



TEXTS ADOPTED

Provisional edition

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Discharge 2016: EU general budget - European Parliament

1. European Parliament decision of 18 April 2018 on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2016, Section I – European Parliament (2017/2137(DEC))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2016¹,
- having regard to the consolidated annual accounts of the European Union for the financial year 2016 (COM(2017)0365 – C8-0248/2017)²,
- having regard to the report on budgetary and financial management for the financial year 2016, Section I – European Parliament³,
- having regard to the Internal Auditor’s annual report for the financial year 2016,
- having regard to the Court of Auditors’ annual report on the implementation of the budget for the financial year 2016, together with the institutions’ replies⁴,
- having regard to the statement of assurance⁵ as to the reliability of the accounts and the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions provided by the Court of Auditors for the financial year 2016, pursuant to Article 287 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to Article 314(10) and Article 318 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002⁶, and in particular Articles 164, 165 and 166 thereof,

¹ OJ L 48, 24.2.2016.

² OJ C 323, 28.9.2017, p. 1.

³ OJ C 266, 11.8.2017, p. 1.

⁴ OJ C 322, 28.9.2017, p. 1.

⁵ OJ C 322, 28.9.2017, p. 10.

⁶ OJ L 298, 26.10.2012, p. 1.

- having regard to the Bureau decision of 16 June 2014 on the Internal Rules on the implementation of the European Parliament’s budget¹, and in particular Article 22 thereof,
 - having regard to Rule 94 and Rule 98(3) of, and Annex IV to, its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A8-0105/2018),
- A. whereas the President adopted Parliament's accounts for the financial year 2016 on 28 June 2017;
- B. whereas the Secretary-General, as principal authorising officer by delegation, certified, on 10 July 2017, his reasonable assurance that the resources assigned for Parliament's budget have been used for their intended purpose, in accordance with the principles of sound financial management and that the control procedures established give the necessary guarantees concerning the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions;
- C. whereas Article 166(1) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 requires each Union institution to take all appropriate steps to act on the observations accompanying the Parliament’s discharge decision;
1. Grants its President discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Parliament for the financial year 2016;
 2. Sets out its observations in the resolution below;
 3. Instructs its President to forward this decision and the resolution forming an integral part of it to the Council, the Commission and the Court of Auditors, and to arrange for their publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union* (L series).

¹ PE 422.541/Bur.

2. European Parliament resolution of 18 April 2018 with observations forming an integral part of the decision on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2016, Section I – European Parliament (2017/2137(DEC))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its decision on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2016, Section I – European Parliament,
 - having regard to Rule 94 and Rule 98(3) of, and Annex IV to, its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A8-0105/2018),
- A. whereas in his certification of the final accounts, the European Parliament's accounting officer stated his reasonable assurance that the accounts present fairly, in all material aspects, the financial position, the results of the operations and the cash-flow of the Parliament;
- B. whereas, in accordance with the usual procedure, 141 questions were sent to Parliament's administration and written replies were received and discussed publicly by the Committee on Budgetary Control, in the presence of the vice-president responsible for the budget, the Secretary-General and the internal auditor;
- C. whereas there is permanent scope for improvement in terms of quality, efficiency and effectiveness in the management of public finances, and scrutiny is necessary to ensure that political leadership and Parliament's administration are held accountable to Union citizens;

Oversight over Parliament's budgetary and financial management

1. Notes that the formal oversight system of Parliament's budgetary and financial management consists of four main components:
 - the certification of the final accounts by Parliament's accounting officer;
 - the annual reports of the internal auditor and his opinion on the internal control system;
 - the assessment of administrative and other expenditure for all the Union institutions, including Parliament, by its external auditor, the Court of Auditors (the "Court");
 - the discharge procedure prepared by the Committee on Budgetary Control resulting in a decision of Parliament on granting the President of Parliament discharge;
2. Welcomes the fact that the Court has increased the sample relating to the number of Parliament's transactions, and encourages the Court to continue on this path, as the reputational risk is relatively high, given that financial and budgetary errors might impact negatively on the standing of the institution;

3. Encourages the Court to consider issuing more special reports on specific areas of Parliament's operations, such as its communication policies and its management of the grants for European political parties and foundations with a special focus on performance based budgeting;
4. Welcomes the follow-up that is given by the administration to strengthen in-house expertise on accounts and auditing by setting up an additional service for Members involved in the discharge procedures relating to Union institutions thus providing help and support on how to understand and interpret the outcome of annual accounting and audit reports;

The Parliament's budgetary and financial management

5. Notes that Parliament's final appropriations for 2016 totalled EUR 1 838 613 983, or 19,39 % of heading 5 of the Multiannual Financial Framework¹ (MFF) set aside for the 2016 administrative expenditure of the Union institutions as a whole, representing a 2,4 % increase over the 2015 budget (EUR 1 794 929 112);
6. Notes that total revenue entered in the accounts as at 31 December 2016 was EUR 183 381 513 (compared to EUR 176 367 724 in 2015), including EUR 30 589 787 in assigned revenue (compared to EUR 27 988 590 in 2015);
7. Emphasises that four chapters accounted for 69,92 % of total commitments: Chapter 10 (Members of the institution), Chapter 12 (Officials and temporary staff), Chapter 20 (Buildings and associated costs) and Chapter 42 (Expenditure relating to parliamentary assistance), indicating a high level of rigidity for the major part of the Parliament's expenditure;
8. Observes the figures on the basis of which Parliament's accounts for the financial year 2016 were closed, namely:

(a) Available appropriations (EUR)	
appropriations for 2016:	1 838 613 983
non-automatic carry-overs from financial year 2015:	-
automatic carry-overs from financial year 2015:	289 323 907
appropriations corresponding to assigned revenue for 2016:	30 589 787
carry-overs corresponding to assigned revenue from 2015:	103 055 269
Total:	2 261 582 946
(b) Utilisation of appropriations in the financial year 2016 (EUR)	
commitments:	2 225 465 435
payments made:	1 900 199 164
appropriations carried forward automatically including those arising from assigned revenue:	324 909 094
appropriations carried forward non-automatically:	-
appropriations cancelled:	36 094 295

¹ Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1311/2013 of 2 December 2013 laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2014-2020 (OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 884).

(c) Budgetary receipts (EUR)	
received in 2016:	183 381 513
(d) Total balance sheet at 31 December 2016 (EUR)	1 574 480 381

9. Points out that 99,2 % of the appropriations entered in Parliament's budget, amounting to EUR 1 823 844 172, were committed, with a cancellation rate of 0,8 %; notes with satisfaction that, as in previous years, a very high level of budget implementation was achieved; notes that the payments totalled EUR 1 538 531 527, resulting in an implementation rate of 84,4 % and representing an increase of 0,7 % compared to the previous year;
10. Underlines the fact that the cancelled appropriations for the year 2016, amounting to EUR 14 769 811, were mainly related to remuneration and other entitlements, as well as, once more, to the expenditure related to buildings;
11. Notes that in the 2016 financial year, seven transfers were approved in accordance with Articles 27 and 46 of the Financial Regulation ¹, which amounted to EUR 66 655 000 or 3,6 % of final appropriations; observes with concern that the majority of such transfers were, once more, related to the Parliament's buildings policy, and in particular to the Konrad Adenauer building project; considers that level of the 'mopping-up' transfer continues to be very high; is of the firm belief that effective budget management should be able to reduce such transfers to the bare minimum necessary; urges that Parliament's buildings policy be laid down with sufficient clarity, as part of the budgetary strategy;

The Court's opinions on the reliability of the 2016 accounts and on the legality and regularity of the transactions underlying those accounts

12. Recalls that the Court performs a specific assessment of administrative and other expenditure as a single policy group for all the European institutions; points out that administrative and related expenditure comprises expenditure on human resources (salaries, allowances and pensions), accounting for 60 % of total administrative expenditure, and expenditure on buildings, equipment, energy, communications and information technology;
13. Recalls that the audit involved an examination of a representative sample of 100 payment transactions, including a risk-based sample of 20 commitments which have been approved close to the end of the 2016 financial year and automatically carried over to 2017, in order to check the usage of the budget according to the principle of annuality;
14. Acknowledges from the Court that the overall audit evidence indicates that the spending on 'administration' is not affected by a material level of error; notes that, on the basis of the 12 quantified errors, the estimated level of error present in heading 5 of the MFF on administration is 0,2 % (down from 0,6 % in 2015);

¹ Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 (OJ L 298, 26.10.2012, p. 1).

