



# QUESTORS

## MINUTES

of the meeting held on Tuesday, 26 March 2019, at 14.30  
Room WEISS S3.4.  
Strasbourg

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ANNEX: Record of attendance

Mr KARSKI, Chair-in-Office, opened the meeting at 14.35 on Tuesday, 26 March 2019.

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1. Adoption of draft agenda

The Quaestors,

- adopted the draft agenda as indicated in these minutes (PE 634.057/QUEST).

2. Minutes of the meeting of 12 March 2019

The Quaestors,

- noted and approved the Minutes of the meeting on 12 March 2019 in Strasbourg (PE 634.041/QUEST).

3. Announcements by the Chair-in-Office

There were none.

**A. DECISIONS/ EXCHANGE OF VIEWS**

4. Unofficial groupings of Members, including friendship groups

The Quaestors, with debate,

- took note of a draft Notice on unofficial groupings of Members, including friendship groups (PE 634.0046/QUEST);
- took note of Notice 20/2018 on Members' obligations when participating in friendship groups or other unofficial groupings (PE 612.582/QUEST);
- heard Mr KARSKI, Chair-in-Office, stat that:
  - following the plenary decision on 31 January 2019 on the revision of the Rules of Procedure, including Rule 34, which became applicable since 11 February 2019, revised rules have been adopted regarding unofficial groups including so called "friendship groups",
  - the item was discussed during last Quaestors' meeting on 12 March 2019 where a number of technical and political concerns about the implementation of the new regulation were raised,
  - Mr MANKA, Quaestor responsible, was asked to liaise with the relevant administrative services in order to clarify a number of issues and submit a revised draft Notice for adoption by the Quaestors at their next meeting,

- held an exchange of views with the participation of Mr MAŇKA, Ms BEARDER, Quaestors, and Mr KARSKI, Chair-in-Office, who noted *inter alia* that:
  - unofficial groupings of Members including the so-called friendship groups, must respect the values of the European Union,
  - all activities promoted by these unofficial groupings of Members must not interfere or create confusion with the official activities of the European Parliament,
  - the use of ‘coincide’ can have different meanings, but it is the term used in the Rules of Procedure and must be taken to mean ‘in parallel’, ‘at the same time’;
  - each individual Member participating in an unofficial grouping has the personal responsibility to declare any support received,
  - any use of the Parliament logo, if allowed, must be done in accordance with the relevant rules;
- adopted the draft Notice and instructed the Secretariat to send it to Members.

## 5. Mind matters programme

The Quaestors, with debate,

- took note of a presentation by the Medical Service on the Mind matters programme (PE 634.060/QUEST);
- heard Mr KARSKI, Chair-in-Office, introduce the matter at hand, noting that:
  - he welcomed the “Mind matters” programme developed at the initiative of the Secretary General and implemented by the Medical Service under the direction of its Head of Unit, Dr Petra CLAES, whose objective is to ensure better mental and psychological health among Members and staff, and to help finding solutions to any relevant issues,
  - stress in the workplace is one of the biggest challenges, since 50% of employees consider it common, it contributes to around half of all lost working days and is often misunderstood or stigmatised;
- observed a presentation by Dr CLAES who explained that:
  - there was a need to de-stigmatise problems relating to mental well-being, since such problems were encountered by one in four people every year;
  - as somebody can be physically sick, it must be recognised and accepted that one can also have health issues with the mind;
  - workplaces had a responsibility to take action against such problems, noting that doing so would lead to better work performance;
  - activities focused on five areas:
    - raising awareness through events, symposia, presentations, workshops and dialogue with stakeholders,
    - combat stigma, encouraging mutual respect and support,

