



European Economic and Social Committee

**Report on the implementation of
the Cooperation Agreement between
the European Parliament and
the European Economic and Social Committee**

December 2016

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1. Introduction

The cooperation between the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the European Parliament (EP), while enshrined in the Treaties, is described and regulated by the Cooperation Agreement signed between the two institutions on the 5th of February 2014. The agreement was accompanied by two annexes co-signed together with the Committee of the Regions (CoR), an "Annex on administrative cooperation" (Annex I) and one on a "Budgetary scenario [concerning the] staff transfer from the Committees to the European Parliament" (Annex II).

Cooperation, at points extensive, had existed also before the signing of the Cooperation Agreement.

The scope of the text of the Cooperation Agreement is political, drawing the lines for a "sustainable working relationship [...] based on mutual cooperation". It sets out several key principles for cooperation on legislative work and policy assessment, as well as for the establishment of contacts at rapporteurs' levels. Annex I focuses on practical and logistical cooperation, such as dealing with translation, security, IT services, access to canteens and to buildings. Annex II describes the budget impact of the staff transfer.

Whilst the Cooperation Agreement itself does not make reference to monitoring progress, it is stated in Annex I that the agreement's "proper implementation [...] will be followed up on an annual basis by the Presidents or his/her representative supported by their respective Secretary Generals". In the EESC in 2015 a report was produced, noting developments up to 01.12.2015. At the administrative level, the units dealing with interinstitutional relations in both the EP and EESC are monitoring the Cooperation Agreement. In 2016 several meetings were organised to identify further options for the implementation of its provisions.

Over all, progress in the implementation has been made at various levels, with issues still persistent. While staff and members on both sides have, on some topics, good and constant cooperation, open problems range from the difficulty of having EESC rapporteurs invited to EP committee hearings to logistic blockages, such as the closing of the footbridge (passerelle) between the Bertha von Suttner and the Atrium building.

For the 2016 report a greater focus is on political developments; possible solutions for certain problems identified are also suggested.

This report covers the period from the previous document up to 01.12.2016.

2. Implementation of the Cooperation Agreement

This report discusses the components of the agreement by grouping them in terms of their focus.

2.1 Legislative cooperation: preparation and follow-up

The Economic and Social Committee will also anticipate its treaty based opinions in order to be timely available.

[...]

In parliamentary committee meetings a seat will be reserved for one member of the Economic and Social Committee to be present. Economic and Social Committee Rapporteurs will be invited to present substantial opinions in hearings of the relevant parliamentary committees.

Reciprocally, parliamentary rapporteurs will be invited to participate in the competent bodies of the Economic and Social Committee.

Preparation

The EESC routinely, where possible, anticipates legislative opinions through a close cooperation with the European Commission and by monitoring the Parliament's work agenda. The EP gives a 3 months' deadline for the Committee's input to be received, a demanding deadline which is met by the sections/CCMI. This deadline can be modified, following an agreement between the relevant services and on the basis of the foreseen schedule of the relevant EP Committee.

EESC sections in charge of a file normally establish contact with relevant EP committees while preparing the opinion. Increased engagement with MEPs from EESC members has been made throughout 2016. Rapporteurs, sections/CCMI and groups presidents and other Committee members do meet with their Parliament counterparts, usually to discuss specific, topical issues.

In 2016, over 40 meetings of this type took place. To mention a few, Mr. Trantina, president of the SOC section, participated in two EMPL committee meetings and also met his homologue, Mr. Händler, on a bilateral basis. Mr. Burns, president of the NAT section and Ms. King, president of the Sustainable Development Observatory met Mr. La Via, president of the ENVI committee. Mr. Siecker, president of the INT section, took the floor in a Hearing of the IMCO Committee on 23.02.2016 and had an informal discussion with the Chair, Ms. Ford, on the margins of that meeting. The ECO section president, Mr. van Iersel met MEP van Nistelrooj, Vice-president of the EP Urban intergroup, while REX section president Ms. Slavova met both the chairs of the EP DEVE and AFET committees. TEN section rapporteurs Mr. McDonough, Mr. Krawczyk and Mr. Miltoviča, among others, met their counterparts from the Parliament as well.

Follow-up

EESC opinions, particularly when requested by the EP, are often, but not always, referred to in the preamble of EP reports. EP committee secretariats should adopt the default practice of including EESC opinions as points for reference, where they exist and are relevant.

Although the Committee's opinions do not include specific proposals for amendments for the EP texts, in some cases of good cooperation, parts or ideas from the EESC were used by Parliament rapporteurs or shadow rapporteurs as amendments. Meetings between EESC rapporteurs and EP shadows were also held within the context of the amendments process.

