



## 2018 Discharge

### Questionnaire to the European Economic and Social Committee

Hearing: 12 November 2019

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#### General questions

1. **What steps were made to follow up the areas related to translation management requiring further attention from management highlighted by the internal audit service?**

Following the assessment of the pilot project on the common management of certain translation units, the Committee, in close cooperation with the CoR, agreed to establish further synergies within the Translation Directorate: it was decided that, starting in 2019, the management of the Maltese and Slovene units and of the Danish, Finnish and Swedish units would be merged. Further merging of units will be decided on a case-by case basis.

Translation outsourcing will be stabilised in the coming years at between 20% and 25% in order to maintain a certain level of internal flexibility.

The Directorate for Translation is committed to further exploring rationalisation measures in the area of translation.

2. **What was the cost of outsourcing of translation in 2018? What would have been the cost if the translations had been carried out by in-house services?**

According to the KIAPI methodology, the total cost of outsourced translation for the EESC and CoR was EUR 7 669 468 in 2018 (EESC costs only: EUR 4 417 613). According to the same methodology, the total cost of translation in-house would have been EUR 12 471 818 (EESC costs only: EUR 7 208 710).

3. **What has been made to continue the positive trend towards fewer cancellations of interpretation services?**

The following measures were implemented throughout 2018:

- The specific Key Performance Indicator (KAPI) has been constantly monitored with regard to the question of late interpretation cancellations; the data indicate a constant reduction in unused slots from 4.38% in 2016 to 2.61% in 2018;
- A mechanism for alerting organisers was put in place at the beginning of the week in which interpretation had to be cancelled to avoid invoicing;

- Specific awareness initiatives took place with requesting services on broad linguistic regimes to raise greater awareness of the importance of avoiding late cancellations;
- Targeted contact took place to assess real needs in terms of the language coverage requested;
- Specific negotiations took place with institutional providers (EP/DG LINC, and EC/SCIC-DG Interpretation) to obtain extended deadlines for cancelling without costs;
- Requesting services were required to provide justification for any late cancellations of interpretation;
- The EESC Commission for Financial and Budgetary Affairs previously – Budget Group closely monitors late cancellations of interpretation that have incurred costs and requests detailed explanations.

#### **4. What has been made to reduce the member's transportation cost?**

According to Council decision No 2013/471/EU of 23 September 2013, the EESC has a system for the reimbursement of travel expenses based on actual costs, as well as for allowances compensating for the time spent by its members and their alternates when performing their duties.<sup>1</sup>

The Council rules were implemented by EESC decision of 26 May 2015 on the reimbursement of expenses incurred and the allowances received by the Committee members replaced by the EESC decision of 26 April 2016 currently in force.

The rules relating to reimbursement of travel costs mirror the rules in force at the European Parliament:

- Decision No 2009/C 159/01 of the Bureau of 19 May and 9 July 2008 concerning implementing measures for the Statute for Members of the European Parliament and
- Decision No 2018/C 466/02 of 10 December 2018, according to which EESC Members, are reimbursed – upon presentation of the supporting documents – the actual costs of their travel tickets, up to a maximum of the discounted ("D") business class (or similar) air fare.

The current system – which is based on actual costs – is in line with both the Council decision and with the system in place at the European Parliament.

It should be noted that EESC members are employed by entities in Member States. Their availability to participate in EESC activities (meetings, etc.) is impacted by this element. The EESC members travel in order to attend the duly convoked meetings necessary to perform their functions according to Article 300 of the TEU. A specially drafted brochure on smart booking practices helps members to optimise their choices when making their travelling arrangements, thus freeing up more resources for the political work. Hence,

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<sup>1</sup> Notably Article 3: "The travelling expenses of beneficiaries shall be reimbursed on the basis of the expenses actually incurred. The Committee shall set appropriate reimbursement ceilings, with a view to ensuring that its travel-related expenditure does not exceed the level contained within its voted annual budget".

EESC beneficiaries are well aware of the need to make their travel arrangements in advance, whenever it is possible. A targeted, extensive awareness raising campaign aimed at members was launched following the 2015 changes to the Member's Financial Statute to move to a real cost coverage. This campaign, which included the aforementioned brochure on "Smart booking for travelling" (published in February 2018 – in attachment), encouraging best practices in reserving flight tickets (crossed-booking, booking in advance, using low-cost airlines, etc.), has been run and is being constantly updated. As a result, savings were made with regard to travel costs, following the invitation to members to book tickets as soon as the meeting was notified.

The savings created higher effectiveness in the spending on political activities. In addition, it should be noted that the planning of EESC meetings related to the core activity, i.e. preparation of opinions, depends on the date of the referrals set by the key stakeholders, European Commission, European Parliament and Council. Therefore, the planning of their legislative activities has a direct impact on the activities of the EESC and therefore, on the number of days for booking in advance.

The EESC travel agency (the same as the EP) systematically presents several cost-effective solutions to the requesting EESC beneficiaries.

Furthermore, the EESC encourages shared transport solutions such as public buses, as well as car and taxi sharing. Coaches are hired (particularly for meetings outside Brussels) when this proves to be the most cost-efficient solution.

With a view to constantly developing and optimising the members' travels costs, the EESC periodically reviews its internal rules on reimbursement (Members Financial Statute): last revision took place in 2019.

## **5. What steps were made to regularly inform the Parliament about the achievements related to the application of the principles of performance-based budgeting?**

The EESC understands performance-based budgeting in the same way as the OECD, namely as "the systematic use of information about the outputs, results and/or impacts of public policies in order to inform, influence and/or determine the level of public funds allocated towards those policies in the budgetary context".

The performance-based budgeting of the European Commission is restricted to operational expenses and the Programme Statements are the instruments through which the Commission provides performance information.

The EESC budget is part of Administrative Heading 5 of the EU Budget (current MFF 2014-2020) and is purely of an administrative nature. The principles of performance-based budgeting can therefore be applied in decision making and in the reporting processes only.

The EESC 2018 Annual Activity Report (AAR) gives a detailed analysis of the achievements of the institution, including Key Activity Performance Indicators (KAPIs) and budget execution rates. The AAR document informs the Parliament, on a yearly basis, on the application of the principles of performance-based budgeting.

**6. How has worked the ad hoc group set up by the Committee's Bureau on the future of the Committee? What were the outcomes of the ad hoc group in 2018?**

The Ad hoc group on the "Future of the Committee" presented its final report to the Bureau in July 2017. The Bureau decided to extend the reflection process via another ad hoc group on the "Rationalisation of the Committee's bodies".

This group reported back to the Bureau in October 2017 and was instructed to press ahead with discussions, this time bringing in the presidents of the sections and the CCMI. A follow-up report was submitted to the Bureau in December 2017, whereupon the Bureau was in a position to take a formal decision on streamlining its structures in January 2018.

As a conclusion, the Europe 2020 Steering Committee was replaced by a specific body focusing on the European Semester. Additionally an ad hoc group on fundamental rights and the rule of law was also set up. The Bureau addressed all of the Committee's other internal structures. Cuts were made to the number of members and to the number of meetings held by some of these bodies, and others were discontinued.

The Bureau also reviewed the membership of the Committee's cross-cutting structures, such as the Liaison Group with European civil society organisations and networks and the Brexit follow-up group. The Bureau is currently considering, via an appropriate ad hoc body, the remit of the Committee's sections.

**7. What has been made to strengthen the political cooperation between Committee and Parliament?**

2018 was a year of change and progress for the political cooperation between the Committee and the Parliament.

The EESC renewed its leadership in April 2018 and elected Luca Jahier as the new president. The new president increased efforts to strengthen relations with the EP, especially given the occasion of the upcoming European Elections.

This effort was visible in the meetings organized between the two sides, in particular:

- A bilateral meeting between president Luca Jahier and the EP CCC Chair, Cecilia Wikström;
- The participation of EP vice-president, Ramón Luis Valcárcel, in the EESC's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary plenary session;
- The meeting of the EP vice-president in charge of outreach to citizens, Ms Guillaume, with the EESC Liaison Group members as part of the "This time I'm voting" campaign;

Furthermore, in preparation for the EP Elections 2019, the EESC adopted an action plan in September 2018, focusing in particular on young voters throughout the EU. On 5 December, the EESC president and Antonio Tajani, president of the EP, signed a joint declaration on the European elections.

These activities have created the basis for stronger cooperation, both on EP elections and during the following mandate in 2019. Furthermore, they had a significant effect on cooperation and communication between the two sides:

- EESC members and delegates had 43 meetings with EP committee presidents, rapporteurs and shadow rapporteurs, as well as with other MEPs;
- Members of the EESC took part in 96 events at the Parliament (committee meetings, hearings, intergroup events and events initiated by individual MEPs).
- MEPs participated in 39 EESC legislative work meetings;
- The EP continued sharing the half-year programme of planned committee hearings with the EESC.

After receiving a list of possible topics for cooperation presented by the EESC president to the CCC in 2017, the Parliament also followed up with several exploratory opinion requests, in particular from the Committee on Women's Rights.

The initial results of the decision to share the list have been encouraging, with the overall requests for opinions reaching a new high. This suggests it has a positive effect on the relation between the two sides, encouraging sectorial cooperation. After overcoming some initial procedural issues and informing committees of the possibility of requesting opinions from the EESC, there is room for further developments.

EESC specialised sections, their members and their presidents maintain active formal and informal contact with the parliamentary committees, with chairs and vice-chairs, coordinators and rapporteurs. Contact is also maintained at administrative level between the relevant secretariats.

The EESC Communication Commission previously - Communication Group, in its meetings of 5 July and 13 September 2018, endorsed the EESC communication action plan in the run-up to the EP elections. The aim of the action plan was to assist the European Parliament in raising awareness about the European elections and to encourage participation, targeting in particular civil society organisations, local audiences and young people. The EESC started to communicate about the upcoming 2019 European elections in the summer of 2018, joining the EP's "This time I'm voting" campaign. The campaign was continued until the Election Day and was the focus of EESC's campaigning on social media in the second half of 2018.

Particularly noteworthy actions carried out in 2018 include: the 12th Civil Society Media Seminar on the theme "Reaffirming European values", which took place in Athens on 22-23 November 2018 in view of the upcoming European elections 2019, and the second information seminar for journalists, which took place on 12-13 December 2018. The EESC organised the seminar in view of the 2019 European elections to enable journalists to gain a better overall understanding of the EU institutions and EU policy-making and to become better acquainted with the work of the Committee, its members and its contributions to the life of European citizens. The joint declaration by president Tajani and president Jahier of 5 December 2018 paved the way for the implementation of the elections communication plan in 2019 and for the cooperation between the two institutions in raising awareness about the elections.

**8. What are the concrete steps and what has been done in the Committee's mid-term strategy on the investments in their IT projects and equipment?**

With a view to modernising and improving the Committee's working methods, reflections on the future digital strategy to support this change took place from 2017 onwards.

Following this, the EESC Bureau adopted the EESC Digital Strategy at its meeting of 18 June 2019.

The Digital Strategy is divided into three main sections:

- The General IT framework at the EESC – presents the vision of the EESC IT environment and identifies the major IT challenges that support this vision, in particular user-driven design, the sharing and reuse of data, the offer of modern and flexible solutions, facilitating real-time data exchanges, the free flow of data and the provision of borderless digital services for both members and staff while strengthening cyber security.
- Strategic projects – focuses on the development of new applications and the improvement of the existing ones and pays particular attention to the deployment of digital solutions covering existing gaps in the political domain.
- Enablers – underlines the importance of a set of enabling actions (governance, resources, digital skills), without which it would be impossible to achieve the desired digital transformation of the institution.

In this context, it must be pointed out that there has been a structural low level of IT funding at the EESC in recent years, also as a consequence of the nominal freeze of the budget. The Committee has only devoted less than 3%<sup>2</sup> of its total budget to IT, compared to more than 7% at the EP and the Council and around 5% at other European Institutions. This will have important repercussions on the implementation of the digital strategy, as it will not be possible to progress as swiftly as desired. It should be noted that the European Parliament in the observations on the EESC's 2017 discharge resolution acknowledged this underfinancing.

**9. In which way has the Committee informed about updates on the new comprehensive Ethics and Integrity framework?**

In 2018, the Committee started preparations for a "Respect@Work" campaign in order to raise awareness of the importance of dignity in the workplace and to foster respectful workplace relations.

