

**REPLIES TO AND ACTIONS TAKEN**

**ON THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION  
OF 18 APRIL 2018 ON DISCHARGE IN RESPECT OF  
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENERAL  
BUDGET OF THE EUROPEAN UNION FOR THE  
FINANCIAL YEAR 2016**

**§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;"*

Parliament's internal auditor has no competence on the financing of political groups. The Court of Auditors conducted its last audit on political groups in 1999.

The facts established result from a qualified opinion of the external auditor Ernest and Young. Therefore, the administration does not have a solid basis to judge the financing of political groups and to take appropriate measures.

The procedure to close the 2016 accounts for the ENF group was completed.

Based on the opinion of the Committee on Budgetary Control of 23 March 2018 and on the written observations of the ENF group on this opinion and on the underlying audit findings, the Bureau approved the closure of the 2016 accounts of the ENF Group in its meeting of 2 July 2018 and decided on the repayment of the expenditure classified as non-compliant with the applicable rules.

As the amount that the audit report initially mentioned as questionable had been withheld from the initial payment of the 2018 instalment to the group, the sum corresponding to the ineligible expenditure could be recovered from this amount. The remainder was transferred to the group.

**§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;"*

As previously indicated in the replies to the questionnaire in preparation of the 2016 Parliament's discharge, the meetings of Parliament's governing bodies (the Bureau, the Conference of Presidents and the Quaestors) are restricted to their members and the staff essential for their running. The necessary consultation and information process with Members routinely takes place via the Vice-Presidents and the Quaestors who are elected by the plenary and thus represent all Members of Parliament, and also via the political groups, who are represented by members of their staff in the Bureau meetings.

Agendas of Bureau meetings are published on the intranet before each meeting and are made available in the public register of documents on Parliament's internet site. All Bureau discussions and decisions, including the ones *in camera*, are minuted and, once approved by the Bureau, these minutes are also accessible on the same sites.

The minutes enable requests for access via the register or on the basis of Rule 31(2) of the Rules of Procedure.

**§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;"*

As indicated in the questionnaire in preparation for the 2016 discharge, all Vice-Presidents and Quaestors vote the discharge resolution in Plenary. Therefore, Members of the Bureau are fully aware of all recommendations. Furthermore, the information concerning the replies and actions taken on the resolution on discharge adopted by Parliament in respect of the implementation of the general budget is transmitted to the Bureau for each annual procedure.

The Bureau is also informed of the answers by the Secretary-General to the questions raised in the resolutions on Parliament's estimates every year.

The Committee on Budgets is regularly informed on building projects as required by the Financial Regulation. Other projects with significant budgetary impact are approved in the framework of the annual budget procedure or communicated as ad-hoc budget transfer request.

**§27:** *"Recalls that both Parliament's discharge resolution for the financial years 2014 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;"*

The technical services have established a solution that provides direct accessibility from Parliament's website, via an icon, to Members' individual calendar of meetings with interest representatives on a voluntary basis. On 10 September 2018, the Bureau had a discussion whether to go beyond this icon solution and establish the information directly on Parliament's website.

**§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;"*

The integrated Physical Access Control System (iPACS) project was approved by the Bureau in March 2015 as a multiannual project to be implemented on a phasing-in basis in the three working places and to be finalised in 2020.

In accordance with the Bureau decision, a schedule for the phasing-in of the system in the three places of work over an estimated time span of five years was drawn up.

The implementation of the project is currently advancing according to schedule and the conclusion of the upgrade of current security equipment (badge readers, controllers, etc.) should be achieved as planned.

Considering the heterogeneous equipment available in each building, the first implementation phase always consists of an evaluation study, to be carried out building by building. Each study includes the inventory of all existing material, which could be retained and upgraded, if considered compatible with the future system, as well as the identification of the new material to be acquired and installed. The second implementation phase focuses on equipment installation in each building, as soon as its evaluation is concluded.

Following unforeseen events and developments, some adaptations had to be made:

- The terrorist attacks triggered the need to integrate new entrances security installations into the project;
- The fact that the previous access control system is not capable of supporting the new chip foreseen for the new badge, imposed a change in the deployment strategy to allow a more efficient deployment of the new badges and reduce to the strict necessary the need to have two different badges;
- A new chip was considered for deployment in view of recent developments in cybersecurity by integrating a contact chip to allow a better integration of the badge with future IT-security needs.

The current state of deployment is as follows:

- All new entrance security installations are integrated into the new system;
- All building and parking entrances in Brussels and Strasbourg already migrated to the new system;
- Strasbourg : The migration of security controls (badge readers, controllers, etc.) inside buildings is ongoing and should be finished before the end of this year;
- Luxembourg : The migration of security controls (badge readers, controllers, etc.) for all entrances (people and parking) and inside buildings is ongoing and should be finished before the end of this year;
- SPINELLI building in Brussels: The finalisation of the call for tenders for the migration of security controls (badge readers, controllers, etc.) inside the building is currently ongoing. The tender is planned to be launched before the end of September 2018 with works starting during the last quarter of the year;
- All remaining buildings in Brussels: The migration of security controls (badge readers, controllers, etc.) inside buildings is planned for 2019/2020;

- New badge production system: ready for deployment. Final settings (layouts, etc.) are now being defined for the new badges. The new chip configuration specifications are reaching their final phase. The full set-up and new badge deployment will be ready for the new legislature;
- Migration of current CCTV systems (BXL, STR, LUX): planned to be started before end of 2018 and planned to be finalised during 2019.

**§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);"*

The analysis of the hotel costs reimbursed to the EP staff for Strasbourg missions in 2016, 2017 and in the first four months of 2018 indicates an increase by:

- + 7,7% in 2017
- + 1,8% in 2018

The relatively high hotel prices during the plenary session result from the high demand during this period. The possibilities for price negotiations are limited, as Members as well as staff members are free to make their reservations in any hotel of their choice, either in Strasbourg or in its surroundings.

The high level contact group between the European Parliament and the City of Strasbourg discusses the issue of hotel prices during each meeting. During the last meeting on 18 April 2018, the Strasbourg authorities announced a considerable increase of the room offer (1329) between 2018 and 2020, which will have a positive impact on prices.

In order to ensure availability of rooms, the Parliament's services negotiate allotments for a certain number of rooms with different hotels below the price ceiling set for staff. It should be noted that the price increases of the hotels granting an allotment have been relatively moderate during the last few years. For 2017, only 6 out of 36 hotels increased their prices while 6 decreased their prices compared to 2016 prices. For 2018, 7 out of 31 hotels granting allotments have increased their prices slightly for 2018 and 5 have even decreased their prices compared to 2017 prices. There are only 2 hotels which had an increase for both years. In addition, the Parliament's services established efficient communication and cooperation between the travel agency and Euraccueil (Office de Tourisme of the City of Strasbourg) in order to benefit from allotments in negotiated prices in even more hotels.

The internalisation of the drivers' service improved the quality and resulted in an increase of services offered to Members such as a reliable transport option between Brussels and Strasbourg and the possibility to respond better to individual requests during the part-session. Members can also benefit from the 20km transport rule, which covers a wide range of hotels on the German side in various villages and towns.

A general shuttle bus service for Members between Kehl and the Parliament building would not respond properly to the specific needs of every Member (e.g. different hotels and departure times in the morning and evening).

Since April 2017, there is also a regular, fast and efficient tram connection between the Parliament building and Kehl station.

**§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;"*

The recently increased Belgian Rail offer between Brussels-Luxemburg and Zaventem Airport provides for direct connections twice an hour and at least four times per hour when including connections with one changeover.

The Chair-in-Office and the responsible Quaestor repeatedly informed the Members about the free travel pass issued by SNCB (which is also valid for the direct train connection to Brussels National Airport) without this having resulted in less individual MEP transport requests so far.

On request of the Secretary-General, the adequacy and reliability of the offer is regularly discussed during the coordination meetings between the EU institutions, the various Belgian authorities and SNCB.

**§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;"*

The restructuring of the entrance to the WEISS building is part of the whole security reinforcement process of all entrances to Parliament's buildings. Based on a risk analysis conducted by experts, it was deemed necessary to perform security controls and accreditation procedures in front of the building, in order to prevent any unaccredited or unauthorized visitors to enter the Agora or the WEISS building itself. The temporary reception and control building installed in the aftermath of the Paris bombings on the forecourt of the building will be replaced by a permanent structure aimed at welcoming Members, staff and visitors in a professional and optimised manner. The project was approved by the Committee on Budget under Article 203 of the Financial Regulation during its meeting of 28 June 2018.