- provide information, tools and training, including mental health first aid,
  - promote a healthy work environment,
  - facilitate access to professional support;
- the feedback received so far from the programme was positive;
  - an in-house training on the internationally recognised “mental health first aid” had been launched, making the European Parliament a pioneer among EU Institutions;
- held an exchange of views with the participation of Ms MORIN-CHARTIER, Ms BEARDER and Mr MAŇKA, Quaestors, who:
    - welcomed the programme and the presentation by Dr CLAES,
    - recalled issues inherently linked to, *inter alia*, cases of harassment between Members and their accredited assistants, which were yet another reason to emphasise the importance of this programme,
    - stressed the need to be mindful of cultural differences, since not everyone would necessarily contact the EP medical service in case of problems, and to also address issues such as loneliness and home-sickness;
  - heard Ms LANDI-GIETEMA, Director of HR Support and Social Services, DG PERS, explain that the programme is work in progress, *inter alia* in the area of confidence-building, expressing the hope that the programme would meet expectations in terms of preventing mental health problems;
  - heard Mr KARSKI, Chair-in-Office, suggest that the Medical Service prepare a comprehensive draft Notice about all its services, including the ‘Mind matters’ programme, to be sent to Members;
  - agreed with the suggestion of the Chair-in-Office.

## 6. State of play of the Catering policy

### The Quaestors.

- took note of a presentation from DG INLO on the Catering policy (PE 634.061/QUEST);
- heard Mr KARSKI, Chair-in-Office, introduce the matter noting that:
  - at its meeting on 10 June 2013, the Bureau adopted guidelines for the modernisation of Parliament’s catering policy 2014-2019, key points being the diversification of service providers and the gradual transition towards non-subsidised and concession type contracts; these goals have been achieved in Brussels and Strasbourg, and Luxembourg will follow once the current contract runs out,
  - other achievements worth noting are the refurbishment of different catering outlets and the opening of new ones; the positive outcome of the pilot project of water fountains installed at the Parliament’s main alleyways to encourage the reduction and gradual elimination of single-use plastic, measures to reduce food wastage and regular donations of unsold food to charitable organisations,

- at the same time, however, both the Mediterranean restaurant and the supermarket remained closed and a solution had yet to be found;
- heard Ms LINNUS, Director-General, DG INLO, present the matter at hand explaining that:
  - with the decision taken on 10 June 2013 the Bureau agreed that the subsidies of about EUR 5 million a year earmarked in the EP budget for catering contracts in the three places of work were not justified in the light of the European economic situation and the catering services should be offered in a subsidy-free way;
  - DG INLO launched a call for tender in 2014, and the Parliament had a new service provider for the first time since almost 30 years; moreover, separate small outlets opened with a view to offering a diversified choice of food able to satisfy customers' needs,
  - the new Parliament's catering policy has produced considerable savings and the catering budget line is now reduced to less than EUR 1 million;
- heard Mr MACHMER, Director of Logistics, DG INLO, present the state of play and future developments of the catering policy in the three places of work noting *inter alia* that:
  - in Brussels the current main catering contract will expire on 31 July 2019; the new call for tender was already launched and the selection procedure is expected to be terminated by the end of June; the new policy will provide a total of 8 contracts in the field of catering, four big lots and four small concessions, to ensure a more diversified and competitive catering service,
  - following the renovation of the MON 63 building, a tender procedure was launched and is now in its final stage; the catering unit set up a tender procedure in order to open a new 'pop - up restaurant', after the Mediterranean style restaurant closed its doors in November 2018; the renovated Astrid Lulling Lounge reopened on 24 September 2018 and offers *inter alia* audio-visual equipment for informal meetings, conferences and presentations for Members; the self-service restaurant and cafeteria in the MARTENS building opened in April 2018, with a new culinary offer which turned out to be very successful,
  - in Strasbourg, EUREST France is the main catering service provider, which operates since November 2016 and offers now an even wider variety than before, including a new sandwich bar with some healthy take-away options such as salad jars and bio-food; EUREST France has also provided an impressive proof of professionalism and competence in managing the difficult situation that has arisen in Parliament following the terrorist attack in Strasbourg last December,
  - in Luxembourg, Parliament has the last catering contract under the old system, but after the completion of the new ADENAUER building (KAD) a new concession-based contract will be implemented with considerable savings for the EP budget,
  - furthermore, it is worth noting that the "Meet and Eat" formula is highly appreciated, as it provides support for the long and highly engaging inter-institutional trilogues; the Key Environmental Performance Indicator related to the reduction of food waste has shown a decrease by 16% in 2018; in the same year, the European Parliament donated 1 673 kg of unsold food to charities; the ongoing installation of

water fountains resulted already in 2018 in a significant drop by 11% of plastic bottles sales (about 103 000 bottles) in comparison with 2017;

