

The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) follow-up to the Discharge 2015 discharge resolution with observations adopted by the European Parliament on 27 April 2017

References between the 2015 discharge observations (1-25) and the CoR's Annual Activity Report for the Financial year 2016¹ (AAR 2016) already submitted to the CONT-Committee, unless otherwise stated

1. Notes that the Court of Auditors (the “Court”), in its annual report for 2015, observed that no significant weaknesses had been identified in respect of the audited topics relating to human resources and procurement for the Committee of the Regions (the “Committee”);

Follow-up: *Not applicable.*

2. Notes with satisfaction that on the basis of its audit work, the Court concluded that the payments as a whole for the year ended 31 December 2015, the administrative and other expenditure of the institutions and bodies were free from material error;

Follow-up: *Not applicable.*

3. Notes that the Committee's budget is mostly administrative, with a large amount being used for expenditure concerning persons working within the Committee and the remaining amount relating to its buildings, furniture, equipment and miscellaneous running costs; stresses, however, that introducing performance-based budgeting should not apply only to the Committee's budget as a whole but should also include the setting of specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-based (SMART) targets to individual departments, units and the annual plans of members of staff; in this respect, calls on the Committee to introduce the principle of performance-based budgeting more widely in its daily operations;

Follow-up: *The CoR has a budget, planning and reporting system that is developed for its responsibilities and its needs. This system is described in chapter 3, point 3.4 of the AAR 2016. The CoR will follow the developments among other EU-Institutions that do not have operational budgets and it will consider generally accepted and implemented practices in this field based upon experiences obtained by the Institutions.*

4. Notes that in 2015, the Committee had an approved budget of EUR 88 900 000 (compared with EUR 87 600 000 in 2014), of which EUR 87 200 000 comprised commitment appropriations with a utilisation rate of 98,2 %; notes the slight decrease of the utilisation rate in 2015;

Follow-up: *Information about the 2016 commitment utilisation rate follows by Annex 1 to the AAR 2016.*

¹ The CoR has in addition submitted answers to questions in the 2016 discharge questionnaire (the 2016 discharge covering the Financial Year 2016) to the CONT-Secretariat for the 4 December 2017 hearing of the Secretariats Generals of the Other Institutions on 24 November 2017.

5. Notes the conclusion of a new administrative bilateral cooperation agreement between the Committee and the European Economic and Social Committee signed in 2015; trusts that that agreement ensures further efficiency in the performance of the Committee and the European Economic and Social Committee;

Follow-up: *Not applicable.*

6. Notes with satisfaction that the report on the implementation of the Cooperation Agreement between Parliament and the Committee (the “Agreement”) was timely and positively assesses the cooperation between both institutions; observes, however, that the nature of the “intensified” cooperation referred to in the Agreement needs to be better clarified;

Follow-up: *Information about what the cooperation entails in practice follows inter alia by point 1: Political achievements, point 2.3: Directorate for Legislative works 1, objective 4 and point 2.4: Directorate for Legislative work 2, objective 4 of the AAR 2016.*

7. Welcomes the Committee’s interest in having a more systematic approach to the cooperation with Parliament, particularly in political areas and with Parliament’s research service (EPRS); believes that further development of synergies brings positive results to both institutions;

Follow-up: *See follow-up to point 6 above.*

8. Reiterates its request for a joint assessment of the budgetary savings resulting from the Agreement to be included in the next follow-up report of the Agreement;

Follow-up: *An assessment of budgetary savings resulting from the Cooperation Agreement between Parliament and the CoR is included in the follow-up reports of the Cooperation Agreement set between the European Parliament and the CoR.*

9. Notes with concern that none of the targets set by the Committee in 2015 to increase involvement of Parliament and Council in activities related to the Committee opinions were achieved;

Follow-up: *Information about fulfilment of targets for involvement of the Parliament and the Council in activities related to the Committee opinions follows by point 2.3: Directorate for Legislative works 1, objective 4 and point 2.4: Directorate for Legislative work 2, objective 4 of the AAR 2016.*

10. Notes that the direct access between the RMD and the REM buildings was closed by Parliament due to security concerns after the November 2015 Paris terrorist attacks; trusts that Parliament will re-assess the security concerns as reopening of the passage would certainly be beneficial to all three institutions;

Follow-up: *Not applicable*

11. Notes with concern a consistent decrease in the payment execution rate in 2015 in some budgetary items; takes note that 2015 was the starting year of the sixth term in office of the Committee; is of the opinion, nevertheless, that the Committee should not allow this to

impact on budgetary management; calls on the Committee to improve its performance and better to prepare for the starting year of the seventh term in office of the Committee;

Follow-up: Note has been taken of the call.