The new building will regroup the five existing entrances of the ground floor of the WEISS building, and provide for the entry of Members, staff, visitors, external providers and journalists. It will be split in a control and reception area and an accreditation area. This new structure will facilitate and optimise access and strongly enhance the security of the premises at the same time.

A project of this size and complexity needs appropriate planning and preparation. Works are planned to start during the last trimester of 2018 and to be finalised within a period of two years.

It should be noted that works to reorganise the entrance of the CHURCHILL building are ongoing and should be concluded during the last trimester of 2018. As soon as this new entrance will be operational, access procedures and security arrangements will be updated to alleviate as much as possible the entrance through the WEISS building.

**§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;"*

The Secretary-General requested each DG to set up a lead indicator for monitoring its activities and performance following a harmonised method. This indicator allows to monitor progress against clear, measurable targets and to support key decisions on efficiency and allocation of resources. The lead indicators for each Directorate-General ensure a more systematic approach to measurable targets and performance management based on pre-determined metrics.

All DGs have developed management tools to follow progress in their different functions and according to established excellence standards. This effort is centrally supported in order to disseminate and exchange best practices in measurement and implementation.

In DG TRAD, LINC, PERS, ITEC, FINS and INLO clear cut targets are already set (and revised) annually by the DG senior management. Performance is then measured against these targets, which cover key sectors of action for each DG. Purely quantitative targets are more difficult to set in those DGs more associated with the more seasonal and partly unpredictable political cycle. In those domains, the feasibility of setting targets in hours of attention and level of client satisfaction is currently being studied.

A monitoring system has been put in place.

**§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;"*

The new allowance rates for APAs decided by the Bureau on 2 October 2017 entered into force on 1 January 2018.

As previously recalled, Article 132 of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union (CEOS) does not refer to Article 22 of the CEOS but to Article 125 of the CEOS which states that Parliament shall adopt implementing provisions by internal decisions for this purpose. Therefore, it is the Bureau which decides on the revision of the flat rate allowances, not the Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/1611.

**§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;"*

As indicated in the replies to question 35 of the 2016 discharge questionnaire and to paragraph 91 of the 2015 discharge resolution, in order to be entitled to a retirement pension paid by the EU institutions, a staff member must have completed at least 10 years of active service within the institutions or have reached the normal retirement age whilst still employed by the institutions. These provisions are fixed in the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the EU (CEOS) and Article 77 of the Staff Regulations.

Parliament's administration is not entitled to an interpretation changing the length of the 10 year period and therefore cannot consider that two legislative terms automatically amount to 10 years of active service. The right of initiative to propose an amendment lies with the European Commission.

As regards the early elections in 2014, it needs to be underlined that this decision was taken by the Council on EP's proposal.

In 2009 and in 2014, the delays in the signature of the contracts were not due to the heavy workload for the HR services. The main reason for postponement was the late completion of the files by the candidates. Some APAs also requested a postponement themselves, because they were not available earlier. Delays also occurred due to the APA's need for authorisation for external activities. In few cases, the APA did not show up to sign the contract on its date of effect in which case the starting date was also postponed.

In 2014, a technical problem with the transfer of data from one IT system to another caused a delay in re-recruitment of seven APAs in July. For those cases, for the purpose of calculation of pension rights, the employment was considered as uninterrupted.

DG PERS is exploring all the possible solutions and the APAs concerned will be informed of the outcome in due time.

The ten years of active service can be reached through different forms of employment (contract agent, temporary agent in a political group or the administration or official if one succeeds in a competition, within the EP or in other institutions) with or without an interruption of contract.

The already acquired pension rights can be kept in the system, as they do not need to be transferred into the national scheme straight away.

In case a staff member does not reach the limit of ten years, the pension contributions are not lost, but can be transferred to a national or private pension scheme of the colleague's choice or contributed to the EU system if the staff member is later employed within the institutions.

**§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;"*

In 2017, the Missions Unit settled and paid about 84% of the mission expenses declarations (about 52.000 in total) within 30 days.

Longer settlement times occur mostly due to the complexity of the declaration and underlying evidence. The Missions Unit has been analysing the reasons of this situation to improve the internal procedures in order to reduce their number as much as possible.

**§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;"*

The Secretary-General transmitted the above-mentioned report to the Secretary-General of the European Commission.

**§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;"*

In October 2015, the Bureau acknowledged that certain safeguards for Members' trainees should be developed and pledged to revise the current legal framework for Members' trainees, which was adopted in 2010. At its meeting of 2 July 2018, on the proposal by the Secretary-General, the Bureau adopted a set of key principles to revise the current legal framework.

Such revision would inter alia grant the trainees minimal guarantees as regard in particular their remuneration and traineeship duration.

It would also give both Members and trainees legal certainty, and extend Parliament's internal traineeship rules whenever possible, notably for the social and fiscal and missions aspects. Along those principles, a comprehensive proposal to review the legal framework for Members' trainees will be drafted for a forthcoming Bureau meeting.

**§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;"**

Parliament's Secretariat supports Members by ensuring that CVs they submit are translated into all official languages and published on their profile page on Parliament's website. All CVs submitted until the drafting of this document were published and are available on the website.

There is, however, no obligation for Members to do so, as also indicated in the Quaestors' Notice 37/2015 ("Members may submit their Curriculum Vitae").

The competent services will once more raise Members' awareness about the possibility to submit their CV and will continue to provide practical assistance.

**§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;"**

Standing parliamentary committees, subcommittees, committees of inquiry and special committees, as well as the Parliament's governing bodies, may organise hearings of experts, under the political authority of their Chair or the President respectively. Experts are chosen by Committee members in full respect of the hearing objectives.

As to the acquisition of external research expertise, notably for the drafting of certain studies, the requirement for such expertise to be independent is highlighted in the "Guidelines concerning paid external expertise", Conference of Committee Chairs decision of 10 July 2007 (Article 8) on the Quality and independence of external expertise: "In connection with the acquisition of external expertise, the authorising officer by sub-delegation shall ensure that public procurement legislation is strictly adhered to and, in particular, that the technical selection criteria are objective, in order to ensure that selection is as transparent as possible and the experts selected are as independent as possible."

In addition to obligations on staff under the Staff Regulations, various provisions of the Financial Regulation deal with (potential) conflicts of interest at the level of officials and tenderers/experts. They require scrutiny of potential conflicts of interest at every stage of the procedure. These are explained in the Parliament's procurement guidances, documents such as standard declarations to be signed by staff and tenderers, and standard contracts. The main obligations and responsibilities as to independence and possible sanctions are clearly set out.

Procurement staff are thus aware of the risk of conflict of interest and how to handle it, which also forms part of financial training. The possibility of recourse to specialised advice from DG FINS and the Legal Service in individual cases is also widely known. The existence of the rules mentioned above and considering that the existence of a conflict of interest needs to be assessed on a case-by-case basis, lead to the conclusion that there is currently no need to adopt further and additional detailed rules on conflict of interest for experts hired by Parliament.

**§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;"*

The administration is continuously striving to improve the EP website and to adapt it to the needs of the users, taking into account the latest technologies and behavioural trends.

In 2017, two major steps with regard to content and design were taken that have already shown impressive results. Firstly, the administration implemented a responsive web design, which allows the website to be displayed on different devices (PC, smartphone or tablet) and different window or screen sizes. Secondly, the design and navigation of the website was simplified.

In May 2017, the revamped versions of the two first sections were launched - the Europarl homepage and the "News" section, both in 24 languages. In 2017, the "News" section gathered 22% more visits, 29% more visitors and 27% more page views than in the previous year.

The remaining sections will be finalised during the course of 2018:

- The President's website;
- "About Parliament";
- "At your service";
- "Contracts and grants";
- "Visits" section.

Additionally, a new single platform was created to host the EP's free and downloadable multimedia content - an extensive collection of historical and topical photos, audio material and video footage. The Multimedia Centre replaced Audiovisual and EPTV websites in January 2018.

On a technical level, it is planned to replace the Search Engine of the Europarl website with a new, better performing model during the course of 2018.

Furthermore, apart from its website, Parliament also uses digital channels to communicate and engage with citizens remotely. Besides Facebook and Twitter, it is active on all mainstream platforms (LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat, Google Plus, etc.) and manages a number of other platforms (Reddit, Flickr, Pinterest, etc.).