Since the presidents, vice presidents and committee coordinators in the political groups are important decision makers, a further option to be explored in the Parliament is fostering the contacts with key MEPs from the political groups. While it goes without saying that staff stay politically neutral, members can pursue individual contacts, following both their national and political preferences.

Establishing regular and closer contacts with committee coordinators and also with MEPs who are keen on supporting EESC work on specific policy files should become a priority in developing the Committee's relation with the Parliament.

In all EP committee meetings, a seat is indeed reserved for one person representing the EESC. Occasionally, in the event where no EESC representative is present, Parliament *huissiers* remove the sign.

EESC rapporteurs in some cases try to take part in EP **committee meetings** where the legislative proposal in question is being discussed. Likewise, EP rapporteurs and other MEPs are commonly invited to take part in relevant meetings at the EESC, mainly section meetings where the relevant opinion is being voted on.

In some cases, EESC rapporteurs have been invited to present their opinions at EP **committee hearings**. Hearings, as opposed to meetings, are organised in advance by the EP committee(s) responsible, which do invite a number of external experts. The decisions on who to invite for both rests with the MEPs chairing that committee. However, there is no established general practice in this respect and there are examples of the EESC being turned down when proactively asking to present an opinion to an EP committee. Reasons cited are linked with time and the fact that often not even MEPs themselves are given all the time and opportunity to present their positions.

However, some good examples do exist, like Mr. Baráth and Mr. Haken taking the floor in a Joint REGI-COTER public hearing on 25.01.2016.

Over all, EESC Members took part in 38 various events organised by the Parliament in 2016, where they could intervene as speakers, in connection with adopted or ongoing Committee opinions. Moreover, in the case of some Intergroups, like the Intergroup on Social Economy, or informal groups, EESC members or staff are routinely invited to meetings.

Also in 2016, some EESC members actively pursued a follow-up on their work with the Parliament; one such case regarded the AFCO committee, where two reports were discussed over the course of the year regarding the Lisbon Treaty and the future of the EU. The Committee rapporteur who had worked on the EESC's opinion on the issue in 2015, Mr. Jahier, met with many of the key MEPs involved in the file, including the AFCO Chair Ms. Danuta Huebner, in order to present to them the position of the Committee.

EP Members have participated on 29 different occasions at EESC consultative works meetings, hearings, thematic debates or other events. For example, Mr. Sieckierski, Chair of the EP AGRI Committee, was invited in a NAT section meeting, in March 2016, while Mr. Gualtieri, Chair of the ECON Committee spoke at a debate on the EMU Package in January 2016.

2.2 Political and programming cooperation

The general legislative cooperation and the work plan will be discussed twice a year between the Chairman of the Conference of Committee Chairs of Parliament and the President of the Economic and Social Committee.

The Conference of Committee Chairs (CCC) is the body of the European Parliament where decisions are taken concerning the legislative agenda and the legislative workload of the

institution, while the committees are the source of most referrals coming from the EP. The EESC has engaged with it at two levels: participation by the EESC President in CCC meetings and bilateral meetings with its chair.

On 15.12.2015 in Strasbourg the EESC President had a lively exchange of views with the Conference of Committee Chairs, where a large number of issues were discussed, with many of the EP Chairs expressing their interest in pursuing cooperation with the Committee. On 27.09.2016, the President met with Chair Jerzy Buzek in Brussels, where he presented the EESC contribution to the Commission Work Programme for 2017, and also discussed other areas of cooperation.

Meetings were also held at the highest political level, with EESC President Dassis meeting EP President Schulz on 26.01.2016, where they discussed the need to reinforce political cooperation. EESC vice-presidents also met with their EP counterparts.

A participation of the EESC President in a CCC meeting in December 2016 had to be postponed as it overlapped with an EESC Bureau and plenary session and is planned to take place in February or March 2017 (after an expected reshuffling of leadership positions in the EP, including of the CCC functions, in January 2017).

Stronger engagement with the CCC should remain a priority for the EESC. At its level, with its chair and all its members, there are opportunities to discuss priority issues of common interest, exploratory opinion requests, own-initiative opinion suggestions of interest for both the EP and EESC not covered by the EC Work Programme, joint events, etc. It can also constitute an alternative venue of increased cooperation together with that of political groups.