The campaign includes activities such as:

- Organising conferences
- The launch of an online survey

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<sup>2</sup> The average for the EESC between 2012 and 2018 is 2.85 %

- Exchanging good practices between services within a consultation forum
- Creating the intranet page "A respectful workplace", as well as the restructuring of the "Ethics and Integrity" page to make it user-friendly
- Preparing posters

In addition, an exercise on the revision of the Ethics and Integrity courses has started in order to include all the stakeholders in the Committee.

**10. What has the Committee done to find out the direct budgetary impact of the decision of the United Kingdom to withdraw from the Union?**

Under the assumption that Brexit would take place, the Committee deducted the "evident changes" linked to members' travel costs and the co-financing of IT equipment from its 2019 and 2020 budget. The expenditure linked to UK members' participation in plenary sessions and section meetings, as well as a lump sum amount paid to UK members for the co-financing of IT equipment was therefore taken out. An amount of EUR 318 600 was deducted from the 2019 budget and an additional amount of EUR 173 062 when preparing the 2020 budget.

**11. What has been made together with the Committee of the Regions, to carry out an assessment of potential renovation needs and to make an estimation of the costs for the scenario where the two Committees take over the entire VMA building?**

a) Technical condition of the VMA building

Taking into account that the VMA was built more than 30 years ago, the Committees have decided to renovate the office space by 2022.

The aim of this renovation, which will include all areas (except for the conference rooms that are fully operational and still usable for 10 years), is:

- improving the security of the building.
- technical conformity, with a view to extending the useful life of the building until 2028, when the purchase option could be exercised.
- creating a more adequate and modern working environment.

Work on the upgrading security will start in 2020 and the cost estimate is EUR 1 million.

b) Technical Audit of the VMA

As a first step, and as a follow-up to the approval of the Buildings Strategy, the Committees launched a technical audit with the aim of better understanding the constraints of the building.

This involves carrying out a technical audit on the regulatory conformity/non-conformity of the technical installation and the structural components and



determining which are to be fully or partially renovated, as well as identifying those worth keeping due to their sufficient residual life.

The results will allow the Committees to identify the work that needs to be undertaken in the short term to ensure compliance with the regulation in force and to allow a 10-year extension of the life of the building.

c) Assessment of the scenarios for the occupancy of the building.

The Committees have entrusted a specialised architecture agency with the task of assessing and proposing different scenarios for the occupancy of the building, with differing densities in order to find out the pros and cons and the costs.

Additionally, the ideal set-up for the VMA will be defined, taking into account the configuration of the external walls, the load-bearing structure and the capacity of the technical installations.

The final report is expected at the end of 2019.

d) Assessment of the upgrading work

The minor renovation work will be determined by the conclusions of the technical audit and the assessment of the different scenarios mentioned above.

At the end of 2019, the Committees will then launch a call for tender (after the specifications have been defined by an architecture agency) with a view to signing the contract at the end of 2020. It will only be possible to estimate the costs of the renovation after the assessment by the architecture agency.

The renovation work is expected to take place from the end of 2020 and until the summer of 2022.

**12. How many members from 350 members of the Committee have registered address in Belgium?**

Twenty-five members have provided the administration with a registered address in Belgium.

**13. How many members are employed by a company in Brussels?**

Members are not obliged to declare the address of the organisation and/or company by which they are remunerated.

It should be noted that upon taking office, and in the case of any changes to the information given or to their circumstances, members are required to complete and sign a declaration of interests, published on the Committee website, in which they are asked to list their remunerated functions or activities.



**14. What is the whole amount of daily allowances (€290 daily allowance) paid in 2018?**

The amount of daily subsistence allowances for members and their alternates in 2018 was EUR 6 557 536.

**15. Have you considered changing the system of one signature to confirm the presence of members on the meetings, to the system of two signatures – one signature at the beginning of the meeting and one at the end of the meeting – to avoid that the members are coming just to sign their attendance list?**

The Members' Financial Statute (Article 4(1)) stipulates that " in order to benefit from reimbursement of expenses or payment of allowances, the beneficiary must: a) sign the attendance list at meetings, whenever such a list is kept; b) complete the standard expenses declaration form for each day of the meeting, and c) submit the appropriate supporting documents". Subsistence is granted for each day of participation in the work of the Committee and its constituent bodies or of official representation of the EESC.

The EESC is firmly committed to improving its working methods; it will further study practices and experiences at the European Parliament and other European bodies regarding the presence record and will benchmark the best practices.

**16. Have there been any new measures taken to renew the administrative cooperation between the Committee and the Committee of the Regions since the cooperation agreement from 2016?**

The administrative cooperation between the EESC and the CoR is a very good example of interinstitutional cooperation, seeking effectiveness and efficiency in their administrations while recognising each other's distinct institutional role and political identity. The Joint Services serve both institutions in the fields of translation, infrastructure, logistics, security and IT.

The current administrative cooperation agreement between the CoR and the EESC entered into force on 1 January 2016 and will expire on 31 December 2019. The mid-term assessment of the cooperation agreement confirmed that the cooperation was working well in general. Following the mid-term review report, the respective Bureaux instructed political negotiators and the secretaries-general to negotiate a new agreement. While efforts continue to update and upgrade the existing relationship with a view to allowing further synergies and savings, there is a mutual will to keep a stable relationship beyond 2019, possibly by extending the current agreement.

**17. What progress has been achieved in the cooperation with the Committee of the Regions based on the cooperation agreement, which entered in force in 2016?**

The administrative cooperation between the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions is highly developed. It constitutes a model of sound management of public finances, which is one of its major objectives. By means of an administrative cooperation agreement approved by the two Bureaux, the two Committees have not only established a large number of procedures for collaboration between their own services but have also set up and organised what are known as Joint Services, in which both human and financial resources from the two Committees are pooled together. The Joint Services serve both institutions in the fields of translation, infrastructure, logistics and IT.

Regular contact takes place between the presidents of the EESC and the CoR as well as between the respective secretaries-general. The current cooperation agreement that entered into force in January 2016 is the third consecutive cooperation agreement since 2000.

The major achievements in the field of infrastructure in 2018 were:

- the negotiation of the agreement with the European Commission to exchange the VMA building for the buildings BEL68 and TRE74 in 2022;
- the completion of the security-related refurbishment of the entrance hall of the JDE building;
- the launch of the security-related refurbishment of the entrance hall of the BVS building.

Another key element of the cooperation is "resource-efficient multilingualism", which is based on effectively combining in-house translation, enhanced work-sharing between institutions and increased productivity and outsourcing; its main elements are:

- Progressively aligning with interinstitutional best practices for outsourcing: outsourcing has been further developed, rising from 9.7% in 2015 to 20.10% in 2018 (indicative target: 20%).
- Setting of staffing levels for translation units based on objective criteria, which are subject to annual confirmation based on interinstitutional benchmarking (changes in workload and productivity levels). Nearly all translation units have reached their final target size.
- The decision to continue with the common management of certain translation units (Finnish/Swedish and Czech/Slovak) and continuation of the project on a case-by-case basis, where it is possible to demonstrate savings. Since then the secretaries-general of the EESC and CoR have agreed on a merger of the Slovenian and Maltese units (as of 1 June 2019) and of the Danish unit with the already merged Finnish and Swedish unit (as of 1 October 2019).

As part of the efforts to rationalise the use of space, the Committees – thanks to coordinated management of meeting rooms – make the best of the available meeting and conference rooms.

The Cooperation Agreement also provides for close and consistent cooperation on the maintenance and technical management of meeting rooms. On this basis, the

two units responsible cooperate on a daily basis on several projects to maintain and improve the relevant technical infrastructure, with particular emphasis on the complete technical renovation of the JDE conference rooms' audio-visual systems between 2017 and 2021. Furthermore, permanent joint technical EESC-CoR study groups, which include technicians from both Committees, have been created and meet on a regular basis in order to discuss and define the specific technical solutions to be implemented in the meeting rooms.

**18. What budgetary savings have been achieved through the cooperation with the Committee of the Regions?**

As regards infrastructure, yearly savings amounting to EUR 11.8 million + EUR 0.72 million for rent, maintenance, consumables and staff are due to both Committees sharing resources in this area.

With regard to IT, the total annual budget is some EUR 7 million for both Committees. If each Committee were to operate a separate IT system, the costs would be some EUR 6 million per Committee. Thus, the annual budgetary savings due to the Cooperation Agreement are some EUR 5 million for both Committees.

However, it should be noted that there has been a structurally low level of IT funding at the EESC for years, as the Committees dedicate less than 3% of their total budget to IT, compared to more than 7% at the EP and the Council.

In order to address their backlog in IT projects and systems, the two Committees are using mopping-up exercises at the end of the year to finance IT projects and equipment that have suffered from underfinancing for several years.

For the Printshop, the staff savings resulting from the Cooperation Agreement amount to around EUR 0.45 million/year. This is without taking into account the need to increase the equipment available for independent use by both Committees (offset printers, finishing machines, plotter, and digital machines).

The two Committees, like other EU institutions, have been exposed to several security challenges since the entry into force of the current cooperation agreement. The response to these challenges necessitated additional investments in infrastructure without additional budget, close coordination between the Committees in crisis situations, and a revision of the procedures for interaction with the Belgian authorities and the EU institutions.

Staff-related budgetary savings have also been obtained by pooling resources for providing security to members, staff and visitors. Savings amount to around EUR 0.5 million/year.

With regard to translation, the 2016-2019 Cooperation Agreement confirms the EESC's and CoR's commitment to a further extending and developing the resource-efficient multilingualism policy and to evolving staffing levels in translation based on objective criteria while maintaining appropriate quality levels.

In relation to the management of meeting rooms, synergies are linked to:

- a reduced need for temporary contracts;

- reduced rental fees for meeting rooms outside the premises (around EUR 0.10 million/year).

- partially sharing the control room (OPS room), resulting in a saving of around EUR 0.05 million/year, which corresponds to the cost of operating an OPS room. Additionally, setting up a second room would cost around EUR 0.35 million/year.

**Budgetary savings for both Committees (EESC and CoR) through cooperation**

Area	Amount in million (EUR)	Comment
Infrastructure	11.8 0.72	Rent, maintenance, consumables Staff
IT	5.0 Not quantifiable	Operating IT systems Setting up of separate IT systems
Printshop	0.45 Not quantifiable	Staff Purchase of separate equipment
Security	0.50	Staff
Meeting service	0.10 0.05 0.35	Rental of meeting rooms Staff for control room (OPS room) Setting up of a second control room (OPS room)

**19. Which proposals have been developed in 2018 by the Committee together with the Parliament’s Secretary-General to better integrate the Committee’s opinions into Parliament’s work? Since the Committee mainly refers to meetings and concludes that there is scope for further developing the co-operation with Parliament, which measures could in the Committee’s opinion enhance its effectiveness towards the Parliament’s work and, in particular, its legislative work?**

The cooperation between the EP and the EESC at legislative level has improved significantly in recent years thanks to the active commitment of both institutions. Meetings on topics of common interest between the EP committees and the EESC sections have become a major component of the cooperation process. Regular information about planned EP committees' hearings that the EP communicates to the EESC has allowed better monitoring and thus participation in EP activities. As a result, in 2018:

- EESC members and delegates had 43 meetings with EP committee presidents, rapporteurs and shadow rapporteurs, as well as with other MEPs;
- Members of the EESC took part in 96 events at the Parliament (committee meetings, hearings, intergroup events and events initiated by individual MEPs).
- MEPs participated in 39 EESC legislative work meetings;

- Exchanges between the EESC president and its Bureau and the chair of the CCC take place on a regular basis on issues of mutual interest.

Particular attention should be drawn to the contribution that the EESC makes to the EP's work via the possibility of drawing up exploratory opinions upon request of the EP.

The EESC believes that there is scope for further developing cooperation with the EP and enhancing the effectiveness of the EESC's input to the EP's legislative work:

- considering that the EESC's opinions are in general ready before the start of the legislative work at the EP, ensuring a formal contact between EESC rapporteur and the EP rapporteur before the publication of the first draft of a report or the working document could have a crucial impact on the EP's legislative work;
- using the list of EP hearings and the work programme of each EP committee, the EESC can better make its relevant opinions known by creating possibilities for EESC rapporteurs to participate regularly in EP hearings and official EP committee meetings;
- reciprocally, increasing the participation of EP rapporteurs and shadow rapporteurs in EESC sections activities could be a key tool in ensuring that the EESC's opinions and ideas are taken into consideration in EP reports.

