

2017 Discharge

The European Committee of the Regions answers to the 2017 Discharge Questionnaire and its Addendum

Hearing: 27 November 2018

General questions

1. What was done to improve the communication in relation with Union citizens?

CoR answer to question 1:

In 2017, the most important contribution of the CoR to improving communication with the citizens was through "Reflecting on Europe". The President of the European Council asked the CoR to carry out this initiative in autumn 2016 as a mean to rebuild trust in the European project.

First, this encouraged CoR Members – wherever possible with MEPs and other partners – to organise local events across the EU. This continued throughout the 2017 budget year and beyond into this year – the CoR's contribution to the Citizens' Dialogues or "consultations citoyennes". Over half of the CoR's Members took part. Over 180 dialogues in over 110 regions!

Second, the CoR developed innovations such as an online survey and mobile phone "app" to boost these dialogues – allowing all participants to have their say, to extend the reach beyond those "in the room" and to enable everyone to see in real time the results in each Member State as they evolved. The survey has also been used to reach out to potential voters in the European elections as part of the CoR's commitment to work with the EP.

Thirdly, the CoR integrated into this process its relations with grassroots movements such as Pulse of Europe and others. These have been a source of inspiration.

Despite the CoR's small size and scarce resources, the CoR "Reflecting on Europe" report – adopted by our President on 9 October 2018 – is the first formal input into the December 2018 European Council. Ireland, France and others are all preparing similar reports.

Beyond what the CoR achieves on its own, improving communication with citizens is also at the core of our efforts to work with the other EU Institutions. In addition to regular exchanges at senior officials level (Directors-General), the CoR organises EuroPCom which has become one of the most important events for EU communicators to meet and exchange with politicians as well as with each other. This year's edition which took place in early November 2018 focused on "Campaigning for Europe" – bringing together the citizens' dialogues experience with the next stage of the European elections campaign.

2. How do you reach out for specific target groups via social media channels? Based on available insights and/or social media analytics can you tell whether this target group has been reached? What difference do you observe in this regard among the different social media channels?

CoR answer to question 2:

The CoR has defined local and regional authorities and EU institutions to be its main target groups in its Communication Strategy 2015-2020 and Digital Communication Strategy 2016-2020, with a special attention to its members as multipliers.

The social media actions follow these strategies with member-centric content on the 3 institutional accounts of the CoR: Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn¹. The number of its followers grew dynamically in the past year; 50% more followers acquired across all accounts.

The CoR builds on the potential of the CoR Members as multipliers, given that the most followed 20 CoR Members and Alternates on social media can reach together more than 2.2 million people. Latest Eurobarometer² results show that citizens see regional and local representatives as better placed to explain the EU compared to national representatives. Hence the CoR gives utmost importance to engage with its Members on social media in the frame of its communication campaigns, providing them with multilingual and audio-visual content and encouraging them to further disseminate.

The CoR uses state of the art monitoring and listening technology to understand the impact it makes on its target audiences. The CoR's latest 6-months analysis showed that 1,254 social media posts were published between January and June (about the same as in 2017), and CoR related posts generated in a total of almost 54,000 mentions (+94%), an engagement of 85,300 (+121%). Broadly speaking, it is CoR plenaries and events which trigger most of the time social media mentions and engagement.

The CoR's experience shows that the use of the different social media platform change country by country therefore it tailors its actions according to the specific CoR Member or Member States involved. Among the CoR's Members, Facebook is the most popular social media platform. The CoR considers Twitter a very effective tool for Brussels related events or in the case of specific countries such as Spain, Italy or the Netherlands. The CoR is also actively building a community on LinkedIn where it can connect easily with experts and practitioners of the policy fields the CoR deals with.

3. How has the political and the administrative cooperation between European Parliament and the CoR improved in 2017?

CoR answer to question 3:

The cooperation between the CoR and the EP in 2017 revealed once again a satisfactory progress on several levels. The following observations can be made:

¹ The CoR has also a YouTube and Flickr account used primarily as a depository for audio-visual materials.

² Flash Eurobarometer 472 Public Opinion in the EU Regions, First Results as presented at EuropCom 2018

-) The relations between CoR commissions and EP committees show a steady progress and produce outcomes, such as increasingly popular exchanges between rapporteurs and new joint meetings and events.
-) More efforts are essential to increase visibility of the CoR in EP hearings and scrutiny activities regarding EU legislation;
-) Cooperation with EPRS is progressing and could be further enhanced via joint projects.
-) New ways of cooperation such as contributions to implementation reports and fact-finding missions were launched. Relevance, timing and advanced planning remain crucial for maximising their success.
-) Cooperation in communication and information has been stepped up notably in view of the upcoming elections in 2019.

The political cooperation should continue to be further developed at the level of CoR/CCC Presidents, CoR commissions and EP committees, and between EP and CoR rapporteurs, respecting the autonomy and the specific approaches used by each Committee/Commission. In this context, the CoR would welcome a more systematic approach to the cooperation. The cooperation at members' level is successfully supported by the respective secretariats.

The cooperation on the administrative aspects of the agreement has equally advanced and the agreement will continue to be the basis for reinforcing synergies between the CoR and EP secretariat.

4. What budgetary savings have been achieved through the cooperation with the European Parliament?

CoR answer to question 4:

The Committee is committed to efficient and transparent use of public money. The cooperation with the European Parliament is part of these efforts, thereby generating savings for the EU budget. However, quantifying savings is complex, notably as regards the political cooperation.

The main impact on the CoR budget has been connected to the gradual transfer of staff to the EPRS. In 2015, the budget for salaries was reduced and in turn the budget for outsourcing of translations was partially increased. The full budgetary impact of these operations is visible as of 2016 when all staff transfers from the CoR to the EPRS have taken place. In accordance with Annex II, this implies, as compared to the situation before the signature of the Cooperation Agreement, a reduction in staff expenditure of some 2.4 million euros (2016 salary levels).

Further savings are created e.g. through cooperation in the fields of workload sharing between the translation services, joint tenders, provision of EPRS products to the CoR, the revised SLA on interpreting, and security. In 2017, the joint CoR and EESC translation services translated 1395.5 pages submitted by the Parliament and the Parliament translated 69.7 pages for the Committees. Joint tenders with the EP such as for the selection of the travel agency, IT-related purchases, etc. create savings both in terms of internal resources and the prices for the outsourced services.

Annex II explicitly states that "an eventual surplus [on externalisation of translations] can be used for further political work in a budgetary neutral manner". Parts of these appropriations were reallocated to other areas in 2015, 2016 and 2017 by means of external transfers of appropriations, i.e. involving the Budget Authority.

5. What progress has been achieved in the cooperation with the EESC based on the cooperation agreement that entered in force in 2016?

CoR answer to question 5:

The administrative cooperation agreement (CA) covers

- several areas of cooperation on a day-to-day basis
- some specific projects with a defined timeline.

Progress on the day-to-day cooperation was evaluated as part of the mid-term review (see question 6).

With regard to the specific projects, progress in 2017 was notably achieved on

- the security-related refurbishment of the JDE entrance hall. The preparatory stages of this project were concluded in 2017, allowing for a completion of the works in 2018 and thus ensuring the consumption of the C8 credits earmarked for this project.
- the pilot project in the Directorate for Translation (October 2016-March 2018). The project was conducted with support from an ad-hoc advisory group comprising also staff representatives.
- continued increase of translation outsourcing and adjustment of staffing levels in the Directorate for Translation, taking into account the results of the annual inter-institutional benchmarking for translation.

6. What was the result of the mid-term review of the cooperation agreement between CoR and EESC?

CoR answer to question 6:

The mid-term review was conducted at the end of 2017 and the report of the two secretaries general was endorsed by the CoR-EESC Political Monitoring Group at its meeting on 26 February 2018. The report covers all aspects of the administrative cooperation agreement (CA) and its main findings can be summarized as follows:

The governance and administrative structure for the cooperation was successfully simplified, ensuring the proper monitoring and management of the agreement's implementation.

Given that a substantial share of staff of the Committees work in the Joint Services, and that these also manage about one-fifth of the Committees' total budgets, the CA establishes some harmonised rules with regard to managing staff and budgets, and to establish a harmonised control environment. The cooperation in these areas by and large works well.

The budget managed by the Joint Services for the jointly used buildings, security and IT, for example, comes from two separate budgets. This requires intensive coordination in the budget planning process, and comparable rules for execution of the budget, verification of expenses and audits. It also requires the alignment of control environments and a substantial number of procedural arrangements. The key purpose is to make sure that the Financial Regulation and the responsibilities of the two authorising officers by delegation are fully respected. The assessment concludes that, overall, the established procedures are working in a satisfactory way. Further improvements are identified with regard to the multi-annual planning and the harmonisation of the control environments. The Audit Services are cooperating in full with regard to audits concerning the Joint Services; also in this field, a multi-annual plan is being considered for further optimisation.

