



Report on the follow-up to the discharge of the EEAS for the financial year 2017

Point 4: Notes with appreciation that the previous recommendations made in relation to the improvement of the monitoring system for the timely updating of the personal situation and data of members of staff, with a potential impact on the calculation of family allowances, have been implemented in most respects; considers, however, that consistency checks in relation to the management of family allowances require ongoing attention.

A systematic ex-ante control of the data encoded by the EEAS staff members in the Human Resources applications in order to verify the correctness and consistency is made before proceeding with the payment of the financial entitlements for staff and their families.

Furthermore, an effective system of ex-post controls is in place for these payments and reimbursements, which, inter alia, includes exchanges of information with other Commission services as well as the Delegations where staff are posted.

A systematic cross-checking of the different entitlements is made to ensure consistency and sound financial management (i.e. reimbursement of school fees vs medical costs: verifying if the place/country of schools attended by the children is the same as the place/country where they receive medical services).

Point 5: Welcomes the efforts of the EEAS to improve procurement procedures in delegations, including the deployment of the Public Procurement Management Tool, the establishment of a procurement plan for low and middle-value contract and the development of templates for tender documents and trainings; considers that the former weaknesses identified in public procurement and the management of security services still deserve a steady attention and monitoring.

The procurement plan for 2019, compiled in the Public Procurement Management Tool, includes not only low and middle value contracts, but also very low value



contracts. This provides an even more detailed overview of expected procurement procedures in the EEAS.

New templates for (very) low and middle value contracts were developed in 2018 including tender specifications and evaluation reports. The templates are publicly available to be used by Headquarters and Delegations. In addition, templates including technical specifications for cleaning and IT services have been prepared in 2019 to further facilitate the work of Delegations and to increase the quality of procurement documents.

Furthermore in 2019, a series of web-streamed trainings was organised for (very) low and middle value contracts for colleagues in Headquarters and Delegations. The trainings will also be available on the EU learn platform. Similar trainings have been delivered during various workshops at Headquarters and regional seminars in Delegations.

Regarding the procurement and management of the security services contracts, further improvements of the templates and procurement procedures have been made in 2019. These are complemented with continuous support and guidance provided by Headquarters to Delegations. The management and the monitoring of the performance of the security services contracts have been reinforced at field level with the promotion of key performance indicators and the monitoring of non-compliance by the expanded Regional Security Officers' network.

Point 6: Asks the EEAS to keep the Parliament informed about the results achieved through the aforementioned efforts to improve procurement procedures in delegations, in particular through the PPMT (Public Procurement Management Tool) system and eProcurement and eTendering procedures.

eTendering and eSubmission were introduced in the EEAS in 2018. eTendering is used for all the procurement procedures above directive thresholds, whereas eSubmission is used for all open procurement procedures above directive thresholds. The use of eProcurement tools enables the EEAS to compile a comprehensive database of all the published procurement procedures together with the related questions and answers.

As of April 2019, the Public Procurement Management Tool (PPMT) is being used for



the launch and management of the procurement procedures above directive thresholds. This allows an effective follow up all ongoing high value procurement procedures.

In 2019, more efforts have been made to centralise the public procurement procedures above directive thresholds and, in doing so, further increase the quality of procedures and shorten the time from the launch of the procedure until the signature of the contract.

Point 7: *Observes that the causes of errors identified by ex-ante checks both on commitments and payments are of the same nature, namely the lack of supporting documents, as in previous years; notes that the EEAS ex-post control included for the first time the expenditures of the end of the year (November-December 2016).*

In 2018, a dedicated forum, the Finance & Contracts Network, was established in order to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and good practices in finance, procurement and contractual matters. Moreover, the implementation of financial e-workflows at Headquarters by the end of 2019 will contribute to a reduction of the level of errors in general terms.

Point 13: *Requires the EEAS' buildings policy to be annexed to the annual activity report, particularly in view of the fact that it is important for its costs to be properly rationalised and not to be excessive; urges the EEAS to provide the discharge authority with the list of building contracts concluded in 2017, including details of the contracts, the country where they were concluded and their duration, as in its annual activity report for 2011; requests the EEAS to provide the same information on building contracts in its annual activity report for 2018.*

In line with the requirements of Article 266 of the Financial Regulation, the EEAS provides the European Parliament annually with the exhaustive list of office buildings, including information on the annual rents and the surfaces, in the Working Document on its Building Policy. The latest update of the Working Document was sent to the attention of the Parliament's Budget Committee in June 2019¹. Following the ad hoc request from the Chair of the EP Budget Committee in 2017 to obtain the

¹ Ares(2019)4110430 Envoi du document de travail sur la politique immobilière (Art. 266 du Règlement financier) - SEAE



list of the Residence Buildings, the EEAS now also includes this list in the annual update of the Working Document on EEAS Building Policy.