- held an exchange of views with the participation of Ms MORIN-CHARTIER, Ms BEARDER, Quaestors, and Mr KARSKI, Chair-in-Office, who:
  - noted that for the first time ever the European Parliament has a non-subsidised catering system and all the restaurants and outlets have to compete on the basis of the market prices,
  - highlighted that the new catering policy has brought about a change in mentality in the customers, but also in the staff employed, with a level of commitment and professionalism that was also evident during the terrorist attack in Strasbourg,
  - welcomed the campaign to prevent food waste and noted in particular the effectiveness of the actions taken such as the donation of unsold food to charities and the implementation of 'My Portion' according to which the food from the buffet is now paid by weight and no longer as a standard portion, with the effect of reducing food waste,
  - welcomed the installation of the water fountains, emphasizing the achievement of the 11% reduction of plastic bottles sales in 2018 in comparison with 2017, and the importance to further promote the reduction of the single use plastic bottle,
  - noted the lack of a shop inside Parliament where one can buy food and in particular healthy food, especially during the afternoon hours or in the evening,
  - enquired about checks of the quality of the water supplied by the fountains that is particularly 'hard' in Brussels,
  - enquired about the possibility for Members' sponsored visitor groups to pay for their meal after receiving the grant by the European Parliament, and not in advance as currently requested, which is highly impractical and very difficult to apply;
- heard Ms LINNUS, Director-General, DG INLO, in response to the questions raised:
  - explain that the water fountains are perfectly sustainable and they are regularly monitored to verify the quality of the water supplied,
  - inform that DG INLO will present at the next Quaestors' meeting a proposal for the location of a new shop inside the Parliament to better respond to customer needs,
  - inform that the administrative services will seek a solution for sponsored visitor groups in case the service provider requests an advance payment for the meal;
- took note of the information provided and welcomed the results achieved with the new catering policy.

## **B. PROPOSAL FOR DECISION WITHOUT DEBATE**

### **7. Implementation of Article 23 of the Rules governing the reception of groups of visitors (additional financial contribution for visitors with special needs)**

The Quaestors, without debate,

- took note of a draft Notice on visitors with special needs (PE 634.062/QUEST/CM);
- approved the draft Notice and instructed the Secretariat to send it to Members.

## 8. Urgent matters and any other business

### 8.1 Access of Former Members to *Financial Times* and *Politico* subscriptions

The Quaestors, with debate,

- heard Ms BEARDER, Quaestor, note that former Members who are quite active and almost act as ambassadors for the EP and the EU wished to remain informed about events in Europe and therefore enquired whether they could be granted access to the services of the Parliament's library and particularly to subscriptions to *The Financial Times* and *Politico*;
- heard Mr TEASDALE, Director-General, DG EPRS, explain that former Members already had physical access to Parliament's library, but wished to be granted access also to the online documentation service, noting that the feasibility of this was currently being examined by his Directorate-General; explain, further, that while Parliament could, to a large extent, give former Members access to the most used online documentation applications at no extra cost for the Institution, some technical issues linked to making intranet-based services accessible from the internet would need to be solved, further noting that, in the case of *The Financial Times* and *Politico*, access by former Members would also entail a not insignificant budgetary cost for Parliament; suggest that, generally, DG EPRS's approach was favourable, and that a range of initiatives had been taken to strengthen relations with the Former Members' Association;
- took note of the information provided and requested DG EPRS to examine the matter and explore the different possibilities and liaise with the FMA.