The CA includes several measures consolidating both Committees' efforts to ensure resource-efficient multilingualism. These measures have been successfully put in place, creating efficiency gains on the one hand and providing continued appropriate quality translation to members. This has allowed the CoR and the EESC to fulfil the commitments they gave in the administrative part of the cooperation agreements with the European Parliament of 2014, and to strengthen the HR support to the members' core work in each Committee. The pilot project on the common management of translation units will be evaluated after its conclusion in March 2018. Efforts are needed to implement the envisaged redeployment numbers. The monitoring of workload and productivity levels based on inter-institutional benchmarks will need to continue and practical measures on the demand side are proposed to ensure the sustainability of the efficiency gains.

Cooperation between own services and liaison between own and joint services, covering areas such as the management of meeting rooms, business continuity management, interaction with the printing services, IT and EMAS, is functioning well overall, with room for improvements in day-to-day operations. In the area of IT, progress has been achieved in ensuring the compatibility of the governance structures of the CoR and EESC. Discussions on these matters are ongoing.

Overall, the assessment concludes that the cooperation agreement is working well and ensures the provision of the necessary services for the Committees, their members and the administrations. While maintaining their institutional identity, the Committees deliver substantial synergies at inter-institutional level. There are, however, some procedures and mechanisms that can still be improved in some regards. The bodies in charge of managing cooperation are aware of this and are able to ensure that progress is made in the right direction through the established, functioning mechanisms. Thus, the assessment concludes that there is no need at this point in time for changes to the agreement and its appendices.

7. What budgetary savings was achieved through the cooperation with the EESC?

CoR answer to question 7:

It is impossible to estimate with any precision the savings incurred in terms of budget and human resources. However, it is clear that savings in those operational domains where an economy of scale truly applies (buildings, meeting rooms, IT, printshop etc.) by far outweigh the resources spent on coordination.

8. What is the rate of compliance of your institution with regard to the recommendations of the Ombudsman?

CoR answer to question 8:

In 2017 no specific Ombudsman recommendations were addressed to the CoR.

9. The 2016 Discharge report requested to optimise the discharge procedure by speeding up the deadlines for the submission of Annual Activity Reports and Accounts by 31 March of the year following the accounting year in question. Has the CoR made an effort to streamline its procedures and was it able to publish the Report and Account by the deadline?

CoR answer to question 9:

The CoR respected the Financial Regulation and the European Union year-end consolidation instructions issued by the Accounting officer of the European Commission.

The 2017 provisional accounts and other requested information was sent to the European Commission's Accounting Officer and to the European Court of Auditors on 28 February 2018.

Following the finalisation of the European Court of Auditors' audit, the CoR's 2017 Annual Activity Report was sent to the European Parliament on 6 June 2018 and the 2017 certified final annual accounts and other requested information was sent to the European Commission's Accounting Officer and to the Presidents of the European Parliament, the Council and the European Court of Auditors on 29 June 2018.

10. In the 2016 discharge the EP requested that the CoR perform an impact assessment of the financial, human and possible other consequences to its structure, budget and human resources by the decision of the UK to leave the EU. Could you please elaborate on the findings?

CoR answer to question 10:

At this point in time, the CoR estimates the monetary impact of the UK's withdrawal from the EU to be 373 666 € in 2019 and 576 559 € in 2020 in case of reduction of its membership by the 24 seats currently attributed to the UK.

11. The European Court of Auditors confirmed in their 2017 audit that entitlement-based expenditure was free from material error, while reimbursement-based expenditure continued to be affected by material error. What proportion of expenses of the CoR is currently reimbursement-based and are efforts being made to reduce them?

CoR answer to question 11:

The proportion of reimbursement based expenses of the CoR during the financial year 1/1 – 31/12 2017 represents some 10 % of all payments made in that period. Almost the entire proportion (9.95%) relates to travel and subsistence allowances for CoR members attendance of meetings³. The level of the budget requested for a budget implementation year is based upon a thorough administrative and political estimation of the CoR's needs. The budget is then adopted by the CoR's Bureau and by its Plenary before it is submitted for the EU Inter-Institutional budget procedure.

12. In September 2015 the Commission introduced a paradigm shift towards performance-based budgeting in the Commission's budget planning procedure. Has the CoR introduced the method to its own budget-planning procedure and if so, could you please elaborate on the procedure?

CoR answer to question 12:

The CoR is a political body and yet its budget appropriations are included entirely under Administrative Heading 5 of the EU-budget. The CoR has no spending oriented programmes of the type the European Commission manages under other headings of the EU-budget. The CoR has in principle only one activity.

The CoR's draft budget estimate is vetted in detail at administrative and political level before its Bureau and Plenary adopt it for subsequent submission into the EU Inter-Institutional budget process. Once the Budget Authority has adopted the CoR's budget for a given budget implementation year, the appropriations for its activity is subjected to a detailed budget planning adopted in the beginning of the budget implementation year by the CoR's Bureau. Prior to a specific actual budget implementation decision on what in detail the CoR will do in a specific circumstance, it puts together proposals with estimations of how much appropriation that are needed from various budget lines. The proposals are then scrutinised / followed up on by the CoR's Commission for Administrative and Financial Affairs that is a specific working group reporting directly to the CoR's Bureau.

Given the relatively small size of the CoR, that it in principle only has one activity and that its appropriations are included under Administrative Heading 5 the CoR considers that it has adopted a procedure that is suitable for assessment of performance during its budget establishment, planning of how it will use its budget appropriations and its follow-up reporting. The CoR continuously remains open to assess if implementation of practices developed and tried with a successful result in other EU Institutions of a similar size and with a similar political representation would result in an improvement of the CoR's political decision making process.

³ The CoR members are local and regional politicians within the EU and they do not receive their salaries from the CoR. They receive travel and meeting allowance when they attend meetings to fulfil the CoR's political mandate.

13. According to the CoR Annual Activity Report for 2017 translation output was 4.6% lower than in 2016, therefore further steps towards a manageable level of translation must be taken in 2018. Which steps has the CoR taken towards that manageable level? Why the CoR didn't developed them in 2017?

CoR answer to question 13:

If the output was lower in 2017 than in 2016, it is precisely due to the translation rationalisation measures already introduced. The additional measures considered involve substantial IT developments (automating the multilingual generation of some document types, producing some document types in a structured format, such as XML, in order to allow for an easy re-use of their content, etc.), must be prioritized against other IT needs of the CoR and can therefore only be implemented on a longer-term basis.

14. What were the costs of the institution for interpretation, translation and languages classes in 2017?

CoR answer to question 14:

Interpretation

The cost of the institution for interpretation in 2017 is 3 691 000€.

Translation

According to the KIAPI (Key Interinstitutional Activity and Performance indicators) methodology, the total cost of translation for the CoR in 2017 was € 27 231 105 of which € 2 376 591 for outsourced translation. According to the KIAPI interinstitutional statistics, the total cost of translation for both the CoR and for the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in 2017 was € 52 925 878. The costs include staff, interinstitutional projects, buildings, IT costs, and administration. The translation output was distributed in 2017 as follows: CoR: 49.2%, EESC: 47.6%, Joint Services (JS): 3.2%. The JS costs (3.2%) have been included proportionally in the CoR and EESC costs, respectively. The JS costs correspond to translation and editing work done for other EU institutions via the Workload Balancing system and to other translation and editing work, such as call for tenders, requested by the Joint Services of the two Committees.

Language training

The total cost for language training in 2017 is 62 238 €. This total cost comprises the cost of participation of CoR staff in the EC language courses (spring, summer and autumn sessions), as well as participation in external language training (linguistic missions and own initiative training).

15. How does the CoR assess the pilot project for the common management with the EESC of some translation units?

CoR answer to question 15:

The pilot project was continuously monitored by the management in close cooperation with an ad-hoc advisory group including the HR departments and staff representatives. Based on objective, quantitative performance indicators (work rate, deadline compliance, outsourcing rate, etc.) and satisfaction surveys among members and staff it was concluded that the good functioning of the pilot units and the quality and timeliness of translations were not affected by the pilot project.

In the pilot project setting (merger of two language units), the reduction of management staff was estimated at 0.5 post. Further synergies were mostly expected in the field of translation assistance. Some were indeed identified during the pilot project, but could not be fully implemented at this stage (so as not to pre-empt the reversibility of the pilot project, because some technical conditions were not yet in place, etc.). The evaluation made it clear that mutual assistance among assistants in some fields, such as work distribution and outsourcing, is possible immediately. Further synergies/savings, leading to a reduction of the number of translation assistants, are possible, but certain conditions need to be met before this can happen. On this basis, on 8 October 2018 the CoR Bureau gave mandate to the CoR Secretary General to draw up and propose a new establishment plan for the Directorate for Translation in cooperation with the EESC Secretary General, taking into account the evaluation results of the pilot project.