In addition to the central accounts, the EP's Liaison Offices in the Member States have their own platforms, which maximises the Parliament's proximity to citizens in their own language. All together, the EP social media presence amounts to over five million followers.

Also, Parliament created and manages the EP Newshub ([www.epnewshub.eu](http://www.epnewshub.eu)), a real time news aggregator that gathers all items published online by MEPs, the political groups and the EP communication services. The EP Newshub represents a unique gateway to all political actors, to the diversity of political opinions and in the end to political debate in Parliament, opening up its doors to citizens online, in a modern, intuitive and simple way.

**§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;"*

A direct comparison of the resources spent on European Parliament Liaison Office (EPLO) buildings and staff with the budget for operations does not paint a complete picture of the resources available to these offices to perform their key functions. EPLOs benefit from a wide range of central resources - including information systems and the support of dedicated services. For example, EPLOs receive from the centre targeted briefings to facilitate the distribution of information about the work of the Parliament; central services also support EPLOs in the creation of communication tools including, for example, press releases and other multimedia material for the media or videos and other communication products for specific target groups. The EPLOs thrive on the basis of this symbiotic support: they assist the activity of Parliament in the Member States while receiving the strong support of central resources to achieve this.

The profound political, social and economic changes in Europe, along with changes in the media landscape and communication methods have led to a thorough revision of the mission statement of the EPLOs. Outreach towards citizens is at the core of the offices' actions. In this context, the stakeholders' dialogues give a regular platform to MEPs, citizens and stakeholders at local level.

The EPLOs have developed a strong digital presence. Locally managed social media activities in the national language have increased substantially. Each office has been reinforced with a community manager who will be key in the intense digital campaign of the upcoming European Elections. These efforts are relatively low-cost in terms of operational budget but generate a high visibility for Parliament.

Increased media attention has also been triggered by intensified efforts towards the media (as a priority identified in the new EPLOs' mission statement adopted by the Bureau). As media outlets are decreasing their travel budgets and consequently reduce their presence in Brussels and Strasbourg, local contact had to be intensified. Reaching out to journalists and maintaining the network is a very personnel-based activity. To improve the media impact even further, the media relations capacity of the EPLOs have been enhanced: up to three new media relations officers have been hired in offices (depending on the size of the country). This process has less impact on the operational budget.

The direct, physical experience is also key to reaching all audiences. Therefore, the human resources and budget of the offices are deployed for reaching out to young people (European Parliament Ambassador School project, Charlemagne Youth Prize Laureates, Euroscola programme) and stakeholders at the local level, thanks to a very active participation of the Members of Parliament in the Stakeholders' debates, for example.

Direct contact with citizens through visits to the Parliament's premises is equally invaluable. So far, the Europa Experience centres reproducing the concept of the Parliamentarium on a smaller scale were opened in Berlin and Ljubljana. These projects require an initial investment in the real estate hosting the exhibition space which is, however, justified by the returns in terms of the number of visitors and a real, emotional link between Parliament and the citizens it represents with a comparatively low intensity in human resources. In Berlin, the total number of visitors to the Europa Experience since its opening in May 2016 reached 337 000. The EPLO in Ljubljana was visited by 15 000 citizens since the opening of the small-scale Europa Experience in March 2017, representing a 37-fold increase in hours of attention plus 273 newsletter subscriptions and 1101 photo booth mails.

Finally, a major part of the budgetary and human resources of the EPLOs will be dedicated to the European Elections campaign in the coming year. While the overarching approach and messaging strategy is developed centrally, EPLOs will need to adapt it to the contextual needs of each Member State and the identified target audiences.

**§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;"*

The Bureau revised the rules for reimbursement of travel expenses for groups of visitors sponsored by Members in October 2016. The reimbursement takes the form of a financial contribution paid by Parliament to help cover the cost of the visit, with a ceiling made up of a fixed amount and a variable distance-dependent travel factor. The contribution effectively paid out is determined taking into account the real costs actually incurred by the group for travel, accommodation, meals and minor local expenses, within limits set by the rules.

The travel factor is calculated taking into account the distance between the place of origin of the group and the place of visit (Strasbourg or Brussels). This is done through an internet-based application in a simple, objective and transparent way that is easily accessible to visitors.

Pursuant to the Bureau decision, there is indeed no direct link between the amount calculated per kilometre for the travel and the actual costs of the means of transport used, which are the choice of the group. Such a flat kilometric rate allows a rapid calculation and swift payment, in line with the principles of economy and efficiency. Special rules apply to groups coming from the French Overseas Departments and Territories, due to the very long distances travelled by these groups.

The information that heads of groups receive before a visit includes a recommendation to choose environment-friendly transport. An internal audit report conducted in 2016 on EMAS related activities recognised this approach and praised the various efforts to shape a sustainable and environmentally friendly visitors programme.

**§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;"*

The administration does not have any evidence at hand, information from APAs or other data, indicating that professional travels are undertaken by APAs without a validated mission order. On the other hand, it is allowed to have a proper mission order validated and without certain costs or any cost borne by Parliament, though this concerns only a minor part, notably around 7-10% of all APA missions. APAs are under insurance cover once a mission order exists irrespective of the arrangement on mission costs.

If APAs were to find themselves in the situation of having to undertake missions without a validated mission order, they are advised to contact APA Missions Front Desk without delay.

The APA Front Desk, which is located at the "Staff Cube" in front of meeting room 3G2 in the SPINELLI building, was set up by the Secretary-General in order to provide APAs with an easily accessible contact point concerning reliable advice and information on administrative procedures including the rules on missions.

**§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;"*

As it is up to the Conference of Presidents and the Bureau to decide on this matter, the financial impact will depend on different factors such as the number of APAs eventually allowed, the destination and duration of the delegation or mission. As a matter of example, over 2016, 2017 and the first four months of 2018 the average daily cost for a staff member accompanying a delegation/mission varies from around EUR 300 inside the EU, to EUR 600-700 outside the EU. The potential increase of organisational and logistical complexity (venues, transport, accommodation etc.) and thus of workload when delegations grow substantially in size also needs to be taken into account.

**§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;"*

As pointed out previously in reply to question 39 of the 2016 discharge questionnaire, budget item 1630 'Social welfare' serves inter alia for the financing of a grant for the Staff Committee. As per the accompanying budgetary remarks for the line, 'contributions or defrayal of expenses by the Staff Committee for participants in welfare activities will be aimed at financing activities that have a social, cultural or linguistic dimension, but there will be no subsidies for individual staff members or households.' Adjustments to the level of appropriations and the type of expenses to be financed under this budget item can be introduced during the annual budget procedures.

In this context it is important to remind of the fact that all social and cultural activities carried out by the Staff Committee are open to all EP staff, including APAs.

**§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;"*

Article 126 (2), 2<sup>nd</sup> subparagraph of the CEOS sets out that 'the arrangements relating to the autonomous representation of accredited parliamentary assistants shall be laid down by the implementing measures referred to in Article 125 (1) taking into account that a formal link shall be established between the statutory representation of staff and the autonomous representation of assistants', and that Article 35(2) of the Implementing Measures for Title VII of the CEOS adopted by the Bureau on 14 April 2014 provides that the APA Committee shall make 'a contribution towards the establishment of formal relations with Parliament's Staff Committee, so as to ensure that there is a direct formal link between the two committees'. In the framework of the establishment of such a formal link, the Staff Committee and the APA Committee requested in June 2011 the possibility for the APA Committee to appoint observers to several internal joint committees and the Secretary-General gave a positive answer to this request on 27 June 2011.

Furthermore, DG Personnel confirms that the administration is responsible for drafting proposals regarding new rules on which staff representatives are then consulted.

**§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;"*

In order to ensure certainty for UK staff working at Parliament as regards their situation after 29 March 2019 when the UK will leave the European Union, the Secretary-General presented a number of proposals to the Bureau, which it approved at its meeting of 2 May 2018.

As regards permanent officials of exclusively UK nationality, the Bureau confirmed that the Appointing Authority will refrain from applying Article 49 of the Staff Regulations and therefore not require British officials to resign on the ground that they will no longer have the nationality of a Member State. Those officials will, thus, be able to stay, with meaningful career perspectives.