**20. How did the Committee follow-up the demand in paragraph 22 in the discharge report to the year 2016 to publish declarations of interests from the President, the Vice-Presidents and the Secretariat on the website?**

The declarations of interest for the president and vice-presidents are available and accessible on the EESC members' internet pages. All members must update their declarations if their circumstances change. Following the new Rules of Procedure that entered into force in March 2019, upon appointment, members taking office must draw up a declaration of any interest, financial or other, that might have an impact on their work at the Committee.

Staff members must sign a "declaration – conflict of interest" before being recruited.

**21. What budgetary savings have been achieved through the cooperation with the Parliament?**

The cooperation with the European Parliament enhances efficiency through increased administrative cooperation and the optimisation of certain functions and services, thereby generating savings in the Union budget. However, quantifying these savings is a complex matter.

One example of a clear synergy, which creates savings in terms of staff costs, is the fact that the EESC uses the European Parliamentary Research Service (36 EESC posts were transferred to the EPRS for this purpose, reducing the "salary mass"

accordingly). This reduction amounts to EUR 3.3 million (2016 salary levels) as indicated in Annex II of the Cooperation Agreement.

Based on the Cooperation Agreement, and in order to compensate for the reduction in translation staff, the EP decided to provide an additional amount to the EESC and CoR to outsource translation services, which could be reallocated to other political areas if not fully used up for outsourced translation. The EESC used this possibility of reallocation in the past 3 years.

The workload balancing between the Parliament and the Committees was less intensive in 2018 because the translation services of all institutions had to cope with heavy workload peaks due to the Multiannual Financial Framework. Nevertheless, the Committees have translated 927.62 pages submitted by the Parliament.

Moreover, joint tenders with the EP such as for the tender for selecting the travel agency, create savings both in terms of internal resources and the prices for the outsourced services.

During 2018, the EP (leading institution) invited the EESC to participate in the drafting, launch and award of a five years' service contract to a travel management company (EP/FINS/2017-103).

The budgetary savings for the EESC relating to interinstitutional cooperation in this area are equivalent to the cost of one contractual agent from function group IV working for 9 months.

Preparatory work was carried out with a view to finalising a SLA in the field of interpretation services. The agreement was signed in 2019.

Further efficiency gains could be achieved through mutual recognition of badges for members and staff and the opening of a new pathway between the BvS and ATR buildings.

## **22. How has the administrative cooperation between Parliament and the Committee improved in 2018?**

Cooperation between the EESC and the EPRS is well-established and has intensified in 2018. Both the EESC and the EP are committed to creating quality content and share the same objective of better-law making.

Constant exchanges of information and communication between the two sides has allowed for fruitful cooperation. Facilitated access for members of the EESC and the legislative work units to the EPRS' services and background material has been a valuable support when drafting opinions. Moreover, the ad hoc briefings prepared by the EPRS at the request of the Committee have helped the EESC to produce high quality opinions and make better use of the content produced by EPRS. The establishment of the "linking the levels unit" within the EPRS has been key in reinforcing the cooperation.

The communications services from both sides also liaised closely during the year. The EESC took part in the interinstitutional project the "European Quarter of Brussels exterior wayfinding system", which the EP is leading.

As part of the cooperation between the EESC and the EP visitors' services, the EESC welcomes visitor groups organised by MEPs. Many groups visiting the EESC also visit the Parliament and vice versa. Moreover, in 2018, a visit to the House of European History was organised for the winners of the EESC civil society prize on the day of the awards ceremony in December 2018. This visit was also organised for the teachers accompanying the students participating in the EESC youth event "Your Europe Your Say" (33 teachers from the 28 EU Member States and the 5 EU candidate countries).

All cultural events and relevant communication activities organised by the EESC were regularly published in the monthly edition of the EP newsletter, "Destination EP" (now called "Newsletter Business to Citizens" (B2C)). Such productive cooperation has consistently multiplied its impact by maximising the audience reached and participation in the events organised by the Committee.

A direct channel for cooperation and networking between colleagues from the two institutions has also been opened. More specifically, in conjunction with the European Year for Cultural Heritage (EYCH), colleagues from both institutions participated in the Stakeholders' Committee for the EYCH2018.

The EP Director for the Liaison Offices presented the EP elections campaign to the EESC Communication Group on 5 July 2018. Several meetings already took place at administrative level in 2018 to coordinate specific communication activities in view of the elections.

**23. Concerning the Committee opinions to the parliamentary committees, how does the Committee match its opinions calendar to the parliamentary committees' schedules? How do you communicate and make sure your opinions are taken into consideration?**

According to Article 304 of the TFEU, the EESC shall/may be consulted by the European Parliament, by the Council or by the Commission and the institutions may set a time limit for the submission of its opinion.

In the specific case of the EP, the referral letter usually mentions a three-month deadline from the date of the announcement at the Parliament.

The deadlines requested by the legislative authorities are the first point of reference for the EESC in establishing the calendar for the preparation of its opinions. The EESC ensures the timely adoption of the opinions and makes sure that they are readily available for the proceedings in Council and Parliament.

In order to improve outreach as part of the process, whenever possible, an exchange of views between EP and EESC rapporteurs is organised to discuss policy content.

The EESC ensures that, as a rule, the EESC opinion is adopted in time for work in the EP Committee. The EESC Rapporteur is therefore encouraged and available to present



core proposals to the MEPs at any stage of the legislative process. EESC staff provide regular updates, information and reminders on the possibilities to present the EESC opinions at the EP's hearings and other events.

As regards non-legislative files – which the EESC usually works on when a referral is received from the European Commission and on which the EP often prepares an INI Report – a similar practical process is set in motion with a bilateral meeting between rapporteurs being key to the EP-EESC's cooperation.

It should be noted that the Committee shares the use of its meeting rooms with the Committee of Regions. The calendar is prepared in the year N-1 to respect the needs of both consultative bodies, hence, its flexibility is somewhat restricted.

See also the reply to question 19.

With regard to communication, every EESC opinion is sent by a personal email to each MEP sitting on the competent EP committees.

In addition, as explained above, the EESC rapporteur meets the EP rapporteur(s) to discuss policy content. The EESC Rapporteur also attends hearings organized by the EP committees and political groups. As stated above, the EESC rapporteur is available to present the opinion in the relevant EP fora (including in bilateral meetings).

For its part, the EESC organises hearings and conferences for most opinions during the preparation phase and EP Rapporteurs are invited to speak in most cases.

**24. Has the agreement between the Committee and CoR and European Commission on the exchange of the Commission's VMA building against the Committees B 68/TRE 74 buildings (rue Belliard 68 and rue de Trèves 74 are adjacent buildings) been signed?. What were the advantages of the exchange of buildings for the Committee?**

The agreement between the EESC and the CoR and the European Commission on the exchange of the Commission's VMA building for the Committees BEL68/TRE 74 buildings was signed on 28 August 2019, in the presence of the respective presidents of the EESC and CoR and Commissioner Oettinger. The Bureau of the European Economic and Social Committee approved the signing of the agreement in its meeting of 19 March 2019. The main priority identified in the EESC buildings policy, approved by the Bureau in October 2017, is the geographical concentration of the buildings. The Bureau also approved the best possible scenario for the Committees in the short, medium and long term, which is securing long-term availability of the whole Van Maerlant (VMA) building.

The advantages are:

- a reduction in the operating expenses for security, technical services, organisation of meetings and internal transport;
- optimisation of the reliability of technical and data-processing installations; minimisation of the impact on the environment and finally;
- an improvement in effectiveness, profitability performance and visibility/return, comfort and image.

Its three conference rooms are in good shape for another 10 years of use and are, just like its offices, physically connected to the offices and conference rooms of the Committees' main building, the JDE. These are exceptional circumstances with a high value for the Committees as they allow for very significant financial and non-financial benefits (lower security costs, cabling and easier accessibility due to interconnected buildings). No other existing building nearby can offer similar benefits.

Furthermore, the efficiency of staff management will benefit from the synergies generated by grouped buildings.

**25. After the revision of the Committee's performance measurement announced in the replies to the written questions from November 2018, are there any improvements of the KAPIs (Key Activity Performance Indicators), in order to better assess the performance of the institution?**

The revision of a subset of performance measurements, KAPIs (Key Activity Performance Indicators), was carried out in two steps: firstly, the establishment of an inventory of the existing KAPIs and secondly, an analysis of the system.

A series of individual meetings took place with different organisational entities in order to raise awareness of the system and create synergies.

This process of updating the inventory aimed to bring clarifications and homogeneity to the existing KAPIs. Throughout the analysis of the system, the KAPIs were assessed in the broader framework of the workflows and work procedures. The outcome of this two-step process is that targets are more measurable and there are stronger links between the procedures and the desired results. An example for a newly developed KAPI would be the indicator on payment lead times, which reflects the time between the receipt of a reimbursement claim by a member and the payment with the aim to be more efficient in the reimbursement process.

**26. Concerning revenue arising from the repayment of amounts wrongly paid within administrative operations of the institution, can you clarify what those payments concern and how errors have occurred?**

There is no revenue arising from repayment of amounts wrongly paid to the institution as the managing officers, the verification agents and the authorising officers perform several checks before the accountant executes a payment.

The only "revenue" that returns to our bank account comes from closed bank accounts about which the suppliers/beneficiaries have not notified us.

**27. Please name three of the Committee's main achievements and successes in 2018. How do they affect in the institution's challenges for the future?**

1) Social economy and new economic models: for a renewal of the European economy

Through its overall action and commitment to new economic models, the EESC contributes directly and visibly to the overall process of changing the economy by means of an analytical, pragmatic and participatory approach.

Building on its work on the social economy, and having adopted a set of topical opinions, the EESC has been able to make a number of recommendations aimed at making the European economy an economy with a human face and bringing social innovation. Since 2016, it has organised the *European Day of Social Economy Enterprises*. The 2018 event focused on the creation of an ecosystem enabling Social Economy Enterprises to scale up, in order to allow this enterprise model to fully unleash its potential. The EESC thus brings together various complementary topics such as the social economy and the sustainable economy, dealing in particular with *the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* as defined by the UN.

The EESC is also working on the new economic models and their implications on the future of work, developing a large set of opinions, that covered various interrelated aspects, and by holding meetings with private and public stakeholders. The events devoted to circular economy and the collaborative economy in the Member States merit special praise. Over the course of 2018, the EESC organised a series of fact-finding missions in the Member States, aimed at gathering the views of European civil society on these issues. The compilation of concrete recommendations resulting from these missions may constitute a guidance document, a first roadmap towards a future-proof, innovative, solidarity-based and sustainable single European market.

The EESC has also been involved for several years in promoting the circular economy, a dynamic example of the new economic models. In close cooperation with the European Commission, the EESC established the *European circular economy stakeholders platform* (<https://circulareconomy.europa.eu/platform/fr>), a trans-European network of initiatives and best practices with an educational purpose. The EESC has also issued a number of key opinions on the central issue of the renewal of the European economy.

The EESC is a key player at a crossroads where reflections and proposals from civil society are converging towards a more social, sustainable and innovative economy.

2) Addressing the challenges of migration

Through the EESC, civil society has devoted considerable efforts to address the short- and long-term challenges arising from the large numbers of migrants and refugees arriving in Europe in recent years. As the EU voice of these civil society interests, the EESC ensured that integration of refugees remained high on the political agenda,

looking notably at their integration in the jobs market and dealing with related challenges and opportunities in the context of an ageing European population. Gathering information through conferences and fact-finding visits, the EESC put forward through its opinions and reports innovative grassroots-level practices and called for more investment in and faster labour market access for refugees. The 2018 edition of the European Migration Forum (EMF), organised by the EESC and the Commission, focused specifically on labour market inclusion of migrants. Over the years, the EESC has strived to change the narrative about migration and to reform the Dublin Regulation system.

The EESC supports the Commission's ambitious plans for the EMF. To do so, the EESC will seek further synergies internally, in terms of resources dedicated to related policy work, and externally, by cooperating more closely with the EP, mainly the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs.

The Committee organizes a yearly European Migration Forum that attracts a significant number of participants from EU institutions, Member States and NGOs to address specific topics relating to the challenges of migration: the 2018 edition focused on a more inclusive labour market for migrants.