12. Urges the Committee to further improve the transparency of its operations and include all the data available on the missions undertaken by its Members in its annual activity report, with detailed expenses;

Follow-up: *Information about the CoR members' travels is included under point 2.2: Directorate for members and Plenaries, objective 2 of the AAR 2016.*

13. Calls on the Committee to join the future Inter-Institutional Agreement on a mandatory transparency register;

Follow-up: *The CoR has not yet taken a decision in this regard.*

14. Notes with concern the continued gender imbalance in senior and middle management posts (25 % / 75 % in senior management and 38 % / 62 % in middle management); urges the Committee to improve its gender balance and report back to the discharge authority on the measures taken to tackle this issue, and the results achieved;

Follow-up: *Measures taken follow by point 2.6, objective 3, Staff engagement of the AAR 2016 and by the document referred to in footnote 1 above*

15. Notes with satisfaction the good geographical balance within the management positions;

Follow-up: Not applicable.

16. Is deeply concerned with the high number of days of sick leave within the Committee staff; calls on the Committee to assess the reasons, focus its human resources' governance to improve the situation and target its well-being activities to include as many staff members as possible to help prevent this kind of absenteeism;

Follow-up: *Measures taken follow by point 2.6, objective 3, Staff engagement of the AAR 2016 and by the document referred to in footnote 1 above.*

17. Is concerned that the audit recommendations on performance of IT projects for internal application lag adequate implementation; calls on the Committee to correct this situation without further delay;

Follow-up: *Information about audit recommendations on IT follows by point 2.2: Directorate for Members and Plenaries, footnote 2, of the AAR 2016.*

18. Welcomes the provision of translation data according to the harmonised methodology settled by the inter-institutional committee for translation and interpretation; notes that the undergoing revision of the Code of Conduct for Translation is to be made jointly with the European Economic and Social Committee;

Follow-up: Not applicable.

19. Notes that the outsourcing rate of translation increased from 2,57 % in 2014 to nearly 10 % in 2015 due to the transfer of staff to Parliament under the Agreement; calls on the Committee for an assessment of the cost-effectiveness of the new arrangement now in practice;

Follow-up: *Information about translation can be found under point 2.10: Directorate for Translation of the AAR 2016 and by the document referred to in footnote 1 above .*

20. Notes the Committee adoption of rules on whistleblowing in December 2015; also notes that one whistleblowing file was opened in 2015; asks the Committee to keep Parliament informed of developments in of the case;

Follow-up: *Further information can be found in the document referred to in footnote 1 above.*

21. Considers it to be fundamental that the Committee immediately follow up on the two Civil Service Tribunal rulings¹ and the European Anti-Fraud Office's case report², the Commission's Paymaster Office department's report³ and Parliament's resolutions⁴ and bring the whistleblower case of the former internal auditor of the Committee to a just, honourable and equitable settlement before the end of 2017;

Follow-up: *The Court has not yet finalised its deliberations.*

22. Considers it to be fundamental that the Committee work together with the European Economic and Social Committee to follow up immediately on the ruling of the Civil Service Tribunal in a harassment case involving officials from both institutions⁵, that it report to Parliament on the progress and that it review its procedures for handling future allegations of harassment to ensure that they are in line with the case-law of the Civil Service Tribunal;

Follow-up: *The Court has not yet finalised its deliberations.*

23. Notes with great satisfaction the efforts and results so far achieved in improving the environmental footprint of the Committee and the renewal of the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) certification;

¹ Judgments of the Civil Service Tribunal of 7 May 2013, case F-86/11 (ECLI:EU:F:2011:189), and of 18 November 2014, case F-156/12 (ECLI:EU:F:2014:247).

² European Anti-Fraud Office Final Case Report dated 8 October 2003.

³ The Commission Paymaster Office department's report of 8 May 2008.

⁴ Parliament's resolutions of 29 January 2004 (OJ L 57, 25.2.2004, p. 8), 21 April 2004 (OJ L 330, 4.11.2004, p. 153), 12 April 2005 (OJ L 196, 27.7.2005, p. 54), 27 April 2006 (OJ L 340, 6.12.2006, p. 44), 29 April 2015 (OJ L 255, 30.9.2015, p. 132) and 28 April 2016 (OJ L 246, 14.9.2016, p. 152) in support of the Committee's Internal Auditor's case.

⁵ Judgment of the Civil Service Tribunal of 26 February 2013, Case F-124/10: Vassiliki Labiri v European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) (ECLI:EU:F:2013:21).

Follow-up: Not applicable.

24. Notes the Committee's efforts and achievements in stepping up its information and communications policy;

Follow-up: Not applicable.

25. Welcomes the information on the Committee's building policy in its annual activity report, in particular given that it is important that the costs of such a policy be properly rationalised and not excessive.

Follow-up: Not applicable.