Concerning temporary and contract staff, Articles 47 and 119 of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the Union (CEOS) provide that, in principle, employment is terminated if an agent no longer has the nationality of a Member State. However, as regards temporary and contract staff of exclusively UK nationality in Parliament's Secretariat, the Bureau decided that a case-by-case assessment should be carried out as soon as possible and, where an extension of the employment contract is justified, an exception will be authorised. As a matter of principle, an extension of a contract will never be denied on the sole ground of the colleague's nationality. DG Personnel is currently carrying out such an assessment, together with the Directorates-General concerned, and informing the concerned staff members.

As for temporary and contract staff in the political groups, it will be for the groups to carry out a similar assessment and decide whether an exception should be authorised, taking into account their specific situations.

Concerning accredited parliamentary assistants (APAs), it follows from Article 139 CEOS that the contracts of APAs working for British Members, whether the APA is a UK national or not, will end at the end of March 2019 as a consequence of the end of the Member's term of office. For APAs with only UK nationality, but working for non-British Members, at the request of the Member concerned, an exception will be authorised along the same principles as those applying to temporary and contract staff.

With these decisions the Bureau has ensured that UK staff members will not become victims of the UK's decision to leave the EU, independently of the outcome of the negotiations between the UK and the EU.

**§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;"*

Parliament strives to maintain an open and inclusive working environment, free from abuse of power, harassment and discrimination with a zero tolerance policy towards any form of harassment and violence. It has the most advanced system for preventing and addressing harassment in a parliamentary workplace and serves as role model for other Parliaments in this area who regularly seek Parliament's advice on the matter.

With a view to introducing further improvements in the prevention of workplace harassment, the Secretary-General submitted a detailed roadmap to the Bureau for its meeting on 15 January 2018. As a follow-up to the Bureau discussion, an "Updated Roadmap for the adaptation of preventive and early support measures to deal with conflict and harassment between Members and APAs, Trainees or other staff" was presented and endorsed during the Bureau meeting on 12 March 2018. A set of implementing measures was approved during the Bureau meeting of 2 July 2018.

The roadmap presents different initiatives whose goals are to review and improve the existing anti-harassment practices and procedures, provide effective and timely support to victims, and introduce additional awareness raising activities. It addresses all of the major challenges in the Parliament's current harassment prevention practices and procedures and introduces efficient and timely solutions to address them in order to maintain a harassment-free working environment for all staff members.

With the change of scope, all potential cases involving Members with all kinds of staff (including trainees) are covered. Following this extension, all cases of harassment concerning staff are covered by procedures and structures inside the European Parliament, apart from group staff in cases not involving Members.

Items of the roadmap already implemented:

- Improved regulatory framework of the Advisory Committee entered into force on 1 September 2018 (enlarges the scope of the Committee to cover all potential cases for all categories of staff involving Members, includes a second APA representative in the composition of the Advisory Committee, improves the working methods, including the protection of victims, and investigative procedure of the Committee);
- A Code of Appropriate Behaviour for Members of the European Parliament approved by the Bureau on 2 July 2018;
- Proposal for the revision of the Implementing Measures for the Members' Statute to ensure payment of salary to victims of harassment was adopted by the Bureau on 2 July 2018;
- Organisation of an external audit of harassment procedures: panel of experts established in June 2018, recommendations expected by early November 2018;
- A permanent secretariat of the Advisory Committee was established in March 2018;
- Mandatory training for APAs and Members' trainees in place since January 2018;
- Training for Members on demand in place since September 2018;

- Brochures for Members available since August 2017;
- Brochures for APAs to be published in September 2018;
- Brochures on best practices of institutions and multinationals distributed in 2018 ;
- Doctors, nurses, psychologists and social workers of the Medical Service actively provide social and psychological support and counselling to victims of harassment.

Items under implementation:

- Revision of sanctions applicable to harassment behaviour via the AFCO committee and a revision of the Rules of Procedure (letter sent to the AFCO in April 2018);
- Drafting of the Annex to the Declaration concerning the Code of Conduct;
- Update of Advisory Committee website and creation of central complaints office;
- Creation of network of confidential counsellors having undergone appropriate training by Mid-September 2018;
- Designing a specific induction training for Members and APAs at the beginning of the next legislature;
- Public hearing of experts on harassment foreseen in November 2018.

**§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;"*

The Secretary-General presented the "Updated Roadmap for the adaptation of preventive and early support measures to deal with conflict and harassment between Members and APAs, Trainees or other staff" to the Bureau at its meeting on 12 March 2018 when it received full support (see also the reply to paragraph 74).

An external audit is currently carried out in order to review Parliament's internal harassment practices and procedures. The recommendations are expected by early November 2018.

A public hearing with experts on harassment in the workplace, including on sexual harassment, open to all Members of Parliament, Parliament's staff and the public will be organised in order to gather external expertise on how to improve the fight against harassment in November 2018.

The creation of the network of confidential counsellors is foreseen by Mid-September.

Since 1 September 2018, a second APA representative was included in the composition of the Advisory Committee.

**§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;"*

In addition to measures in place in each Institution (see reply to Paragraph 77) and the existing procedure of referral to CONT coordinators of cases not relating to Parliament, such a body to strengthen whistle-blowers' rights can only be established by a basic act. The Commission has launched a legislative proposal in April 2018 (COM (2018) 218), it is up to the legislative authority to take the necessary legislative steps in this field which is not within the remit of the administration.

**§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;"*

In 2015, the Secretary-General adopted Internal Rules implementing Article 22c of the Staff Regulations, which concern whistleblowing. In accordance with these rules, the Parliament's administration shall take all reasonable steps to ensure fair treatment and protection of whistle-blowers. Measures may include ensuring that they have equal promotion possibilities, or if need be, their transfer to another post.

In addition to Article 22c, if whistle-blowers believe that they have been victimised as a result of their actions, they may ask for assistance under the Article 24 or lodge a complaint under the Article 90 of the Staff Regulations.

**§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;"*

Parliament is closely monitoring developments in workplace trends and is committed to providing modern and flexible working conditions. It recognizes the need of staff members to have a good work-life balance, and supports them by providing the possibility to choose from different working-time and leave arrangements.

Currently, the Parliament offers more than 130 different working time formulas, ranging from 50% to 100%, which are adapted to the needs of staff members and provide them with more flexibility in balancing their personal and professional commitments.

In line with these efforts, the Parliament has already implemented the occasional teleworking project. The project was evaluated after its first year of implementation and the results show high levels of satisfaction among staff members and managers. Taking into consideration results of the survey and needs expressed by the staff members, the administration is working on the improvement of the current scheme.

As regards flexitime using "clock in-clock out" systems, other institutions are reviewing their arrangements because it seems more and more common in organisations to stop measuring time of arrival and departure of staff, while more agile ways of organising work based on results gain importance.

**§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;"*

See reply to paragraph 89.

**§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;"*

The fall in demand is acknowledged, however Members are informed in a great number of ways about the possibility to follow in-house as well as external language course. Both options are mentioned on the website as well as in the brochure "learn.MEP", now being printed for its third edition. An email campaign targeting all Members and highlighting in-house language learning possibilities was run on 20 February 2018. Finally, awareness raising posters featuring language teachers' contact data are hung up in the Members' portal area.

With two half-time language teachers for French, and one half-time teacher each for Italian and Spanish, there is enough capacity with the current contracts. Four language teachers are employed under contracts for an indefinite period and enjoy a high level of job security.

**§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;"*

New rules on mobility were adopted by the Bureau on 15 January 2018 and are in force since 1 February 2018. Implementing measures will set out the timeline of each year's mobility exercise, the accompanying measures, as well as the measures encouraging mobility between Directorates-General.

To encourage voluntary mobility, the EP has put in place, or anticipates putting in place, amongst others: formal job shadowing; temporary placements of staff in other services; increased training possibilities; detailed information on job profiles; a frequent Career Day for all staff, organised in the main places of work etc.

Career Counselling services, both central and in each Directorate-General are at the service of staff who seek assistance with future career possibilities.

Internal EP platforms and databases are being developed for a future "Exchange forum" where staff could find job opportunities and HR services could find staff with the profiles they seek.

The "Mobility Policy" project, part of the Parliamentary Project Portfolio, is looking into ways to strengthen the career development aspects of mobility and thereby to encourage voluntary mobility even further.

**§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;"*

The infrastructure of the MADARIAGA building is constantly maintained and the reinforced maintenance policy of Parliament allows monitoring the state of the building. The building was the subject of various works planned over the last 10 years (lifts, complete rehabilitation of roofs, heat pumps, renovation of facades, etc.).

The technical facilities and the infrastructure are in good conditions. In the coming years, the fire safety system will be renovated throughout the site, as well as the sanitary blocks. It will be necessary, in the medium term, to replace the false ceilings.