2.3 Priority subjects and the European Semester Work

Parliament can define priority subjects where deepened input from the Economic and Social Committee would be especially valuable. In those cases an intensified cooperation will be established with the parliamentary committee concerned and its rapporteur. Requests will be made in good time and with reasonable deadlines.

At this time, no "priority subjects" for "deepened input" have so far been defined by the EP.

The European Parliament will actively involve the Economic and Social Committee in its European Semester Work.

EESC members still have not been consistently involved in events organised by the ECON Committee. The EESC feels that it could provide added value if better included and consulted in matters relating to economic and fiscal policy coordination under the European Semester.

However, for this topic as for other aspects of legislative cooperation, the decision for a larger involvement of the Committee stays with the MEPs working within the ECON Committee in the Parliament. After the January 2017 mid-term reshuffle, greater engagement at this level should be pursued.

2.4 Impact assessment and EPRS

[The EESC's focus on the preparation of European legislation] includes impact assessments on European legislation which will be provided to the European Parliament systematically with information and relevant materials from civil society on how existing legislation and spending programs are effectively working and what are the deficiencies to be taken into account in making and revising legislation and EU policy.

The contributions will be submitted to Parliament in good time before the amendment procedure is starting. Background material will be shared with the European Parliament.

The subjects to be dealt with will be based on the Annual Legislative Work Program of the European Commission and linked to ex-post analysis of existing legal and administrative frameworks.

The European Parliament has identified as a potential added value of the EESC for its work its ability to derive impact assessment and policy impact data from EU organised civil society. This is highlighted also in the Cooperation Agreement.

Soon after the signature of the Cooperation Agreement, and with specific reference to the paragraph above on impact assessments, the EP, by means of a letter signed by its president, consulted the Committee on the proposals made by the European Commission in its 2014 Annual Work Programme. Since then, other requests from the EP in the area of policy evaluation have been communicated regularly either by an official letter signed by the secretary-general or have come directly from the EPRS (European Parliamentary Research Service).

In response to an April 2015 letter, the EESC legislative directorates further developed the support they provide to the EP by preparing syntheses of positions drawn from adopted EESC opinions, civil society organisations' participation in stakeholder hearings and seminars, Going Local missions, and day-to-day interaction with those directly affected by European legislation. The exercise has been renewed in 2016, and will be continued and improved in 2017.

Given the strong interest from the EP for impact assessment information coming from the EESC, a strong cooperation has been established between the Policy Assessment Unit (PAS) of the Committee and the Parliament's EPRS. In 2016, several meetings were organised at HoU and/or ADs levels between PAS and the EPRS units in charge respectively of Policy Cycle and Ex-Post Impact Assessment.

The European Parliament through its Members Research Service will provide to the Economic and Social Committee additional expertise and materials (analysis and studies on issues of relevance).¹

EESC members have constant access via the Information Centre to various types of informative material prepared by the EPRS for MEPs, as well as to EPRS services, including the EP library. This provided the EESC members with valuable background material when drawing up opinions, including ad hoc briefings, processed through the EESC Information Centre.

¹ The following paragraph from the Annex on administrative cooperation should also be considered in this context: "*The services of the Members Research Service will allow being available for members of the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions as well once 50 transfers have been conducted. The maximum staff number to be transferred shall be 80. The moment 90% of the maximum number of transfers have been affected the services of the Library will allow to be equally accessible for all the members of the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. The calls for interest will be conducted in January 2014 and effective integration will take place in May 2014.*"

EESC members and section/CCMI staff are informed about the availability of relevant EPRS information via presentations and information sessions as well as by means of an adapted version of the EPRS newsletter prepared by the EESC Information Centre in cooperation with the EPRS.

The Information Centre has carried out a survey among members who requested briefings of the EPRS between 2015 and 2016 and asked the requesting members and services to evaluate it. All members declared to have received the briefings on time, to find the content very useful and that they would recommend this service, commending the EPRS staff for its availability, openness and usefulness. Further efforts should be made to increase the awareness of EESC members of the existence and potential offered by the EPRS.

It could only be beneficial if all EPRS briefings and documents addressed to EP rapporteurs and other MEPs include, when available, relevant EESC opinions and documents.

2.5 Usage of EP offices in the Member States

If the Economic and Social Committee so wishes, Parliament is ready to host their staff in its information offices in the Member States. The staff will cooperate in a spirit of mutual support.

In 2016, the EESC did not ask for placing staff in the Member States on a permanent basis. However, there are examples of good cooperation between the EESC and the EP in the context of organising specific activities in the Member States, such as EESC Members' "Going Local" actions (e.g. on the occasion of Europe Day) and the assistance with promoting EESC initiatives at national level.