For security reasons, these documents were not annexed in the 2018 Annual Activity Report of the EEAS, which is a public document.

Point 15: *Acknowledges that the number of budget lines used to finance the operations related to Commission staff in delegations (34 different lines originating in various headings of the Commission budget, plus the EDF Funds) increases the complexity of budget management; remembers that this topic was treated in the 2016 discharge report and takes note of the complexity in the simplification of reducing the budget lines; encourages therefore the EEAS to keep on working with the Commission to simplify the budget lines when possible in order to reduce the complexity of budget management.*

The complex budgetary management of the Commission's staff in Delegations has already been considerably simplified. This work began with the budget-neutral transfer of the so-called "common costs", whose first phase was achieved in the budget procedure for the 2015 budget. The second phase, which was negotiated in the budget procedure for the 2016 budget, simplified the management of the European Development Fund (EDF) contribution to the common costs, by treating it as a definitive and fixed-amount per staff member, based on real, average costs.

The EEAS accepts the Parliament's recommendation that there is further space for simplification. The EEAS therefore intends to raise this issue with the Commission in the framework of the development of the Union budget's nomenclature post-2020.

Point 19: *Notes that 1,3 % of the budget increase in 2017 was dedicated to security investments in the context of the implementation of the security package, which included the reinforcement of the network of regional security officers and armoured vehicles acquisitions in line with the EEAS's duty of care and field security, the cybersecurity strategy and continuous training in security of staff in response to potential threats and crisis situations in delegations and headquarters; welcomes the improvements achieved so far, but encourages the EEAS, in particular, to address the different remaining challenges such as the need to update IT security tools; calls on the EEAS, moreover, to work together with Member States with a view to*



developing a common approach and to improve the interconnection of security systems with other institutions and Member States.

The EEAS continues to improve its security by developing a security culture among the staff and by reinforcing its cybersecurity and secure IT Tools.

Even though it remains a challenge to find cyber specialists and keep up with the evolving threat landscape, the EEAS is continuously adapting its capacity to detect and deter cyber-attacks:

- New secure networks are under development and interconnecting these with the Commission and the Council is one of the first priorities which will be implemented.
- A new secure classified network at R-UE/EU-R level (RESCOM) will be deployed. In parallel, the EEAS is consolidating a classified system by leading the deployment of a high classified corporate platform allowing processing data up to S-UE/EU-S.
- A secure voice network has been deployed to most Delegations as well as CSDP Missions and Operations. This system will be extended to all Delegations, the Council and Commission by 2020.
- The number of Member States connected to the High Secure Wan (EU OPS WAN) has been increased, with the ultimate goal is of having all the Member States connected to the system.
- The network of Regional Security Officers/Advisers (RSO/RSA) has been reinforced and reorganised to ensure a better coverage of the Delegations.

In terms of cybersecurity awareness programs, the EEAS is following closely the initiatives of other EU institutions and Member States. A security awareness campaign was initiated and was launched in summer 2019 following a survey aiming to address staff concerns.

Point 21: *Notes that the 2017 annual self-assessment of the internal control system provided reasonable assurance to EEAS management regarding the level of compliance with the majority of internal controls; notes however that the three following internal control standards ‘Staff allocation and mobility’, ‘Business continuity’ and ‘Document management’ remain the weakest components of the EEAS internal control system; notes with concern that ‘business continuity’ has*



continued to be problematic for several years, both in terms of compliance and effectiveness, and is of particular importance within delegations.

The EEAS introduced in 2018 a new Internal Control Framework based on principles and with a renewed emphasis on controls. The change aligned the framework to the principles set by the Committee of Sponsoring Organisations of the Treadway Commission (COSO) and adopted by the Member States of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The new framework is similar to the one adopted by the Commission and by other EU Institutions, as a system for good governance. With this improved framework, the EEAS demonstrates its commitment to ethics, staff developments, sound financial management, risk monitoring and good governance.

During 2018, the EEAS also implemented different measures in order to enhance its efficiency and internal coordination as well as to ensure better allocation of human resources and alignment with political priorities and evolving realities, while seeking the best solutions for its staff.

More particularly, the EEAS decided a number of measures throughout 2018 to prepare for the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EU and address its consequences on the organisation and its staffing. It also aligned itself to the Commission's Decision of 28 March 2018, regarding the application of provisions of Article 49 of the Staff Regulations, and Articles 47 and 119 of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants (CEOS).

The EEAS continued strengthening the Delegations and rebalancing of the resources between Headquarters and Delegations. In a context of budget constraints and enhanced focus on prioritisation, the Permanent Annual Review Mechanism was established in 2017 to ensure a strategic approach to allocation of posts in Delegations and to address the need for the opening and the closure of Delegations. Based on the recommendations from the Mechanism, the EEAS Secretary-General decided the implementation of adjusting the allocation of posts, including the sources and final destinations of posts. The implementation, which was launched in two phases, is expected to be concluded in 2019. Throughout 2018, eight posts were transferred between Delegations, constituted by a mix of Administrators (AD), Contract Agents and Local Agents posts, and eight AD posts were redeployed from Headquarters to Delegations in order to rebalance the resources between Headquarters and Delegations.