Parliament's administration is currently preparing a comprehensive plan for the three working places that will comply with the decisions of the Bureau ("Parliament's building strategy beyond 2019" of 16 April 2018, and "Medium-term Office Allocation strategy for Strasbourg" of 11 September 2017) including the principles laid down by these decisions for office allocation. It will also take into account the ongoing building renovation and reconstruction projects and anticipate possible future renovations in line with the existing overall maintenance program.

The plan should remain flexible and adjustable until the conclusion of Brexit negotiations and when the consequences for the building strategy and office allocation are fully known.

Staff fully based in Strasbourg is concentrated in the new HAVEL building. In the case of future renovations of the MADARIAGA, PFLIMLIN and CHURCHILL buildings, the Secretary-General will present an appropriate relocation plan for staff concerned. It should be noted that the New Building Strategy beyond 2019, suggested by the Secretary-General and approved by the Bureau on 16 April 2018, foresees an indicative estimated rolling renovation plan of all buildings in the coming 30 years.

**§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 buildings<sup>1</sup> in the context of the Energy Efficiency Directive, given the approaching 2020 deadline;"*

Parliament's administration is fully committed to comply with Directive 2012/27/EU. For all currently on-going construction and renovation projects, environmental considerations and in particular energy performance play a key role. In this context, the project of the new ADENAUER Building in Luxembourg (220.000 m<sup>2</sup>) as well as the new MARTENS building (30.000 m<sup>2</sup>) include an innovative and performant energy concept based on the extensive use of geothermal energy and cogeneration. For all currently on-going or recently completed building renovations, such as the House of European History (10.300 m<sup>2</sup>) in Brussels and the HAVEL building (6.800 m<sup>2</sup>) in Strasbourg, energy performance was considered throughout the whole process.

Furthermore, Parliament will continue to pay particular attention to its environmental commitment to achieve outstanding environmental certification (such as BREEAM excellent) for its buildings once they undergo a fundamental renovation, as it has been the case for the MARTENS, MONTOYER 63 and ADENAUER buildings.

In the context of the environmental management system EMAS, an energy management for all buildings of Parliament in Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg has been set up and is subject to regular internal and external audits.

**§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;"*

The detailed proposals were presented to the Working Group on Buildings, Transport and Green Parliament on 14 March 2018. In its meeting of 2 July 2018, the Bureau decided to select two options (structural renovation and redesign) for further elaboration, including a preparatory architectural competition.

**§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;"*

Parliament's administration is fully committed to gender balance and this also includes recruitment procedures. Unfortunately, the number of female candidates for the transport service was very low. Consequently, the reserve list for drivers included 321 candidates, of which only six women (1.8%). All six candidates were interviewed by Parliament's administration with the result that two did not pass the test/interview, one did not submit the necessary documents and had thus to be refused, one did not have enough professional experience, so that it was not possible for Parliament to recruit more than the remaining two female drivers. Their proportion among the 110 new drivers recruited is 1.8%.

The recruiting service is aware of the need to recruit a higher number of female drivers and future recruitments will also take into account gender balance, as far as possible.

In accordance with Article 86(1)(iv) of the CEOS, new drivers are recruited as contract staff in function group I, grade 1. Depending on their experience, they can be classified either in step 1 or step 2 of grade 1 (Article 86(2) of the CEOS). The scale of basic salaries for the two steps is provided for in Article 93 of the CEOS.

**§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 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;"*

All holders of a trainee badge are entitled to a set price reduction in the self-service restaurants in all three places of work on all hot meals offered, including the "dish of the day" already offered at a lower price. Parliament's services will insist, also for every new contract and annual indexation applied, that a "dish of the day" is offered at discounted price, a significant discount for trainees is applied, and general 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;"*

Special parking places for bicycles exist in all of Parliament's buildings in Brussels, as well as in their surroundings. Most of these buildings also offer showers for cyclists and lockers.

Significant measures have also been taken to improve safety, especially around the entries and exits of the parking. For instance, the newly renovated SQUARE DE MEEUS building offers 152 bicycle parking places complemented by special safety measures. Efforts will continue to offer additional parking places, shower, changing and locker facilities for the constantly increasing number of cyclists. The same ambitious policy is applied in Luxembourg and Strasbourg. A decent number of parking places for bicycles exists already, with further increases and the installation of showers planned for the coming years.

Particular attention was paid in recent years to the bicycle offer in Strasbourg. There are covered parking places for bicycles available in each building to accommodate service bicycles available to staff as well as individual bicycles.

At the time of drafting, the situation is as follows:

Building	Service bicycles and parkings		Parking for individual bicycles		Total
	Indoor	Outdoor	Indoor	Outdoor	
LOUISE WEISS	140	-	103	-	243
WINSTON CHURCHILL	24	-	51	-	75
SALVADOR DE MADARIAGA	-	-	30	28	58
PIERRE PFLIMLIN	-	-	-	29	29
VACLAV HAVEL	-	-	-	58	58
<i>Total</i>	<i>164</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>184</i>	<i>115</i>	<i>463</i>

**§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),"*

At its meeting of 13 December 2017, the Bureau decided to offer Members and their staff an improved working environment in Brussels incorporating the latest developments concerning working conditions and the workplace for the beginning of the next legislature.

In concrete terms, the Bureau endorsed the proposal to fit-out welcome reception facilities areas for Members' guests at the exit of the lifts, the creation of small meeting rooms with visio-conferencing and central kitchenettes by transforming unused storage space into central areas on all Members' floors.

It also endorsed the proposal to equip all offices with flexible, ergonomic, sustainable solutions, chosen by each Member individually through an online office configurator/catalogue based on personal needs and within a predefined line and budgetary envelope.

**§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,"*

The survey made by the Staff Committee regarding shared office space shows a positive interest by different colleagues towards their working environment and some of the information acquired can be used in future developments of office space for staff. However, the survey consisted of a very limited number of questions with yes/no answers and cannot therefore be considered as the sole source of consultation.

Parliament's responsible DG for building policy, DG INLO, has also acquired an important amount of information and indications for office space preferences amongst management and staff of various DGs through the comprehensive consultation process in the context of the office design and move into the newly inaugurated Martens building in Brussels. During the process, which lasted 2.5 years, DG INLO organised approximately 250 consultation meetings and visits for five client DGs and their staff jointly with the management of each DG, with highly satisfactory results amongst the occupants of the building. The same consultative process is already ongoing in relation to the future design and office allocation of the KAD building in Luxembourg.

**§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;"*

DG Finance is currently conducting an analysis with a view to a possible simplification of the procedures related to local assistance. However, the Parliament's 5% staff reduction plan is having a negative impact on the competent services, which may result in further delays. Should a review of current procedures be carried out further, it will need to comply with the regulatory framework and take into account the recent case law.

**§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;"*

An open call for tender has been launched (with publication in the Official Journal) to select a new travel agency as of 1 January 2019.

The tender specifications have detailed provisions with regard to the importance of offering a professional and tailored made service to travellers, mainly to Members, assistants, officials and other servants of Parliament, by searching for the most appropriate travel options, hotel reservations and other travel-related services (individual or group bookings).

The future travel agency will be required to be open during lunch time and to provide a 24/7 emergency hotline that can be called after office hours and during the weekends.

Furthermore, the travel agency will be required to put an efficient complaint procedure in place ensuring close follow-up of each case until its conclusion. Complaints shall be monitored in order to identify problems and recommend actions for improvement.

Given that especially Members' agendas are subject to many modifications, the travel agency will be always required to apply the best fares offering the possibility of changing or cancelling tickets without considerable fees. As a consequence of this flexibility, rates offered by the travel agency cannot always be the cheapest available options on the market, but the rates correspond to the established travel policy, decided by Parliament and the guidelines given by the authorising officers' services responsible for the reimbursement of expenses.

Please note that the above conditions have already been set out in the call for tender before the adoption of the resolution and the Financial Regulation does not allow to modify significantly the specifications of an ongoing procedure.

**§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;"*

The Bureau held a debate on the matter on 12 March 2018 on the basis of a proposal by the Secretary-General. It decided that Lord Balfe, Chairman of the Fund, should be heard with a view to prepare a decision of the Bureau at a forthcoming meeting. This meeting between the Bureau and Lord Balfe took place on 30 May 2018. The Bureau has also requested the Secretary-General to submit additional legal and financial analyses.