Management of funds by the political groups

15. Recalls that the political groups are responsible to the Parliament for managing the funds allocated to them, within the powers conferred upon them by the Bureau; notes with concern that the Court found weaknesses in checks on the authorisation and settlement of expenditure related to the Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) group and that payments were being made without being covered by contracts resulting from a procurement procedure; highlights that the external auditor “Ernest and Young” issued a qualified opinion; calls on the Bureau to take appropriate measures, including possible reimbursement, concerning the ENF group;
16. Notes the specific findings concerning Parliament contained in the annual report of the Court for 2016; notes that for one payment to a political group, the Court found weaknesses in checks on the authorisation and settlement of expenditure made in 2015 but cleared in 2016; notes, in addition, that the Court found that payments were made without being covered by contracts resulting from a procurement procedure; notes, finally, that the Court detected similar shortcomings in a transaction relating to another political group in 2015;
17. Notes the responses given by Parliament to the Court during the adversarial procedure; asks the Court to keep the responsible committee informed on the implementation of its recommendation to review the framework for monitoring the implementation of budget appropriations allocated to political groups and monitor more effectively how they apply the rules for authorising and settling expenditure, and how they carry out procurement procedures;
18. Encourages the Parliament’s Secretariat to continue its additional efforts in assisting the political groups in improving their internal financial management and in providing them with better guidance; calls on the political groups to further improve the application of relevant rules for authorising and settling expenditure, as well as to improve and further harmonise how they carry out procurement procedures;

The internal auditor's annual report

19. Notes that at the competent open committee meeting with the internal auditor held on 23 January 2018, the internal auditor presented his annual report and described how in 2016 he had performed audits on the following subjects:
 - Review of the project for the new Financial Management System (FMS) - Phase 3;
 - Follow-Up of Open Actions from Internal Audit Reports;
 - Audiovisual Sector;
 - Recruitment Process for Officials and Temporary Staff;
 - External expertise on works’ projects in the Directorate-General for Infrastructure and Logistics (DG INLO);
 - Activity Reporting Process;
 - Recruitment Process for Contract Staff;
 - IT Infrastructure & Operations: Data Centre Inventory and Management of External Expertise;
20. Recalls that the annual activity report is a cornerstone of the Parliament’s governance

structure; emphasises that following the audit of the activity reporting process, which focused on the effectiveness of the annual activity reports as a tool for reporting on accountability and performance, the internal auditor made the following recommendations:

- an integrated framework for planning and reporting should be adopted; it should cover both the setting of strategic objectives and each directorate-general's annual operational objectives, establish key result indicators, and enhance reporting on performance in the annual activity reports;
- the Secretary-General should appoint a service with an expanded mandate for the coordination and monitoring of the activity reporting process;
- the assessment of the Internal Control Framework and the reporting thereon should be enhanced, by appointing an Internal Control Coordinator in each directorate-general, providing suitable guidance and tools to the directorates-general, and ensuring coherent reporting on internal controls in the annual activity reports;
- Parliament-specific guidelines for drawing up the Declaration of Assurance and assessing the need for making possible reservations should be adopted;

21. Notes that the 2016 follow-up process resulted in the closure of 22 of the 48 validated open actions, as well as that the risk profile of the overdue actions continued to be progressively reduced in 2016; notes in particular that at year-end, 10 of the 26 open actions were in the "significant risk" category, and the remaining 16 in the "moderate risk" category;

Follow-up to the discharge resolution for the financial year 2015

22. Acknowledges the written answers to the discharge resolution for the financial year 2015 provided to the Committee on Budgetary Control on 4 October 2017, as well as the presentation by the Secretary-General on the various questions and requests of Parliament's discharge resolution for the financial year 2015 and the exchange of views with Members that followed; stresses the importance of having more frequent discussions with the Secretary-General on issues concerning Parliament's budget and its implementation in the Committee on Budgetary Control;
23. Stresses once more, in the interests of greater transparency within the institution, and especially concerning its decision-making procedure, the need to facilitate and make more accessible the work of Parliament's internal decision-making bodies, especially the Bureau and, above all, the decision-making procedure; calls for Bureau agendas to be published on the Intranet in a timely manner and for the minutes of meetings to be published much more promptly; observes that it is not necessary to wait until they are translated into all languages before publishing them; congratulates the College of Quaestors on the progress made in this regard, especially as regards its new policy of disclosing its decisions;
24. Asks the Secretary-General to forward this resolution to the Bureau, highlighting all requests for action or decisions by the Bureau; calls on the Secretary-General to establish a plan of action and a timetable enabling the Bureau to follow up and/or respond to the recommendations contained in Parliament's discharge resolutions and

include the results in the annual monitoring document; asks the Secretary-General to report in good time to the Budget and Budgetary Control Committees on all projects with a significant budgetary impact that have been submitted to the Bureau;

25. Regrets, however, that many of the recommendations in the discharge resolution¹ for the financial year 2015 have not been followed up and that no reason or justification has been given; expresses its deep concern that neither the Bureau, nor the Secretary-General has published a progress report or made sufficient progress on several requests for action or for a decision to be taken by them;
26. Reiterates its call on the Bureau to follow-up all discharge decisions as follows from Rule 25 and Annex IV of the Rules of Procedure and Articles 6 and 166 of the Financial Regulation;
27. Recalls that both Parliament's discharge resolution for the financial years 2014² and 2015 asked for a technical solution that allows Members to use their individual page on the Parliament's website for the voluntary publication of meetings with interest representatives; urges the Parliament's Bureau and the Secretary-General to make this possible without further delay;
28. Calls on the Secretary-General to inform the Members of progress made with regards to the iPACS Project (whose aim is to strengthen and modernise the security of people, buildings and assets of the Parliament); notes that this project was adopted by Bureau decision on 9 March 2015; underlines the importance of ascertaining whether a project of such prime importance to the Parliament – and that has cost such a large sum of money – is on track;
29. Calls on the Secretary-General to institute measures to deal with significantly increasing hotel prices in Strasbourg, prices that have increased dramatically from one year to the next with an especially marked peak during the plenary session; recommends facilitating transport between Strasbourg and the German side of the border, where prices are significantly lower (possibly by means of a shuttle bus service between Kehl and the Parliament building);
30. Welcomes the initiatives of the Secretary-General regarding the review of the Crisis and Business Continuity Strategy in order to build up the resilience of the Parliament to better face any potential major incident (of any nature, but concerning for example IT, security or premises) impacting Parliament's activities, reflected in a Bureau Decision of 3May 2016;

Parliament's 2016 discharge

31. Notes the exchange of views between the vice-president responsible for the budget, the Secretary-General and the Committee on Budgetary Control in the presence of the internal auditor, on 23 January 2018 in the context of the Parliament discharge for the financial year 2016;
32. Notes that, following the referendum held on 23 June 2016 in the United Kingdom the Bureau discussed the consequences in its meeting of 4 July 2016; notes that the position of the President is that, as long as the United Kingdom remains a full member of the

¹ OJ L 252, 29.9.2017, p. 3.

² OJ L 246, 14.9.2016, p. 3.