3. Implementation of Annex I on administrative cooperation

This annex includes a number of measures, which were implemented, primarily a transfer of a significant number of EESC staff members from the translation service to the EPRS. The following points discuss this and other aspects.

3.1 Transfer of staff

With a view of reinforcing the political and administrative cooperation the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions are prepared to contribute to the building up of the Members Research Service [...]. The transfers of staff involved will be based on a joint process and on a voluntary decision of the staff of the Committees translation service concerned [...] and should involve AD and AST/AST-SC grades with a target of about 3:1. The modalities of transfers will be jointly agreed.

It is also mentioned in the annex that the "maximum staff number to be transferred shall be 80". As Annex II shows, at an early stage this number was reduced to a target of 60. The distribution ratio between the EESC and the CoR was set at 3:2, which translated into 36 posts for the EESC (27 ADs/9 ASTs) and 24 posts for the CoR (18 ADs and 6 ASTs). The transfers from the EESC took place as follows:

- 1 October 2014: 12 ADs + 4 ASTs were seconded to the EP; 9 ADs and all ASTs were subsequently transferred on 1 April 2015.
- 1 January 2015: 9 ADs + 3 ASTs were seconded to the EP and subsequently transferred on 1 July 2015.
- 1 January 2016: 9 ADs + 2 ASTs were transferred to the EP as vacant posts.

The 3:1 ratio between AD and AST/AST-SC was thus achieved. The precise arrangements for these transfers were agreed between services as well as with staff unions and staff associations (OSPs). The EESC Staff Committee had observer status in the process. The first step was a call for expression of interest launched among staff working in the EESC/CoR Joint Directorate for Translation (DIR T). Staff members applied for transfers on a fully voluntary basis. Applicants were interviewed by a panel composed of representatives from the EP (DG EPRS), the EESC and the CoR, with members of the three staff committees as observers.

At first, selected applicants were seconded, in the interest of the service, for a period of six months in accordance with Article 38 of the Staff Regulations. Towards the end of their secondment, and following an interview with their head of unit in the EP, staff members were asked to choose between being transferred to the EP or returning to their post at the EESC. Individual choices were then checked against the official request from the EP services before

a final decision on each transfer was made. Three staff members decided to come back to the EESC after their secondment to the EP.

The draft General Budget of the European Union for the Financial Year 2017 released by the European Commission in June 2016 included a reduction of 12 posts from the EESC establishment plan (and a reduction of 8 posts from the Committee of the Region's establishment plan). This proposal was against the provisions of the cooperation agreement. Both the EESC and the CoR informed the EP, the Commission and the Council of the fact that the two Committees had complied fully with the provisions of the cooperation agreement by transferring a total of 60 posts (out of which 36 posts of the EESC). Further to this explanation, shortly after the adoption of the draft budget 2017, the Secretary-General of the EP confirmed in writing that the 20 posts should in fact be cut from the EP's establishment plan instead and reinstated in the EESC and CoR establishment plans.

3.2 Workload balancing, outsourcing and rationalisation in the translation services

The translation services of the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions agree on a comprehensive and binding system of workload balancing, providing for mutual support in times of peaks and heavy workload in order to preserve the working conditions of the staff and to maintain high standards.

The quantity of services rendered will be balanced out in terms of number of pages over the year based on a mutual understanding of the method of counting. The Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions will have access to the EP framework contracts for external translations.

The translation services have agreed on a system of workload balancing as foreseen in the Cooperation Agreement. As workload balancing is best ensured by close contact at unit level, heads of unit in the two services exchange information about spare capacity and share work when possible. Experience shows that such cooperation is most efficient in relation to translating shorter, urgent documents. Units also provide each other with ad hoc assistance to cover less common language combinations in order to avoid translation via a third language. Information on language combinations on offer is exchanged centrally.

The Committees have developed a SharePoint platform for exchanging tasks in an efficient and user-friendly manner. This platform is available to all institutions and has been a key factor in workload balancing. Following the Committees' example, the Parliament has given translation units direct access to this platform, which is expected to lead to a further increase in synergies between the two sides (the EP's Directorate-General for Translation and the EESC/CoR DIR T).

Between January and October 2016, the Committees' translation service translated some 2080 pages for the EP and sent around 368 pages to other institutions to be translated (of which 44 to the EP).²

The high standard of translations has been maintained throughout this process.