The annual Mobility and Rotation exercises offer a wide range of career development possibilities to EEAS staff members, while also enabling the EEAS to attract suitable candidates from Member States' diplomatic services. The 2018 Mobility exercise allows for staff members to change post in Headquarters as well as for the reintegration of staff members who return from Delegations. In the framework of this exercise, AD staff are in principle required to change job after four years in the same post, while Assistants (AST) can participate in the Mobility exercise on a voluntary basis. In the 2018 Mobility exercise, 52 AD posts and 35 AST posts were available. The EEAS also undertook a management Mobility exercise in 2018, with the participation of returning Heads and Deputy Heads of Delegation and managers in Headquarters who had been on their post for four or more years.

On information and document management, the EEAS has been using, since 2011, the eDomec rules framework developed by the Commission. The increased mobility of staff and the fact that the rules were not designed specifically for the EEAS have contributed to unsatisfactory awareness and adherence. In order to boost the awareness and compliance the Information and Document Management Sector (BA.BS.IDM) conducted a campaign from June to September 2018 within the Managing Directorate of Americas and the Managing Directorate of Africa, consisting of trainings on e-Domec and e-signatory as well as conducting meetings focusing on best practices.

To complement the campaign, from October 2018 the following trainings at Headquarters were organised: "Ares Introduction" (e-Domec overview and Ares essentials), "E-signatory for electronic validation of financial documents in ARES", "Filing Plan: How to organise your files in ARES", and "Visibility and Security in Ares/NomCom".

The lack of training for the Document Management Officers (DMOs) who are deployed in Delegations has been identified as a key challenge. To address this issue, numerous specialised trainings for the future DMOs in Delegations have been merged and consolidated into a single course, with the participation of the European Commission's Secretariat-General, Directorate-General for Informatics (DIGIT), Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO). Since April 2018, 12 trainings have been offered, with a participation of 140 staff. The trainings will be further updated in 2019 and offered on a monthly basis.



Regarding business continuity, renewed efforts have been made in 2018 and in 2019 to improve the EEAS' resilience and effective response to operational disruptions and business discontinuity. There has been a continuous improvement in the compliance of contingency planning in Delegations: the vast majority of Delegations have their own tailor-made BCPs, covering a broad range of risks, which have been communicated to the Headquarters.

The EEAS BA Field Security Division has been actively pursuing a policy of full compliance for Headquarters and Delegations, with the instructions being renewed every year.

Point 22: *Welcomes the continued reduction in the number of delegations exceeding the maximum space of 35m² per person from 83 in 2016 to 73 in 2017 in line with the recommendation of the Court in 2016; welcomes the launch of the real-estate management tool IMMOGEST and the acquisition of internal and external expertise to support building management, in particular in regard to delegations; calls on the EEAS to continue implementing, when possible, reasonable and efficient for the Union budget, the recommendations of the Court in its special report on the EEAS's management of its buildings around the world and to keep the Parliament informed about the improvements.*

The recommendations of the European Court of Auditors Special Report no 07/2016 "The European External Action Service's management of its buildings around the world"² are still under implementation. Tangible progress has been achieved throughout 2018 and still continues in 2019, notably thanks to the increase in the number of contract agents with expertise in security and real estate management.

In July 2019, the Court of Auditors launched the follow-up exercise to the audit recommendations included in its Special Report. This is an opportunity to conduct an analysis of the progress made by the EEAS in its management of its buildings.

Point 23: *Welcomes the fact that the EEAS has established 7 new co-location projects with 6 different Member States and observes the increasing interest in co-location schemes with 14 new co-signed agreements, not only with Member States but also with FRONTEX or EASO; notes that co-location arrangements have*

² https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR16_07/SR_EEAS_EN.pdf



contributed to a reduction in the average space of buildings in order to bring it closer to the prescribed 35m²/person; is of the opinion that co-locations are cost-effective and welcomes that they contribute to the joint representation of the Union and its Member States towards third countries; invites the EEAS as part of the monitoring of costs to expand such memoranda of understanding to other Union entities such as the CSDP missions; invites the EEAS to put in place an effective management of recovery of costs in the case of co-locations.

The EEAS has been continuously working to improve the system of cost recovery, especially from co-location partners in line with the recommendation of the Court of Auditors, aiming to a progressive centralisation at Headquarters. The introduction of a management fee in order to compensate for the additional workload on the administration has been also implemented.