Union, British Members and Parliament staff enjoy exactly the same rights and obligations as all other Members and staff of the house; notes that this arrangement needs to be flexible and remain in line with any possible outcomes of the Brexit negotiations; notes that the situation of British Members and Parliament staff might change during the yet to be defined transition period;

33. Acknowledges that the referendum result had a considerable impact on committee secretariats, research units and horizontal services of the political directorates-general; notes that the Parliament's services prepared analytical material based on fact-finding work to consider the impact of the United Kingdom's withdrawal on the policy areas and legislation in their respective fields; acknowledges moreover that future work on this issue is of a very complex legal nature, as well as that the expertise built up in committee secretariats and policy departments is ready to be mobilised during the subsequent phases of the withdrawal process based on the political decisions taken;
34. Welcomes the improved cooperation in the security field between the Parliament and the national authorities of its host countries, in particular the Belgian authorities;
35. Encourages the Secretary-General to negotiate with the Belgian railways to offer more direct trains between Brussels-Luxembourg railway station and Zaventem Airport at peak arrival and departure times for Members in order to save travelling time and lower Members' carbon footprint; asks the secretariat to promote train travel for Members;
36. Recalls that openness to the public is a hallmark of the Parliament; supports the reorganisation and improvement of entrances to all Parliament buildings at the three places of work on the basis of a new security concept which guarantees a safe working environment for parliamentary activities while retaining Parliament's openness; notes that these entrances, modernised in 2015, were equipped with new access control systems and have been incorporated into the new central integrated physical access control system; stresses that the entrance of the Louise Weiss building in Strasbourg (LOW) is one of the entrances most used by the Members, Union staff and visitors during the plenary sessions; stresses it is de facto the most visible entrance in Strasbourg; regrets that the "temporary" security check at entrance of the LOW building has become de facto permanent; urges the Secretary-General to propose an alternative to facilitate entrance into the LOW building while keeping the level of security and the attractiveness of this entrance;
37. Notes that attention paid to performance-based budgeting still varies between the directorates-general, and is still at a preliminary stage in parts of the administration; calls upon the Secretary-General to ensure that clear, measurable targets are set and monitored throughout the administration;
38. Regrets that, according to the Court, the costs of the geographic dispersion of Parliament amount to EUR 114 million per year; notes the finding, in its resolution of 20 November 2013 on the location of the seats of the Union's institutions¹, that 78 % of all missions by Parliament staff coming under the Staff Regulations arise as a direct result of the fact that Parliament's services are geographically dispersed; recalls that the estimate of the environmental impact of that dispersal is between 11 000 to 19 000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions; notes with regret that in 2016 the total cost of reimbursements solely for Members' travel expenses for plenary sessions in Strasbourg amounted to as

¹ OJ C 436, 24.11.2016, p. 2.

much as EUR 21 352 262; calls on the Council to find a solution toward a single seat for the European Parliament in order to not waste taxpayers' money;

39. Notes the publication of seven "Cost of Non-Europe" reports, as well as five "European Added Value Assessments" which were completed in 2016;
40. Notes the revision of allowance rates for accredited parliamentary assistants (APAs) with respect to their duty travel between Parliament's three places of work; notes that for officials and other servants of the Parliament, the hotel ceiling for Strasbourg missions is set at EUR 180 and daily allowance at EUR 102, making a daily total of EUR 282; whereas for APAs this amount is reduced to EUR 137, EUR 160 or EUR 183 per day for the same expenses, at the Member's discretion; recalls, however, that APAs are entitled to the same subsistence allowance as officials and other Parliament staff for missions to destinations other than Strasbourg; calls on the Bureau, for the third year running and for the purposes of equal treatment of workers, to take swift action to bring the daily subsistence allowance for APAs on mission in Strasbourg into line with that for officials and other staff; calls again for the Bureau to fully align allowances between officials, other servants and APAs;
41. Welcomes the willingness of the Secretary-General to find a solution and reiterates its call to find a workable solution for those APAs who, having worked without interruption for two parliamentary terms, will not be entitled to access the European pension rights scheme when they will reach the pension age at the end of the current Parliamentary term, owing to circumstances beyond their control and that of the Members employing them, since they will not have reached the ten years' service required due to early elections in 2014 and delays in the validation of their new contracts because of the heavy human-resources workload after the elections of 2009 and 2014; therefore requests that two legislative terms be considered ten years of active service; calls on the Secretary-General to instruct the Directorate-General for Personnel (DG PERS) to seek possible solutions without delay and keep representatives of the APAs informed of, and involved in, the process; requests that the Commission submit a legislative proposal before 1 September 2018 to solve this issue;
42. Notes that some missions' reimbursements are subject to very long delays and suggests that solutions as to bring them within a reasonable timeframe should be explored;
43. Considers it appropriate to keep the small increase in budget line 422 'Expenditure related to parliamentary assistance', taking into account the higher workload through Brexit, growing number of trilogues and increasing number of temporary and special committees, which has reached a historical record of 25 standing and temporary committees, and the coincidence of the end of legislature with the complex package of legislative MFF proposals;
44. Asks the Secretary-General to transmit to the Commission the Report on the evaluation of the new Statute of APAs drawn up following the resolution adopted on 28 April 2016 on the discharge for the financial year 2014 and referred to in Article 3 of Council Regulation (EC) No 160/2009¹;
45. Encourages the Bureau, when assessing the new rules on visitors' groups introduced last

¹ Council Regulation (EC) No 160/2009 of 23 February 2009 amending the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Communities (OJ L 55, 27.2.2009, p. 1).

year, to delete the possibility to appoint APAs as head of a group as it poses professional, legal, ethical and data protection concerns;

46. Observes that trainees employed by Members have a private-law contract with the Member, which does not entitle them to the same status in Parliament as that of other categories of Parliament staff, or to have scholarships from the Parliament itself (Schuman scholarships); regrets that there is no facility or legal framework within the Directorate-General for Finance (DG FINS) to arrange a scheme for direct advance payments to such trainees prior to missions – although such arrangements are in place for all other staff – given the fact that, for obvious reasons, they can barely afford to pay these expenses up front out of their own pockets; underlines that Members may find an agreement on advance payments with the trainee and the paying agent on a case-by-case basis; however notes that many Members do not use the services of a paying agent to remunerate the trainees they employ, asks the Parliament to evaluate as soon as possible whether such a direct payment scheme could be implemented;
47. Notes with concern that at this advanced stage in the parliamentary term, the CVs of more than half of the Members are still yet to appear in their profiles on the Parliament’s official website; calls on the Secretary-General to take swift action to ensure that the CVs of all Members appear on the official website;
48. Recalls that the mandate of the Members of the Parliament is incompatible with a number of offices, including that of a mandate of a national parliament; asks that the necessary rules be drawn up for the next parliamentary term to exclude the possibility for Members to have an additional mandate in a regional parliament of a Member State with legislative powers that requires its members to make similar commitments in terms of working time to a national parliament;
49. Is of the opinion that in order to receive more independent and reliable opinion and studies there is a need to create rules on conflict of interest for experts hired by the Parliament’s committees;
50. Recalls that the discharges for the financial years 2014 and 2015 had noted that the Parliament website is not particularly user-friendly and, in this light, calls on the Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM) to improve its website and to institute a more efficient search engine as a matter of urgency; stresses that progress still needs to be made with regard to the attractiveness and appeal of the website and that an effort is still required in order to diversify the available social media platforms; calls for a new strategy to be implemented, one that reflects the full capacity of social media in its various manifestations;
51. Takes note of the updated mission statement for the information offices, from now on “liaison offices” (adopted by the Bureau in November 2017); strongly underlines that their main function is to inform and communicate locally on behalf of the Parliament, in order to provide information about the Union and Union’s policies through the activities of external stakeholders at a local, regional and national level; underlines the need to optimise the use of new communication technologies and models, and take advantage of the liaison offices’ privileged geographical position close to citizens to further intensify activities at local level, such as organising debates with Members and civil society, with a view to listen to people and engage with them; points out that online debate and media attention triggered by these events should contribute to further increasing outreach to citizens; calls for an improvement in the strategy adopted with regard to the information

offices of the Parliament and urges DG COMM to confront the problem of the imbalance between the amount of money spent on the building and staff costs as opposed to the key functions of these offices, which is direct communication with local stakeholders and citizens;