The latest actuarial assessment dated 31 December 2017 shows an actuarial deficit of EUR 305.4 million. DG Finance estimates that the liquidity of the fund is sufficient to cover pension payments approximately until the end of 2024. Estimated annual pension payments will increase from around EUR 19 million in 2018 to approximately EUR 21 million in 2023-2024 and will gradually decrease thereafter.

**§107:** *"Welcomes the decision of the Bureau to create an adhoc 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 2017 and of 25 October 2017 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;*
- *that the unspent share of the general expenditure allowance be returned at the end of a Member's mandate;"*

At its meeting on 2 July 2018, the Bureau adopted a revised list of eligible expenses, which is applicable from the next legislative term. It was also decided that Parliament shall pay the funds earmarked for the general expenditure allowance (GEA) to a dedicated account to which it does not transfer any other allowances.

**§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;"*

Since 2016, user awareness on cybersecurity matters has been a fundamental objective belonging to the five priority tracks for the newly created Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) entity. Several trainings and sessions have been organised covering the user community of Members, assistants and staff. Awareness raising measures include posters, the Newshound, DG ITEC's website and information emails to all users. The on-line training was presented to the Working Group on ICT Innovation Strategy.

The CISO has begun implementing the cyber-defence strategy. In terms of human resources, thanks to the organisation of a specialised EPSO competition, five candidates have been selected and will take up duties this year. The internalisation process is ongoing.

**§112:** *"Takes note of the project "ICT4MEPs" 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;"*

The objective of the ICT4MEPs project is to provide extended IT support to Members and their assistants, both on the EP premises and in their constituencies.

All the deliverables defined by the project have been implemented as follows:

- Provision of IT accounts to local assistants - access to Parliament's ICT systems for local assistants based in Members' constituencies (from October 2016);
- Toll-free number for extended IT support, available in all 28 Member States (from October 2016);
- Members' Collaborative Space (MCS) for document production and exchange - shared workspace that allows Members and accredited and local assistants to collaborate, coordinate activities, store, share and display selected information (from March 2017);
- Remote access to office desktop computer (VDI) - allows working remotely from any device by accessing a PC desktop with a similar configuration to the one available in the office (from November 2017);

- Videoconferencing service - videoconferencing from anywhere, using MEPs and APAs desktop computer and phone or personal devices instead, instant messaging, contacts' availability, audio, video and desktop sharing, to improve communication in the work environment (from February 2018).

**§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;"*

The administration already took measures to reinforce the Wi-Fi network security. The EP operates two Wi-Fi networks. One dedicated network for Members, Assistants and staff and another network for EP visitors.

Special attention has been put on the Wi-Fi system in the Hemicycle in Strasbourg. After an in-depth analysis, the relevant services decided to design a new Wi-Fi architecture for the Hemicycle. The first step was to install supplementary antennas in spring 2018. According to tests carried out, this action led to a significant improvement of the Wi-Fi service in the Hemicycle. The second step consists of further strengthening the new design through a series of infrastructure interventions. These works are planned to start in 2019.

**§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;"*

As regards the European Parliament general contingency planning, the Bureau mandated the Secretary-General in May 2016 to perform a full Revision of the Crisis and Business Continuity System of the European Parliament. The objective of the review being to ensure continuity of the Parliament's legislative activity in case of disruption (including the list of priority services and corresponding IT applications) by means of, in a first phase, a "European Parliament Business Continuity Plan" and, subsequently, individual Business Continuity Plans within each Directorate-General.

This revision first implied the drafting of a new Business Continuity Policy (outlining the Parliament's core activities and recovery time objectives) and the corresponding new Crisis and Business Continuity Governance Scheme for the European Parliament (defining a three-level response to incidents and crises applied throughout the entire EP administration). Both the new Policy and Governance Scheme were presented to and validated by the Bureau in March 2018. The corporate Business Continuity Plan of the European Parliament has subsequently been elaborated. In accordance with this general plan, the services will now start accompanying the Directorate-Generals on developing and implementing their individual Business Continuity Plans.

As regards DG ITEC in particular, both the corporate Business Continuity Plan of the EP, as well as DG ITEC's own business continuity plan will constitute the contingency plan for long-time system blackouts.

In parallel and following the lessons learned of the IT outage incident of October 2017, measures to reinforce the European Parliament ICT infrastructure and applications resilience have been elaborated in an Action Plan agreed between DG ITEC and the Cabinet of the Secretary-General in cooperation with the EP Risk Manager and the EP Business Continuity Manager. The Action Plan addresses DG ITEC's resilience in its three essential aspects: Risk Management, Crisis Management and Business Continuity and will, amongst others and once implemented, allow DG ITEC's quick restore of priority services as well as plan data centre diversification measures and support the overall contingency planning for long-term system blackouts.

**§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;"*

Following the raise of the security alert level to yellow, new ways of communication to Parliament's users via Directorates-Generals and political groups' management were decided in the Security Management Steering Committee, composed of all Directors-Generals and Secretaries-Generals of political groups.

Initiated in 2015, two major decisions were implemented:

1. The creation of an internal communication cell composed of the Directors-Generals of DGs SAFE, PERS and FINS (and eventually other DGs concerned by the event) aimed at harmonising the communications sent via e-mail to Parliament's users in case of security-related emergency situation;
2. The implementation of an automated SMS alert system for urgent security-related communications to reach the top and senior management of the Institution: Cabinet of the President, Cabinet of the Secretary-General, Directors-Generals and Directors and Secretaries-Generals of the political groups who all have an EP mobile phone.

As soon as they receive the information, the top and senior managers of Parliament and the political groups, transfer the information to their middle managers who forward it to Members or relevant staff. Thanks to this top-down approach in cascading the information, managers make sure that everyone in the Institution is well aware of the situation and react accordingly.

DG SAFE created an ad-hoc database and implemented the procedure described above when sending security-related SMS.

To meet the demands reiterated in discharge resolutions, Parliament's services are currently coordinating the setting-up of an efficient procedure and tool to enable DG SAFE to send the security-related emergency SMS to all users of Parliament service mobile phones. This should be operational very shortly.

The possible implementation of a large-scale system to send SMS to all Members and staff would need further analysis especially on data protection issues.

In parallel to this system specifically related to safety and security emergency situations, the Business Continuity Plan of the European Parliament includes an "Institutional Framework for Incident and Crisis Communication in the European Parliament". By defining key principles of incident and crisis communication, clearly defining roles and responsibilities and ensuring timely and efficient response, aggravation of an incident or crisis is prevented and the impact on persons and activities is mitigated. The services are preparing an awareness campaign on incident and crisis communication within the European Parliament as well as training sessions for staff.

In their individual business continuity plans, the Directorate-Generals will develop their respective incident communication measures, such as the creation of an emergency rapid alert system that respects the principles outlined in the general "Institutional Framework for Incident and Crisis Communication in the European Parliament".

**§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;"*

Two of the major goals of the internalisation process, approved by the Bureau in June 2012, are to provide an efficient and tailor-made security service which meets the Institution's specific needs and to guarantee the highest level of professionalism and skills of the security staff.

In addition to the selection and recruitment procedures put in place to recruit the best candidates in the field, the greatest possible attention is paid to further develop and maintain the skills of security staff. Professionalisation is one of the pillars of the EP's security strategy as set out in the Global Security Concept.

Therefore, professional training is provided on a regular basis as initial and further training. Immediately after recruitment, prevention and surveillance officers benefit from a three weeks specific initial training adapted to the specificity of Parliament. Once completed, all security agents receive 10 days of further training annually. The exchange and transfer of experience is permanent under the supervision of senior staff who carry out several qualitative assessments of knowledge and skills throughout the year. Emergency simulation or incident management exercises further strengthen the responsiveness of prevention and surveillance officers.

Several vocational training schemes are coordinated by DG SAFE, which annually establishes a Training Plan with courses either within the Institution or with external providers of the highest level, such as the European College of Police, the European School of Administration or the official services of Member States.

Training contents are reviewed annually so as to take account of the evolution of the very complex politico-security context, emergence of new threats, new security methods or techniques and the general evolution of the professional environment. In particular, staff are trained to respond to crisis situations at various levels. Anticipation of threats and prevention are also taken into account and are the subject of specific courses.

In 2017 and 2018, the training program was adapted and strengthened to meet the specific needs of the armed personnel and the President's close protection team. In this context, a protocol was signed with the Belgian Federal Police in September 2017 to train all future armed agents in the best possible conditions and according to the highest professional standards, quality and rigour. The new courses are also open to other security staff in order to promote synergies and strengthen the overall response to incidents and crisis situations.