### 3) Artificial Intelligence – a high priority for the EU

The EESC's May 2017 opinion on the societal impact of artificial intelligence (AI) helped to steer much needed debate in 2018 on the main societal challenges, including ethics, safety, privacy, transparency, work, education and skills, (in) equality and inclusiveness. The Commission's strategy on artificial intelligence mirrors, to a considerable extent, the proposals put forward by the EESC in that first opinion. A more comprehensive set of opinions, studies and reports were developed in the course of 2018.

The first Stakeholder Summit on Artificial Intelligence, organised on 18 June by the EESC and the European Commission, stressed the importance for the EU of ensuring that AI is safe, unbiased and in line with European values.

For the future, the Committee is also focusing on the implication of the civil society in the European Semester process and will continue to be actively involved in the process of analysing the respect of the Rule of Law in the Member States (both activities started in 2018).

## **Staff**

### **28. What steps were made to encourage more men to make use of the flexible working arrangement, with a view to promoting their engagement in family life?**

The EESC's offer on flexible working arrangements is addressed to men and women equally. The participation of beneficiaries reflects first and foremost the gender repartition of the staff (see the reply to question 45). The EESC actively promotes the use of these arrangements with respect to the interest of services and personal choices (see the reply to question 43). Flexible working hours arrangements are

available for all staff (with the exception of few specific posts, e.g. drivers, see also the reply to question 47).

In 2018, as part of the series of life cycle conferences, an awareness event on "birth" was organised for future parents. Around 25% of the participants were male. The conference provided the opportunity to underline the right to parental leave and part-time arrangements regardless of gender.

In 2018, preparations started for the update of the decision on annual and special leave. The new decision that entered into force in 2019 provides, inter alia, that the birth of a child following recourse to a surrogate mother shall be treated as adoption, offering the same leave rights. The EESC is the first and only EU institution to have reacted to recent trends in society and considers this as a provision to promote gender equal engagement in family life.

**29. Percentage of managers coming from Member States who joined the Union in or after 2004 (EU13) increased to 16 % in 2017 and is now at 18,5 %. What has been done to fulfil the target of 20 %, which reflects the proportion of the EU13 population compared to the total Union population?**

As a small institution, the EESC has limited flexibility to correct geographical imbalances resulting from past recruitment and the evolution of the age pyramid. In particular, the age pyramid is closely monitored in order to forecast the number of retirements in coming years. 20% of managers, most of whom are from EU15 Member States, will be able to apply for retirement until the end of 2023. Their replacement will present the opportunity to address geographical balance in the near future.

In 2018, a Polish national was appointed as Head of the President's Cabinet.

The trend has continued in 2019 with the appointment of a Romanian national as Director for Human Resources and Finance ad interim and a Lithuanian as Head of the secretary-general's team.

Recently, when advertising vacancy notices in the Official Journal, the EESC also includes in the text the following clause that shows its commitment to diversity:

"The EESC believes in diversity and strongly favours a balanced representation of genders, of all Member State nationalities and of all the official languages of the European Union. It has an equal opportunity policy that precludes any discrimination based on gender, disability, race, political or religious views or sexual orientation. In line with these principles and the provisions of the Staff Regulations, applications from the least represented gender and nationalities are particularly encouraged."

**30. What concrete measures were taken to establish guidelines on the prevention of conflict of interests to be provided to all staff in response to the Decision of the European Ombudsman in case 1306/2014/OV?**

In the context of the Decision of the European Ombudsman in case 1306/2014/OV, it was recommended that clear guidance be provided to staff regarding situations

where the exercise of the right of association guaranteed by Article 24b of the Staff Regulations might conflict with their other duties and responsibilities towards their institution.

After having consulted the EESC socio-professional organisations and the EESC Staff Committee, the secretary-general adopted an administrative note, (DRH 001/19) entitled "Guidelines on managing conflicts of interest of staff in the performance of their duties". The text was published on 2 April 2019 and was communicated to all staff members. A separate communication was sent to management staff regarding the implementation of the new policy.

The guidelines are intended to serve as a practical handbook for EESC staff in cases where they need to perform overlapping functions when handling a single subject (for example management functions in parallel with staff representation activities).

**31. What has been made to familiarise members with the principles of the administrative culture of Union institutions to ensure dignity and respect at work?**

In 2018, the administration started the preparations for an ambitious "Respect@Work" initiative. This initiative targeting all categories of persons working for the Committee and aimed to raise awareness of the importance of ensuring dignity and respectful relations in the workplace.

At members' level, preparatory work was initiated with a view to modernising the Committee's Rules of Procedure. This process was concluded in March 2019 with the adoption of the new Rules of Procedure including the Code of Conduct. This text states that the members of the Committee must respect dignity in the workplace in the performance of their duties. Members shall refrain from any form of harassment and condemn this practice. An extensive communications campaign was conducted, including information in plenary sessions and on the members' intranet page and video messages from the presidency.

**32. Only 11 posts were open in the Committee in 2017 (related to permanent posts). How many posts were open in the Committee in 2018?**

In December 2018, 22 permanent posts were open which corresponds to 3.5% of the total number of permanent posts in the establishment plan.

**33. What is the average overtime of the Committee's staff in 2018?**

The table below shows the average overtime hours performed by EESC staff in 2018.

	2018
<b>Total number of staff</b>	<b>706</b>
<b>Number of staff entitled to overtime payment</b>	<b>176</b>
<b>Number of overtime hours performed</b>	<b>813,9</b>
<b>Average number of hours per entitled staff member</b>	<b>4.6</b>

In the EESC, overtime is typically associated with services such as the Copyshop, Infrastructure, Translation, Legislative planning and Bureau, External Relations, Conference Technology and External meetings.

**34. Adding to public allegations that recruitment procedure of Mr Brunetti becoming Secretary General of the Committee has been violated; could you provide us explanation on this particular recruitment procedure?**

The EESC has a long-standing practice of transparency and openness with regard to senior management selection and appointment. In accordance with the EESC Rules of procedure, vacancy notices for senior manager positions have been consistently published in the EU Official Journal throughout the past years and strictly followed. EESC procedures were also presented by the EESC at an inter-institutional round table on senior management selection and appointment organized by Commissioner Oettinger on 25 September 2018, in the presence of representatives of the European Parliament and of other EU institutions.

Therefore, the EESC firmly rejects any allegations concerning the violation of the recruitment procedure of the EESC Secretary General. The recruitment was carried out in full respect of the applicable rules – notably the Staff Regulations and the EESC Rules of procedure – and in full transparency throughout all its phases, as explained below.

Between March and April 2018, an ad hoc group composed by six EESC members representing the three EESC groups drafted the vacancy notice.

On 17 April 2018, pursuant to Rule 72 of the Implementing Provisions of the EESC Rules of Procedure, the EESC Bureau adopted the vacancy notice and on 22 May 2018 it formally appointed a screening panel made up of six members from the three EESC groups.

On 24 May 2018, with a view to providing the broadest possible publicity, the vacancy notice was published in 24 languages in the EU Official Journal (OJ 177 A), as well as on several websites (EESC website, EPSO website, LinkedIn and the interinstitutional portal of vacancy notices).

Before the closing date for applications, the screening panel members held a meeting and agreed on the weighting of the selection criteria laid down by the vacancy notice.

Each member of the screening panel and of its secretariat signed a confidentiality and absence of conflict of interest's declaration.

On 25 June 2018, the closing date for applications, 31 applications had been received. Amongst these applications, the screening panel considered that 16 candidates met the eligibility conditions set out by point 3 of the vacancy notice.

On 25 July 2018, pursuant to point 5.2 of the vacancy notice, the panel assessed all eligible applications and allocated points to each candidate for each of the selection criteria. The panel unanimously decided to invite to an interview 6 candidates, who



had obtained the highest number of total points in the assessment of their qualifications pursuant to the previously agreed weighting of the selection criteria.

On 27 September 2018, further to the interviews, the screening panel unanimously decided that one single applicant was deemed to meet the requirements of the post far better than the other candidates. Pursuant to point 5.3 of the vacancy notice, this candidate was invited to an assessment centre with an external consultant (Hudson).

On 19 October 2018, the screening panel, having regard to the assessment of qualifications, the interviews and the analysis of the results of the assessment centre, concluded its works, deciding unanimously to propose the shortlisted candidate, who was deemed to meet the requirements of the post far better than any other candidate, for the post of Secretary-General.

The screening panel thoroughly considered all applications and paid special attention to the applications of candidates that would ensure geographical and gender diversity. Indeed, two women and one man from a Member State who joined the EU in 2004 made it to the interview phase. However, gender and geographical balance, pursuant to the relevant case law, may play a role in selection procedure only when they apply to candidates having similar merits/performance. This was not the case in this procedure, where there was a big gap in merits/performance between the proposed candidate and the other ones.

On 13 November 2018 the EESC Bureau, at its meeting in Bucharest, pursuant to Rule 72 of the Implementing Provisions of the EESC Rules of Procedure, heard the candidate proposed by the screening panel and, further to a vote by secret ballot pursuant to Rule 3(5) of the procedural rules of the EESC Bureau, decided to appoint him as Secretary General of the EESC.

During the recruitment procedure, four requests for information from applicants were received and timely answered.

Further to the recruitment procedure, no complaint has been submitted by non-selected candidates or other parties.

**35. Could you please provide a table of all human resources broken down by nationality, type of contract, gender and grade for the year 2018, and an overview of how these figures compare with the year 2017?**

Breakdown of staff by type of contract and gender										
	Situation on 31/12/2017					Situation on 31/12/2018				
Gender	Officials	Temporary agents	Contract agents	Seconded national experts	TOTAL	Officials	Temporary agents	Contract agents	Seconded national experts	TOTAL
Female	384	43	25	4	456	375	56	25	4	460
Male	215	17	17	1	250	209	12	21	3	245
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>599</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>706</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>705</b>

Breakdown of staff by type of contract and nationality										
	Situation on 31/12/2017					Situation on 31/12/2018				
Nationality	Officials	Temporary agents	Contract agents	Second national experts	Total	Officials	Temporary staff	Contract staff	Second national experts	TOTAL
AUT	10			1	11	9			1	10
BEL	114	4	10	1	129	109	6	13	1	129
BGR	16				16	14	1			15
CYP			1		1		1			1
CZE	13	2			15	13	2			15
DEU	33	2	1		36	32	3	1		36
DNK	20				20	17				17
ESP	47	4	8		59	45	3	7		55
EST	12				12	12		1		13
FIN	16	3			19	16	3			19
FRA	37	7	1		45	37	10	1		48
GBR	16	1			17	16	2			18
GRC	24	9	5	1	39	24	8	2	2	36
HRV	10	1	1		12	11				11
HUN	19	1		1	21	18		1		19
IRL	10	1			11	10			1	11
ITA	50	7	9	1	67	53	10	11	1	75
LTU	15	1			16	14	1			15
LUX		1			1		1			1
LVA	7	1			8	7	1			8
MLT	8	1			9	10		1		11
NLD	12	2			14	10		1		11
POL	23	2	1		26	22	3	1	1	27
PRT	23	4	3		30	22	5	4		31
ROU	22	3	2		27	23	3	2		28
SVK	17				17	19				19
SVN	13	1			14	11	2			13
SWE	12	2			14	10	3			13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>599</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>706</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>705</b>

36. Could you please provide us a table of staff broken down by type of contract for 2013 and 2018? What was the average duration of contractual employments (including renewal of contracts) in 2013 and in 2018?

2013		
Statutory link	Contracts	Length of contracts (average in months)
Contract agents ("Art. 3a" CEOS)	20	indeterminate
Contract agents ("Art. 3b" CEOS)	22	7.5
Temporary agents ("Art. 2c" CEOS)	29	indeterminate
Temporary agents ("Art. 2b" CEOS)	26	10
Temporary agents ("Art. 2a" CEOS)	1	75.5
<b>Total days worked</b>	<b>Total days worked</b>	
Equivalent GFI	215	
Equivalent GFII (AST1)	124	
Equivalent GFIII (AST3)	50	

2018		
Statutory link	Contracts	Length of contracts (average in months)
Contract agents ("Art. 3a" CEOS)	19	indeterminate
Contract agents ("Art. 3b" CEOS)	15	10.53
Temporary agents ("Art. 2c" CEOS)	32	indeterminate
Temporary agents ("Art. 2b" CEOS)	23	10.50
Temporary agents ("art. 2a" CEOS)	1	indeterminate
<b>Total days worked</b>	<b>Total days worked</b>	
Non-statutory staff (SNE)	58	
Equivalent GFI	71.5	
Equivalent GFII (AST1)	128	
Equivalent GFIII (AST3)	277	

37. Please present a gender and nationality breakdown of your middle and senior management positions.

	Situation on 31/12/2018			
	Senior management		Middle management	
	F	M	F	M
Austria			4	
Belgium			2	1
Danemark			1*	
Estonia				1
Finland			1	
France		1	1	2
Germany			2	2
Greece				1
Ireland				2
Italy	1	1	3	3
Latvia			1	
Lithuania				1
Luxembourg				1
Netherlands				1*
Poland			2	1
Portugal		1	1	1
Romania	1		1*	
Slovakia			1	
Spain	1		2	1
Sweden	1			
United Kingdom		1		1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>19</b>

\* Acting Head of unit

38. We would appreciate a comprehensive overview of staff on sick leave in 2018, 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 2018? What was the evolution since 2013?