Directorate-General for Communication

52. Recalls that the key performance indicator of DG COMM is the total outreach or exposure attained across the entire range of Parliament's communication platforms and channels; notes that, with regards to the Parliament's presence in the media and average coverage per month, there was a 12 % increase compared to 2015, and 7 % increase compared to the election year 2014; acknowledges the improvement in the Parliament's use of social media, as well as actions related to raising awareness among young people; points out, however, that the Parliament's communication activities should continue to improve, in particular by increasing outreach on social media, which is currently below the standards expected of a parliamentary institution; underlines that, particularly in light of the European elections in 2019, a comprehensive social media strategy needs to be developed and implemented; stresses that this strategy needs to reflect the amount of work the Parliament accomplishes while taking into account the multi-faceted interests, worries and ideas for the future of Europe that citizens express;
53. Notes that DG COMM launched a new multi-annual work programme for grants in the area of media and events organisation covering the period 2016-2019; acknowledges that for the award of a grant in the media category, 102 framework partnership agreements were established and 48 grant applications were successful, with a total value of EUR 3,99 million; notes that in the area of events organisation, 18 projects were selected for the award of a grant with a total value of EUR 0,8 million; calls on DG COMM to concentrate on a more active approach towards those who are not automatically interested in Parliament's activities or who may even be sceptical about its functioning;
54. Takes note of the major technical and editorial changes made to the Parliament's public website, particularly with regard to search engine optimisation of the website; congratulates DG COMM on this progress but adds that the rate of progress remains excessively slow; notes that the Responsive Web Design project and the live streaming and video-on-demand platform renewal project - which aim to redesign the website to make it adaptive to all kinds of devices - were launched in 2016 and successfully implemented to parts of the website; calls for a continuation of these projects and their implementation across all sections of the Parliament's website; notes that much still needs to be done in order to bring an effective website and communication tool into being; underlines that the renewal needs to be accomplished in a timely manner, as visibility of and accessibility to the Parliament should be in place well before, but at the very latest by, the up-coming European elections in 2019; stresses that a transparent and accessible website is key to the involvement of citizens;
55. Notes a significant increase in the volume of requests submitted to the Citizens' Enquiries service (AsKEP) since 2014, mainly as a result of seemingly coordinated 'write-in' campaigns on topical issues; suggests that the Parliament's replies be advertised to Members who might be unaware of their existence;
56. Draws attention to the latest Eurobarometer survey commissioned by the Parliament, where a specific question on the image of the Parliament was posed; is pleased that,

according to the survey the percentage of citizens who have a positive view of the Parliament is on the rise from 25 % (2016) to 33 % (2017); notes with satisfaction that the increase of Parliament's positive image directly corresponds to a decline in the 'negative opinion' by 7 percentage points from 28 % (2016) to 21 % (2017); points out that, despite clear signs of improvement, much still needs to be done;

57. Encourages the Bureau, when assessing the new rules on visitors' groups introduced last year, to delete the possibility to appoint APAs as head of a group;
58. Calls for a review of the system for calculating the reimbursement of travel expenses for groups of visitors sponsored by Members, with a view both to ensuring equal treatment of all Union citizens and to promoting the use of more environmentally friendly means of transport, given that the current system, based on calculating mileage, fails both to take account of the isolation and geographical barriers afflicting certain areas of the Union and to cover the cost of travelling to places where faster and more environmentally friendly means of transport are available;
59. Notes that, by 31 December 2016, a total of 5 375 officials and temporary staff were employed within the Secretariat (a decrease of 16 compared with 31 December 2015) and a total of 806 officials and temporary staff were employed within the political groups (an increase of 35 compared with 31 December 2015); notes that, together with contract agents, DG PERS was responsible for 9 617 staff (an increase of 264 compared with 31 December 2015);
60. Notes that at 1 January 2016, 57 posts were deleted from Parliament's establishment plan in accordance with the 2014 revision of the Staff Regulations and the MFF for 2014-2020;

Directorate-General for Personnel

61. Welcomes the fact that promoting equal opportunities remains a key component of Parliament's human resource management policy; notes that the action plan for the promotion of gender equality and diversity, approved by the Bureau in 2015, continued to be implemented during 2016 together with its specific objectives and all other related measures;
62. Welcomes the fact that a roadmap for "Gender Equality in the European Parliament Secretariat" has been adopted; notes that the roadmap outlines concrete actions and a clear timeline for specific measures regarding management, professional training, awareness-raising on gender equality, work-life balance measures and a regular monitoring of gender balance through statistics;
63. Welcomes the fact that gender equality among heads of unit appointed by the Secretary-General increased from 21 % in 2006 to 36 % in 2016 and that the posts that women have obtained tend to show a satisfactory improvement in the quality of the posts attributed to women;
64. Regrets that the gender balance at the level of director-general fell from 33,3 % / 66,7 % in 2015 to 16,7 % / 83,3 % in 2016; notes that the gender balance at director level remained steady from 2015 to 2016 at 29,2 % / 70,8 % and 29,8 % / 70,2 % respectively; considers this move in contradiction with the road map for "Gender Equality in the European Parliament Secretariat";

65. Recognises that, for certain activities, such as running the canteens and cleaning, outsourcing has been Parliament's preferred option and that, as a consequence, for certain directorates-general, the number of external staff on Parliament's premises may even exceed the number of officials;
66. Reiterates the opinion that external staff should not be used to compensate for the reduction of the number of posts agreed in the context of the 2014 revision of the Staff Regulations and the current MFF;
67. Notes that, at the end of 2016, there were 1 924 APAs working at the Parliament, compared to 1 791 a year before; calls for special consideration of the rights of APAs and local assistants, as their contracts are directly linked to the mandate of the Members they support, bearing in mind that APAs are members of staff holding Parliament employment contracts, while local assistants are subject to various national legislations;
68. Reiterates its concern at the alleged practice of Members obliging APAs to undertake missions, particularly to Strasbourg, without mission orders, without mission costs or simply without travel costs; is of opinion that such a practice leaves room for abuse, given that where APAs travel without a mission order they not only have to pay for the costs by their own means, they are also not covered by workplace insurance; calls on the Secretary-General to investigate this alleged practice and to report on this by the end of the year;
69. Reiterates its call on the Conference of Presidents and the Bureau to reconsider the possibility for APAs, at certain conditions to be set, to accompany Members in official Parliament Delegations and Missions, as already requested by several Members; calls on the Secretary-General to investigate the budgetary consequences, and the organisation and logistics of these missions;
70. Notes that Parliament is providing a budget to the Staff Committee, calls for a similar budget for the Accredited Parliamentary Assistants Committee, since they fulfil tasks provided by the Statute for Members of the European Parliament and its Implementing Measures which are useful to all institutions and Members;
71. Calls on the administration to involve the Accredited Parliamentary Assistants Committee in the decision making process of all rules that might concern Accredited Parliamentary Assistants Committee exclusively or commonly with all the other categories of staff represented by the Staff Committee;
72. Welcomes the interest in keeping staff with British citizenship who have become European civil servants, asks the Secretary-General to report on the potential risks for British staff and on how to ensure that British staff do not become victims of Brexit, and that their statutory, contractual and acquired rights be fully safeguarded;
73. Acknowledges that, in accordance with the Interinstitutional agreement on budgetary discipline, on cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management¹, 57 posts were removed from the Parliament's establishment plan for 2016, in line with the requirement for a 5 % reduction in staff posts; notes that two further posts were removed with a view to them being transferred to the Commission in connection with interinstitutional IT projects; notes moreover that the Parliament was to reduce its

¹ OJ C 373, 20.12.2013, p. 1.

establishment plan by a further 76 posts as of 1 January 2017 following the decision of the budgetary authority;

