

2016 Discharge

Follow-up questions to the Committee of the Regions and its answers thereto

Deadline: 18 December 2017

Staff

1. How many interim agents were employed by your institution in 2016? How many of these interim agents replaced an official? How many were they in 2015 and 2014?

The CoR's answer to question 1:

	2016	2015	2014
Number of interim agents	28	18	21

Interim agents are recruited either to ensure business continuity in case of absence of staff members or to support the work of an entity for a limited period of time in case of additional/specific activities for which the expertise is not available in-house.

Due to the fact that the CoR lost, over the last 5 years, almost 10% of its posts in the establishment plan, the remaining resources available in each service don't allow for absorbing of the additional workload in case of unforeseen absences or in case of additional tasks limited in time. The number of interim missions has therefore increased over the period under consideration. This number is expected to decrease in 2017 in line with the reduced budget appropriations.

In 2016, 23% of the hours worked by interim agents were needed for replacing officials (2015: 72%; 2014: 38%).

2. Which are the differences in the working conditions of interim agents and temporary staff?

The CoR's answer to question 2:

Interim agents are not employed by the CoR, unlike temporary and contract staff members. The employment of interim agents is subject to the law of the country in which they work (for the CoR: Belgium). They can be recruited for missions going from 1 day up to 6 consecutive months (according to Belgian law, no person can work as an interim agent for more than 6 months in a row; an interruption of at least 1 month must be observed between such assignments) with a probationary period of 3 days. The specific working conditions of employment of interim agents in the European institutions are laid down in a framework contract (currently HR/R3/PR/2014/078-2). Interim agents can work max. 9 hours per day and 38 hours per week (overtime might be authorized subject to prior consent of the relevant authorizing officer by sub-delegation). Their salary is also subject to annual indexation. They are paid on a weekly basis directly by the company which employs them (currently Randstad – for the CoR). They are not authorized to go on mission. Their medical insurance and pension rights are governed by national law.

Temporary and contract staff members are directly employed by each institution following the relevant provisions of the Conditions of employment of other servants of the European Union (CEOS). They work 40 hours per week and have either fixed-term contracts (contract staff members 3b) and temporary staff members 2a) and 2b)) or open-ended contracts (contract staff members 3a; temporary staff 2a) after two consecutive fixed-term assignments; temporary staff 2c)). Based on the requirements of the CEOS and/or on the practice in our institution, the minimum duration of their contract is 3 months for contract staff members and 6 months for temporary staff members (unless required otherwise). The maximum duration of assignments of fixed-term contracts for contract and temporary agents is 6 years (for temporary staff 2b, it's one contract of max. 4 years followed, if necessary, by one single extension of 2 years max.). Overall, they benefit from the same working conditions in terms of leaves, allowances, rights and obligations as officials and can be sent on mission. They also benefit from the medical insurance and pension scheme offered by the European institutions during the duration of their contract and from unemployment benefits provided they were employed for at least 6 months with no interruption by one of the institutions.

3. How many trainees were employed in 2016? How many of the offered traineeships were non-remunerated?

The CoR's answer to question 3:

Every year, the CoR traditionally hosts around 60 interns (all types of internships taken together). In 2016, they were of the number of 61:

- 43 paid trainees
- 17 non-paid short-term study visits
- 1 non-paid internship for a governmental official

Harassment

4. Do you have an organ that is comparable to the network of confidential counsellors in the EESC whose purpose is to offer advice and guidance harassment issues? If not, would you consider introducing such a structure in your institution?

The CoR's answer to question 4:

The CoR has indeed a network of confidential counsellors whose purpose is to offer advice and guidance on harassment issues.

Since the adoption, in 2010, of the CoR decision n° 362/2010 concerning psychological and sexual harassment at work, a number of formal and informal procedures are available to staff members who feel that they have suffered harassment. The most important informal procedure is the possibility to consult a confidential counsellor, in a fully confidential setting.

In early 2016, ten confidential counsellors were appointed in various departments of the institution and followed twelve days of specific training to duly prepare them for this task. They operate under a (renewable) three year mandate.

Confidential counsellors shall constitute an initial point of contact and support for persons who feel that they have suffered harassment. Their first objective is to alleviate the suffering of the person claiming harassment by receiving them, listening to them attentively and informing them of possible

courses of action in complete confidentiality without any preconceptions and without passing judgment on any of the parties concerned. They shall take care to remain objective and neutral. It is not their task to institute an investigation. They offer advice and guidance to alleged victims but do not represent them in their proceedings.

With the prior consent of the parties concerned, the panel of confidential counsellors may also undertake a mediation procedure. The panel must perform its duties in a neutral and objective manner. These duties consists in listening attentively to the persons (alleged victim and/or alleged harasser) who want a hearing to help them identify the conflict and its parameters, seek its causes and resolve it by mutual agreement or compromise solution. Subject to the agreement of the parties involved in the alleged harassment, the panel may also hold strictly confidential interviews with others (e.g. witnesses), without prejudice and without passing judgment on any of the parties concerned.

For mediation to succeed, both sides involved must show a desire to be constructive. In this context, the panel shall contact those involved in a case of alleged harassment, cooperate with them on a strictly voluntary basis with the aim of resolving the conflict and, where necessary, ensure that the mediation is properly followed up. The panel shall take care to remain objective and neutral and it is not its task to institute an investigation.