16. How many OLAF investigations were carried out in 2017 with regard to the CoR? How many of them led to a sentence?

CoR answer to question 16:

In 2017 no new investigation has been started by OLAF with regard to the CoR. The CoR awaits the OLAF report concerning the only ongoing investigation notified by the CoR to OLAF in 2016.

Staff

17. Could you please provide a table of all human resources broken down by nationality, type of contract, gender and grade for the year 2017, and an overview of how these figures compare with the year 2016?

CoR answer to question 17:

	31/12/2016	31/12/2017
Total workforce	591	600
Statutory staff by type of the contract	526	533
Officials	411	407
Temporary staff	63	71
Contract staff	51	54
Special adviser (doctor)	1	1
Non statutory staff	64	66
Seconded national experts	9	10
Trainees	25	26
Service providers	28	26
Interim	2	4

The increase of temporary- and contract staff is mainly related to security prompted by the situation in Brussels.

Statutory staff by gender		
	31/12/2016	31/12/2017
Women	56,9%	56,5%
Men	43,2%	43,5%

Statutory staff by nationality (officials, temporary, contract staff and special adviser)		
	31/12/2016	31/12/2017
Nationality	526	533
Germany	33	32
Austria	3	4
Belgium	78	80
Bulgaria	16	17
Cyprus	2	3
Croatia	8	9
Denmark	7	6
Spain	31	34
Estonia	8	8
Finland	12	12
France	38	39
Greece	24	24
Hungary	13	15
Ireland	12	11
Italy	46	47
Latvia	13	12
Lithuania	13	13
Luxembourg	1	1
Malta	7	8
Netherlands	7	8
Poland	31	31
Portugal	17	17
Czech republic	18	18
Romania	28	29
United Kingdom	17	15
Slovakia	16	14
Slovenia	15	15
Sweden	12	11

Active statutory staff by grade/ function group	31/12/2016	31/12/2017
Total	526	533
Administrators	282	288
AD16	1	1
AD15	2	4
AD14	19	15
AD13	18	17
AD12	29	27
AD11	10	13
AD10	13	20
AD9	36	38
AD8	45	45
AD7	43	40
AD6	37	31
AD5	29	37
Assistants	189	184
AST11	3	4
AST10	1	
AST9	7	8
AST8	7	12
AST7	20	19
AST6	24	23
AST5	31	35
AST4	36	33
AST3	41	37
AST2	13	7
AST1	6	6
Assistants/Clerks	3	6
SC1	3	6
Contract staff	51	54
GFI	21	23
GF11	3	5
GF12	1	1
GF13	17	17
GFI1	11	8
GF14	2	3
GF15	5	5
GF16	4	
GFI1	7	9
GF18	2	2
GF19	2	3
GF110	1	2
GF111	2	2
GFI1	12	14
GF13	3	3
GF14	2	2
GF15	4	4
GF16	3	5
Special adviser (doctor)	1	1

In addition, there is a special adviser being the external expert to the CoR's Audit Committee.

18. Could you please provide us a table of staff broken down by type of contract for 2013 and 2017? What was the average duration of contractual employments (including renewal of contracts) in 2013 and in 2017?

CoR answer to question 18:

Active statutory staff by type of the contract					
	31/12/2013	average duration of the contract (months)	31/12/2017	average duration of the contract (months)	
total	539		533		
Contract staff	34		54		
3a	20	<i>indefinite</i>	23	<i>indefinite</i>	
3b	14		31		28,7
Temporary staff	64		71		
2a	4	<i>indefinite*</i>	4	<i>indefinite*</i>	
2b	23		21		23,5
2c	37	<i>indefinite</i>	46	<i>indefinite</i>	
Officials	440	<i>indefinite</i>	407	<i>indefinite</i>	
Special adviser (doctor)	1		1		72

(*) Including 1 temporary staff member 2a (Secretary General) recruited for a mandate of 5 years

In addition, there is a special adviser being the external expert to the CoR's Audit Committee.

Between 2013 and 2017, the total number of officials decreased by more than 9% due to the staff cuts and the transfer of additional posts to the European Parliament in the framework of a new cooperation agreement.

In parallel, thanks to a new strategy for a more efficient multilingualism, a certain number of posts from the linguistic services were reassigned to more core business services (legislative works, communication etc.) and/or converted into temporary posts 2c) in view of reinforcing the political groups.

In order to accompany the important organisational changes, it was decided to find internal synergies for short term replacements and to offer longer contracts to non-permanent staff members recruited with more technical skills/profiles mainly for specific projects running for several years.

As a result, the number of contract staff increased between 2013 and 2017 as well as the average length of their contracts. On the other hand, the number of temporary staff members occupying permanent posts decreased over the same period of time.

19. How many British members of staff work for your institution (cut down by category: civil servants, temporary agent and contract staff)?

CoR answer to question 19:

British nationals on 31/12/2017 by staff type		of which only UK	
	15		14
Officials	7		7
Temporary staff	6		6
Contract staff	2		1

20. How many senior experts and senior assistants were appointed in 2017 and to which grades, and which grades did they have before the appointment? How many further promotions beyond AD 12 without managerial responsibility took place in 2017?

CoR answer to question 20:

There were no senior experts and senior assistants newly appointed in 2017. There were no promotions beyond AD 12 without managerial responsibility in 2017.

21. How many former MEPs, Commissioners or high officials (from AD 14) still receive money from the budget of your institution as advisors, contract agents or others? What are their tasks and their respective salaries?

CoR answer to question 21:

None.

22. How many officials in which functions and grades were retired in 2017 according to article 41 of the staff regulations? What were the reasons, their last grade, and promotion, respectively?

CoR answer to question 22:

None.

23. How many officials were placed on leave in the interest of the service, article 42 c) of the staff regulations? What were the reasons, their last grade, and promotion, respectively?

CoR answer to question 23:

One staff member was placed on leave in the interests of the service according to article 42 c) of the Staff Regulations. The staff member was placed on leave in the interests of the service on 01/12/2017 in the framework of the reorganisation of the Translation services involving staff reductions and redeployments. The possibilities for the colleague to adapt to the changing environment or to envisage a professional mobility were limited or requiring a disproportionate investment. The last grade of the official placed on leave in the interests of the service was AD9 and the last promotion took place on 01/01/2017.

24. How many officials, and in which functions and grades, were retired in 2017 in the interest of service according to Article 50 of the staff regulations? What were the reasons, their last grade, and promotion, respectively?

CoR answer to question 24:

None.

25. We would appreciate a comprehensive overview of staff on sick leave in 2017, broken down by the total number of staff member that were on sick leave and by how many days they were on sick leave in total. How many days lasted the three longest cases of sick leave? How many days of sick leave concerned Mondays and Fridays in 2017? How has the situation evolved since 2013?

CoR answer to question 25:

Sick leave is measured in calendar days. When staff is sick on weekends and holidays, this is included in the total.

In 2017, 449 staff members took at least half a day of sick leave. With a reference population of 532 staff members:

- ✓ 83 staff members (15.6 % of the total) took no sick leave during 2017;
- ✓ 248 staff members (46.6% of the total) took between 0.5 and 7 days of sick leave;
- ✓ 338 staff members (63.5% of the total) took between 0.5 and 14 days of sick leave.

It follows that more than 60% of the reference population took between 0 and 7 days of sick leave in 2017, i. e. less than a week including a weekend.

Moreover, 79.1% of staff took between 0 and 14 sick leave days in 2017. This means that an overwhelming majority of staff have been sick less than two weeks (including weekends) in 2017.

The four longest cases of sick leave respectively lasted 360, 354, 340 and 287 days and corresponded to serious illnesses. For three of them no perspective of reintegration was foreseen and invalidity procedures were launched in 2018.

For one case (360 days), the staff member was reintegrated in the CoR with a personalised action of return-to-work.

Below can be found a comprehensive overview of staff on sick leave in 2017, broken down by the number of staff member that were on sick leave and by how many days they were on sick leave.