74. Is of the opinion that in reaction to the #metoo-campaign, the Parliament should achieve zero-tolerance towards violence in any form be it structural, sexual, physical or psychological; demands therefore:
- complete accountability of the perpetrators with full exhaustion of available penalties and sanctions;
 - creation of a central complaints office for reporting harassment cases;
 - access for all to an independent harassment committee in the Parliament that does not reproduce the internal structures of power by having Members on board;
 - protection for victims and those reporting such violence which grants them full anonymity and discretion;
 - psychological support for victims provided by a central office of the Parliament with doctors, social workers, and counsellors;
 - mandatory training on sexual harassment and mobbing for Members and officials in positions of power;
 - training and information for staff to help them recognise sexual harassment and to ensure that they know their rights;
75. Considers that the relatively low number of harassment complaints brought forward in 2016 both to the Advisory Committee on Harassment for staff and by APAs could imply a lack of appropriate channels; stresses that there are two kinds of harassment recognised by the Staff Regulations (psychological and sexual harassment); is of the opinion that the fight against any kind of harassment should be one of the utmost priorities of the Secretary-General; welcomes in this regard the proposal of the Secretary-General to introduce a network of independent confidential counsellors who can be contacted by APAs, trainees working for Members, group staff and all other staff and trainees; acknowledges that these counsellors will be selected for their expertise and inter-personal skills, and will undergo targeted training; encourages revision of the composition of the advisory committees dealing with harassment complaints to ensure equal representation of Members, APAs and staff, and gender balance; invites the Bureau to examine the possibility of appointing an external auditor in order to further improve the internal processes;
76. Expresses the need to establish an independent disclosure, advice and referral body with sufficient budgetary resources, in order to help whistle-blowers use the right channels to disclose information on possible irregularities affecting the financial interests of the Union, while protecting their confidentiality and offering needed support and advice;
77. Reiterates the vulnerable position APAs and interns employed by Members hold in respect to internal whistle-blower protection rules; cautions the Secretary-General against potential financial consequences for the Parliament's continued failure to provide the requisite whistleblower protection for APAs who report wrongdoing by Members; urges the Secretary-General to address this situation immediately;

78. Calls for weeks to be set aside for external parliamentary activity, to be used for training courses, particularly for Members' assistants, including intensive language courses;
79. Points out once again that Parliament is practically the only institution that has not introduced flexitime in its working arrangements, something that almost all the institutions, particularly the Commission, did years ago, with the proven outcome of increased productivity and improved quality of life for staff; calls for flexitime to be incorporated into Parliament's working arrangements as soon as possible and for the Committee on Budgetary Control to be kept informed of progress made towards achieving this objective;
80. Reiterates - as adopted in the Parliament's discharge resolution for the financial year 2015 (paragraph 90) - that, in light of their income, scholarship students should be entitled to greater price reductions in Parliament's restaurants;
81. Notes with great concern the fall in demand from Members for individual language courses in French and, especially, Spanish and Italian, particularly since 2009; notes that only in English and German classes have numbers remained steady, and even improved; reminds the Secretary-General of the importance of multilingualism in the process of European integration and the role that the administration should play in promoting language learning among Union citizens' elected representatives given that languages are also an essential tool for understanding and communication in the exercise of their parliamentary duties; calls on the administration to keep Members regularly informed by appropriate means, in addition to the existing brochure and the information available online, of all the opportunities offered to them by Parliament, with particular emphasis on classes with in-house language teachers in Brussels and Strasbourg, since this is the most flexible and compatible solution with their needs and working conditions and also offers the best value for money; further urges the Secretary-General to come up with the necessary means to promote multilingualism in this area, including by improving the availability of in-house language teachers and putting an end to the job insecurity that they face; notes the transfer of the Members' Professional Training Unit from DG FINS to DG PERS with a view to creating greater synergy with the staff training unit already within DG PERS; asks the Secretary-General to keep it informed of the specific results it intends to obtain from this development;
82. Calls on the Secretary-General to develop a voluntary and transparent mobility policy that takes interests and skills of staff into account in the framework of a genuine career development strategy;

Directorate-General for Infrastructure and Logistics

83. Notes that the updated proposal for the Parliament's medium-term building strategy, taking into account recent developments on the Luxembourg and Strasbourg premises, should be focused on the Brussels premises and in particular on the future of the Paul-Henri Spaak building; invites in addition the Bureau to evaluate the age of the infrastructure in the Salvador de Madariaga building in Strasbourg; notes in addition that crucial Brexit-related factors defining the future of the building policy, such as the potential consequences of Brexit on multilingualism, on the number of posts for officials in the establishment plan and on the number of Members, are still unknown; acknowledges that reliable planning can be done only after the Brexit process has come to its conclusion; invites the Bureau to develop risk mitigating strategies, taking into

account the need to counteract any possible disruptions that may be caused by future developments in the Brexit negotiations; asks the Secretary-General to propose a detailed plan on where staff housed in the buildings will be handled in the case of the buildings' renovation or reconstruction;

84. Urges the responsible services to clarify how they plan to implement the statement by the Parliament, the Council and the Commission on the exemplary role of their buildings¹ in the context of the Energy Efficiency Directive, given the approaching 2020 deadline;
85. Acknowledges that the Bureau mandated the Secretary-General to work out detailed proposals on possible options for the refurbishment of the Paul-Henri Spaak building; notes in addition that these proposals should address all possible options, including no action, renovation or reconstruction, and that the proposals should be accompanied by detailed assessments on the feasibility of the projects and address any relevant legal matters; notes that the detailed proposals being prepared by DG INLO were to be presented to the Bureau at the beginning of 2018;
86. Notes that most of Parliament's buildings were not designed and constructed taking into account the Eurocodes requirements for structural integrity, as those norms did not exist at the time of their construction; notes that the only buildings compliant with Eurocodes standards for structural integrity are the Willy Brandt and the Wilfried Martens buildings; acknowledges that the risk generated by the potential vulnerability of the structures of the different buildings is mitigated partly by operational measures taken by DG INLO and the Directorate-General for Security and Safety (DG SAFE), and that further organisational changes are foreseen to address this issue;
87. Recalls that the Bureau adopted a proposal for bringing the Members' transport service in-house at its meeting of 11 April 2016; notes with satisfaction that the procedure for bringing the drivers' service in-house resulted in a qualitative and quantitative increase of the services provided to Members, as well as for an effective and efficient response to unforeseeable emergency situations or sudden increases in demand; regrets that the principle of gender balance was not respected in the recruitment process for the transport service at the Parliament; calls on the Secretary-General to come up with a proposal to improve the current situation; is, moreover, concerned by the diverging remuneration grades among drivers and asks the Bureau whether it plans to consider a harmonisation to counteract possible unfair remuneration schemes;
88. Welcomes the introduction of the test project for digital transmission of supporting documents between DG INLO's initiating service and the *ex ante* service for the expenditure commitments of the Strasbourg Maintenance Unit; notes with satisfaction that, on the basis of positive experiences, the project was extended to the Strasbourg Projects Unit; encourages DG INLO to continue with the implementation of the digital transmission of documents wherever possible, in order to reduce costs and increase the efficiency of related services;
89. Notes that the revision of prices in Parliament's self-service canteen was required in order to move away from subsidised services and towards a concession type of contract, where the catering provider bears the full economic and commercial risk; welcomes the fact that trainees in the Parliament continue to be entitled to a discount of EUR 0,50 on

¹ OJ C 353 E, 3.12.2013, p. 177.

the main dishes in all self-service restaurants in Brussels and Luxembourg and EUR 0,80 in Strasbourg; asks DG INLO to monitor future price increases to ensure the services remain appropriately and fairly priced;

