformation of mainly technical areas and the creation of a link to the level of the Esplanade Solidarność 1980 (by elevators and stairs).

From plan to project

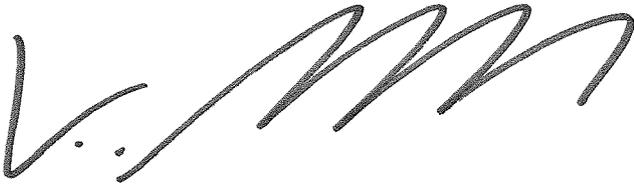
A preliminary feasibility study and an outline plan have been produced. Detailed requirements and the layout of facilities need fine-tuning and also account taken of results of the audit organised by DG COMM.

On receiving a positive decision by the Bureau, the feasibility study will be finalised with a view to the actual logistical and financial implementation of the project.

Conclusion

The Bureau is therefore invited to:

- take note of the logistical aspects of receiving visitors to the European Parliament in Brussels set out herein;
- charge the Secretary-General to develop the feasibility studies in preparation of the project on the basis of this information.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Welle', with a stylized, cursive flourish.

Klaus WELLE

- Annex 1: Minutes of the meetings of the Bureau on 23 March 2011 (including the DG COMM action plan) and 12 October 2011
- Annex 2: Document presenting the outline plan
- Annex 3: Plan presenting the link between the visitors' reception centre and all other points of interest for visitors