The EESC, like most European institutions, measures its staff's absence rate based on the following method laid down in an interinstitutional agreement of 31 May 2001:

$$\text{absence rate} = \frac{\text{total absence in calendar days}}{\text{days in a year} * \text{total of staff}}$$

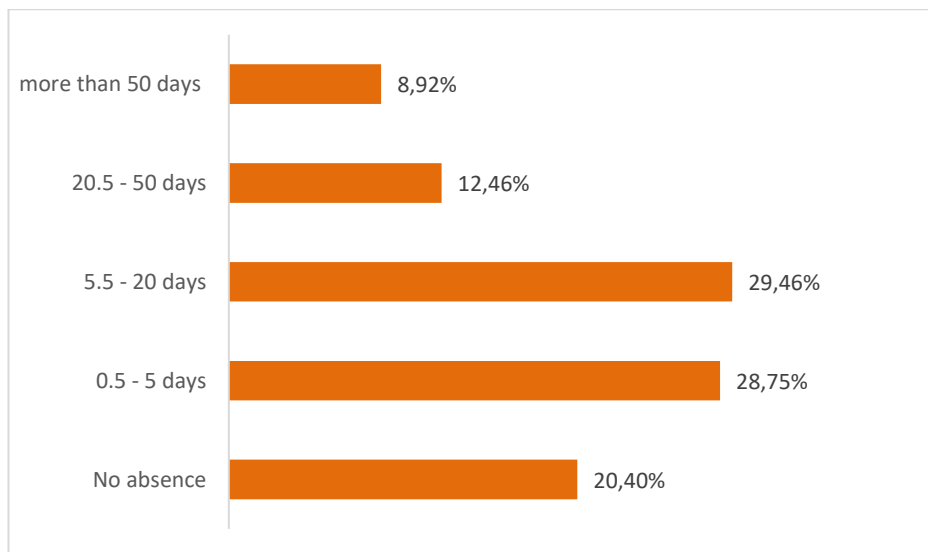
Table: Total absences due to sickness

	2018
Reference population (total staff)	706
Total number of registered sick leave days	13799.75
Absence rate	5.35
Average sick leave days (in calendar days)	19.54

In 2018, the average length of absence due to sickness among EESC staff was 19.54 days, a slight decrease since 2017 (19.98 days). This is equivalent to an absence rate of 5.35%.

The graph below gives a more precise picture of the distribution of the length of sick leave.

Graph: Sick leave per staff member broken down by duration (% of population)



The three longest absences in 2018 (possibly with working days in between) were of 350, 324 and 308 days.

347 staff members (49.15%) had a maximum of five days of sick leave, with more than 20% of staff taking no sick leave at all. This means that since 2017 we have seen a slight increase in the proportion of staff without any absence due to sickness at all.

With regard to the specific question about sick leave absences on Mondays or Fridays, there were 711 isolated cases of sick leave days on either Friday or Monday, and 2380.5 days (weekends included) of absences including both Friday and the following Monday. In such cases, the provision of a medical certificate is mandatory.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Reference population (total staff)	737	707	704	707	706	706
Total number of registered sick leave days	10816,25	10877,05	10249,5	12608,5	14112	13799,75
Absence rate	4,02	4,21	3,99	4,87	5,47	5,35
Average sick leave days (in calendar days)	14,67	15,38	14,55	17,83	19,98	19,54

\* Officials, temporary agents, contract agents, seconded national experts and the medical advisor.

Comparing 2013 and 2018, the data shows a noteworthy decrease in the population without any sick leave during the year (-2.27%) and an increase in absences of more than 90 days (+2.06%). This effect might be linked to the reform of the Staff Regulations in 2014 (switch to a 40hr working week – also see the recent report by the Court of Auditors about the impact of the reform on staff wellbeing) and also to an ageing workforce.

To sum up the situation: the data show that the absence rate, meaning all types of absence due to sickness (absence with or without medical certificate and medical part-time) has increased since 2015 and seems to have reached its peak in 2017, as it slightly decreased again by 0.12% in 2018.

Close contact is maintained with the Health Service to reinforce absence management and implement an efficient return-to-work policy. Medical part-time may be granted in specific cases, particularly after a long-term absence, to facilitate the return-to-work process and it is a preventive measure to avoid further sickness absences. This measure is increasingly used to facilitate reintegration after absence due to sickness. As of 2020, the EESC will provide further specific measures to better support colleagues in their return-to-work process.

This trend is similar for other Institutions.

The Court of Auditors, in its assessment of the 2014 Staff Regulations' reform, established in detail the extent to which the staff had to suffer as a result of the SR reforms of 2004 and 2014. These sacrifices are multiple and substantial with both a financial and non-financial impact: *“Savings generated from the 2014 staff reforms go beyond expectations, but they are overshadowed by their impact on the workforce”*. *The Human Resources implications of the cost-saving measures were not*

*without negative consequences for both working conditions and the attractiveness of the EU institutions as an employer”.*

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

Two staff members (directors) consecutively performed the role of SG ad interim (respectively four months and one month and a half).

Three translators took on the role of acting head of unit.

Due to the relatively small size of our institution, it might prove necessary in some cases to assign tasks in a flexible way, for example:

- staff members in function group AST/SC would justify the AST function group; it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between secretarial and assistant tasks.
- higher-graded assistants would justify the AD function group; e.g. the representing the EESC at interinstitutional meetings (in particular in public procurement procedures), setting up and implementing policies, financial responsibilities, etc.

**40. What were the three most important actions taken by the Committee in favour of equality?**

In 2018, the EESC continued to implement its Action Plan for Equal Opportunities and Diversity (2017-2020).

- In cooperation with the CoR, the EESC organised a series of awareness raising activities. The most significant of them took place in March 2018, on the occasion of International Women's Day, when the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) presented the results of the gender equality index.
- In May, on the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia, the EESC, in cooperation with the CoR, organised a debate on the state of play of LGBTIQ+ rights in the EU.
- For the third time, the EO Officer participated as an observer in the work of the Joint Promotions Committee and concluded that the discussions were free from any form of discriminatory remarks.

**41. What were the three most important actions taken by the Committee in favour of disabled people?**

Constant efforts are made to build a more diverse and inclusive work environment and culture.

- In November 2018, an awareness raising workshop on motor, visual and hearing impairments was organised for members and staff. Participants were put in situations similar to those experienced by persons with disabilities on a daily basis. The workshops were supported by the EESC's Permanent study group on disability rights.
- In 2018, the EESC welcomed four trainees with various kinds of disabilities. Their feedback led to further improvement of the premises and was

presented at the Interinstitutional Network of Equal Opportunities Officers. The interinstitutional cooperation in this field resulted in the publication of the brochure "AccessAble Brussels", which provides all necessary information relating to the recognition of a disability, adapted accommodation and accessible transport for newcomers with disabilities moving to Brussels. Interinstitutional cooperation in the field of disability has continued into 2019: in June, in cooperation with the CoR, the EESC hosted the InterCOPEC conference dedicated entirely to disability issues.

- Both the EESC intranet and the EESC website are digitally accessible to persons with visual impairment. In 2018, an action plan was launched to optimise its accessibility levels with a view to obtaining the certification of compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 and 2.1, levels A and AA in 2019.

With a view to enabling persons with disabilities to participate in the Committee's activities, the EESC, in accordance with the Buildings Strategy, is committed to systematically applying the "design for all" principle to their infrastructure, and certainly to their building projects for new or renovated areas. In particular, this has been the case for work linked to upgrading security facilities in the entrance halls of both the JDE and BvS buildings.

#### **42. Were there any improvements done to the organisation of workspaces? What chances have there been in 2018?**

The Committees' long-term Buildings Strategy deals with strategic questions for the coming years and presents various scenarios for future needs/options for buildings. This strategy, which was approved by the Committees in 2017, sets out improvements in four key areas related to the organisation of workspace:

- reorganising office allocations – technical audits have been started; The Commission's services (DG HR, DIGIT, OIB) have been contacted to exchange experiences in relation to "*The Workplace of the Future*";
- refurbishing existing buildings with a view to creating healthier workspaces that conform to ergonomic standards, e.g. by renovating some of the older offices and common areas (technical audits of the VMA, the BvS and the RME buildings have been started);
- increasing the security level of buildings, e.g. the renovation of the BvS entrance hall and reinforcing the inside windows with an anti-blast film;
- reducing electricity consumption and alignment with environmental obligations: by improving evacuation routes, lighting, replacing window frames and renovating heating/cooling installations in some buildings.

Additionally, the ergonomist has provided recommendations for improvement in more than 50 cases after visiting different workstations. For example, some standard desks have been replaced by height-adjustable ones where needed.



**43. What flexible working arrangements does your institution offer?**

The EESC is committed to providing its staff with working arrangements that help them to reconcile their professional and private life such as:

- Standard part-time with options of 50%, 62.5%, 75%, 80%, 90%, 95%
- Special part-time (time-credits) with options of 75%, 80%, 90%
- Parental leave 50 and 100% (6 months + 6 months extension)
- Family leave (50 and 100%)
- "Serious hardship" (under exceptional circumstances, an official may be entitled to work 95% without a reduction in salary, pursuant to Article 55a (2)(d) of the Staff Regulations).

**44. How often are these flexible working arrangements used? Has there been a development in the frequency?**

Different work patterns in 2018

2018	
Working formula	nbr of formulas
Family leave 100%	10
Family leave 50%	33
Parental leave (Extension) 100%	49
Parental leave (Extension) 50%	60
Parental leave 100%	64
Parental leave 50%	193
Part-time 50%	120
Part-time 62,5%	49
Part-time 75%	54
Part-time 80%	91
Part-time 90%	96
Part-time 95%	19
Part-time in case of serious hardship 95% - paid 100%	19
Part-time "time credit leave days" 75%	30
Part-time "time credit leave days" 80%	55
Part-time "time credit leave days" 90%	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>1002</b>

As a general trend, the requests for flexible working arrangements increased from 2014 to 2017 (with the exception of 2015, where we saw a slight decline). In 2018, again there has been a slight decrease of 3.54%. Parental leave remains the most used option. The majority of parental leave is taken in July and August. It is also interesting to see that while on the one hand the percentage of staff opting for a particular work pattern decreased, the number of different formulas on offer increased. In other words, those who need flexibility tend to modify their working

hours more often. It shows that the EESC provides the flexibility staff need to find a satisfying work-life balance.