Budgetary means used up to now for the staff members to be transferred remain available for the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a long term basis in order to guarantee sustainability and autonomy of Committees' translation services. They will be dedicated primarily for outsourcing of translation services and for the remaining part to improve the political input of the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

The EESC/CoR had access to EP framework contracts for outsourcing of translation already before 2014. In view of the additional budgetary means for outsourcing which became gradually available as a consequence of the staff transfers described under 3.1, the translation service has introduced measures for stepping up outsourcing without interruptions to the working cycle of the EESC and the CoR. Taking into account existing staffing level and the need to adapt workflows, the outsourcing target was 10% in 2015 (reached), 15% in 2016 (currently 17%) and 20% in 2017. Reaching these targets will be facilitated by the new translation outsourcing framework contracts concluded in cooperation with the European Parliament.

In 2016, out of an initial budget of 2 722 010 EUR (EESC: 1 624 810 € and CoR: 1 097 200 €) on this budget line (item 1420), about 42% is expected to be used on outsourcing (47% after deducting interinstitutional projects from the total initial budget). The surplus results, on the one hand, from the rationalisation measures taken (in particular, systematic pre-

² A common method of counting was put in place with the KIAPI system in 2012.

processing of outsourced translation requests) and, on the other hand, from the lower prices for outsourcing under the current framework contracts. With the above mentioned outsourcing target of 20% in 2017, it is expected that appropriations on budget line 1420 will be increasingly used as of 2017, even much more if, for operational reasons, outsourcing targets have to be reviewed upwards.

In terms of using unspent appropriations on this budget line to strengthen the political input of the EESC see point 4.

The Parliament takes note that the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions have decided to implement Resource Efficient Multilingualism (REM) with regard to their translation services.

REM is being implemented and will be continued in the framework of the latest administrative cooperation agreement between the EESC and CoR, which entered into force on 1 January 2016. As a result of REM, an extensive rationalisation of translation demand has been achieved: fewer and shorter documents are being translated into fewer languages. Further measures to rationalise working methods and workload will be taken, also as a means to offset reductions in staff.

3.3 Reinforcement of political core functions

[Implementation of REM] frees up an important number of staff in order to reinforce [the Committees'] political and legislative role at EU level as well as to strengthen the inter-institutional synergies with the EP.

In view of strengthening the cooperation with the European Parliament the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions decided to reinforce their respective political core functions by way of redeploying empty posts and by launching an internal mobility exercise.

At a time of downsizing and concentration on certain policy priorities, a new organisational structure was designed and approved in 2014. The new organisational chart entered into force on 1 January 2015. The new organisational structure aimed at reinforcing the EESC political

and legislative role at EU level as well as providing the administration with the flexibility and adaptability required to face future challenges.

The main objectives sought by the changes in the organizational chart can be summarized as follows:

- Boosting the Committee's role in the EU legislative process (a new "Policy Assessment" unit was created within the Legislative Work Directorate).
- Strengthening relations with other EU institutions and organised civil society: more resources were allocated to the units dealing with these matters to enhance and broaden their portfolio of activities.
- Improving the support provided to members.
- Increasing efficiency and improving planning, training and career guidance for staff.

In order to staff the new units dealing with legislative work as well as to reinforce those units dealing with inter-institutional matters, 8 AD and 7 AST posts were redeployed in 2015 from the Directorate for Translation (DT) to other services, again on a voluntary basis. In 2016, 8 additional posts were redeployed from the DT to reinforce the core political functions of the EESC.

3.4 Access to buildings and security

The direct access possibilities between the buildings Remard and Remorqueur and Bertha von Suttner and Atrium will be reopened. The feasibility of a reopening of the tunnel linking the Jacques Delors and Paul Henri Spaak buildings will be examined.

The passage between the Committees' Remorqueur building (REM) and the EP's Remard building was opened on 21 January 2015. However, following the events of November 2015, when the alert state in Belgium was raised to level IV and subsequently lowered to level III, the passage was closed (on 15.11.2015) and has not been reopened since, except during the EESC/CoR plenary sessions, taking place in the EP.

It is not fully clear why the passage has not been reopened since then, as it is a requirement clearly indicated in the cooperation agreement and several times requested by the Committees. Its reopening would certainly facilitate mutual access to meetings and bilateral contacts.

Concerning the possibility of establishing a second passage between the Bertha von Suttner building and the Atrium building, the European Parliament has drawn up plans with various options. The EESC has not been involved in this work so far.

A tunnel linking the Committees' Jacques Delors building (JDE) and the EP's Paul-Henri Spaak building (PHS) is not considered a realistic option at this stage.