In addition to the global Memorandum of Understanding with Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) which was signed in 2016 and came into force in 2017, a Service-Level Arrangement (SLA) to facilitate co-location was signed with the EU Intellectual Property Office in 2018. Other SLAs are currently under negotiation with the European Investment Bank (EIB), the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) and the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA). These documents establish a detailed legal framework, a clear calculation of costs and a recovery mechanism for the most important co-location partners of the EEAS.

Point 24: *Acknowledges the EEAS' preference to purchase rather than rent buildings for its delegations; asks the EEAS to be kept informed about a comprehensive analysis of all Union delegations to determine in which countries it would be more cost-effective for the delegations to buy office or residence buildings instead of renting them; notes that the share of owned buildings represented 18 % in 2017.*

Since 2016, Delegations, in coordination with the Headquarters, have been analysing locally the cost-effectiveness of purchasing offices and/or residences rather than renting them. The possibility of a purchase is always checked against the particular situation of the country, when analysing a building project.

In principle, the EEAS supports the position that owning in the long-term is better



than renting. The purchase of Delegation premises is considered an investment, especially in countries that are like-minded or strategic partners. From 2017 onwards, the EEAS purchased 6 buildings in different countries: Colombia, Ecuador, Nepal, New Zealand, South Africa and the United States of America.

Point 25: *Recalls the importance of providing a result-oriented support to delegations in all areas and asks the EEAS to report on the experience of the Regional Centre Europe and its assessment of possibilities of extending this framework to other geographical areas; welcomes the increased efforts undertaken to support delegations, in particular through the new Horizontal Coordination Division, which help to reinforce the general level of assurance for tasks carried out by delegations, especially those relating to high value public procurement.*

The evaluation of the pilot phase of the Regional Centre Europe (RCE) was concluded in 2018. Whereas the regionalisation project will not continue with the establishment of other regional centres, the conclusions from the evaluation have given rise to a broad dialogue for the modernisation and simplification of the administration of Headquarters and Delegations.

The Horizontal Coordination Division further enhanced its support of the Administration sections of the Delegations in 2018 and in 2019, by facilitating the business and operational continuity through the coordination of floater missions in Delegations from Headquarters and regional floaters. Furthermore, the Division provides training to the newly appointed Heads of Administration via its specialised Mentoring programme and also participates in the recruitment and selection procedures of the new members of the Administration section. In addition, the EEAS Human Resources Directorate launched the College for future Heads of Administration in 2018. The EEAS is also running through the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) a competition for Heads of Administration in Delegations. The College and the competition should together ensure that the EEAS has suitable and qualified candidates for the future Heads of Administration posts in Delegations.

Point 26: *Considers it essential to remind Heads of Delegation regularly, during the pre-posting phase, ad hoc seminars or annual conference of Ambassadors, of their essential role in the consolidation of the EEAS chain of assurance and their overall responsibility and accountability for the managing of administrative expenses and*



project portfolios in addition to their political functions; considers that an experience in a Union institution should be considered as an asset when selecting Heads of Delegation.

During the pre-posting seminar for the new Heads of Delegation in June 2019, the EEAS and Commission management conveyed a clear message to the newly appointed Heads of Delegation/Ambassadors about their role in the consolidation of the EEAS chain of assurance and their overall responsibility and accountability for the managing of administrative expenses and project portfolios. This message will be also reiterated during the Annual Conference for Heads of Delegation, which gathers the Heads of EU Delegations/Ambassadors, the EU Special Representatives, the EU Special Envoys, the Heads of Military Operations and the Heads of Civilian Missions in Brussels.

The selection panels check the ability of future Heads of Delegation in managing operational and administrative expenses of the Delegation and take into account their institutional knowledge of the Union.

Point 28: *Recognises the difficult feature of the management and resource allocation of human resources in the context of the ‘three sources’ of recruitment of the EEAS and the management of the posts in delegations; notes, moreover, that the EEAS reduced its staff by 5 % over the period 2013-2017 in compliance with the inter-institutional agreement, representing a reduction of 16 posts for 2017 in headquarters and an overall reduction of 84 posts over the last five years; is concerned that increasing average work load and understaffing issues could have detrimental effects on the health and quality of life of members of staff as well as on the long-term organisational development of the institution.*

The combination of the staff cut exercise 2013-17 and the increase of tasks constitutes a challenge for the EEAS. Therefore a series of efforts have been launched to address the risks related to workload, understaffing and health and quality of life of staff members:

1. Systematic requests for additional staff, when additional tasks are attributed to, or faced by, the EEAS, are introduced in the budgetary requests cycle. In 2018, the budgetary coverage for the recruitment of 40 contract agents was granted for addressing security matters.