Developments in staff opting for a non-standard work pattern

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Total staff</b>	<b>707</b>	<b>704</b>	<b>707</b>	<b>706</b>	<b>706</b>
<b>Number of staff who asked for at least one working pattern</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>213</b>
<b>% of staff members who asked for at least one working pattern</b>	<b>29.00%</b>	<b>28.55%</b>	<b>30.69%</b>	<b>33.71 %</b>	<b>30.17 %</b>

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

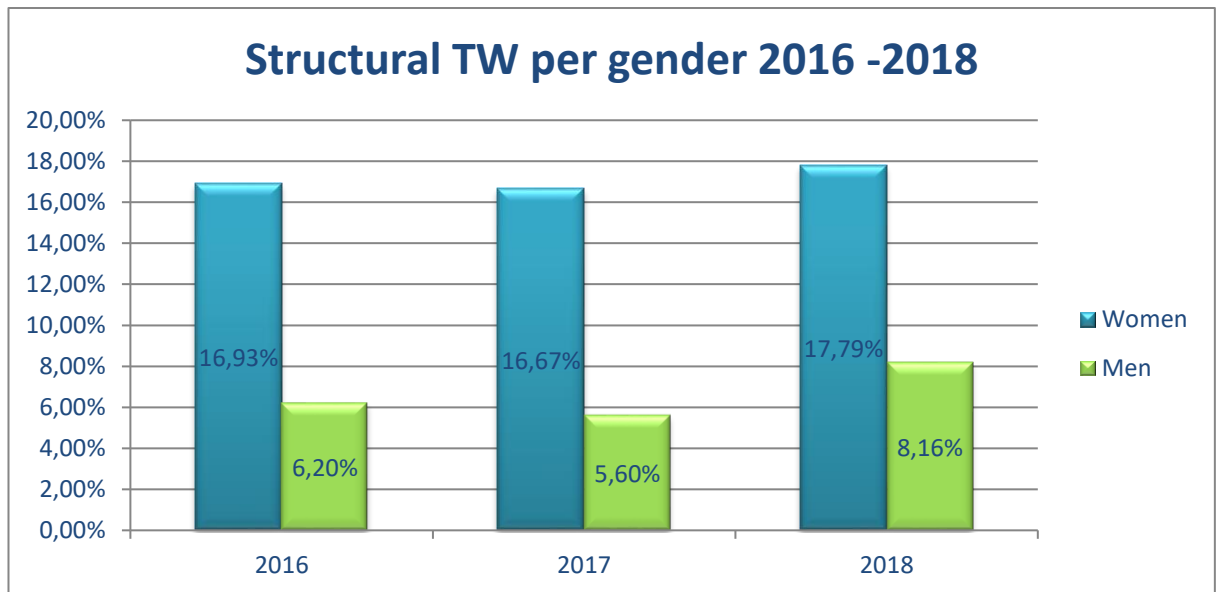
Flexible working arrangements by gender

	By gender				All	
	M		F		Number	%
	Number	%	Number	%		
<b>2018</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>15.5%</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>38.0%</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>30.2%</b>
2017	45	18.0%	193	42.1%	238	33.7%
2016	43	16.6%	174	38.7%	217	30.7%
2015	35	17.2%	166	38.1%	201	28.6%

The table shows that in 2018, 38% of EESC female staff opted for flexible (non-standard) working arrangements compared to 15.5% of men.

Additionally it is worth mentioning that two types of teleworking are used at the EESC: structural teleworking where staff work remotely for up to 2.5 days a week on a regular basis, and occasional teleworking for up to 28 days a year following ad hoc requests. More than 53% of staff use either structural and/or occasional teleworking.

The graph below shows that the total number of structural teleworkers increased in 2018 compared to 2017. While the proportion of women teleworking is still higher than that of men, this proportion is now in line with the overall gender distribution within the EESC.



**46. To what extent does your institution encourage young parents to make use of flexible working arrangements to improve work-life balance?**

Parents-to-be are offered individual advice on everything they need to know about maternity/paternity leave and working time possibilities for parents with young children or children with serious illnesses.

A certain number of provisions (pecuniary and non-pecuniary) directly address the needs of this group:

- Increased parental leave allowance for the first three months if the parental leave is taken immediately following maternity leave or adoption, or during maternity leave for the parent who is not entitled to it.
- Part-time work to care for a child cannot be refused until the age of 9;
- 6 days/year of special leave are possible in cases of serious illness, 15 days/year in cases where a child has a very serious illness;
- For spouses: 10 days of special leave to be taken within 14 weeks of the birth;
- 2 hours of work per day are granted for cases of breastfeeding for the first 6 months (12 months if medically proven).

In order to facilitate better access to information, an awareness-raising event was organised in 2018 and a brochure has been published to inform parents-to-be about working time arrangements, as well as their pecuniary rights and how to register their children in nurseries and schools.

**47. Can all categories of staff apply to these working arrangements?**

All EESC statutory staff (officials, temporary agents, contract agents) as well as seconded national experts (ENDs) can apply for part-time solutions, regardless of their function group and grade (within the limits of the Staff Regulations).

With regard to flexible working hours, some constraints might affect given categories of staff due to the specific nature of functions and working patterns for example:

- staff members allocated to services that work in close relation with members;
- drivers
- security officers

**48. Was any staff member placed on leave in the interest of the service according to Article 50 of the staff regulations? If yes, what were the reasons?**

No.

**49. The impact on such an agreement in terms of loss of office space is mentioned in the Annual Activity Report 2018. Can you explain how the 200 members of staff will be accommodated and what you understand by the terms “use of office space in a better way”? Do you intend to set up open or shared office spaces, and if so, has the staff been consulted? If so, what is the staff response?**

Exchanging the BEL68 and TRE74 buildings for the VMA building will result in a loss of 10 440 m<sup>2</sup> of office space, which cannot be entirely offset by alternative measures in the short term such as densifying the use of space in the other buildings or increased teleworking. Therefore, there will be a need to find extra offices to accommodate around 200 staff members after the exchange of BEL68/TRE74 for the VMA. A joint EESC-CoR working group that has recently been established by the secretaries-general which will prepare a further analysis of this gap and ways to close it, against the backdrop of introducing new ways of working.

In order to close the gap in terms of office space, options including a connected office building will be explored. If none of the adjacent buildings can be used by the Committees by 2022, a market prospectation will be launched to rent or purchase an additional building for housing approximately 200 staff members.

The administration is keeping all stakeholders informed via staff meetings and through the management of the concerned services and will take into consideration the concerns and suggestions put forward. The Staff Committee and the Unions are continuously kept informed of the developments. They will be closely associated with the activities of the working group mentioned above.

**50. Concerning sanctions foreseen in the new code of conduct for members, do you see any scope for reinforcement?**

The Committee puts standards for ethical behaviour high on its agenda for staff and members. The new Code of Conduct reflects this strong engagement. Furthermore, the Committee has a long-standing zero-tolerance policy regarding harassment. By adopting a reinforced Code of Conduct the Committee took an important step in establishing a legal framework for dealing with misconduct and harassment. The Code establishes procedures in the event of possible breaches of its provisions, sets up an Advisory Committee on the conduct of members, and also provides the sanctions to be applied. The Code is largely based on the principles set by the EP and its administrative framework.

The sanctions are as follows:

- written warning;
- inclusion of the written warning in the Bureau minutes and, where applicable, in the plenary session minutes;
- temporary suspension of the member from any duties as rapporteur, president or member of a study group, and from any participation in missions and extraordinary meetings.

The Advisory Committee will give guidance on the interpretation and implementation of the provisions of the Code of Conduct, assess alleged breaches of the Code, and make recommendations to the president. The sanctions vary in accordance with the degree of severity of the members' behaviour.

Taking into account that the Code of Conduct has just recently entered into force, it is not yet possible to evaluate the effectiveness of the system of foreseen sanctions. Consideration could be given to a possible reinforcement of sanctions following further analysis of the functioning of the system.

**51. Would you say that the Committee had a fair recruitment practice policy in 2018? Were there any complaints, lawsuits or otherwise reported cases of non-transparent hiring or firing of staff?**

The Committee has a long-standing policy of fair management of human resources based on equal treatment and equal opportunities principles. There have been no complaints or other reported cases of non-transparent recruitment or firing.

**52. What were the costs in 2018 respectively for away days, trainings, closed conferences or similar events for staff? How many staff members participated in the respective events? Where did these events take place?**

Nine teambuilding events were organised outside the EESC premises (away days). Six of these events either took place in Brussels or in the interinstitutional EU centre in Overijse. Three events were organised in Genval (in the outskirts of Brussels).

182 staff members participated and the total cost of these events was EUR 12 889, i.e. EUR 70.82 per person.

## **Harassment**

### **53. How has the Committee monitor the efficiency of its policy in this regard, to continue raising awareness about harassment at the workplace and to continue fostering a culture of zero-tolerance policy with regard to harassment?**

Different sources of analysis have been used: feedback from confidential counsellors, opinions from the social worker, monitoring of in and out flows from the different departments, exit interviews, input from individual and collective stakeholders including staff representatives etc.

In order to strengthen the effectiveness of the anti-harassment policy the following measures have been taken:

i) The number of active confidential counsellors (CCs) has been increased to six staff members (launch of procedure in 2018, appointment in early 2019);

ii) Continuous further training on specific topics (e.g. mediation) and regular supervision by an external consultant (any personal information is anonymised to ensure strict confidentiality).

iii) Monthly internal CC meetings as well as regular meetings with the top level of the administration (HRF director and SG) to discuss general trends and areas for improvement.

iv) Ongoing networking and mainstreaming of CCs with other relevant services in the EESC (in particular with the medical service/social worker, Staff Committee and Equal Opportunities Officer) to ensure that policy and procedures are addressed comprehensively and that feedback is provided from all angles.

v) Regular participation of CCs at induction days, consisting of a short presentation and a Q&A session to inform newcomers about the existence of the confidential counselling service, followed by the opportunity to ask further questions at the "marketplace" held later in the day.

vi) Timely meetings with all newcomers during their first couple of weeks at the EESC to make sure that everyone is made aware of the network of confidential counsellors as soon as they start working here.

vii) In light of the 2018 best practices published by the EU Ombudsman (Report of the European Ombudsman on dignity at work in the EU institutions and agencies: SI/2/2018/AMF), a review of policy and procedures is currently ongoing, including information in brochures and on the website.

viii) Preparations for an extensive "Respect@Work" campaign, launched in 2019 in order to raise awareness of the importance of dignity in the workplace and to foster respectful workplace relations. The programme has run throughout 2019 with a wide

range of activities, such as conferences for managers and staff, surveys, training on ethics and integrity etc.

**54. What were the expenditures in 2018 for the management of court cases and Court sentences? What was the specific amount for harassment cases?**

In 2018, the EESC spent EUR 16 000 on the management of court cases and court sentences, this amount was fully recovered following the judgment in favour of the Committee. None of the cases dealt with by the EU jurisdiction was a harassment case.

**55. Where there any cases related to harassment reported, investigated and/or concluded in 2018?**

One case of alleged harassment was reported in 2018 through the formal procedure (article 24 of the Staff Regulations and article 12§1 of the EESC decision on the prevention of harassment). An administrative inquiry was launched in November 2018.

Three other alleged cases of harassment, to some extent connected to each other, were reported in 2018 through seven whistleblowing reports. Two of these cases were joined which led in practice to the opening of a total of two administrative inquiries in January 2019.

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

Detailed information is available in Part II of Decision 200/14 A on the formal procedure and how to lodge a formal complaint of harassment. The Decision is available on the Committee's website.

Furthermore, in individual cases when confidential counsellors see colleagues with difficulties in workplace relations (within the "informal procedure"), colleagues are made aware of their right to lodge a formal complaint at any time. This allows for a possible transition from the informal procedure to the formal procedure.

**57. Has there been any recent modifications to your anti-harassment rules, and could you specify to what extent?**

To cover a broader scope, a revision of the current decision on harassment is under consideration, also to ensure better synergies with other relevant regulations, such as the decision on whistleblowing and the decision on administrative inquiries and disciplinary procedures.

**58. Following accusations of harassment made towards a senior member of the Committee, can you specify if this case was looked into following the adoption of a new code of conduct for member, and if any sanctions were applied?**



The case in question has been handled pursuant to the provisions of the decision 053/16 A laying down rules on whistleblowing. All whistleblowers were extensively informed on their rights and at each step of the procedure. Appropriate support measures were also offered, according to the specific needs of the person (medical/psychological support, coaching, temporary reassignment, etc). An administrative inquiry was subsequently launched and OLAF was also informed according to the revision of the EESC-OLAF administrative agreement. These proceedings are still ongoing.

The new procedure provided by the Code of Conduct entered into force after the facts described in the paragraphs above. Under the Code of Conduct no complain has up-to-now been introduced.

**59. Do you have a functioning team of the confidential-staff-councilors? Did they and the staff as a whole, receive any special training / seminars on the prevention of harassment?**

An active team of trained confidential counsellors has been in place at the EESC since 2016. Following a call for expressions of interest in 2018, three additional staff members were selected to join the team and – after intensive training – were appointed in early 2019. The network now comprises six staff members. The CCs receive continuous further training on specific topics (e.g. mediation) and are supervised regularly by a trained psychologist and specialist in the field.

In April 2018, the last of a series of management training modules dealing with the key issues that had emerged from the staff survey on psycho-social risks and wellbeing covered the topic of "Managing conflicts". A confidential counsellor co-facilitated this workshop.