In this framework, security staff also have access to trainings delivered by the French National Police and / or the RAID intervention group.

A large-scale, real-life exercise was carried out in cooperation with the French national police forces in Strasbourg in March 2018. A terrorist attack inside the Parliament in Strasbourg was simulated based on a scenario involving 4 levels of response. This phased approach was implemented in order to gain a maximum of experience and knowledge and to be able to appropriately train all different relevant services at all levels. This exercise involved the security services but also all Directorates-Generals.

Furthermore, an open procedure is currently in progress for the provision of specific and high-level training services to update, develop and supplement the skills of security agents.

Lastly, attention is drawn to the Secretary-General's comprehensive approach to security, which also includes IT security (implemented by the Chief Information Security Officer), ongoing work on security-sensitive procurement policies and preventing disruptive cyber-attacks and data theft.

**§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;"*

A systematic control procedure operated by security personnel in cooperation with evacuation volunteers is in place to ensure that all persons on the premises have either been evacuated or localised in case of an alarm. Specific adapted measures and procedures have been developed for persons with disabilities. The offices of the hearing impaired were equipped with lighting devices and secure waiting areas are provided for persons with reduced mobility so that they can be taken care of by the security personnel.

Evacuation exercises are carried out each year based on a planning approved by the Secretary-General. They cover all buildings on the three sites, allow the occupants to be trained in the evacuation process and enable DG SAFE to adapt its procedures. The evacuation of the Strasbourg Hemicycle during the May plenary session was part of the annual evacuation exercises.

**§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;"*

A mandatory approach to "greening" public procurement was considered. However, since not all types of contracts can be "greened" a mandatory approach could be counter-productive. The current approach involves evaluating which contracts have a high potential for "greening" and then maximise the "greening" at the level of individual contracts.

The targets set in 2015 are as follows for priority areas<sup>1</sup>: "the percentage of contracts (taking into consideration their value/potential for "greening") which are classified as "GREEN", "VERY GREEN" or "GREEN BY NATURE" should be at least 35% of the procurement procedures launched at Parliament in 2016, 50% in 2017, and 60% in 2018.

The first two years of this exercise showed, however, that focusing on the "greening" potential of individual contracts above a certain contract value and in the priority product categories mentioned in the guide raised awareness in the EP among the authorising officers.

In 2015, 68 % of the contracts were categorised in the "no environmental category". In 2016, this figure has dropped well below 50 %.

In 2016, the percentage of contracts (taking into consideration their value) which are classified as "GREEN", "VERY GREEN" or "GREEN BY NATURE" was 73 %, far beyond the objective fixed at 35%.

Parliament has made considerable progress in "greening" its public procurement.

An overwhelming majority of procurement procedures in Parliament are conducted based on the price-quality ratio. Therefore, ensuring optimal cost-benefit ratios, including but not limited to environmental criteria, is already an integral part of the procurement process.

The lowest cost award method based on a cost-effectiveness approach including life-cycle costing was introduced in the Financial Regulation in 2016. Life-cycle costing covers costs over the life cycle (acquisition, use, maintenance and end of life costs) as well as costs attributed to environmental externalities. The use of this method, which forms a part of Parliament's Green Public Procurement approach, should lead to additional environment benefits as well as cost savings for contracting authorities.

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<sup>1</sup> Buildings (construction; heavy renovations; light renovations/refurbishment), Cleaning, Food and Catering, Furniture, Gardens, green areas and hydroculture plants, IT and Imaging Equipment, Lighting, Office Supplies, Paper, Sanitary and Water Equipment, Textiles, Vehicles and Transport, Waste Management

The use of this award method should increase in the future, ensuring that Parliament resources are spent in the most effective way, enabling green purchases and at the same time keeping the costs of a purchase at reasonable level.

**§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;"*

At present, there are 166 water fountains on Parliament's premises in the three places of work – 122 in Brussels spread over 7 buildings, 39 in Strasbourg spread over 4 buildings and 5 in Luxembourg spread over 4 buildings. 78 are owned by the Parliament, 88 are rented.

A communication campaign amongst users is being deployed, including additional initiatives to increase visibility of water fountains through interactive maps/floor-plans, backlit frames and signs as well as internal advertising of the locations through the network of EMAS Officers from all Directorates-General.

Several measures have already been adopted to reduce plastic waste in the provision of water and in catering in general. Biodegradable cups made of FSC-certified (Forest Stewardship Council) recycled paper and fibres, such as corn and sugarcane, were introduced in Brussels in July 2017.

Parliament's contract with the general waste collector in Brussels was amended accordingly, so that the biodegradable cups were integrated into the paper/cardboard recycling cycle. The same solution will soon be introduced in Strasbourg as well. In the meantime, bins for selective disposal of the cups are available next to the fountains and plastic cups are reprocessed under the PET system.

A number of actions are in place to improve the overall environmental impact of catering activities, such as the gradual replacement of plastic cups and cutlery by biodegradable ones; acquisition of "Earth Trays" and pleated paper portion cups for ketchup, mustard and mayonnaise in the self-service restaurant in the MARTENS building in Brussels; introduction of reusable salad jars in all self-service restaurants in the three places of work, etc.

Since April 2015, a system of reusable EMAS porcelain and thermo mugs is established in the Parliament (Brussels and Luxembourg) to propose an environmentally friendlier alternative to take-away cardboard cups delivered at bars, cafeteria and vending machines. Stickers and other visual material are on display to raise awareness among users.

Targeted communication and awareness-raising campaigns amongst users are regularly undertaken by the relevant services to involve catering users in individual efforts to use the different selective bins in an appropriate and responsible way, in addition to resource-efficient industrial waste management.

In order to reduce and finally scrap single use plastic bottles altogether; the following measures were decided by the Quaestors during their meeting on 17 April 2018:

1. Until the new legislature Parliament's services will continue to install tap water fountains in particular around major meeting room areas to increase their number to approximately 300
2. Individual plastic bottles of mineral water (still and sparkling) will be provided to official meetings shorter than one and a half hours only on request
3. Members and staff will be encouraged to make use of the tap water fountains in alleyways and near meeting rooms

The Bureau decided on 11 June 2018 the following additional measures:

1. Plastic water bottles at large-scale events on Parliament's premises, such as the European Youth Event, Open Days, Citizens Parliament, High Level Conferences, etc. shall no longer be provided. Visitors will be encouraged to make use of the tap water fountains in alleyways and near meeting rooms. Reusable cups/jugs/mugs made of environmentally-friendly materials will be distributed to guests attending the events.
2. A gradual phasing-out of plastic bottles also at the longer meetings will be introduced (several parliamentary committees already having signalled their readiness and intention to abolish the provision of plastic water bottles during their official meetings), with the ambition to scrap the distribution of single use plastic bottles completely by the beginning of the next legislature when the new catering contract will come into force. Parliament's providers are aware of the Plastic Waste Strategy, presented by the European Commission in January 2018 and are currently looking into alternatives.
3. A significant reduction of the number of single-use plastic bottles for drinks available for purchase in canteens/sandwich shops should take place gradually, with the eventual goal of eliminating the offer of single-use plastic bottles in those outlets altogether. This could be achieved gradually when renewing the concession contracts for the provision of the respective catering services in Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg thus reflecting the change in policy.

There is no contract between Parliament and any specific brand. Catering concession-holders, chosen through a public procurement procedure, decide on the brand according to their commercial strategy. Since the beginning of its contract in Brussels in September 2015, the main catering contractor has been working with several brands, both concerning plastic and glass bottles (in canteens, cafeterias, bars, restaurants).

Parliament's services will fully integrate the Plastic Waste Strategy, presented by the European Commission in January 2018, into the technical specifications of any future catering concessions.

**§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;"*

A leasing concept has been chosen for Parliament's service car fleet, which allows continuous adaption to the progressive technical evolution of the automobile market in utmost flexibility and to comply with the political and environmental objectives set out in the E-mobility road map adopted on 5 May 2017 by the Bureau.

Fully electric vehicles are still more expensive to purchase and maintain than internal combustion or plug-in hybrid vehicles. For this reason, the Parliament's services liaise with European car manufacturers to identify the financially most beneficial options on the fast evolving market for full electric or other cutting edge low or zero emission vehicles, depending on technological developments.