2. The rebalancing of staff between Headquarters and Delegations was launched in 2018 following budget allocations requested in 2018 for redeployment of 20 posts from Headquarters to Delegations.
3. The Annual Review Mechanism has been launched with the view to optimising further distribution of staff in Delegations, taking into account both operational requirements and political priorities.
4. The Annual Management Plans have been launched in HQ since 2018, setting clear priorities for staff.

Point 29: *Notes with appreciation that gender balance almost reached parity in the overall number of posts occupied with 49,6 % being women; regrets however that the number of women in management positions remained insufficient, both for Heads of Division and Heads of Delegation, with 57 out of 219 positions (26 %) or solely 18 % of senior management posts (9 out of 50 posts) being held by women; highlights a similar imbalance among Administrators, of whom 33 % were women, and among seconded national experts (SNE), of whom 23 % were women.*

Although the gender imbalance still persists, the trend towards achieving the goals at management level is positive and encouraging. Although the number of female applicants remains low for all published management positions, progress was achieved as regards gender balance in management positions throughout the 2018 and 2019.

The percentage of female Heads of Delegation increased from 21.9% in 2017 to 25.2% in 2018 and 26.9% in 2019 and for Heads of Division from 23.5% in 2017 to 26.2% in 2018 and 29.4% in 2019. Improvements were made as well at the level of senior management where the percentage of female senior managers increased from 18% in 2017 to 21.6% in 2018 and 23.5% in 2019. Overall, the percentage of women in senior and middle management positions increased from 24.5% in 2017 to 27.1% in 2018 and 28.1% in 2019.

The representation of women among Administrators has also increased from 33% in 2017 to 34.9% in 2018 and 35% in 2019. The percentage of women Seconded National Experts remained stable: 23% in 2017, 22% in 2018 and 22.2% in 2019.



Point 30: *Invites the EEAS, in cooperation with Member States diplomatic services, to continue improving as far as possible the gender balance among senior and middle management; notes that only 18,28 % of applicants for management posts in the last rotation exercise were women; observes that for the other posts published by the EEAS, the percentage of women among applicants also decreased from 39 % in 2016 to 31,7 % in 2017.*

The EEAS and the Member States' Ministries of Foreign Affairs meet twice per year at the level of Human Resource Directors. Member States are regularly informed on the current statistics and encouraged to send qualified female candidates.

The low number of female candidates (internal and external) still remains a challenge. The level of female candidates for management position in the 2019 rotation exercise slightly increased to 22.6%, from 18% in the 2018 exercise and 21% in 2017 exercise.

Point 31: *Is of the opinion that progress is necessary in this regard and therefore invites the EEAS to both identify and reflect on the reasons for this imbalance, and subsequently possibly refine its conditions and recruitment policies in order to attract all genders equally for management positions; encourages the EEAS to cooperate with national universities offering courses dedicated to a diplomatic career in order to promote the European diplomatic service at an early stage.*

Although there is a positive trend, the general gender balance, and in particular the gender balance for managers, still needs to improve. In 2018, women accounted for 34.9% of the total population in the AD category while they held the majority of AST and AST/SC (65.6%), contract agent (58.2%) and local agent positions (53.9%). Throughout the year, the EEAS continued to pursue its efforts for more parity in management positions as regards to gender, which resulted in an increase in representation of women.

As a diplomatic service that values and welcomes the expertise of the Member States, the EEAS also invites Member States to put forward more female candidates, especially in the context of the rotation exercise. Other actions to support gender balance include continued use of positive action (i.e. opting for the candidate of an underrepresented gender when the candidates are else equal on merit); the development of an EEAS Competency Framework for Managers;



training on interview techniques and unconscious bias for selection panel members; further development of the mentoring process; an anti-harassment awareness campaign to emphasise our zero-tolerance, and to ensure that all know the procedures to follow; dedicated trainings for women managers and aspiring women managers, as well as a network created for the latter; further development of tools for work-life balance, such as teleworking in Delegations; and work with Member States and the Commission to facilitate spouse employment at post.

The EEAS is at the last phase of setting up a training map dedicated to a diplomatic career of EEAS staff, which is expected to be available by the end of 2019. This process is supported by exchanges with national academies and Member States.

Point 32: *Calls for the creation of an institute dedicated to the education of future European diplomats and suggests to study the possibility by the pertaining authorities of using the facilities of the European Parliament in Strasbourg to house this diplomatic institute.*

While the EEAS is looking at institutional specificities and processes of diplomatic academies in the Member States, in light of the small number of recruitments, it will focus on the structural models of the European School of Administration and the European Security and Defence College -these being essentially virtual colleges- as examples for its future development.