In May 2018, the coordinator of the EESC CCs participated in a meeting hosted by the European Institute for Gender and Equality (EIGE) for all representatives of CCs at the EU institutions. The aim of this meeting was to discuss common issues and identify best practices in assisting colleagues and working closely with administrations. A network of EU CCs was subsequently set up, which the EESC CCs have joined.

In December 2018, one CC participated in a legal seminar on recent developments and best practices in dealing with harassment at the EU institutions.

The course on Ethics & Integrity, which is compulsory for all staff now, covers standards of behaviour in the workplace, including what harassment is and how to deal with it.

### **Whistleblowing**

**60. Were there any whistleblower cases coming out of the Committee and in such a case how did you follow-up on them?**

See question 55 above.

In 2018, one specific situation was brought to the attention of the administration via seven whistleblowing reports (one by an EESC Member and six from staff). One

additional whistleblowing report was submitted in 2019 concerning the same situation. A series of actions were taken after the first reporting. (formal warnings, coaching sessions, medical support, mobility measures, etc.). As mentioned under question 55, two administrative inquiries were launched and the matter was also referred to OLAF. The proceedings are still ongoing and to preserve the confidentiality of the works, no further details can be provided.

## **Communications**

### **61. What has been done to improve the communication with Union citizens?**

All communication efforts undertaken by the EESC aim to ensure that the views expressed by the EESC in its opinions or otherwise not only reach the other EU institutions but also target audiences such as employer and employee associations, as well as other civil society organisations in Member States. At the same time, the EESC strives to increase awareness within European organised civil society and among citizens in general that the EESC is there to ensure that their views and concerns are represented at European level.

In 2018, the EESC developed targeted action in the field of online communication, by:

- Optimising online tools and products and strengthening social media activities (for more details on social media see question 62 below).
- Transitioning to a digital newsletter (EESCInfo) available in 23 EU languages to increase the outreach of its activities.
- Producing digital publications such as "Civil society in action for tomorrow's Europe" on the EESC's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. A celebratory plenary session for the 60th anniversary took place in May 2018, supported by an intense social media campaign to promote the Committee's main achievements and its proposals for the future of Europe. The campaign gathered more than 1800 mentions on social media and potentially reached almost 10 million users.
- Specific focus was given to web accessibility by further removing both language-related and disability-related barriers.
- Interactive features were introduced to the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform, such as a "virtual meeting place" for stakeholders across Europe to share their solutions and team up to address specific challenges, to advocate the circular economy at national, regional and local levels and to support its implementation.

As part of its long-term Communication Strategy, in 2018 the EESC continued projects and activities such as:

- Visits: the number of visitors increased by 20% from 7820 in 2017 to 9 419 in 2018. This total number was divided into more than 400 groups;

- Participation in the interinstitutional Open Day in May – which attracted around 3000 visitors, with an increase of 10% compared to the previous year – and active participation in the Schuman Day celebrations in Budapest and Paris;

- Organising the ninth edition of the youth plenary session "Your Europe, Your Say", with the title "United in Diversity: a younger future for European Culture. Can European Youth take European culture to heart?"; additionally around fifteen cultural

events, ten of which were linked to the European Year of Cultural Heritage and labelled #EYCH2018;

- Awarding the tenth EESC civil society prize to 5 winners selected from the 150 applications received from 27 Member States (for more details on the prize see question 27 above);

- Organising 239 Going Local activities, i.e. specific activities carried out by EESC members at local level to connect with European citizens and act as ambassadors for the European project at a local level. These initiatives aim to involve citizens by taking a participatory approach towards Europe, optimising the shared use of networks, platforms, communication means and they aim to reach the widest possible audience on the ground.

- Citizens Consultations were given particular attention on the EESC's political agenda. On 5-6 May 2018, at the request of the French government (with the endorsement of France's President Emanuel Macron) and in cooperation with the European Commission, the EESC acted as a springboard in organizing a Citizen's Panel to consult the public on the future of Europe. This was the starting point for the European citizens' consultations, the results of which were presented in a final report at the EU 27 Summit in Sibiu on 9 May 2019. The EESC broadly communicated about this event and the public consultation on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, potentially reaching almost 5 million users.

- Additionally, the EESC hosted 72 "partnership" events, organised in cooperation with civil society organisations on topics that are relevant and of interest to the Committee.

**62. 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 regards among the different social media channels?**

The EESC's target audience and outreach channels can be broken down as follows:

- Twitter - EESC partners, institutions and policy stakeholders in Brussels and across the EU

On Twitter, the Committee targets citizens and stakeholders in a decentralised way: besides the main account, a number of policy accounts exist to address specialised audiences and these are often where debates and exchanges with key civil society stakeholders take place. Meanwhile, the main account targets its communication on overarching priorities and current EU affairs, focusing on citizens and providing more general information about the EESC.

Available insights and social media analytics confirm the consistent positive trend in terms of engagement and follower growth rates on most of these accounts. As social media is in general an ever-evolving sphere, the EESC evaluates the performance of all its Twitter accounts on a monthly basis. This enables the committee to fine-tune the strategy and allows for the closure of accounts that do not reach the targets, thus resources can be re-located elsewhere.

The EESC Twitter accounts reach a growing number of EESC civil society stakeholders, interest groups etc., as shown by the increasing engagement and comments from citizens and organisations.

In addition, the EESC members' contribution to and participation in social media activities is essential to promoting the Committee's work. It should be noted that the EESC members are fully independent in running their private social media accounts, as regards both content and levels of activity. Half of the EESC members have an account on Twitter. A 15% increase in members active on Twitter was recorded at the end of 2018 compared to the same period in 2017.

The EESC's main Twitter account achieved a growth rate of 18% and reached at the end of the year 36.626 followers (more than 40.000 in 2019).

- LinkedIn - Policy stakeholders and professionals, especially in Brussels and across the EU, those interested in highly specialised information on EU matters.

In 2018, the Committee expanded its social media presence to LinkedIn by increasing communication on this social media network and tailoring the content to a new target audience. The account grew by 19%, with 9.407 followers by the end of 2018.

On specific occasions, job vacancy notices are advertised via this network.

- Facebook – EU citizens

On Facebook, the Committee pursues a centralised approach, focusing its communication on its main institutional account and two other accounts: one covering the cultural activities of the EESC, and the latter covering "Your Europe, Your Say", an annual EESC project targeting youth in 33 countries. The institutional account is targeted mainly at reaching EU citizens outside Brussels. The main account showed a consistently positive trend in terms of engagement and follower growth rates, achieving a 17% growth rate and 24 126 followers.

The performance of all social media platforms used at the EESC (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) is being tracked using a powerful analytics, monitoring and engagement tool.

The average combined growth rate of followers on all EESC social media accounts reached 19% in 2018.

All plenary sessions and main events are covered on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn using tailor-made approaches for each specific platform. Selected Plenary content is also showcased on the EESC's YouTube account on the EESC website.

The launch of the Committee's Instagram account is scheduled for December 2019.

**63. What was the Committee's strategy for social media channels in 2018? Are there any significant changes of followers at the social media which Committee use?**

Changes in the Committee's social media channel strategy in 2018 lie in the decision to further differentiate and expand the target audiences and the social media channels through which the target audiences can be reached, and to provide tailor-made content for each channel (as described in the answer to question 62).

Other changes are the increase in activity on LinkedIn, where the Committee is sharing its content communicating from the policy angle, giving more in-depth and technical information on the EESC's work, such as opinions, information reports, studies, publications and web stories.

The EESC continued its efforts to provide more live content on social media – by streaming key debates of general interest via Facebook Live. Paid promoted posts on Facebook were introduced, enabling more precise audience targeting and a wider reach. Selected plenary content was also showcased on the EESC's YouTube account and on the EESC website.

Specific training courses on social media for members are organised on an ongoing basis.

**64. There was an increase in the number of opinions and reports adopted at the Committee in 2018 (215 in 2018 in comparison with 155 in 2017, 151 in 2016). However, the number of press releases and the number of press cuttings reported in which the Committee is mentioned have decreased. What can be the reasons? What are the measures to promote the legislative work of the Committee?**

In 2018 the EESC reduced the number of press releases as part of a strategy aimed at developing the format of *webstories* (on more specialised topics targeting specific audiences) in order to have more focused communication on the most important topics of the Committee. The *webstories* are published either on the EESC website or sent to specialised journalists.

During a large part of 2018 the Press service has been in the process of upgrading its working tools. The new monitoring system became operational in the last quarter of 2018. Therefore, information on the press coverage of EESC activities was restricted compared to the year before.

On the other hand, the EESC Press service has been increasingly using non-traditional media (social media such as Twitter, video messages, op-ed, etc.) to deliver the EESC's messages. Therefore, the press release remains one of the EESC's tools, but it is often complemented by a range of other products such as media advisories, information notes and others. The EESC also communicates by organising different activities, such as seminars for journalists, press points and interviews. This approach makes it possible to be more selective and give more importance and quality to the press activity.

## **Transparency**

### **65. What activities has the Committee started and what policies implemented in the area of transparency in 2018?**

As regards transparency in access to documents, two domains have been tackled:

- the revision and extension of the document nomenclature as part of the continuous improvement of the search engine of the document register,
- the implementation of the Bureau's decision register, accompanied by a recasting of its decision-making process and the formalisation of its decisions. This register served as a prototype for the subsequent creation of other registers, in a global approach of transparency.

Additionally, following an interinstitutional meeting on transparency held in Luxemburg on 25 September 2018, and with a view to further improving transparency and facilitating access to the EESC documents while ensuring a balance between transparency, access to documents, data protection and the protection of other legitimate interests, the EESC has launched an exercise to take advantage of the best practices of other institutions, which resulted in an action plan for 2019.

This action plan is structured around the following two axes:

- the follow-up on the obligations related to the financial regulations, the Rules of Procedure, the code of conduct for the members, creation of transparency registers, access to documents, code of administrative conduct),
- the creation of a unifying web page, with a presentation suitable for both internal communication and external communication with EU citizens.

### **66. Did the Ombudsman issue any recommendations to the Committee in 2017 or 2018 and how did you follow-up on them?**

In 2017 the Ombudsman issued a recommendation (Recommendation of the European Ombudsman concerning the alleged failure by the European Economic and Social Committee to ensure that a member declared all relevant interests (inquiry into complaints 500/2015/ PHP, 561/2015/ PHP, 570/2015/ PHP, 577/2015/ PHP, 619/2015/ PHP, 635/2015/ PHP and 650/2015/ PHP) concerning the alleged failure by the EESC to ensure that a member declared all relevant interests (the decision was the result of an inquiry launched in 2015). The EESC subsequently amended its Rules of Procedure (entry into force on 15/03/2019) in order to notably reflect the changes requested by the Ombudsman, regarding the declaration of all relevant interests by Members and the provision of sufficient time for Members to examine documents on which they are asked to vote.

In 2018, the Ombudsman came to a conclusion about the absence of maladministration in an inquiry regarding a complaint related to a selection procedure. The Ombudsman concluded there was no maladministration.

**67. What has been done to increase efforts related to the publication for call for tenders launched by the Committee and to reduce the number of exceptional negotiated procedures with only one candidate?**

In 2018, the Committee increased the visibility of its tender procedures through publication of calls for tenders which have market values below and above the Directive threshold on "TED eTendering" (the EU institutions' eProcurement platform based on EU Directives on public procurement).

For procedures with an estimated contract value below the thresholds laid down in Directive 2014/024 (services and supplies in 2018: EUR144 000; works: EUR 5 548 000), the EESC is implementing all its obligations on opening up to competition and transparency by publishing on its web site:

- adequate ex ante advertisement for each procedure above EUR 15 000;
- annual list of contracts signed above EUR 15 000;
- annual list of specific contracts signed under ongoing framework contracts.

**68. How many call for tenders did your institution organise in 2018? Please indicate the value and the number of applicants for each tender.**

According to the Financial Regulation, public procurement of a value above EUR 15 000 must be open to competition; the minimum number of competitors increases with the market value.

The table below shows all procurement procedures above EUR 15 000 launched in 2018, including their market value and the number of tenderers.

The total number of calls for tenders above EUR 15 000 was 11.