### 8.2 Creation of an EP email domain for Former Members

The Quaestors, with debate,

- heard Ms BEARDER, Quaestor, recall that she had already raised the issue of allowing former Members to retain an e-mail address in Parliament, noting that former members of staff had this possibility and that a similar system for former Members would be helpful, also for administrative matters between former Members and the Parliament;
- heard, Mr KOVACHEV, Quaestor responsible for telecommunication and information technology and for relations with the Former Members' Association, express his support for the proposal, noting that the proposal could possibly be implemented at a low cost;
- heard Mr KARSKI, Chair-in-Office, suggest that the relevant services examine the issue and submit a proposal to the Quaestors, noting that the matter should be decided before the end of the term;
- agreed with the suggestion of the Chair-in-Office.

### 8.3 Update on financial entitlements for UK Members and staff and logistical options for decommissioning offices

The Quaestors, with debate,

- heard Ms BEARDER, Quaestor, enquire about the practical and financial arrangements foreseen for Members from the United Kingdom, and their assistants, in view of the extension, pursuant to Art. 50(3) of the Treaty on European Union, of the period before the United Kingdom withdraws from the European Union, further to the results of the European Council of 21 March 2019;
- heard Mr KLETHI, Director-General, DG FINS, note the uncertainties around Brexit and explain that his Directorate-General was monitoring closely the situation and was adapting every time to the latest developments, doing its utmost to minimise the inconvenience caused to Members and their assistants; refer to an administrative notice sent the day before to all Members elected in the UK to inform them of the latest administrative developments in the light of the decision of the European Council;
- heard Mr MANNELLI, Director for Members Financial and Social Entitlements, DG FINS, and Coordinator of the Task-Force Elections 2019, explain that:
  - the conclusions adopted by the European Council on 21 March 2019 raised some practical questions on the implications for the mandates of Members from the United Kingdom and particularly as regards their staff contracts,
  - in accordance with the applicable rules, the Accredited Parliamentary Assistants (“APAs”) who had been recruited to assist Members elected in the UK until the end of the term would continue automatically in their status as APAs until the end of the month in which the mandate of the Member they assist will end;
  - in line with a notice issued to staff on 14 May 2018, the contracts of APAs recruited to assist Members elected in the UK after 15 May 2018 were to expire on 31 March 2019; all APAs with a contract expiring on 31 March 2019 have been contacted by the services and informed of the situation; considering now the extension decided at the European Council, UK Members may ask the APA Desk, as soon as possible, to extend the contract of her/his APAs up to the date of the actual end of their mandate in the light of the above mentioned European Council conclusions; given the externality that caused it, such extension will not be regarded as counting towards the maximum number of extensions of that APA’s contract,
  - as the originally agreed exit-date is only few days from now, the relevant service of Parliament has closed all local contracts of Members elected in the UK with an end date of 29 March 2019,
  - if permitted by, and subject to the relevant procedures under the applicable national provisions, in case Members wish to cancel the redundancy notice for their local assistants and/or service provider and to continue collaboration with them until the day Brexit actually becomes effective, the options available would be the following, depending on what has been agreed in the contract:
    - Option 1: The original contract, both employment and service provider (including paying agent), is dated until the end of legislature and the assistant or the service provider is willing to continue: in this case, a written notification should be sent to the Parliamentary Assistance Unit stating the Member’s wish to

continue with the local assistant(s) and/or service providers indicated therein. (Notifications should be sent by e-mail to [anna.bakker@ep.europa.eu](mailto:anna.bakker@ep.europa.eu))