Point 33: *Welcomes the creation of the task forces on ‘Career Development Gender and Equal Opportunities’ as well as the adoption of a ‘Learning and Development Framework’ (LEAD) and the creation of the network ‘Women and the EEAS’ and the ‘Women Managers Mentoring Programme’ as important steps in improving equal opportunities at the EEAS; notes the roadmap for implementation that was adopted after the publication of the final reports of the two task forces and asks to be kept informed about progress in implementation.*

The roadmap, which was endorsed by senior management in November 2018, is currently under implementation. It covers both career development and gender and equal opportunities, with a view to further improving the organisational culture and functioning of the EEAS. A first interim report was adopted in December 2018 and the second interim report followed in July 2019: both reports give a full overview of



all actions taken to implement the work of the Task Forces.

Point 35: *Notes that the share of Member States' diplomats represented 32,83 % overall AD staff of the EEAS (i.e. 307 persons) in comparison to 33,8 % in 2014; stresses that the number of Member States' diplomats posted as Heads of Delegation decreased from 46 % to 43,8 % of the total; notes the slight increase in the share of women among Heads of Delegation to 21,9 %; notes that only 10 out of 60 Heads of Delegation coming from Member States had already worked in a Brussels-based position.*

The selection panels take into account the EU experience of candidates for a post of Head of Delegation. EU experience can be gained in Brussels as well as elsewhere, such as in capitals of the Member States.

Point 36: *Reiterates that the geographical balance should be closely monitored, in particular in cases of underrepresentation, to ensure a proportionate representation of each Member State among the population of the staff; notes that in eight cases where the share of staff was below the share of their country's population in the overall population of the Union, five came from Member States that acceded to the Union in 2004.*

The EEAS is striving for a geographical balance on the Head of Delegation level. However, the EEAS is also dependant on the number of applications from Member States and the quality and the experience of the candidates proposed. As of 2019, all Member States are represented at the level of Head of Delegation, except Croatia, which was represented in the past,

Point 37: *Observes that the number of SNE from Member States increased slightly in 2017 to reach 449 (with 387 posted in headquarters and 62 in delegations); notes that 55 % of this category of staff located in Brussels (or 214) were paid by their national administrations; acknowledges the need for SNE in various specific areas dealing with defence and security issues as well as strategic communication; calls however on the EEAS, in the context of its SNE strategy or through the newly created annual review mechanism, to provide a more detailed projection of its upcoming needs and related required skills for the purpose of predictability, better*



managing of potential conflict of interest, the avoiding of a steady increase of those contracts and the reinforcement of in house-expertise; is of the opinion that the number of SNE should not exceed a certain proportion of the overall staff of the EEAS in order to preserve a strong and sustainable esprit de corps and asks the EEAS to set such a threshold.

Seconded National Experts (SNEs) constitute a substantial share of the EEAS' Human Resources, and, since the establishment of the EEAS, they have allowed for its functioning given the limited number of statutory staff attributed to the institution.

Following the EP's recommendations, the EEAS established a more restrictive approach, with regards to SNEs and is gradually reducing its reliance on this category of staff through a series of measures:

1. In principle, no additional posts outside the specialised fields of Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) and Strategic Communication are created.
2. Amongst existing posts, in principle only those requiring specialised competences not available amongst the corps of officials are republished. Some exceptions in duly justified case of interest of the service are permitted (i.e. business continuity).
3. Budget to exchange shared cost SNEs with statutory posts were requested and granted by the Budgetary Authority for 2018 and 2019 (8 co-financed SNEs to be replaced by Contract Agents FGIV in 2018 and 6 co-financed SNEs to be replaced by Contract Agents FGIV in 2019).

Considering that the SNEs are assuming substantial and required tasks, a further reduction of the reliance on SNEs will have to be reflected in a matching increase in statutory staff. The EEAS is likely to need to rely on SNEs in specialised areas not regularly found in a diplomatic service in the future.

Point 38: *Welcomes the implementation of paid traineeships in delegations as a positive follow-up of the 2016 EEAS discharge resolution; notes that the EEAS will continue offering traineeships under different schemes such as those relating to compulsory traineeships for students or trainee civil servants as part of their compulsory training; notes that the average financial external support amounted to EUR 885 for trainees in different schemes, which is considerably less than the*



monthly allowance of EUR 1 200 under the scheme of the EEAS; calls on the EEAS to guarantee an appropriate allowance to all EEAS trainees, in order to provide sufficient reimbursement for trainees' efforts and to avoid the reinforcement of discrimination on economic grounds.

Paid trainees are awarded a monthly grant. The amount of the grant is 25% of the monthly basic salary of a local agent in Function Group I in the respective country. However, the maximum amount of the grant is limited to 25% of the basic remuneration for an official at grade AD 5/1 in Brussels.

In order to guarantee the evolution of the grants and thus the link between the remuneration of local agents and the amount of the grants, the Director General for Budget and Administration of the EEAS takes an annual decision based on the monthly remunerations of local agents, fixed on 1st of July each year. For 2019, the Director General for Budget and Administration has taken the Decision ADMIN(2019) 2 on 09 January 2019.