If the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions so wish, Parliament is ready to provide the physical security (guards service) for the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions as well in order to establish a common security parameter. This will allow for free circulation between the respective buildings. The Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions will provide clear guidelines concerning their security needs to be respected. The price charged will not exceed the current costs in constant prices.

All EU institutions are cooperating closely on security, which is particularly important in the present security situation. All institutions have made an important effort for gradually aligning security standards whilst maintaining institutional autonomy, such as with regard to alert states. The Committees, however, do not see the added value in asking the European Parliament to provide physical security for the Committees, in particular in the present situation when quick adaptations of security measures may be required.

3.5 Interpretation and meeting rooms

As of the new legislature starting on 1 July 2014 Parliament commits to make appropriate meeting space available over and above the current slots provided by extending its offer.

Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions will jointly inquire which changes are necessary in the conditions of service in order for Parliament to become the standard provider of interpretation services for the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

The EESC is looking forward to an extension of the offer of appropriate meeting space by the Parliament. In this respect, the EESC held a meeting with the CoR and the EP on 14 November 2016 in order to explore the possibility of concluding an agreement on the use of meeting space.

Regarding interpretation, a draft service level agreement has been negotiated. An agreement was reached at the level of the operational services on a draft text, except for one article on the non-exclusivity of the provision of interpretation services. The EESC – further to the opinion of both the EP and EESC legal services – presented a final draft in June 2016 in order to finalise the text of the agreement taking into account the concerns of both parties. The EESC is currently waiting for a reply from the EP.

3.6 Informatics

The European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions agree on an intensified cooperation in the area of informatics in order to increase synergies.

The EP consistently offers the Committees the opportunity to participate in calls for tender organised by the European Parliament in terms of IT services. This is very valuable to the EESC as it allows to manage calls for tenders with fewer human resources involved. Besides, the bids in such joint calls for tender are generally lower than they would be if the Committees were to organise similar calls for tender on their own.

Wifi coverage for members of the Committees during plenary sessions in the EP buildings has been improved thanks to good cooperation. However, moving ahead with federated Wi-Fi authentication would be appreciated.

The Committees' IT systems are relatively closely aligned (or even integrated) with those of the European Commission. The natural scope for intensified cooperation in this area with the EP is therefore limited, barring major investments.

An initiative by the EP seeks to provide access to its intranet to members and staff of the EESC (and the CoR). The technical requirements have been successfully tested by the Joint

Services' ITT Unit. Further concrete follow-up is yet to be defined. The actual access to the EP's intranet could be provided through a direct link on the EESC's intranet homepage.

Being aware that the Linked Open Data (LOD) pilot project will stay as such and it will not become a 'preparatory action', the EESC is nonetheless interested in following the development of its prototype and its various functionalities (statistics, multilingual search, etc.), notably considering that such a proto-type will be available as Open Source and could be used for a large variety of use (including working tools for rapporteurs or for closed user groups). Reassured by the EP's statements that this kind of platforms would be complementary to the activities of the EU advisory bodies and that they would in no way stand in competition with them, the EESC is keen on being informed about the new EP pilot project on e-democracy, linked to the European Citizens Initiative.

3.7 Canteens

The European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions agree on the mutual access to their canteens on the same conditions as for their own members and staff.

Staff of the EP and the Committees have had equal to access to each other's canteens since May 2014. Moreover, the three institutions have jointly organised a call for tender for a new catering contract.

3.8 Annual follow-up

The proper implementation of this agreement [= Annex I] will be followed up on an annual basis by the Presidents or his/her representative supported by their respective Secretary Generals.

The foremost level of follow-up has been done in the context of the meeting between the EESC President and the Chair of the Conference of Committee Chairs in September 2016 (see point 2.2). The EESC secretary-general met with the secretary-general of the EP in

September 2016 in order to discuss, among other things, the implementation of the Cooperation Agreement.

4. The budgetary implications of the Cooperation Agreement (Annex II)

There are no further budgetary aspects of the cooperation agreement to be implemented. There is an agreement between the European Parliament and the two Committees that no additional posts will be transferred from the two committees' translation service to the EP's Research Service above the 60 posts already transferred.

As a result of the cooperation agreement and the reduction in expenditure for staff, appropriations on budget line 1004 were gradually increased by EUR 660 000 with the specific aim of strengthening the political role of the Committee. At the same time, the budget line for external translation was reinforced to make up for lost translation capacity, with the explicit additional comment that "an eventual surplus [could] be used for further political work in a budgetary neutral manner". It is very likely that the Committee would want to do so over time.