Number of days on sick leave in 2017	Number of staff members	Total Days
0.5	9	4,5
1	38	38
1.50	8	12
2	30	60
2.50	10	25
3	33	99
3.50	6	21
4	30	120
4.50	7	31,5
5	24	120
5.50	8	44
6	25	150
6.50	7	45,5

7	13	91
7.50	3	22,5
8	17	136
8.50	5	42,5
9	10	90
9.50	2	19
10	7	70
10.50	4	42
11	8	88
11.50	3	34,5
12	9	108
12.50	4	50
13	8	104
13.50	2	27
14	8	112
14.50	3	43,5
15	5	75
15.50	2	31
16	8	128
16.50	1	16,5
17	2	34
17.50	1	17,5
18	2	36
19	6	114
19.50	3	58,5
20	4	80
21	3	63
21.50	1	21,5
22	3	66
23	1	23
24	1	24
25	1	25
25,5	1	25,5
26	1	26
26.50	2	53
27	1	27
27,5	1	27,5
28	1	28
28.50	1	28,5

29	3	87
30	1	30
31,5	1	31,5
33	2	66
35	1	35
35,5	1	35,5
36	1	36
37	2	74
38.50	1	38,5
39	1	39
40	2	80
41	1	41
41,5	1	41,5
45	1	45
46	1	46
47	2	94
49,5	1	49,5
50	1	50
51	1	51
52	1	52
53	1	53
60	1	60
66,5	1	66,5
68,5	1	68,5
70,5	1	70,5
72	1	72
74,5	1	74,5
75	3	225
75,5	1	75,5
76,5	2	153
79	1	79
91	1	91
97	1	97
104	1	104
106	1	106
117	2	234
118	1	118
128	1	128
135	1	135

164	1	164
174	1	174
269	1	269
287	1	287
340	1	340
354	1	354
360	1	360
TOTAL	449	7860

Please find below information about how many days of sick leave concerned Mondays only and Fridays only, in 2017;

Weekday	Number of days of sick leave in 2017
Monday only	190,5
Friday only	225,5
Total	416

As part of its absenteeism policy, the CoR continued the implementation of a comprehensive action on well-being, health and absence management with a tight follow-up of absences and the implementation of a more structured return-to-work policy.

In this framework, on 30 March 2017 a managers' workshop was organised on absence management where awareness of managers was raised on burn-out, on a good cooperation with HR on absence management and on the importance of a progressive, caring and appropriate return-to-work.

The evolution of the situation since 2013 in terms of absences at the CoR should be understood in the light of the average age of staff at that time, when CoR staff was one of the youngest in average in all EU institutions. The absence rate – which was then very low - increased from 2013 to 2014 to reach levels comparable with those of other EU institutions of similar size. With the comprehensive absence management policy that has since then been put in place, all efforts are done to avoid long-term absences and to accompany people to reintegrate them at work wherever possible. As a result, the absence rate is decreasing. A comparison of the above 2017 figures with the 2016 figures shows an evolution in the right direction.

26. How many burn-out cases were there among the staff in your institution in 2017? Please specify by gender and category of staff.

CoR answer to question 26:

In 2017, the Committee of the Regions has identified 7 burn-out cases in function groups AST and AD (2 male and 5 female). For confidentiality reasons a further breakdown cannot be provided.

27. Were there any special leaves requested by members of staff in 2017 because of overworking? If so, how many special leave requests were there?

CoR answer to question 27:

Special leave for exceptional work going beyond an official's normal obligations is foreseen in article 6 of Annex V to the Staff Regulations. An internal decision determines the use of this special leave at the European Committee of the Regions. In particular, special leave may be granted:

- in the context of work done on a Saturday, a Sunday or a day of closure of the institution (a half day of special leave may be granted for all combined services totalling eight hours over a period of two calendar months);
- in the context of the end-of-year permanence (one and a half day granted for each whole day worked).

In 2017, a total of 25 days of special leave related to exceptional work were granted to 26 staff members. All days granted in 2017 were attributed to compensate for work performed during a Saturday, Sunday or day of closure of the institution in exceptional cases (no special leave was granted in 2017 to compensate for staff permanence required at the end of 2016).

28. What is the average overtime of the Institution's staff in 2017 and in 2013?

CoR answer to question 28:

The table below shows the average overtime hours performed by CoR staff in 2013 and 2017, respectively.

	2013	2017
Number of overtime hours (in hours/minutes)	1660.24	736.71
Number of staff entitled to overtime compensation or payment	162 (out of a total staff of 538)	120 (out of a total staff of 532)
Average hours per entitled staff member (in hours/minutes)	10.15	6.14
Average hours for all CoR staff (in hours/minutes)	3.05	1.38

The decrease in the number of overtime hours performed by CoR staff in 2017 can partly be explained by the implementation of a new scheme of shift work and stand-by duties for security staff in 2017.

29. What were the costs in 2017 respectively for away days, closed conferences or similar events for staff? How many staff members participated in the respective events? Where exactly did these events take place?

CoR answer to question 29:

	N° of events	N° of participants	Total cost	Average cost per participant
Team buildings	0	0	0.00 €	0 €
Away days	8	112	3,995.20 €	35.67 €
Management Seminars	1	28	285.75 €	10.21 €
N° part	Location	Cost (€)		
13	Antwerp	518.50 €		
15	Namur	600.00 €		
22	Brussels	880.00 €		
13	Le Cocq	440.00 €		
6	Gent	240.00 €		
24	Bokrijk	960.00 €		
10	Brussels	356.70 €		
9	Brussels	0.00 €		
28	Brussels	0.00 €		
140		3,995.20 €		

30. What was the amount dedicated by the Institution to travel for Members of the Committee in 2017?

CoR answer to question 30:

The amount dedicated to travel for Members of the Committee in 2017 was 8 882 955 €.

31. To what extent has staff been involved in carrying out activities that would justify a higher function group?

CoR answer to question 31:

No staff members were carrying out activities justifying a higher function group in 2017.

32. What were the three most important actions taken by the institution in favour of equality?

CoR answer to question 32:

A second quinquennial strategy for Equal Opportunities for the years 2017-2021 was adopted by the Secretary-General end of 2016. It had been elaborated in collaboration with the Joint Committee for Equal Opportunities (COPEC), approved by the Commission for Financial and Administrative Affairs (CFAA) and endorsed by the Bureau.

The quinquennial strategy is implemented by concrete annual or biannual action plans, elaborated in collaboration with the Joint Committee for Equal Opportunities. End 2016, an Equal Opportunities Officer was formally appointed with the specific task of upgrading the policy area through coordination and monitoring of the implementation, as part of the effort to give equality higher priority within HR policies.

The strategy covers three main areas of attention: gender, disability and diversity. While specific measures taken in the areas of gender and disability are outlined in the answers to questions 33. and 34. respectively, the following horizontal actions were put in place in 2017:

a) Staff awareness raising

-) Information sessions to all staff on the new quinquennial Equal Opportunities strategy were organised in English and in French on 28 March 2017.
-) The EO strategy was presented to senior managers on 25 April and to middle managers on 4 May 2017 and a dedicated section was included in the HR toolkit for managers in 2018. Managers were informed about the possibility to organise EO-oriented volunteering-type Away Days.
-) Following these meetings, specific contact points were created in each Directorate in order to follow all matters related to equal opportunities, identify possible issues and answer questions from staff.
-) A stand dedicated to Equal Opportunities was manned jointly by the CoR and the EESC on 26 October 2017 in the framework of the thematic Week for Health and Security at Work.
-) The Equal Opportunities page on myCoR intranet was completely renewed and was regularly updated.

b) Intensify partnership with COPEC

-) The Equal Opportunities Officer participated together with a member of COPEC in the yearly INTERCOPEC meeting on 29 June. The theme of the 2017 edition was *Ageing workforce: Challenges and Opportunities*. The meeting was focusing on challenges and opportunities, training and retirement of the aging workforce in the institutions. Some of the conclusions are intended to be transformed into actions in upcoming yearly Equal Opportunities action plans.
-) The Directorate for Human resources and Finance, in cooperation with the Directorate for Communication, organised an awareness-raising campaign of the COPECs of CoR and EESC on 8 March 2017, International Women's Day.

c) Mainstream actions emphasizing the transversal nature of the EO policy

-) In September 2017, an analysis of central HR processes was performed (selection/recruitment, career, working conditions, vocational training) from an Equal

Opportunities perspective to identify their potential implications on different categories of staff. The analysis was ready in the first quarter of 2018.

-) Based on the conclusions of this study, appropriate actions will be taken at the level of the institution in the upcoming years.
-) A Talent Management Strategy has been adopted in 2018. This strategy covers also several aspects of the Equal Opportunities policies to be implemented gradually.

33. A woman in senior management has left the CoR in 2017, further decreasing the already low share of women in senior management positions in the CoR. What has the CoR done to improve the situation of gender balance in senior and middle management positions?