Young graduates may also receive additional funds provided by external actors and the EEAS has taken the decision not to reduce the amount of the grant in these cases.

Point 39: *Notes the inter-service consultation with the Commission and consultations with Trade Unions to modernise and improve the Framework Rules and related social security schemes for Local Agents; calls on the EEAS to ensure adequate post-retirement medical insurance, in particular in case of invalidity, through the revision process; strongly urges the EEAS to ensure identified reform measures enter into force in 2018 and to improve the involvement of its local staff and their expertise.*

The two parallel but separate social dialogues (Commission and EEAS) on the reform to modernise and improve the conditions of employment of local staff employed outside the EU were launched in September 2017 (Commission) and formally closed in March 2019 (EEAS). Taking into consideration that the reform requires a large number of accompanying decisions to be taken before it can take effect, the entry into force is envisaged for summer 2020.

At the occasion of the closure of the social dialogue, a dedicated legal basis was



inserted into the final texts in view of allowing a lump sum payment to cover medical costs and compensate salary loss in the event of a total permanent invalidity resulting from a work accident or occupational disease. This comes on top of a new legal basis for a severance grant in case of contract termination as a result of sickness, invalidity or accident. Under the reform, it is also possible for a retired local staff member to remain affiliated to complementary medical insurance for additional periods, depending on their years of service.

It should be borne in mind that the primary cover for medical insurance post-retirement is based on the individual national systems to which the EU contributes as employer (in most cases one of several employers during a local agent's work life). The mandate of the inter-institutional joint committee which so far was consulted only on certain aspects of the medical insurance has been widened and will, in future, include consultation on the general rules for both social security instruments (medical and provident fund).

Point 40: *Notes with concern that 171 mediation cases were registered in 2017 (representing a 16 % increase since 2016) of which 60 % were in delegations and that 32 of these cases remained open at the end of the year; notes also with concern that in the Staff Satisfaction Survey, only 10,2 % of staff disagreed and 6,21 % of staff slightly disagreed with the proposition 'I have not experienced harassment in the EEAS'; acknowledges, however, that the continuous increase in reported cases seems to reflect an increased willingness to speak, rather than an increase of conflicts at work; underlines the importance of fostering a culture of zero tolerance toward harassment and of duly following up on reported cases.*

In 2018, the EEAS Mediation Service dealt with a significant number of cases, 135, representing though a slight decrease from 2017. The cases concerned either disagreements around rights and obligations or different kinds of conflict at work, including alleged psychological and sexual harassment.

The number of cases also reflects the fact that the Mediation Service is now more visible and better known to EEAS staff, and the fact that new confidential counsellors joined the confidential counsellors network may also have a contributing factor.

The Mediation Service has noticed an increased willingness from staff to seek support, following the awareness-raising campaign on anti-harassment which



contributed to better communication of support structures in place and perhaps also increased the staff's confidence in them.

Point 41: *Welcomes the extension of the network of confidential counsellors to 13 trained volunteer counsellors in 2017; is concerned that only five out of thirteen counsellors were posted in 140 delegations; calls on the EEAS to continue increasing the presence of confidential counsellors in delegations and to continue raising awareness about harassment and psycho-social risks and about ways to mitigate and react to them.*

In 2018 and 2019, continuous efforts have been made to increase awareness on the possible tools at the disposal of the staff in case of conflict through various seminars and presentations made by the Mediation Service; all categories of EEAS staff, in Headquarters or in Delegations, were represented in these presentations.

In 2018, six confidential counsellors -out of thirteen- were posted in Delegations, more than in 2017; this number is expected to increase to eight counsellors in 2019.

Point 42: *Observes that the EEAS has updated its administrative arrangement with OLAF and reinforced its cooperation on fraud related issues with Directorates General acting in external affairs, such as the FPI, DG NEAR and DG DEVCO in 2017; notes that there are three ongoing investigations by OLAF related to potential conflict of interest in the EEAS and asks to be kept informed about the progress of these investigations.*

Information about the on-going investigations by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) is covered by tight confidentiality rules. With full respect to the prerogatives of both the OLAF and the EEAS, and in particular the need to uphold the confidentiality of the investigations, the EEAS is not informed on the progress of these investigations. The European Parliament is encouraged to approach directly the OLAF for any requests in this respect.

Point 44: *Notes that EUR 1,1 million was allocated to the EEAS in 2017 for developing its 'Strategic Communication Plus' Action in order to combat disinformation and to communicate the positive impact of Union policies; underlines*



also the importance of communicating the work of the EEAS work to citizens and asks the EEAS to provide more information on its activities in this regard in its next annual activity report.

Protecting the democratic processes and institutions from disinformation is a major challenge for our societies. The EU has put in place a robust framework for coordinated action which is fully in line with our European values and fundamental rights.