5. Conclusions

As mentioned in the introduction, the Cooperation Agreement had an explicit focus on political cooperation. Progress was made on this issue on 2016, with numerous contacts being maintained, renewed or created at the level of the members and the staff. The EESC feels that there is scope for further developing this cooperation and that the EP and its rapporteurs could make much better use of the EESC's readily available expertise.

While the follow-up on the Committee's work has increased, potential remains to include EESC opinions more often in the preamble and body of EP reports. EP committee staff could adopt the default practice of including any relevant EESC input in the briefings, drafts and other documents they provide to the Parliament rapporteurs and shadow rapporteurs. The provision of the Cooperation Agreement mentioning the presence of EESC rapporteurs in EP Committee hearings should become an integral and routine component of the cooperation between EESC sections and EP committees. Further contacts at political level remain a goal to be pursued for 2017.

Cooperation at the level of the Conference of Committee Chairs remains a key priority, with progress being made in 2016. However, the need remains to ensure a permanent nature of the participation of the EESC President in the CCC, which is foreseen for February 2017.

The option for the Parliament to identify priority subjects for cooperation with the Committee should be used in the future. A close dialogue should be installed, perhaps in the context of the CCC, where such subjects can be jointly decided, as well as the exact nature of the "intensified" cooperation mentioned in the Cooperation Agreement.

The EESC remains available to be closer involved in the European Semester Week.

The Committee has made progress in the area of evaluation policies and there is an excellent cooperation with the EPRS currently in place, fully respecting the decision of the EESC Bureau of January 2016.

The remaining staff transfers were carried out in 2016, with an on-going good cooperation on workload balancing at the level of the translation services. Further progress was made at the level of IT services, with an offer from the EP to open the Parliament's intranet to the EESC being on the agenda for 2017.

The EESC is cooperating with the EP at the level of access to buildings and use of meetings rooms. The EESC is also participating in the interinstitutional working group on the European Quarter, where together with the EP it is cooperating on projects such as the House of European History or of a common signposting. The issue of the footbridge between the two institutions remains to be addressed.

All the budgetary aspects of the cooperation have been implemented, with a standing agreement that no further post transfers will take place.

6. ANNEXES

- Cooperation Agreement between the European Parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee
- Annex I: Annex on Administrative Cooperation
- Annex II: Budgetary scenario staff transfer from the Committee to the European Parliament

Cooperation Agreement between the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee

The Treaty of Lisbon has reinforced the role of the civil society in the European Union and strengthened the institutional and political role of both the European Parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee.

The European Parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee will cooperate in order to reinforce the democratic legitimacy of the European Union.

This cooperation agreement will guarantee a sustainable working relationship between the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Parliament based on mutual cooperation.

The European Economic and Social Committee, as the institutional body representing the civil society, will focus its work on the preparation of European legislation while benefiting from the experience and expertise of its members and their networks.

This includes impact assessments on European legislation which will be provided to the European Parliament systematically with information and relevant materials from civil society on how existing legislation and spending programs are effectively working and what are the deficiencies to be taken into account in making and revising legislation and EU policy.

The contributions will be submitted to Parliament in good time before the amendment procedure is starting. Background material will be shared with the European Parliament.

The subjects to be dealt with will be based on the Annual Legislative Work Program of the European Commission and linked to ex-post analysis of existing legal and administrative frameworks.

The Economic and Social Committee will also anticipate its treaty based opinions in order to be timely available.

The European Parliament through its Members Research Service will provide to the Economic and Social Committee additional expertise and materials (analysis and studies on issues of relevance).

Parliament can define priority subjects where deepened input from the Economic and Social Committee would be especially valuable. In those cases an intensified cooperation will be established with the parliamentary committee concerned and its rapporteur. Requests will be made in good time and with reasonable deadlines.

The general legislative cooperation and the work plan will be discussed twice a year between the Chairman of the Conference of Committee Chairs of Parliament and the President of the Economic and Social Committee.

The European Parliament will actively involve the Economic and Social Committee in its European Semester Work.

In parliamentary committee meetings a seat will be reserved for one member of the Economic and Social Committee to be present. Economic and Social Committee Rapporteurs will be invited to present substantial opinions in hearings of the relevant parliamentary committees.

Reciprocally, parliamentary rapporteurs will be invited to participate in the competent bodies of the Economic and Social Committee.

If the Economic and Social Committee so wishes, Parliament is ready to host their staff in its information offices in the Member States. The staff will cooperate in a spirit of mutual support.