Before every major renewal of the car fleet, a cost-benefit analysis will be conducted to determine whether the hybrid plug-in technology or the full-electric technology matches best the risk management and cost-benefit considerations (based on the actual use patterns and on the state of technology), with an objective to reach zero-emission operation in urban environment and to have a 100% full-electric fleet as of 2024.

Parliament's services will continue to increase support for active mobility for Members and staff encouraging in particular the use of public transport and bicycles. Upgrading the infrastructure, such as the renewal of the service bike fleet, adequate bike storage spaces and more attractive user facilities such as showers and changing rooms in Parliament's buildings at the places of work will foster alternative transport and contribute to a reduction of individual road traffic. For details of these measures, see also the answer to paragraph 90.

**§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;"*

The Brussels Code of Air, Climate and Energy Management (COBRACE) includes a number of measures in terms of energy efficiency, development of renewable energy sources, transport, air quality and climate. This Code applies progressively to the different buildings according to the renewal of the respective environmental permits (for the SPINELLI building in particular this will be the case as from 2023). Parliament is committed to several measures under this regulation and related objectives (e.g. the EMAS certification and environmental management policy).

Parliament's electricity consumption is already from 100% renewable sources (100% green electricity). Contracts with the maintenance companies include the implementation of actions to further reduce water and electricity consumption. Several energy audits have been undertaken on seven of the largest energy-consuming buildings. A four-year energy saving action plan with annual monitoring and adjustments is in place, and synchronised with the planning of renewal of environmental permits.

Two outdoor air quality measurement stations are installed at the SPINELLI and REMARD buildings. These stations have recently been renewed completely and form part of an automatic air quality-monitoring network. Results will be treated by the Brussels authorities and will be available to the public on [www.qualitedelair.brussels](http://www.qualitedelair.brussels).

With regard to transport and car parks, COBRACE aims to reduce the number of parking spaces available around office buildings in order to dissuade employees from taking the car for commuting. The 2014 modal split survey indicated that only 28% of Parliament staff used the car to commute to work, this proportion further decreased to 24% in 2017. On the other hand, the number of people who come by bike is rising.

These positive results are due to several initiatives, notably:

- In Brussels, Parliament finances 50% of subscription costs for public transport operators STIB (operator of the Brussels Region for buses, trams and subways), SNCB (operator of the Belgian railways) and DE LIJN (Flemish operator buses and trams) covering the Brussels region and its surroundings. Currently, seasonal tickets for journeys of 65 kilometres or less from the workplace are covered.
- All Parliament buildings in Brussels except for three smaller ones are equipped with a dedicated area for bicycles and several have provisions for electric bikes. SPINELLI building, the largest, has 210 places for bicycles. In addition, rules for the use of service bicycles have been updated and now allow their use for commuting.
- Finally, an inter-DG working group on parking policy has been set up. It will propose solutions to further improve the parking policy and align it to COBRACE requirements.

**§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;"*

With the rise of funding, number and diversity of beneficiaries, the risk of irregularities increased and hence the need for control. Furthermore, public sources and third parties inform more frequently of potential irregularities. Until now it was mostly Parliament's control system that actually detected and addressed the irregularities. The proceedings entailed by the applicable regulation in addressing the irregularities can potentially attract public attention.

Pursuant to Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014, adopted in 2014 but applicable from the funding procedure 2018 onwards<sup>2</sup>, and meanwhile further strengthened by the legislature<sup>3</sup>, the control of compliance by European political parties and foundations with their obligations is exercised by Parliament in cooperation with the Authority for European Political Parties and European Political Foundations and by the competent Member States. Control of funding for the European political parties and foundations is undertaken by Parliament in accordance with the Financial Regulation.

Each funding procedure is subject to an audit conducted by an external auditor and a verification of the final reports is undertaken by Parliament's competent services. This verification is based, on the one hand, on the audit report on the annual accounts and, on the other hand, on any possible additional indication issued by the external auditor. The auditor determines independently whether the audit report entails an unqualified or a qualified opinion, an observation, or an emphasis of matter.

Parliament's services examine any problematic findings communicated by the external auditor and evaluate the final reports of the beneficiaries (including an analytical review of the general ledgers requested in addition to the final reports). The verification work is complemented by detailed checks of samples of transactions following a risk analysis, taking into account the performance of the beneficiaries over the past years.

All supporting documents related to the selected samples are requested and analysed. The verification is usually restricted to a desk review. In cases of serious issues detected during this review, it can be decided to conduct ad-hoc on-the-spot checks or to request further verifications by the external auditors, in order to analyse additional elements and to confront the beneficiaries with preliminary findings.

**§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;"**

The typical types of irregularities detected can be categorised as follows:

- Using Union's funds to support national political parties;
- Using Union's funds for national election campaigns or referenda campaigns;
- Conflict of interests in contracting arrangements;
- Excessive expenditure.

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<sup>2</sup> For the financial years 2016 and 2017, the funding system was still based on Regulation (EC) No 2004/2003.

<sup>3</sup> Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/673 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 3 May 2018 amending Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014 on the statute and funding of European political parties and European political foundations

Important measures taken to combat the abuse of awarded funding were:

- Reclassification of costs - reduction of final grant: Whenever beneficiaries did not comply with the relevant rules as regards the eligibility of costs, the Bureau decided to reclassify the costs concerned to non-eligible expenditure. As a result, these costs were not taken into account for the calculation of the final grant and the latter was reduced accordingly;
- Risk mitigation measures: on the basis of a risk analysis, risk mitigation measures included the reduction of the pre-financing payment on the grant amount and the presentation of a bank guarantee as condition for the payment of the pre-financing. In the case of one beneficiary, the pre-financing payment as well as the grant balance payment remained suspended, due to presumed irregularities;
- In the case of one party, pursuant to Article 5(2) of Regulation 2004/2003 and Rule 225 of the European Parliament's Rules of Procedure, the procedure for the verification of the compliance with the principles on which the EU is founded was launched and is being examined by the AFCO committee;
- In 2016 and 2017, Parliament notified OLAF, which opened investigations concerning alleged misappropriation of EU funding with respect to grants awarded by Parliament as regards actions which were judged non-eligible by Parliament and concerned suspicions of serious irregularities and fraud;
- Finally, a revised Regulation will apply for the funding for the financial year 2019 (Amending Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/673). The main measures against the abuse of EU funding concern the amendment of the conditions for registration as a European political party and the possibility, in certain cases, to recover amounts unduly paid also from a natural person, if the Authority for European Political Parties and European Political Foundations establishes that the natural person is also responsible for an infringement leading to a recovery.

**§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;"*

Any progress report on the activities of the Authority will be submitted by the Authority, which is an independent body under the applicable Regulation.

As per Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014, the Authority is located in the premises of Parliament. Apart from the close cooperation relating to the governance and funding of European political parties and foundations, Parliament provides the Authority with a number of administrative facilities, including office space, IT (infrastructure, website etc.) and translation services.

Two additional staff members of the Authority were recruited by Parliament in 2017 under Article 3(b) of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants on a temporary basis and seconded to the Authority. As the Authority is an independent body by law, the resources respectively need to be provided by the Budget authority and the Commission.

The Authority is also cooperating with the Data Protection Officer of Parliament to comply with data protection rules.

Moreover, from 2016 budget, there is the budget item 5000 "Operational expenditure of the Authority for European Political Parties and European Political Foundations".

**§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;"*

In general, pursuant to Article 24(3) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014, controls by Parliament's services do not extend to compliance by European political parties and foundations with their obligations under applicable national law.

A breach of obligations relating to the payment of taxes or social security contributions in accordance with the law of the relevant Member State will result, if the conditions mentioned in Article 106(1) of the Financial Regulation are met, in the exclusion of applicants from participating in calls for proposals/contributions. Furthermore, as laid down in the grant award decisions, compliance with the requirements of applicable tax and social security laws is necessary, in order to consider costs as eligible to Union funding.

As part of its mission, the external auditor verifies that the beneficiaries' obligations arising from the grant award decision, including rules on eligible expenditure, have been met. An opinion on the final statement of eligible expenditure is a crucial element of the annual audit report. With a view to the variety of labour law and social legislation between Member States, it should also be noted that the external auditor is entitled to carry out the requested audit services in all the Member States where the audited beneficiaries have their seat.

Issues relating to employment and consultancy contracts are regularly part of the sample checks which are carried out in the context of the annual verification of the final reports.

Moreover, any information on non-compliance in this area that is received via the external auditor, public sources or third parties is subject to a strict follow-up by Parliament's services.