90. Takes note of the rules of 13 December 2013 on parking facilities in the European Parliament, and of the European Parliament's increased commitment to the environment; considers therefore that the policy on parking for employees' own bicycles at all the Parliament's places of work ought to offer more benefits than the aforesaid rules do at present; asks the Secretary-General to take steps along these lines and, particularly in the case of Strasbourg, allow bicycles owned by employees seconded there to be parked in Parliament's car park outside part-session periods, as well as during them, and for a suitable safe area to be set aside for bicycle parking;
91. Reiterates its deep regret regarding the decision to change the furniture in the offices of Members and their assistants in Brussels; notes that most of the furniture is perfectly serviceable and presentable, and that there is therefore absolutely no need to change it; considers that feedback from a number of Members – as opposed to a general survey – is not, on its own, sufficient justification for the change, and that arguments put forward by the administration on matters of taste, fashion or outdated style are equally inadequate; individual items of furniture should only be changed if there are clear signs of deterioration, major wear and tear or to avoid a health risk in the workplace of a specific or general nature (such as the possible development of more ergonomic office desks or chairs);
92. Reminds the Secretary-General of the outcome of the survey of the Staff Committee, regarding shared offices for staff, that resulted in 3 000 reactions and 80 % of the staff expressing that they are against shared offices; calls on the Secretary-General to prepare a plan for the consultation of staff and to follow up on the results of the survey;

Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences

93. Acknowledges that, in relation to the new output benchmarks for interpreters, an average of 11 hours per week was set as the lowest delivery and 17 hours as the highest average delivery; notes that the overall average number of hours per week staff interpreters spent delivering interpretation services in their booth increased from 11 hours and 54 minutes in 2014 to 13 hours and 25 minutes in 2016; notes that 2014 was an electoral year with less need for interpretation; underlines that the increase from 2014 to 2016 is due to the Parliament returning to its regular rhythm of committee, group, Strasbourg and turquoise weeks; recalls that, when the Staff Regulations were revised in 2013, the weekly working time for all staff of the European institutions increased from 37,5 to 40-42 hours which resulted in an increase in the weekly working time in the interpretation service as well; encourages future cooperation between the trade unions and the Secretary-General that should focus on fair working conditions, while ensuring the smooth running of parliamentary work at the same time; points out that on-going conferral between the Secretary General and the Staff Committee is underway and urges all parties to come to an agreement; notes that the increase in the committed appropriations for 'other staff' was partly explained by the increased need for external interpretation in 2016 (EUR 2,2 million up over 2015); notes moreover, that for meetings of political groups and committee meetings, there is a lack of interpretation for all languages due to the assignments rules; observes, finally, that changes to the scheduling of committee meetings which have resulted in many being held at irregular

hours is partly caused by limited flexibility in the efficient use of interpretation capacity;

94. Notes with satisfaction that the Bureau adopted a “Strategy for the Modernisation of Conference Management” in the Parliament, submitted to it by the Secretary-General; acknowledges that the strategy foresees a single point of contact and support for conference organisers and should be supported by an integrated conference service using a customised IT platform; acknowledges furthermore that one-stop assistance while an event is in progress and one-stop management and support are to be progressively put in place for technical meeting room facilities;

Directorate-General for Finance

95. Recalls that the Bureau endorsed at its meeting of 26 October 2015 a new approach with the goal of enhancing client orientation and reducing the administrative burden for Members by introducing two new instruments, “the MEP’s Portal” and the “e-Portal”; welcomes the implementation of “the MEP’s Portal”, a single front desk integrating all services related to financial and social entitlement formalities, which became fully operational in July 2016; notes that the electronic on-line version of “the MEP’s Portal”, “the e-Portal”, has been accessible since January 2015 with concise information regarding the rules in force and the status of Members’ rights; underlines that any administrative simplification should not only be achieved by shifting part of the work from the administrative staff to Members and their offices;
96. Calls for the simplification of recruitment procedures and reimbursements for missions and travel costs for local assistants; regrets that these processes are often complex and lengthy resulting in significant delays; calls on DG FINS to address this issue as a priority;
97. Notes that the current contract with the Parliament’s travel service expires at the end of 2018 and that an open call for tender is under preparation with a view to selecting a new travel agency to assist the Parliament in the handling and organisation of work-related travel; requests that the new contract contain strengthened conditions, in particular with regard to ticket pricing and the availability at all times of the travel service’s call centre, including at weekends; underlines the importance of a simple and user-friendly complaints mechanism to quickly highlight shortfalls, which allows for a speedy improvement of any problems; emphasises that greater attention needs to be paid to the specific requirements of Members and their need for tailor-made services;
98. Encourages the successor travel agency to strive to achieve the most competitive prices for the Parliament’s work-related travels;

Voluntary Pension Fund

99. Notes that the voluntary pension fund was established in 1990 by the Bureau's Rules governing the additional (voluntary) pension scheme and Members were able to join it until the end of the sixth parliamentary term (13 July 2009); notes that the fund was set up to provide Members with a pension scheme because one had previously been lacking;
100. Recalls that the Court of Justice ruled in 2013 that the Bureau decision to increase the age of retirement for Fund subscribers from 60 to 63 years in order to avoid the early exhaustion of the capital and to align it with the new statute for Members was valid;

101. Notes that the voluntary pension fund has increased its estimated actuarial deficit from EUR 286 million at the end of 2015 to EUR 326,2 million at the end of 2016; further notes that at the end of 2016, the value of net assets to be taken into account and of the actuarial commitment amount to EUR 146,4 million and EUR 472,6 million respectively; observes that these projected future liabilities are spread over several decades but notes that the total amount paid in 2016 by the voluntary pension fund amounts to EUR 16,6 million;
102. Points out that for the next five years, of the number of Members who will reach the age of retirement and who will be entitled to pay-outs given that they have contributed to the fund, and assuming that no beneficiary is (re)elected in 2019 or otherwise takes up a vacant European mandate, the number of new pensioners will be 21 in 2018, 74 in 2019, 21 in 2020, 12 in 2021 and 17 in 2022;
103. Regrets that an assessment of the current situation of the voluntary pension fund is still unavailable; recalls paragraph 109 of the discharge resolution for the financial year 2015 and paragraph 112 of the discharge resolution for the financial year 2014 which call for an assessment of the current situation of the voluntary pension fund; calls on the Bureau to make an assessment as soon as possible and at the latest by 30 June 2018 of the current situation of the voluntary pension fund;
104. Reiterates the continuing problems regarding the voluntary pension fund and asks the Bureau and the Secretary-General to take action, in order to prevent its early insolvency while avoiding any impact on the budget of the Parliament;
105. Notes that Parliament is the guarantor for the payment of pension rights when and if this fund is unable to meet its obligations; welcomes the Secretary-General's announcement that he has submitted to the Bureau a plan of action;
106. Observes that, considering the fund's current level of financial assets, combined with its future yearly payment obligations and the evolution of the rate of return of its investments on the financial markets, the estimated date of insolvency of the voluntary pension fund is estimated to occur between 2024 and 2026;

General Expenditure Allowance

107. Welcomes the decision of the Bureau to create an *ad hoc* working group for defining and publishing the rules concerning the use of the general expenditure allowance; recalls the expectations articulated by Parliament in its resolutions of 5 April 2017¹ and of 25 October 2017² on the 2018 budget, which call for greater transparency regarding the general expenditure allowance and a need to work on a definition of more precise rules regarding the accountability of the expenditure authorised under this allowance, without generating additional costs to Parliament; reiterates its call on the Bureau to make the following concrete changes concerning the general expenditure allowance swiftly:
 - that the general expenditure allowance be handled in all cases in a separate bank account;
 - that all receipts pertaining to the general expenditure allowance be kept by Members;

¹ Texts adopted, P8_TA (2017)0114.

² Texts adopted, P8_TA (2017)0408.