The European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee approve this cooperation agreement as well as the annexes.


Martin Schulz
President EP


Henri Malosse
President EESC

Annex I on Administrative cooperation
Annex II on budgetary implications

05 FEB. 2014

Annex on Administrative cooperation

1. Strengthening staff support for political core functions

With a view of reinforcing the political and administrative cooperation the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions are prepared to contribute to the building up of the Members Research Service which will in return provide free of charge products and services to the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

The transfers of staff involved will be based on a joint process and on a voluntary decision of the staff of the Committees translation service concerned in the framework of the below mentioned call for interest and should involve AD and AST / AST-SC grades with a target of about 3:1. The modalities of transfers will be jointly agreed.

The translation services of the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions agree on a comprehensive and binding system of workload balancing, providing for mutual support in times of peaks and heavy workload in order to preserve the working conditions of the staff and to maintain high standards. The quantity of services rendered will be balanced out in terms of number of pages over the year based on a mutual understanding of the method of counting. The Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions will have access to the EP framework contracts for external translations.

The services of the Members Research Service will allow being available for members of the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions as well once 50 transfers have been conducted. The maximum staff number to be transferred shall be 80. The moment 90% of the maximum number of transfers have been affected the services of the Library will allow to be equally accessible for all the members of the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. The calls for interest will be conducted in January 2014 and effective integration will take place in May 2014.

Budgetary means used up to now for the staff members to be transferred remain available for the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a long term basis in order to guarantee sustainability and autonomy of Committees' translation services. They will be dedicated primarily for outsourcing of translation services and for the remaining part to improve the political input of the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

For the staff transferred Parliament will cover the 5% staff reduction as foreseen in the Multi-Annual Financial Framework 2014-2020.

The Parliament takes note that the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions have decided to implement Resource Efficient Multilingualism (REM) with regard to their translation services. This frees up an important number of staff in order to reinforce their political and legislative role at EU level as well as to strengthen the inter-institutional synergies with the EP.

In view of strengthening the cooperation with the European Parliament the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions decided to reinforce their respective political core functions by way of redeploying empty posts and by launching an internal mobility exercise.

2. Security and Buildings access

The direct access possibilities between the buildings Remard and Remorqueur and Bertha von Suttner and Atrium will be reopened. The feasibility of a reopening of the tunnel linking the Jacques Delors and Paul Henri Spaak buildings will be examined.

If the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions so wish, Parliament is ready to provide the physical security (guards service) for the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions as well in order to establish a common security parameter. This will allow for free circulation between the respective buildings. The Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions will provide clear guidelines concerning their security needs to be respected. The price charged will not exceed the current costs in constant prices.

The buildings of the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions remain for their exclusive use.

3. Interpretation and meeting rooms

As of the new legislature starting on 1 July 2014 Parliament commits to make appropriate meeting space available over and above the current slots provided by extending its offer.

Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions will jointly inquire which changes are necessary in the conditions of service in order for Parliament to become the standard provider of interpretation services for the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

4. Informatics

The European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions agree on an intensified cooperation in the area of informatics in order to increase synergies.

5. Canteens

The European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions agree on the mutual access to their canteens on the same conditions as for their own members and staff.

Verification and follow up

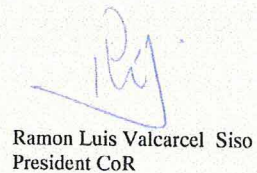
The proper implementation of this agreement will be followed up on an annual basis by the Presidents or his / her representative supported by their respective Secretary Generals.



Martin Schulz
President EP



Henri Malosse
President EESC



Ramon Luis Valcarcel Siso
President CoR

05 FEB. 2014

Budgetary scenario staff transfer from the Committees to the European Parliament

Scenario: 60 staff transfers effected to be applied proportionally in case of different figures

Annual effect on EP budget 2015-2019

60 x 95.000 Euro = 5,7 Million Euro additional staff expenditure

burden sharing saves 2 Million Euro in externalisation of translation

EP additional cost: 5,7 million staff - 2 million saving translation = 3,7 million Euro

Annual effect on budget of committees 2015-2019

60 x 95.000 Euro = 5,7 Million Euro reduction in staff expenditure

2 million Euro additionally for externalisation of translations*

1,1 million Euro additionally for increased political work

Committees saving: 5,7 mio staff - 2 mio - 1,1 mio = 2,6 mio Euro

Final result: 1,1 million additional expenditure = 80 % budgetarily neutral

* An eventual surplus can be used for further political work in a budgetary neutral manner