CoR answer to question 33:

In 2017, the CoR has focussed on two horizontal areas with regards to gender balance in management: 1) A more balanced representation of men and women at all levels, and 2) A working environment conducive to an adequate work-life balance, allowing more women to consider applying for managerial positions. The specific targets for 2017 under each area are outlined below:

1) A more balanced representation of men and women at all levels

-) A prospective analysis of the number of retirements and other departures to be expected during the upcoming years among CoR staff and among managers in particular has been made. It constitutes a rather complex and unpredictable exercise as natural staff rotation (transfers in/transfers out) cannot be anticipated; regarding retirements, only the mandatory departures (age 65 or 66) can be forecasted.
-) In January 2017, functional management functions and titles (deputy head of unit and head of sector on AD level, team leader on AST level) were introduced in view, among other, to encourage women to aspire for management positions. More than half of the junior managers appointed on 1 April 2017 were women.
-) Pre-managerial training programme dedicated to junior functional managers has been designed in 2017 and offered as of 2018.
-) A pilot training on unconscious bias targeting managers was organised by the EUSA on 17 May 2017. Furthermore, a specific training on recruitment interviews intended for functional managers was conceived during 2017 in order to allow them to recruit efficiently without creating bias and prevent any discrimination, to be offered from 2018 on.
-) The target group for pre-managerial trainings of particular interest for women has been identified, and courses have been planned to take place from January 2018 on, both in-house and in collaboration with the EUSA.
-) The Talent Management Strategy elaborated in the course of 2017 also induces further needs of training for women aspiring to a management career.
-) As part of exploring the possibility of providing support to the network of women in management, several meetings with CoR and EESC HR services were convened by one of the founders of the network to discuss, i.e. participation of women in pre-managerial training and further actions to be taken in this respect.
-) An interactive management workshop on time management and working patterns was organised on 23 October 2017. Dialogue with staff members, consideration of individual concerns and analysis of each request were promoted, and managers were also reminded

that as a rule they also have the possibility to benefit from certain flexible working arrangements such as limited part-time formulas and occasional teleworking.

-) According to the internal Guide on best practices in the area of recruitment, but also as a general principle, a selection board should comprise at least one representative of each gender. In order to better assess the situation, and following recommendation from COPEC, gender statistics on composition of selection boards has been gathered as of beginning of the year 2017.

2. A working environment conducive to an adequate work-life balance

-) Following the evaluation of the new features of the flexitime scheme (20 minutes lunch break, transfer of 20 hours to next month, etc.), a new flexitime decision was adopted in July 2017.
-) Managers have been informed about the rules and guidelines as regards flexible working arrangements (flexitime, overtime, part-time work, parental/family leave, telework ...) so as to foster a coherent approach and application across the institution insofar service needs so allow for man and women alike. In particular, an interactive management workshop on time management and working patterns was organised on 23 October 2017.
-) Managers are also eligible for occasional telework and various part-time working arrangements. In addition, with the introduction of functional management, further synergies and delegation mechanisms can be put in place allowing managers to ensure both business continuity and better balance between their personal and professional life.

34. What were the three most important actions taken by the institution in favour of disabled people?

CoR answer to question 34:

Some actions in the area of disability are taken on an inter-institutional level while others have been taken specifically at CoR level.

Target (inter-institutional level): Create a "user group" of persons with disabilities and/or "carers" amongst staff

-) Equal Opportunities Officer liaised with other EU institutions, the EC in particular, to explore possibilities of establishing a joint "user group" of persons with disabilities and/or "carers" amongst staff.
-) The interinstitutional support group for parents with children with a disability is open to CoR staff, as was reminded in the staff notice on the occasion of UN's International Day of Persons with Disabilities (03/12/2017).
-) A more adapted access to the main building taking among others into account specificities of disabled people was part of the holistic refurbishment program for the main (JDE) building. The works have been achieved in 2018 and the new entrance hall fully operational.

Target (CoR level): Increase awareness of the concept of "reasonable accommodation" among staff potentially in need of such assistance

-) An Equal Opportunities section has been created and will be integrated in the HR Toolkit for Managers and a similar section was planned to be included in the Newcomers guide in 2018.
-) CoR staff in the area of Equal Opportunities and welfare participated in a training on how to ensure an inclusive working environment for people with a disability on 22 November 2017,

an interinstitutional training on recognition of a disability for people with residence in Belgium organised by PMO and the Belgian Federal Social Security sector on 28 November 2017, a lunchtime event on Autism and Employment organised by the Council on 4 December 2017 and an inter-institutional conference on Disability, with focus on recognition of a disability in Belgium, organised by PMO and DG HR on 12 December 2017.

) A Staff Communication was sent jointly by the Director of HR and the Chair of the COPEC on 1 December 2017 on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The theme was reasonable accommodation in the CoR.

) The COPECs of CoR and EESC organised an awareness-raising event in the field of disabilities on 14 February 2017 in cooperation with HR. Four thematic workshops were held, aiming at raising awareness of motor, visual, hearing and intellectual disabilities. Participants were invited to learn how to use wheelchairs and to take part in a quiz.

35. Does your institution offer the use of fuel cards for staff? If the answer is positive, how many fuel cards exist and who is using them? What are the rules for private usage?

CoR answer to question 35:

Only staff assigned to the Transport sector is entitled to use, under very strict conditions and control, fuel cards. There are 3 cards for a car park comprising 3 combustion-powered cars (one car per card) and one electric car. No private usage of fuel cards is allowed. No staff members have fuel cards.

36. Flexible working arrangements:

a. What flexible working arrangements does your institution offer?

b. How often are these applied to? Has there been a change in the frequency?

c. What is the share of men and women respectively using these working arrangements?

d. To what extent does your institution encourage young parents to make use of flexible working arrangements to better combine family life with their career?

CoR answer to question 36:

a. What flexible working arrangements does your institution offer?

In terms of working time, a flexitime scheme is in place allowing staff (except managers, political groups staff and Cabinet staff) to work from 7 to 20.30 provided they are present during core hours defined to be from 10 to 12 and from 14.15 to 16. The working week of 40 hours per week must be respected and staff must register their working time in the electronic application. While the objective is to keep a balanced working time, it is possible to carry-over up to 20 hours a month and debit is possible up to 16 hours a month. Recuperation is possible in half-days in due respect of the provisions of article 55 SR.

The Staff Regulations provide a number of working arrangements, including part-time, parental leave and family leave. Under certain conditions, these flexible work arrangements constitute a right for staff. In terms of working patterns, the part-time decision in the Committee of the Regions foresees a wide range of part-time formulae. Standard part-time (shorter working days) is possible with 50%, 62.5%, 75%, 80%, 90%, 95% (as well as 95% paid 100% in case of serious hardship subject to a particular procedure). Special part-time (time-credit in half-days) can be taken over periods of 1 month, 3 months or 6 months, in: 75% of working time (10 free half-days per month), 80% of working time (8 free half-days per month) or 90% of working time (4 free half-days per month). In

terms of rights to part-time, provisions of 55a SR apply. Moreover, statutory provisions such as parental leave (article 42a SR) and family leave (article 42b SR) are applied at the CoR.

Finally, the CoR has a policy of developing telework, be it through structural telework (a telework convention over 1 year, based on certain pre-defined formulae) or occasional telework (individual days up to 28 days a year without prior authorisation by the Appointing Authority, beyond 28 days a year if prior authorisation by the Appointing Authority). The rules on telework at the CoR are currently under revision in order to make the rules more in accordance with current needs of staff and managers.

b. How often are these applied to? Has there been a change in the frequency?

Flexitime is applied all year long to CoR staff, except managers, political groups staff and staff in the President's cabinet who do not benefit of flexitime.

Statistics show that facilities on working time arrangements (part-time, parental leave, family leave) continue to be used by a relatively limited number of staff members, mostly women. Whereas the use of part-time has remained stable as compared to 2016, the use of parental leave has increased (in 2016, 44 staff members requested parental leave, whereas they were 75 in 2017). Please find the detailed 2017 statistics below:

Part Time

Number of staff working part-time	66
% of staff working part-time	12,17%
Number of women working part-time	51
% of women amongst part-timers	77,27%

Parental leave

Number of staff taking parental leave	75
% of staff taking parental leave	13,83%
Number of women taking parental leave	56
% of women taking parental leave	74,66%

Family leave

Number of staff taking family leave	9
% of staff taking family leave	1,66%
Number of women taking family leave	5
% of women taking family leave	55,55%

Distance work has been in place since 2012 at the CoR and has been applied increasingly since then. There was an increase in the use of telework in the CoR between 2016 and 2017 (structural telework: from 41 structural teleworkers in 2016 to 55 in 2017; occasional telework: from 2050.5 occasional teleworking days in 2016 to 2076.5 occasional teleworking days in 2017).

c. What is the share of men and women respectively using these working arrangements?

Please refer to answer to question b).

Moreover, among 55 structural teleworkers in 2017, 42 were women.

d. To what extent does your institution encourage young parents to make use of flexible working arrangements to better combine family life with their career?