- Option 2: The original employment contract is dated until 29 March 2019 but a Member wishes to continue with the same assistant and the assistant is willing to continue: in this case, a form 2.3 and an annex to the contract to prolong it should be submitted to the MEPs' Portal.
  - Option 3: The original service provider contract (including paying agent) is dated until 29 March 2019 and a Member wishes to continue with the same service provider: for this situation, a new contract is needed and the corresponding application must be submitted to the MEPs' Portal,
- whichever option is chosen, Members should consult their paying agent to discuss possible issues linked to already paid redundancy payments and instruct them to keep these amounts until the last month of the mandate of the Member,
  - Members' salaries for April will be paid as usual, envelopes concerning Members' General Expenditure Allowance along with the Parliamentary Assistance Allowance are also normally available, without any additional delay in April,
  - as regards Members travel expenses during the extension period, they will be able to book again flights in the EP travel agency;
  - regarding Members' entitlement to transitional allowance and pension after the end of the mandate, new simulations will be sent and the competent service will inform Members in good time; the date related to Members' end of term already introduced in the application for transitional allowance will be automatically modified according to the effective date of end of mandate,
  - whereas no change affects Members access badge, which remains valid after the 29 March, APA badges with end date of 31 March will need to be changed once they have a new contract;
- heard Ms LINNUS, Director-General, DG INLO, explain that the necessary flexibility regarding Members' offices would be ensured;
  - heard Ms BEARDER, Quaestor, thank the services for the information provided;
  - took note of the information provided.

#### 9. Items for information

The Quaestors, took note of the following items:

- 9.1 Notice 05/2019 - End of term - vacating offices in Brussels (PE 634.043/QUEST/CM)
- 9.2 Notice 06/2019 - End of term - vacating offices in Strasbourg (PE 634.044/QUEST/CM)
- 9.3 Notice 07/2019 - Opening hours and means of contact of the One-Stop Shop for Members during the election period and the summer holidays 2019 break (PE 634.055/QUEST/CM)
- 9.4 Notice 08/2019 - Network of confidential counsellors in the European Parliament (PE 634.047/QUEST/CM)
- 9.5 Notice 09/2019 - Opening of the central attendance register during Parliament's Open Days in 2019 (PE 634.050/QUEST/CM)
- 9.6 FMA's Guide "Life after Parliament", 2019 edition (PE 626.187/QUEST)

10. Date and place of next meeting

The next ordinary meeting of the Quaestors will be held on **Tuesday, 16 April 2019**, from **14.30 to 16.30**, in **Room S3.4** in the **Louise WEISS Building** in **Strasbourg**.

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The meeting closed at 16:20

Karol KARSKI  
Chair-in-Office

ANNEX**RECORD OF ATTENDANCE**Strasbourg, 26 March 2019

<u>Quaestors</u>	Ms MORIN-CHARTIER Mr KOVATCHEV Mr MAŇKA Ms BEARDER Mr KARSKI
<u>Cabinet of the Secretary-General</u>	Mr BARTOSZEWICZ-MALICKI
<u>Cabinet of the President</u>	Mr CAPOGROSSO
<u>EPP Group</u>	Ms ROIG LINANA
<u>S&amp;D Group</u>	Mr HORNÁK
<u>ALDE Group</u>	Ms BOVEINGTON-FAURAN
<u>Legal Service</u>	Mr LORENZ
<u>Relations with the political groups</u>	Mr SCHWETZ
<u>DG PERS</u>	Ms LANDI Dr CLAES
<u>DG PRES</u>	Ms MCLAUHLAN
<u>DG EPRS</u>	Mr TEASDALE
<u>DG INLO</u>	Ms LINNUS Mr MACHMER Ms COJOCARU
<u>DG FINS</u>	Mr KLETHI Mr MANNELLI Ms MARTINEZ VALLS
<u>DG COMM</u>	Mr STOKELJ
<u>Secretariat</u>	Mr TZIORKAS Mr ADLER Mr COBUCCI Ms GIPPERT
<u>Assistant</u>	Ms MARINOVA
<u>Quaestors' personal secretariat</u>	Mr RICHARD (Ms MORIN-CHARTIER) Mr IVANOV (Mr KOVATCHEV) Ms KUČHTIKOVA (Mr MAŇKA) Mr MCDONNELL (Ms BEARDER) Mr SKOCZEK (Mr KARSKI)