**Table: EESC procurement procedures in 2018 with a value above EUR 15 000.**

	<i>Heading</i>	<i>Value (EUR)</i>	<i>Tenderers</i>
<b>1</b>	FRAMEWORK CONTRACT CESE/DL/08/2017 SERVICES DE MAINTENANCE ET DEPANNAGE POUR LES EQUIPEMENTS D'IMPRESSION - - LOT1.	100 550 (*)	1
<b>2</b>	FRAMEWORK CONTRACT CESE/DL/08/2017 SERVICES DE MAINTENANCE ET DEPANNAGE POUR LES EQUIPEMENTS D'IMPRESSION - - LOT2	27 670 (*)	1
<b>3</b>	APPEL D'OFFRES EESC/2018/PRE/04 ONLINE MEDIA MONITORING.	24 600	2
<b>4</b>	APPEL D'OFFRES CESE/DL/3/2018: FOURNITURE ET PLACEMENT D'ÉQUIPEMENTS DE CONTRÔLE D'ACCÈS.	24 805.80	1



5	GRIMOD: CATERING FOR THE OFFICIAL RECEPTION "60 YEARS OF THE EESC" – (23 ET 24 MAI 2018).	24 197.50	1
6	APPEL D'OFFRES CES/CSS/01/2018 - STUDY ON "RURAL SOCIETIES OUTSIDE METROPOLIS".	29 120	2
7	FRAMEWORK CONTRACT APPEL D'OFFRES EESC/COMM/2017/03 EDITORIAL SERVICES.	120 000 (* )	3
8	TENDER CESE/DL/5/2018: FOURNITURE, INSTALLATION ET MISE EN SERVICE D'UN OBSTACLE ESCAMOTABLE À L'ENTRÉE DU PARKING DU BÂTIMENT BERTHA VON SUTTNER (BVS).	28 974.04	2
9	FRAMEWORK CONTRACT EESC/COMM/01/2017 GADGET SEMI-PRESTIGIOUS PROMOTIONAL ITEMS. (4 YEARS)	120 000 (* )	2
10	APPEL D'OFFRES CESE/DL/01/2018 LOCATION MAINTENANCE OMNIUM IMPRIMANTES DE PRODUCTION.	1 088 730	2
11	FRAMEWORK CONTRACT - EESC/2017/CSI/01 LOCATION D'UN SYSTEME DE VOTE ÉLECTRONIQUE PORTABLE POUR LES SESSIONS PLENIERES DU CESE. (4 YEARS – 9 PLENARIES PER YEAR )	450 000 (* )	1

(\* )The amount of each framework contract is the maximum amount (ceiling) that the EESC could spend during the multi-annual duration of the contract.

According to the Financial Regulation, public procurement of up to EUR 15 000 ("*very low value procedures*") can be awarded on a one-offer-only basis and shall not be subject to publicity obligations.

It is worth noting that the EESC also purchases works, goods and services through interinstitutional framework contracts led by other European Institutions. Framework contracts usually cover a span of four or five years.

**69. On 11 December 2018, the rules for data protection in the EU Institutions were brought in line with the rules set out in the GDPR. Did your institution need to proceed to any changes in the way it handles data to adapt to this new legislation? What were those changes?**

In preparation for the entry into force of the new Regulation on data protection, the following actions were taken:

- A new online data protection register was set up
- Templates were created according to the new regulation

- Records of processing activities (online form and word version)
- Privacy statements model
- Models for collecting valid consent
- The existing privacy statements were updated
- Procurement: The EESC procurement models have been updated so as to include the new data protection clauses
- A data breach procedure was established at the Committee
- Data Protection impact assessments (DPIA) – A threshold assessment interactive form was created in order to help assess whether a DPIA is needed
- Data Protection intranet and internet pages have been updated
- EESC websites – privacy statement and cookies policies of a number of EESC websites have been updated

These changes have been accompanied by the following measures:

- A staff notice was sent at the beginning of December 2018 explaining the main steps each service should take in order to ensure compliance with the new regulation.
- Meetings with all Directorates have been organised in order to discuss the implementation of the new rules.
- Training and awareness (Info sessions and training sessions were organised for staff and members).
- Mapping out data protection processing operations at the Committee (an interactive tool has been created to allow for easy update – each controller can add/change their processing operations list).

### **Fraud & Corruption (including co-operation with OLAF)**

#### **70. How did you cooperate with OLAF and the Court of Auditors in the spheres of prevention, investigation or corrective measures?**

On 13 January 2016, the EESC and OLAF have signed administrative arrangements which provide in detail the procedure to be followed for the handling of cases and how the two institutions shall cooperate.

EESC fully collaborates with OLAF and provides all the requested information whenever requested.

In July 2019, the EESC President and EESC Secretary General met with the Director General of OLAF in order to create better synergies and ensure a smoother implementation of the administrative arrangements and a more efficient exchange of information for pre-inquiry cases and opened cases.

As concerns the Court of Auditors, the Audit service keeps informal contacts and, of course, provide audit reports to the Court in the context of the Statement of Assurance, on the Court's request.

### **Conflict of Interests (Rules and control mechanism)**

**71. What measures / rules has (or had been introduced in 2018) the Committee to prevent and fight conflict of interests? How did those rules change until today?**

Please refer to our answer to question 30 as regards the prevention of conflicts of interest for staff members.

As regards EESC members, according to Article 300(2) TFEU, they are "representatives of organisations of employers, of the employed, and of other parties representative of civil society, notably in socio-economic, civic, professional and cultural areas." EESC members are therefore by definition representatives of certain interests, acting in an advisory capacity, based on their experience and expertise (Article 300(2) TFEU). Pursuant to Rule 72(4) of the EESC Rules of Procedure, upon appointment, members are required to draw up a declaration of any interest, financial or other, that might have an impact on their work at the Committee. This declaration is made available to the general public on the EESC's website. Members have to explicitly confirm the validity of its content at least once a year and revise it as soon as any change in their situation occurs.

Furthermore, Article 6 of the new Code of Conduct for Members states that "Members of the Committee shall avoid any situation which may give rise to a personal conflict of interest or which may be reasonably be perceived as such. A personal conflict of interest arises where a personal interest may influence the independent performance of their duties as set out in Article 300 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, in the Committee's Rules of Procedure 2019, in particular Rule 2(3), and in Article 9 of the Members' Statute". The enforcement of this provision shall be overseen by the EESC president and the newly established Advisory Committee on the conduct of members.

### **Activities to Lower the Environmental footprint (EMAS rules, energy, water, paper consumption, CO2 offsetting)**

**72. Please present your activities and achieved results in this field.**

In June 2018, Vinçotte (external auditor) conducted the yearly audit on EMAS. The results were positive and we maintained our certifications: EMAS and ISO 14001. This was a monitoring audit (audit de surveillance) and in 2020 the renewal audit will take place.

The long-standing commitment of the Committee to lowering its environmental footprint has brought additional results such as a decrease in the consumption of electricity and paper.

The environmental results for 2018 are the following:



#### Electricity:

Several energy efficiency measures were taken such as the installation of meters in all the buildings to monitor the energy consumption and of variable flow ventilation in the JDE building.

#### Gas:

Some cuts took place during summer based on the needs identified the previous years. 2018 was also the first (full) year using gas instead of electricity for heating in the TRE building.

#### Water:

Some increases in the number of visitors and security-related works in JDE could have had an impact on the water consumption. The increase of 2.7L per person per day compared to 2017 remains, nevertheless, reasonable.

#### Paper:

The replacement of individual printers by multi-function devices (MFD) and the digitalisation of several work processes (EESC members' reimbursement forms, e-invoicing, e-forms in human resources (interim) have led to the decrease in consumption.

### Waste:

Increase of waste related to paper and cardboard mainly due to the works in the JDE entrance hall. When it comes to other types of waste, volume has decreased compared to 2017.

Additionally, in 2018 the Committee also participated in the European Week for Waste Reduction (EWWR) with awareness raising actions such as a workshop on how to make green clean products, a "zero waste" stand presenting sustainable alternatives to throwaway products and solutions aiming at fixing instead of replacing, a "Christmas challenge" to exchange best practices and ideas in view of the end-of-year festivities.

These activities have been very much appreciated by colleagues and have been organised again in 2019. One entire week in 2018 was also dedicated to the collection of electrical and electronic waste.

### Carbon Footprint

In 2018, the EESC and CoR produced 15 076 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (calculation validated by an external auditor).

For 2017 the calculation was initially calculated at 10 181 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent, however, in 2017 it was decided to follow the EP approach and to also include the missions of the members for the plenary sessions in the scope of the calculation. This decision makes it possible to have a better and more accurate overview of our impact in terms of CO<sub>2</sub> emission. In order to have a possible comparison with the previous year, the emissions of 2017 were recalculated including the missions for the plenary sessions and the rectified emissions were 13 856 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent.

### CO<sub>2</sub> offsetting

- First objective – reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the field of transport of people, which is the main CO<sub>2</sub> contributor

A working group has been created between EMAS and the respective units (Services to Members of both Committees) in order to explore the best way to raise awareness about the impact of different means of transport.

A working group between EMAS and the HR Directorates of both Committees has been created in order to explore possibilities for improvement towards a more sustainable mobility of the staff. At the interinstitutional level and in close contacts with local authorities, discussions regarding the mobility in the European quarter are going on.

- Second objective – offsetting of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions

- CO<sub>2</sub> reduction target:

The efforts of the Committees' administration are particularly targeting staff members (buildings' consumption, IT, staff commuting, etc.) Therefore, the Committees are preparing different studies on CO<sub>2</sub> reduction target.

Based on the results of the studies, realistic reduction targets will be proposed and a reference year will be chosen to compare what reduction targets have been achieved.

The Committees will participate in the Joint Offsetting project with the EP and the ECB and will decide later what percentage of their emissions they want to offset.

The first evaluation of the cost for the compensation of the total of the COR and EESC CO<sub>2</sub> is about EUR 20 000.

**73. How do you explain the increase of the use of gas and water and the increase of the production of waste in the Committee in 2018?**

Gas:

- The main factor explaining the increase of gas consumption is the installation of the new gas heater in the TRE building in October 2017; in terms of global carbon footprint this is balanced by the decrease of the electricity consumption;
- In relation to the REM building there is a high increase in the gas consumption per person due to the reduction of the number of staff housed in this building (from 47 in 2017 to 19 in 2018);
- As for the VMA, the building is currently managed by the European Commission (OIB) and the Committee has received no explanation for the increase.

Water:

The increase of water consumption is mostly linked to the following events:

- the works for the new entrance hall in the JDE building (a leak occurred during the works);
- the installation of 3 new water fountains;
- in the first semester, some troubles were also experienced in the functioning of the bamboo's irrigation system.

Waste:

The reasons for the increase of dangerous plastics/metal/cans waste is due to better sorting of waste by the users, especially of PMC. This should be seen as a positive result, allowing for the recycling of most of these specific types of waste, while in the past a significant part was mixed in with the common waste.

The increase of "common waste", and thus of total waste, is due to the extra waste generated by the security and refurbishment works of the JDE's entrance Hall.

**Cybersecurity**

**74. What steps has the Committee taken towards improving cybersecurity of the institution? Were any of these steps coordinated with any other EU institution or has the Committee started taking such steps on its own initiative?**

The measures taken in cooperation with other EU Institutions during 2018 to enhance the cybersecurity of the Committee are the following:

## **IT Security actions**

- The IT Security Officer delivered user awareness sessions aiming to educate the users on how to identify phishing emails. Based on cybersecurity threats that became known during 2018, specific communications to users were prepared indicating the threats and the related actions required of them.
- A cloud-based solution that blocks in real-time connections to known malicious web sites was implemented.
- A new Endpoint Security platform was evaluated for Windows 10 workstations. The solution takes advantage of cloud capabilities delivering advanced detection capabilities based on analytics and machine learning algorithms.

## **Cooperation with other EU Institutions/Agencies**

Based on the inter-institutional agreement for the set-up of CERT-EU, two IT staffers of the Committees work at CERT-EU on a half-time basis. In the context of this very important cooperation, the Committees received the following services from CERT-EU:

- Cyber Threat Intelligence information for targeted attacks against EU Institutions
- Incident Response and Forensics Services
- Vulnerability Assessments for Web Applications
- Red Team exercise to assess the technical controls in place
- A phishing exercise to test end-user awareness

The Committees participate actively in the CII (IT interinstitutional Committee) Security subgroup and coordinated the creation of cybersecurity awareness posters that were distributed in all EU institutions during the European cybersecurity month in October 2018. The Committees also hosted the kick-off event for the cybersecurity month in October 2018.

**Annex:** Brochure on "Smart booking for travelling"