The decisions on flexible working arrangements are advertised wherever possible. For instance, in October 2017 the CoR has published a series of leaflets on working conditions and distributed them to staff. These leaflets had clearly the purpose to inform CoR staff and notably young parents to make use of the possibilities offered. The topics were, among others: "Having a child: what do I need to know?" (including parental leave), "What do I need to know about part-time work?", "What do I need to know about flexitime?", "What do I need to know about teleworking?". The leaflets are in use since then.

Staff Regulations foresee that flexible working arrangements such as parental leave and part-time are a right in certain conditions. For the application of these provisions, CoR favours a good understanding between staff and managers conducive to the best work-life balance possible while ensuring quality of service. In this respect, on 23 October 2017, the CoR has organised a management workshop in order to raise management's awareness on flexible working arrangements in order to have wherever possible a positive approach from managers to these possibilities.

37. How does the creation of 'head of sectors' improve the management of the CoR? How does their financial situation differ from administrators and head of units?

CoR answer to question 37:

The introduction of functional management (deputy heads of unit and heads of sector, for the AD function group, and team leaders, for the AST function group) formally codified already existing operational management structures in the institution. In the past few years, the tasks of many staff members became more complex and diversified. Many colleagues have taken up additional responsibilities, not in the least because of the staff cuts during the period 2013-2017 that increased the workload of staff on all levels of the institution. Therefore, the validation of this organically grown shift in the organizational structure was a logical next step. Through this formalization, good organizational practices were reflected in the structure of the organisation and will be further developed.

Moreover, the creation of functional management roles grants the institution more organizational flexibility and allows heads of unit to delegate tasks within clear structures, giving them more time for the strategic management of the unit. Furthermore the information flow top-down and bottom up has been improved.

In addition to the organizational advantages, functional management positions allow talented individual staff members to develop their leadership and management skills and to prepare themselves for taking up further responsibilities in the future.

Staff members carrying out functional managerial responsibilities do not receive any additional financial benefits.

38. What valuable insights has the CoR gained through the seven exit interviews it has carried out in 2017?

CoR answer to question 38:

Exit interviews enable the CoR to gain important information into how the CoR is perceived as an employer in order to identify strengths and areas of development for improving working conditions, work life balance, telework, develop tailored management training etc.

What differentiates the CoR from other institutions is its modest size, which almost all respondents stated as the institution's main asset. Its small size makes for good networking and cooperation opportunities. Besides, the large variety of tasks typically linked to a smaller institution seems to increase motivation and commitment. Teams and collegial interpersonal relations in most services seem to be very tight, which has a considerable effect on the general satisfaction of staff and the general perception of everyday life at the CoR. It goes without saying that staff who feels a sense of belonging and takes pleasure and support from the immediate surroundings will also be more loyal and committed to the collective output. This factor should not be underestimated and ought to be nurtured and supported by managers and the institution as a whole.

The working conditions in place at the CoR are highly appreciated, particularly with reference to the flexitime scheme, telework arrangements; part-time possibilities which make it possible to maintain a good work / life balance.

Notwithstanding the appreciation of the CoR as an employer as stated above, there are a number of negative indicators which the CoR will not fail to look into in order to improve the conditions for maintaining staff at the CoR.

39. What were the developments in the case pending before the Court of Justice concerning the former internal auditor?

CoR answer to question 39:

On 23 October 2018, the General Court of the European Union rendered the long awaited judgement in the case McCoy/CdR, T-657/16, concerning the medical assessment on recognizing the professional origin of the invalidity of Mr Mc Coy, former internal auditor at the CoR.

By this judgment, the General Court annulled the CoR decision of 2 December 2014 endorsing the findings of the second Invalidation Committee that had concluded that the former internal auditor's invalidity was not of professional origin.

The Invalidation Committee was composed of the medical officer of the CoR, the doctor of the former internal auditor's choice as well as a specialist doctor appointed by the Court of Justice.

Without stating about the professional origin as such, the General Court considered in its judgement that the invalidity committee's assessment was not sufficiently motivated and contained an error in the assessment of the professional origin.

At the same time, the General Court rejected inter alia the alleged non-respect of the mandate of the Invalidation Committee and of the principle of collegiality.

Furthermore, the General Court condemned the CoR to pay a compensation of EUR 5,000 for its failure to comply with its duty of care and for not having sufficiently monitored the workings of the

second Invalidation Committee. At the same time, the General Court rejected the former internal auditor's claim of an additional compensation of EUR 20,000.

The CoR will fully comply with and duly execute the Court judgement by paying the EUR 5,000 compensation and by covering the legal costs.

At its meeting of 4 December, the CoR Bureau as competent Appointing Authority will decide on the follow-up to the court case in particular by launching a third Invalidation Committee, again composed of three independent medical doctors. The CoR will do its utmost to ensure that the workings of this Invalidation Committee will be fully compliant with the procedural requirements developed in the General Court's judgement.

40. How did your institution assess the impact of staff cuts throughout the years 2013-2017 on the daily workload?

CoR answer to question 40:

Between 2013 and 2017, the CoR lost 48 posts in its establishment plan from 537 to 489. This 9 % loss was mainly due to the 5 % staff cuts and the implementation of a new cooperation agreement concluded in 2014 with the European Parliament resulting in a net transfer of additional posts to the benefit of the services of the European Parliament.

Despite the staff cuts during this period, the CoR managed to reinforce its political role by reallocating more human resources from support services to the core business areas (political and legislative activities). The loss of posts affected all levels of the organization. It resulted in a higher workload and an increased complexity in terms of job content for staff members, only partially compensated by the increase of weekly working hours from 37.5 to 40 in 2014 and the increase in average working time per staff member that followed.

The CoR has tried to mitigate the negative effects of the staff cuts on the organization and its staff members. Measures were taken to allow for more organizational flexibility, such as the creation of functional management, increased internal mobility and redeployment. The practice regarding recruitment of non-permanent staff members was also adapted: longer assignments were proposed in order to accompany the organisational changes. Short term replacements were ensured whenever possible by internal synergies, temporary reassignments of officials etc.

The CoR continuously monitors the wellbeing of its staff and has fine-tuned its working time policy during this period to adjust to the changing working conditions and increased workload by allowing a maximum of flexibility in working time arrangements. Since the period of staff cuts ended only in 2017, the CoR initiated a workload assessment exercise in 2018 to map the workload distribution within the organization and among its staff and verify the match between tasks and resources.

Buildings

41. Were there any improvements done to the organisation of workspaces? What changes have there been in 2017?

CoR answer to question 41:

In relation to the organisation of workspaces, several important projects, studies, services and actions have been executed in 2017:

BUILDING STRATEGY

A long term building strategy was established and approved by the CoR (and by the EESC) during 2017. This building strategy provides a framework for any future decision related to building policy to be taken. The building strategy as such contains a set of guiding principles in the field of real estate. These guiding principles are, inter alia, the geographical concentration of buildings, preference for ownership rather than lease and for exercising options to buy, a sustainable building management and multi-annual planning. Based on this strategy, several scenarios have been identified and explored in order to prepare the buildings policy beyond 2021, once the administrative agreement with the EC related to the VMA expires. Priority is given to scenarios that include the continued use of the VMA building by the CoR.

JDE building

-) The contract has been signed for the execution of the works for the refurbishment of the entrance hall of the JDE building, with the main objective to increase the security level. Preparatory works have been realized such as the cloak room and the accreditation office and the move of the EESC travel agency.
-) The renovation of the floor in the kitchen of the JDE building has been executed.
-) Completion of the renovation of the containers and the replacement of the bamboos' plants in the JDE building.
-) The works to reinforce the inside windows with an anti-blast film in JDE building towards Belliard and Remorqueur street were realized in collaboration with the Royal Military School of Belgium.

BvS building

-) The replacement of window's frames in the BvS with more efficient thermal and acoustical insulation has been continued.
-) The offices on the 6th and 7th floor at BvS building have been refurbished.
-) The study for the new training facilities at BvS 1st floor was completed and works and the installation of furniture were done during the first quarter of 2018.
-) The environmental permit for REM building has been prolonged and compulsory energy audit for BvS has taken place. The request for renewal of the environmental permit for BvS has been introduced.
Further improvements which were related to the CoR's EMAS policy are listed in the answer to question 42, e.g. in the **B68 and TRE buildings**.

42. With regard to the Environmental management system, which were the most important results achieved in 2017? What result was achieved in terms of reducing carbon dioxide emissions and reducing waste, especially plastic?

CoR answer to question 42:

In 2017 the CoR and EESC (buildings are used jointly) produced 10.181 tonnes of CO₂, compared to 10.005 tonnes in 2016.

Emissions have decreased in the following areas:

- Energy consumption;
- Freight;
- Provision of equipment and service;
- Immobilization.

Emissions have increased in the following areas:

- Leaks of refrigerants;
- Transport of people;
- Waste management.