- that the unspent share of the general expenditure allowance be returned at the end of a Member's mandate;
- 108. Recalls the principle of the independence of a Member's mandate; underlines that it is the responsibility of elected Members to use the expenditures for parliamentary activities and that it is possible for Members - who wish to do so - to publish their spending record of the general expenditure allowance on their personal webpages;
- 109. Believes that any revision of the general expenditure allowance should take into account previously adopted plenary recommendations concerning transparency and financial accountability;

Directorate-General for Innovation and Technological Support

- 110. Recalls that a key strategic pillar for Parliament in a world of open communication is strengthening ICT security; acknowledges that, in the framework of the cybersecurity action plan, the "cybersecurity culture" pillar focuses on awareness-raising and training activities to ensure that the Parliament's ICT users are informed of the risks and contribute to its first line of defence in this regard; takes note of the awareness-raising campaign concerning cybersecurity risks, which includes visual reminders throughout the Parliament's premises, articles published on the Parliament's internal newsletter concerning cybersecurity and information sessions for Members, assistants and staff; however, expresses its concern regarding the threats against cyber security; welcomes the appointment of the chief information security officer, the creation of an ICT Security Unit with a security management and a security operations team; calls on the Secretary-General to investigate the possibility of adopting a 100 % in-house expertise system, also in order to avoid a high turnover rate;
- 111. Considers that the first priority for the IT services should be to secure good access to the internet, and that there are currently too many crashes;
- 112. Takes note of the project "ICT3MEPs" which should improve ICT services offered to Members and their staff while working in their constituencies; observes that the first phase of the project was implemented in October 2016, providing access management for local assistants; notes however, that the project still leaves room for improvement; calls on the relevant services to continue with the implementation project taking into account the needs of the users;
- 113. Welcomes the implementation of Wi-Fi access for the Parliament's visitors, which is another step towards a digitally more inclusive Parliament; points out, however, that ICT security should remain paramount and that the Parliament's internal network should be shielded from potential malicious external attacks; stresses the need for dramatic improvement in the nature of the service provided, particularly in Strasbourg, and looks forward to the necessary measures being taken in the near future;
- 114. Invites the Bureau, in cooperation with the Directorate-General for Innovation and Technological Support (DG ITEC), to come up with risk mitigating measures to ensure a smooth running of parliamentary work in the case of system damages or blackouts; underlines the importance of a priority list of services, according to which order services must be restored as quickly as possible so a skeleton service is still functioning in the case of a cyber attack; invites the Bureau to develop a contingency plan for long-time system blackouts; recommends that data centres diversify the sites on which their

servers are located to improve security and continuity of the IT systems of the Parliament;

115. Reiterates the call in its discharge resolutions for the financial years 2014 and 2015 for the creation of an emergency rapid alert system which allows DG ITEC, in collaboration with DG SAFE, to send swift communications by SMS or e-mail to Members and staff who agree to their contact details being included on a communication list for use in specific emergency situations;

Directorate-General for Security and Safety

116. Acknowledges the new optimised system for organising security tasks which the Secretary-General presented to the Bureau in January 2018; acknowledges moreover that this new system takes into account the specificity of the role and function of security agents; hopes that an open dialogue can be maintained in order to remain attentive to the requirements of this group of staff working in a very tense security context;
117. Welcomes the continuous efforts to work on safety and security in and around Parliament's premises; acknowledges that safety within Parliament must seek to achieve a delicate balance between taking a number of protective measures into account, and introducing an overly security conscious regime that slows down the activity of Parliament; nevertheless, insists that Parliament's security should be further reinforced, and reiterates its call on the Secretary-General to ensure that staff are correctly trained and able to perform their tasks professionally, including in emergency situations;
118. Calls on DG SAFE's security staff to carefully check the entire building for which they are responsible in the case of evacuations, to ensure that it has been evacuated and to provide assistance to persons who are hearing-impaired or who have any other form of disability, when people have to be evacuated;

Environmentally-friendly Parliament

119. Recalls that the Bureau launched the Environmental Management System project in Parliament on 19 April 2004; notes that a revised environmental policy was adopted by the Bureau in 2016 which retains and reaffirms the commitment of Parliament to continuous environmentally-focused improvements;
120. Commends the Parliament's commitment to green public procurement; notes that the "EP Implementation Guide on Green Public Procurement", which is designed to help authorising officers at the Parliament to successfully launch green purchasing policy and procedures, was approved in June 2016; welcomes the installation of the inter-institutional Green Public Procurement Helpdesk; calls for an evaluation of the introduction of criteria for a mandatory consultation of the Green Public Procurement for public tenders above a certain financial threshold and for specific product categories; notes the construction of a plant wall in the Altiero Spinelli building and takes the view that its benefits in no way justify its cost; calls on the Environmental Management System to seek solutions that, in addition to the ecological dimension, take account of cost-benefit ratios;
121. Welcomes the installation of water fountains and the new system of reusable glass jars; notes that the water fountains are poorly advertised and not yet installed in office areas;

regrets, despite tender specifications to reduce plastic waste, that an increased number of meals in disposable packaging were sold by Parliament's catering facilities; calls for transparency on plastic waste generated by catering facilities; notes that the brand of bottled drinking water distributed in Parliament meetings has changed three times in less than two years, which does not seem in line with earlier announced tender durations and is still plastic based; recognises that the Commission has scrapped plastic bottles for drinking water and calls on the Parliament to lay out a plan to follow it, especially given its exemplary role and in the light of a European Plastic Strategy policy initiative;

122. Notes that the Bureau endorsed a road-map, proposed by the Secretary-General, to move towards an electric car fleet; acknowledges that by the end of 2017, half of all cars and minibuses in the Parliament's car fleet should be electric vehicles or plug-in hybrid vehicles, as well as that from 2018, any car newly acquired for the Parliament's car fleet should be a plug-in hybrid or electric; notes that in 2020, all cars in the Parliament's car fleet should be electric vehicles or plug-in hybrid vehicles, while in 2021 this should also apply to all of the Parliament's minibuses; strongly underlines that a cost-benefit analysis should be conducted before every major renewal of the car fleet and that the Budgetary Control Committee should be familiarised with the cost-benefit analysis that preceded the implementation of the road-map towards an electric car fleet; calls for increased efforts for the promotion of active mobility, including by offering more attractive, accessible and secured bike parking spaces;
123. Calls on the Bureau to not limit itself to electric cars as a more environmentally-friendly solution since there are concerns regarding their production (including the sufficient availability of the necessary resources) and the disposal of batteries at the end of their life-cycle; regrets that Members were not informed of an analysis regarding alternative fuels such as bio fuels, synthetic fuels or hydrogen fuel cells; underlines that diversification of an environmentally friendly car-fleet would lessen dependence on one supplier and could counteract possible future supply shortages;
124. Notes that the Parliament has to conform with applicable regional and local laws and calls on the Parliament services to detail how it has implemented the Brussels regional law, the *Code Bruxellois de l'air, du climat et de la maîtrise de l'énergie*, especially in the area of car parking spaces offered to employees;
125. Welcomes, in the context of the energy and climate policy of the Union for 2030 and beyond, additional measures to offset unavoidable emissions; calls on the Parliament to develop further CO₂ offsetting policies;

Annual report on contracts awarded

126. Recalls that the Financial Regulation and its Rules of Application¹ lay down the information to be provided to the budgetary authority, and to the public, concerning the award of contracts by the institution; notes that the Financial Regulation requires publication of the contracts awarded with a value of more than EUR 15 000, a value that corresponds to the threshold above which a competitive tendering becomes compulsory;

¹ Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1268/2012 of 29 October 2012 on the rules of application of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (OJ L 362, 31.12.2012, p. 1).