The EEAS, in particular, put in place measures as foreseen in the four pillars of the joint Commission-EEAS Action Plan against Disinformation, including to better detect, analyse and expose disinformation and raise awareness about its negative impact and to develop cooperation with national authorities, civil society and researchers, online platforms on how to counter this threat.

In June 2019, a joint report³ by the Commission and the High Representative was presented on the implementation of the Action Plan against Disinformation, which provides a first assessment of the progress achieved so far and sets out the main lessons for the future. It also explains in more detail how the Action Plan and the Elections Package helped to fight disinformation in the context of the European Parliament elections.

Point 45: *Considers the EEAS to be a vital actor in international cooperation regarding peace, security and human development; therefore stresses the importance of using wisely the scarce resources available and of constantly improving the consistency and coherence of the Union's external and internal action, as well as the need to strive for common positions and coordinated responses for the Union to be efficient in this role; underlines the importance of public diplomacy and strategic communications as an integral aspect of the Union's external relations, not only as an instrument to communicate its values and interests and to enhance the Union's visibility, but also as a tool of countering foreign influence in the Western Balkans and our neighbourhoods and strategic propaganda against the Union and its Member States; stresses the continuing and growing need for exposing disinformation and for mobilizing context-specific analysis in order to counter anti-Union propaganda; firmly believes that the Union should step up its efforts to develop effective public diplomacy strategies; calls on the EEAS to continue its*

³ Report on the implementation of the Action Plan Against Disinformation, JOIN(2019) 12 final.



efforts to modernise its approaches and to invest in new skills and capabilities; deems the work of the EEAS Strategic Communication Task Force necessary and valuable and calls for providing it with the appropriate financial and personnel resources.

A EUR 1.1 million Preparatory Action, under 2018 budget (increased to EUR 3 million in 2019) supports on-going work in providing a more professional and technical monitoring of the information space. A team of over 20 external experts has been working with the East Strategic Task Force in providing targeted and tailored media monitoring and delivering big data analytics towards the detecting and exposing of disinformation.

Outputs are shared with key stakeholders, including the Member States via the Raid Alert System. These include:

1. Daily monitoring reports of the media landscape, covering online and traditional (television and radio) media as well as localised media narratives in key EU and Eastern Partnership languages;
2. Weekly analysis reports of trends in the disinformation data ecosystem and bi-weekly analysis of the reach and potential impact of disinformation;
3. Exposed disinformation narratives publicly available via the weekly Disinformation Review as well as on the 'EUvsDisinfo' website, which contains a rich catalogue of over 5,000 disinformation cases.

The scope of Preparatory Action is currently expanding to cover disinformation coming from Russian sources in the Western Balkans and Southern neighbourhood countries, with further engagement with the Delegations on tackling disinformation, additional reporting and language coverage.

A further stage of awareness raising, as well as training on detection, analysis and responses to disinformation is foreseen for the latter part of the 2019, which will include all EU staff and other key stakeholders.

Point 46: *Notes that the EEAS has carried out an assessment of the impact of the United Kingdom's decision to withdraw from the European Union on human resources (i.e. 122 British national employees) and the operational adjustment required at headquarters and delegations; welcomes the intention of the EEAS to follow a case-by-case approach to decide on the extension of contracts for British*



contract and temporary agents; calls on the EEAS to swiftly develop a coherent strategy to provide certainty for the persons concerned.

On 11 April 2019, the European Council in agreement with the United Kingdom decided upon an extension of the period provided for in Article 50(3) TEU to allow for the ratification of the Withdrawal Agreement. It is also stated that such an extension should last only as long as necessary and, in any event, no longer than 31 October 2019.

Consequently, the High Representative/Vice-President and the Commission have reconfirmed the commitment that was conveyed to EEAS and Commission staff in the letter of 27 July 2018 and to follow a concerted approach with regard to staff serving in Delegations having UK nationality only.

EU permanent officials (AD and AST) having UK nationality only will no longer be able to serve in Delegations and all UK officials currently serving in third countries will be transferred back to Headquarters in the context of the 2019 rotation exercise. They will be able to pursue their careers in Brussels. Regarding Temporary Agents, it was reconfirmed that contracts of Temporary Agents seconded from the UK diplomatic services to the EEAS under Article 2(e) of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants will be terminated on the day the UK leaves the EU (or, if that is earlier, at their normal end date). Regarding Contract Agents serving in Delegations, in view of their specific status, in particular the fact that their reassignment to Headquarters is only possible for a limited period, it was considered in the interest of the service as well as in the interest of the contract agents concerned to extend their presence in Delegations. The EEAS and Commission services were asked to consider the possibility of an extended stay until 1 September 2020, after having heard the colleagues concerned and taken into account in particular their preferences. The assignments of Seconded National Experts have been prolonged until the withdrawal date, while respecting the maximum duration of secondment to the EEAS.