The main actions completed in 2017 regarding efficient energy consumption are the following:

- The replacement of the electric heating system with a gas system for the TRE building
- The optimization of LED lighting in stairs and car parks
- The replacement of the two refrigeration units of building B68 by more efficient groups
- Improved insulation on the 7th floor of the TRE building
- The optimization of gas adjustments: gas was shut off at the BvS building during the months of July and August; it was also cut at building B68 from June to the end of October. As these cuts were not made in previous years, this had a significant impact on 2017 consumption.
- The continuation of numerous adjustments and optimizations of technical installations.











In 2017, the EMAS service was consulted on 27 tendering procedures. Environmental criteria are inserted in most Call for Tenders, either as a requirement in the description of the product or service requested, or as an award criterion in order to promote most ecological tenders. These environmental criteria generally describe the treatment of waste, the storage of hazardous products, the choice of products and materials, the energy consumption of electrical machines and the compliance with environmental legislation.

Another major achievement in 2017 was that the EESC and CoR obtained the Label Good Food, awarded by the Brussels Region⁴. This label certifies that the canteen of the Committees is managed in a sustainable way. The criteria of the Good Food label are numerous and varied and concern for example the seasonality, the origin of the products, the management of food waste, the part of vegetarian food, etc.

As from 2018 the self-restaurant of the Committees has replaced almost all single use plastic containers by others made of paperboard or other bio-friendly materials. The efforts will be pursued in 2019 with the replacement of single use plastics at the cafeterias.

The main results related to EMAS in 2017 are the following:

⁴ Refer to site Bruxelles Environnement: <https://environnement.brussels/thematiques/alimentation/restauration-et-cantines/label-cantine-good-food>

2017 results since 2009		2017 results vs 2016	
	Electricity - 28 %		Electricity - 11 %
	Gas - 51 %		Gas - 15 %
	Water - 35 %		Water - 2 %
	Paper - 42 %		Paper - 8 %
	Waste - 57 %		Waste - 13 %



43. With regard to the rent and lease, please provide the details (amount and with whom) of rental contracts in effect in 2017.

CoR answer to question 43:

1. JACQUES DELORS BUILDING (JDE), sis rue Belliard 99-101, 1040, Brussels

- J Type of contract: *long-term leasehold contract (emphytéose acquisitive)*
- J Duration of the contract: 27 years, starting from the provisional reception of the building (from 18/02/2004 to 17/02/2031)
- J Annual cost (CoR and EESC): 10.623 million euros (2017, indexation included)

2. BERTHA VAN SUTTNER (BvS), sis rue Montoyer 92-102, 1000, Brussels

- J Type of contract long-term leasehold contract (emphytéose acquisitive)
- J Duration of the contract: 27 years, starting from 01/01/2001 to 31/12/2027
- J Annual cost (CoR and EESC): 6.065 million euros (2017, indexation included)

3. BELLIARD 68 BUILDING (B68), sis rue Belliard 68, 1000, Brussels

- J Type of contract: long-term leasehold contract (emphytéose acquisitive)
- J Duration of the contract: 27 years, starting from 01/01/2004 to 31/12/2030
- J Annual cost (CoR and EESC): 2.189 million euros (2017, indexation and estimated charges included); between 2004-2013, an additional annual specific lease of 264,782 euros was paid;

4. TRÊVE BUILDING (TRE), sis Rue de Trève 74, 1000, Brussels

- J Type of contract long-term leasehold contract (emphytéose acquisitive)
- J Duration of the contract: 27 years, starting from 01/02/2005 to 31/01/2032
- J Annual cost (CoR and EESC): 1.583 million euros (2017, indexation included)

5. REMORQUEUR BUILDING (REM), sis Rue Belliard 93, 1000, Brussels

- J Type of contract: long-term leasehold contract (emphytéose acquisitive)
- J Duration of the contract: 27 years, starting from the provisional reception of the building (from 07/02/2007 to 06/02/2034)
- J Annual cost (CoR and EESC): 0.139 million euros (2016, indexation only)

6. VAN MAERLANT BUILDING (VMA), sis rue Van Maerlant 2, 1000, Brussels

- J Type of contract: rent contract

- J Duration of the contract: 12 years initially, starting from 01/04/2007 to 31/03/2019; in autumn 2017 the contract was extended until 31/12/2021, with the possibility of further automatic extensions of 1 year; cancellation subject to prior written notice of 12 months
- J The Commission has for this building a long term lease contract with an option to purchase that runs until 31/12/2028
- J Annual cost (CoR and EESC): 3.427 million euros (2016, indexation and charges included)

In summary, the CoR paid in total 9.976 million euros and the EESC paid in total 14.051 million euros.

For data protection reasons, the identity of the owners of the above mentioned buildings cannot be disclosed.

Harassment

44. What were the expenditures in 2017 for the management/follow-up to Court sentences of harassment cases?

CoR answer to question 44:

No cases of harassment have been reported, investigated or concluded in 2017. No expenditure was incurred in 2017 for the management of harassment cases or for the execution of any court judgement on harassment cases.

45. How many a) new b) ongoing c) closed harassment cases were there at your institution in 2017?

CoR answer to question 45:

In 2017 there were no harassment cases at the CoR, neither new, ongoing nor closed.

46. Which actions were taken to discourage the harassment in the working environment?

CoR answer to question 46:

The CoR discourages actively harassment in the working environment and fosters conflict prevention and dignity at work by regularly recalling its anti-harassment policy via different channels:

1. Every semester, the CoR organises training on the anti-harassment policy for staff in general as well as specific training courses addressed to managers; in addition it is part of the newcomer's training.
2. Since 2017, the confidential counsellors meet staff during unit meetings in the context of a "roadshow" to present their network and its functioning, in order to promote visibility of their work and clarify the services offered.

The existence of confidential counsellors and the anti-harassment policy is brought to the attention of staff through various communication means easily accessible in electronic and paper form, as well as during events like the health and wellbeing week.

47. What measures is your institution taking to raise awareness about the possibility to file harassment complaints?

CoR answer to question 47:

The CoR is, first of all, informing its staff of the possibility to file harassment complaints through the actions as mentioned here above.

Furthermore, before filing formally a complaint on basis of article 90 of the Staff Regulations or by requesting assistance on basis of article 24 of the Staff Regulations, the staff is given the possibility to address themselves first informally to a confidential counsellor or to their hierarchy for seeking amicable settlement to potential harassment, eventually by setting up a mediation with an in-house or an external mediator. In 2017, 6 persons have contacted a confidential counsellor and 7 interviews have been conducted by the confidential counsellors.

In 2017, the CoR did not receive any formal complaint or request for assistance related to harassment.

48. What sanctions or follow-up measures are foreseen against members or staff of the Committee against whom complaints about harassment were filed to the Committee's network of confidential counsellors? Could you please specify the composition of the entity responsible for concluding harassment cases and sanctions or follow-up measures where applicable?

CoR answer to question 48:

By its decision n°362/2010 concerning psychological and sexual harassment at work within the Secretariat of the Committee of the Regions, the CoR put in place an informal procedure in order to provide support and guidance in finding a friendly solution notably by involving the confidential counsellor network or the hierarchical superior.

The informal procedure can lead to institute a formal procedure based on Article 24 and/or Article 90(1) of the Staff Regulations that allows the Appointing Authority to consider to open an administrative enquiry, eventually notify the case to OLAF, and to open a disciplinary procedure that may lead to disciplinary sanctions towards a staff member being an official or a temporary or contract agent submitted to the Staff Regulations or the Conditions of Employment of other Servants of the European Union (statutory staff). Wrongdoings of a Member of the CoR can be notified to OLAF or be prosecuted pursuant to the national judicial system.

Concerning the statutory staff, the entity responsible for concluding harassment cases and disciplinary sanctions is the Appointing Authority pursuant to the procedure as outlined in Annexe IX of the Staff Regulations and the CoR decision n°362/2010. Concerning other staff members and Members of the CoR, the entity responsible is defined pursuant to the national judicial system.

Transparency

49. How many call for tenders did your institution organise in 2017? Please indicate the value and the number of applicants for each tender.

CoR answer to question 49:

Information follows by annex 1 and by annex 2.

Whistle-blower protection

50. How many cases of whistleblowing were reported in 2017? What improvements have been made regarding procedures for whistleblowing? How many of these reports have been notified to OLAF?

CoR answer to question 50:

No whistleblowing cases have been reported in 2017 at the CoR.

The whistleblowing procedure has been in place at the CoR by the internal decision n°508/2015 laying down rules on whistleblowing of 17 December 2015. The procedure has been further improved by the adoption of the administrative arrangement of 10 May 2017, providing a structured framework for cooperation, notably for whistleblowing cases, facilitating the timely exchange of information and ensuring the effectiveness of investigations led by OLAF in respect of CoR staff.