127. Notes that of a total of 219 contracts awarded in 2016, 77 were based on open or restricted procedures, with a value of EUR 436 million, and 141 on negotiated procedures, with a total value of EUR 64 million; notes that the total number of contracts awarded by negotiated procedures was 14 % lower in 2016 (141 against 151 in 2015) with a reduction in value of 29 % (EUR 64 million against EUR 90 million in 2015);

128. Notes the following breakdown of contracts by type awarded in 2016 and 2015:

Type of contract	2016		2015	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Services	169	77 %	194	77 %
Supply	36	16 %	34	13 %
Works	13	6 %	18	7 %
Building	1	1 %	8	3 %
Total	219	100 %	254	100 %

Type of contract	2016		2015	
	Value (EUR)	Percentage	Value (EUR)	Percentage
Services	244 881 189	49 %	539 463 943	70 %
Supply	155 805 940	31 %	78 424 245	11 %
Works	97 640 851	19 %	92 889 168	12 %
Building	1 583 213	1 %	55 804 154	7 %
Total	499 911 194	100 %	766 581 510	100 %

(Annual report on the contracts awarded by the European Parliament, 2016, p. 6)

129. Notes the following breakdown of contracts awarded in 2016 and 2015 by type of procedure used:

Type of procedure	2016		2015	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Open	70	32 %	93	37 %
Restricted	7	3 %	10	4 %
Negotiated	141	64 %	151	59 %
Competition	-	-	-	-
Exceptional	1	1 %	-	-
Total	219	100 %	254	100 %

Type of procedure	2016		2015	
	Value (EUR)	Percentage	Value (EUR)	Percentage
Open	406 408 732	81 %	636 333 284	83 %
Restricted	29 190 756	6 %	40 487 367	5 %
Negotiated	64 284 705	13 %	89 760 859	12 %
Competition	-	-	-	-
Exception	27 000	0 %	-	-
Total	499 911 194	100 %	766 581 510	100 %

(Annual report on the contracts awarded by the European Parliament, 2016, p. 8)

Political groups (budget item 4 0 0)

130. Notes that, in 2016, the appropriations entered under budget item 4 0 0, attributed to the political groups and non-attached Members, were used as follows:

Group	2016					2015				
	Annual appropriations	Own resources and carried-over appropriations	Expenditures	Rate of use of annual appropriations	Amounts carried over to next period	Annual appropriations	Own resources and carried-over appropriations	Expenditures	Rate of use of annual appropriations	Amounts carried over to next period
EPP	17 400	8 907	18 303	105,19 %	8 005	17 440	10 198	17 101	98,06 %	8 745
S&D	15 327	5 802	15 713	102,51 %	5 417	15 256	5 748	15 379	100,81 %	7 633
ECR	6 125	2 518	5 835	95,25 %	2 809	5 959	1 614	5 065	84,99 %	2 779
ALDE	5 759	2 366	6 448	111,98 %	1 676	5 692	2 517	5 865	103,03 %	2 839
GUE/NGL	4 340	1 729	4 662	107,43 %	1 407	4 305	1 256	3 832	89,02 %	2 156
Greens/EFA	4 180	1 557	3 921	93,82 %	1 815	4 153	1 293	3 890	93,67 %	2 078
EFDD	3 820	1 873	2 945	77,10 %	1 910	3 843	1 643	3 629	94,45 %	1 919
ENF**	-	-	-	-	-	1 587	0	827	52,09 %	793
Non-attached Members	772	216	616	79,90 %	257	1 627	533	1 001	61,51 %	214
Total***	57 723	24 968	58 443	101,25 %	23 296	59 860	24 803	56 588	94,53 %	29 155

* all amounts in thousands EUR

** the final amounts of eligible expenses relating to the ENF group will be established at a later stage

*** the total does not include amounts related to the ENF group

131. Notes with concern that, in the case of one political group, the independent external auditor issued a qualified audit opinion; is particularly concerned that the auditor identified non-compliance with the “Rules on the use of appropriations from budget item 400” in the instances of costs for which adequate supporting documentation could not be obtained, as well as in the instance of procurement obligations not having been met for 10 service providers;
132. Expresses its concern at the reputational risk for Parliament that any such irregularities constitute and is convinced of the need for quick and effective action to prevent and address any similar irregularities in the future;

European political parties and European political foundations

133. Notes that, in 2016, the appropriations entered under budget item 4 0 2, attributed to the political parties were used as follows¹:

Party	Abbreviation	Own resources	EP grant	Total revenue ²	EP grant as % of eligible expenditure (max. 85 %)	Revenue surplus (transfer to reserves) or loss
European People's Party	EPP	1 734	6 918	10 650	85 %	304
Party of European Socialists	PES	1 408	7 154	9 512	85 %	12
Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party	ALDE	611	2 337	3 162	85 %	88
European Green Party	EGP	502	1 795	2 587	85 %	78
Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists	AECR	472	2 292	3 232	85 %	-240
Party of the European Left	EL	335	1 594	2 119	85 %	25
European Democratic Party	PDE	107	518	625	85 %	4
EUDemocrats	EUD	54	238	341	85 %	11
European Free Alliance	EFA	158	777	1 008	85 %	5
European Christian Political Movement	ECPM	109	493	665	85 %	0

¹ All amounts in thousands of EUR

² Total revenue includes previous year's carry-over in accordance with Article 125(6) of the Financial Regulation

European Alliance for Freedom	EAF	68	391	459	85 %	-40
European Alliance of National Movements	AEMN	61	229	391	85 %	0
Movement for a Europe of Liberties and Democracy	MENL	189	785	1 020	85 %	0
Alliance for Peace and Freedom	APF	62	329	391	85 %	-5
Total		5 870	25 850	36 160	85 %	242

134. Notes that, in 2016, the appropriations entered under budget item 4 0 3, attributed to the political foundations were used as follows¹:

Foundation	Abbreviation	Affiliated to party	Own resources	EP final grant	Total revenue	EP grant as % of eligible expenditure (max. 85 %)
Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies	WMCES	EPP	965 665	4 878 174	5 843 839	85 %
Foundation for European Progressive Studies	FEPS	PES	1 041 910	4 430 253	5 472 163	84 %
European Liberal Forum	ELF	ALDE	248 996	1 126 430	1 375 426	85 %
Green European Foundation	GEF	EGP	204 866	1 090 124	1 294 990	85 %
Transform Europe	TE	EL	217 209	901 484	1 118 693	85 %
Institute of European Democrats	IED	PDE	50 690	272 033	322 724	85 %
Centre Maurits Coppieters	CMC	EFA	71 952	318 411	390 362	85 %
New Direction - Foundation for European Reform	ND	AECR	316 916	1 503 964	1 820 880	85 %
European Foundation for Freedom	EFF	EAF	41 923	226 828	268 751	85 %

¹ All amounts in thousands of EUR

Organisation For European Interstate Cooperation*	OEIC	EUD	21 702	126 727	148 429	99 %
Christian Political Foundation for Europe	SALLUX	ECPM	61 024	326 023	387 047	85 %
Identités & Traditions européennes	ITE	AEMN	37 896	184 685	222 581	85 %
Foundation for a Europe of Nations and Freedom	FENL	MENL	96 726	549 357	646 084	85 %
Europa Terra Nostra	ETN	APF	37 461	151 403	188 864	85 %
Total**			3 414 937	16 085 895	19 500 832	85 %
<p>(*) the final grant for OEIC represents 99% of the expenditure, because some of them were reclassified to non-eligible expenditure thereby lowering the total eligible expenditure.</p> <p>(**) the table does not include the figures for the IDDE due to 2016 grant termination procedure. Grant decision ongoing.</p>						

135. Is concerned at the recently identified irregularities which have occurred in relation to the expenditure and own resources of a number of European political parties and foundations;
136. Expresses its concern at the reputational risk for Parliament any such irregularities constitute and is convinced of the need for quick and effective action to prevent and address any similar irregularities in the future; considers however that these irregularities are limited to a modest number of political parties and foundations; is of the opinion that these irregularities should not bring into question the financial management of the other political parties and foundations; takes the view that Parliament's internal control mechanisms need to be strengthened;
137. Calls on the Secretary-General to report, by 1 May this year, to the committees responsible on all measures taken to combat the abuse of granted subsidies;
138. Requests that the newly established Authority for European Political Parties and European Political Foundations submit a progress report to Parliament after its first year of activity, namely 2017; calls on the Secretary-General to ensure that the authority will have at its disposal all necessary resources to fulfil its tasks;
139. Considers that, where people are employed by parties and foundations, the labour law and social legislation of the Member State where the work is carried out must be fully complied with; calls for internal audits to include analysis of this aspect;