51. What is the state of play of the whistleblowing file that was opened in 2016 and forwarded to OLAF?

CoR answer to question 51:

The CoR is still awaiting the final report of OLAF concerning the whistleblowing case notified to OLAF in October 2016.

Addendum to the 2017 discharge questionnaire and the CoR's answer thereto

Whistle-blower protection

Please note three additional questions related to the McCoy case:

-) **How will the Committee of the Regions follow-up to the decision of the Court of Justice on 23 October 2018 on the case between the former internal auditor and the Committee?**

CoR answer to the question:

By this judgment, the General Court annulled the CoR decision of 2 December 2014 endorsing the findings of the second Invalidation Committee that had concluded that the former internal auditor's invalidity was not of professional origin

The Invalidation Committee was composed of the medical officer of the CoR, the doctor of the former internal auditor's choice as well as a specialist doctor appointed by the Court of Justice.

Without stating about the professional origin as such, the General Court considered in its judgement that the invalidity committee's assessment was not sufficiently motivated and contained an error in the assessment of the professional origin. At the same time, the General Court rejected inter alia the alleged non-respect of the mandate of the Invalidation Committee and of the principle of collegiality.

Furthermore, the General Court condemned the CoR to pay a compensation of EUR 5,000 for its failure to comply with its duty of care and for not having sufficiently monitored the workings of the second Invalidation Committee. At the same time, the General Court rejected the former internal auditor's claim of an additional compensation of EUR 20,000.

The CoR will fully comply with and duly execute the Court judgement by paying the EUR 5,000 compensation and by covering the legal costs.

At its meeting of 4 December, the CoR Bureau as competent Appointing Authority will decide on the follow-up to the court case in particular by launching a third Invalidation Committee, again composed of three independent medical doctors. The CoR will do its utmost to ensure that the workings of this Invalidation Committee will be fully compliant with the procedural requirements developed in the General Court's judgement.

-) **In a previous case, the Court had already ruled that the conclusions of a medical committee, denying the professional origins of the former internal auditor's invalidity, were not valid. What consequences does the Committee of the Regions draw from the fact that the Court has now ruled that the conclusions of the second invalidity committee, set up for the same purpose, are also not valid?**

CoR answer to the question:

First of all, it has to be stressed that neither the first nor the second Court judgment made any statements about the professional origins of the former internal auditor's invalidity but annulled the CoR decision which endorsed the findings of the Invalidity Committee on procedural grounds (lack of sufficient motivation and an error in the assessment of the professional origin).

The CoR will carefully analyse the General Court judgement and duly implement the procedural requirements which the General Court has developed in its judgement, in particular as regards the obligation to motivate the medical assessment and to monitor the workings of the Invalidity Committee without however breaching the principle of medical secrecy.

-) **Has the Committee of the Regions considered the possibility of recognising the status of the former internal auditor as a bona fide whistleblower? If yes, what was the result of the assessment? What were the facts and the legal basis on which the Committee based its decision?**

CoR answer to the question:

On 31 January 2018, the former Internal auditor introduced a request on basis of article 90(1) of the Staff Regulation to be formally recognized by the CoR as bona fide whistle-blower on basis of article 22 a of the Staff Regulations, as well as a complaint on basis of article 90(2) of the Staff Regulation introduced on 23 August 2018, following the rejection decision of the CoR of 24 May 2018 refusing to recognize him as bona fide whistle-blower.

The CoR has analysed the request in detail and came to the conclusion that there is no legal basis to recognize the former internal auditor as bona fide whistle-blower on the following grounds:

-) The request is to be considered not admissible given the time elapsed since the occurrence of the facts (during the years 2000 to 2003) and given the purpose of Article 22a of the Staff Regulations which is to safeguard the interests of the Union and not to satisfy personal interests.
-) The application must also be considered inadmissible because Article 22a of the Staff Regulations on which the request is based upon entered into force on 1 May 2004, i.e. subsequent to the events it refers to. Art 22a cannot be applied retroactively.

-) Prior to the entry into force of Article 22a of the Staff Regulations, the CoR whistleblowing rules were contained in Article 2 of CoR Decision No 294/99⁵. Even assuming that the former internal auditor's claim would be based on Article 2 of Decision No 294/99 applicable at the time, the claim is still unfounded. In fact, under this Article the former internal auditor would have been obliged to inform OLAF directly of the alleged wrongdoings which he failed to do. Therefore he cannot be considered a whistle-blower under these provisions.
-) It is a fact that at the time it was MEP Mr Van Hulten, member of the COCOBU, who informed OLAF on 8 April 2003 on the alleged wrongdoings at the CoR. This led to investigations by OLAF which recommended in its report of 8 October 2003 to consider opening disciplinary procedures. As a follow-up the CoR carried out an administrative enquiry presented to the CoR Bureau of 20 April 2004 concluding that the alleged wrongdoings had not caused any financial damage to the institution and were not serious enough to justify the opening of disciplinary procedures.
-) In his request the former internal auditor asked the CoR also to recognize that "*the information provided in particular to OLAF was correct and, at the very least, not unreliable or baseless, related to serious facts*". In this regard, it should be recalled that the Court of First Instance in its judgement of 18 November 2014 (Case F-156/12, par. 121) explicitly rejected, for lack of factual evidence, the former internal auditor's allegations of an alleged non-compliance by the CoR of Article 22a of the Staff Regulations and Decision No 294/99.

⁵ Art. 2 of decision 294/99 on internal conditions and fight against fraud, corruption and any illegal activity detrimental to the interests of the Communities: "*Tout fonctionnaire ou agent du secrétariat général qui acquiert la connaissance d'éléments de fait laissant présumer l'existence d'éventuels cas de fraude, de corruption ou toute autre activité illégale portant atteinte aux intérêts des Communautés, ou des faits graves, liés à l'exercice d'activités professionnelles, pouvant constituer un manquement aux obligations des fonctionnaires et agents des Communautés, susceptible[s] de poursuites disciplinaires et, le cas échéant, pénales, ou un manquement aux obligations imposées par le droit communautaire aux membres du Comité dans le cadre de leurs activités en cette qualité, dans les cas où ce manquement porte atteinte aux intérêts des Communautés, en informe son chef de service, son directeur ou le secrétaire général et, s'il l'estime utile, l'Office également. Le secrétaire général, les directeurs et **chefs de service**, en informant leur supérieurs hiérarchiques du secrétariat général, transmettent sans délai à l'Office tout élément de fait dont ils ont connaissance laissant présumer l'existence d'irrégularités visées au premier alinéa.*"

Annex 1 - TENDERS 2017

N°	N° Procédure	Type de procédure	INTITULE/OBJET	Nombre d'offres reçues	Marché attribué	Valeur du marché EUR
1	CDR-COM-2-2017	Négociée (art.134.1.b)	AgEurope	1	oui	34.900
2	CDR-MEM-1-2017	Négociée	Rental of Interpretation services	3	oui	20.508
3	CDR-MEM-20-2017	Négociée	Subscriptions	1	non (offre non conforme)	
4	CDR-MEM-29-2017	Négociée	Rental of Digital Conference and Interpretation Systems - Palma	1	oui	60.601
5	CDR-MEM-32-2017	Négociée	EPP external seminar Brindisi	3	oui	27.848
6	CDR-MEM-38-2017	Négociée	acquisition of airline ticket PNR background data	0	non (aucune offre)	
7	CDR-MEM-94-2017	Négociée	Rental of interpretation services for the Civex 15th Commission	2	oui	22.198
8	CDR-MEM-125-2017	Négociée (art.134.1.b)	Politico Pro	1	oui	16.484
9	CDR-TL2-59-2017	ouverte	Studies Education, Youth etc	7	oui	400.000

Tenders in 2017

No.	Leading Institution	Duration	Title / Scope	Amount	Number of tenderers per call for tenders
1	CoR	10 months	Refurbishment JDE entrance hall	€1,748,002.39	4
2	CoR	4 years	Installation of energy counters on heating/cooling and ventilation systems	€680,000.00	1
3	CoR	5 years	Maintenance of equipment for the cleaning of building facades	€363,417.00	1
4	CoR	10 years	Supply and maintenance of a new Translation Management System	€296,827.00	3
5	CoR	4 years	Control of maintenance services for technical equipment	€219,500,00	4
6	CoR	2 years	Consultation notaries - exercise option to buy rented buildings	€74,415.17	2
7	CdR	4 months	Adaption of front elevation top level into ("double skin") TRE	€35,342.89	2
8	CoR	4 years	Environmental verifier	€21,193.00	1
	CoR	4 years signed	Study bureau and technical assistance	€1,745,500.00	4