

2019 Discharge

The Committee of the Regions reply to 2019 Discharge questionnaire

Hearing: 10 November 2020

Introduction

The replies in this questionnaire mainly refer to the discharge year 2019. In mid-December 2019, the new Secretary General Mr Petr Blížkovský took office and the new mandate of the CoR members started in late January 2020.

From the beginning of his mandate, the Secretary General launched an ambitious programme aiming at boosting CoR impact through focused policy support and increased outreach, supported by a smart and modern administration. The Going for Impact scheme is being rolled-out in 2020, starting from an in-depth analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) and incorporating lessons learnt from the Covid-19 pandemic. From an administrative perspective, the aim is to make more resources available to the CoR's core political functions by simplifying procedures to the extent possible; harnessing the potential of digital, paperless solutions; fostering cooperation across services and hierarchies; inter-institutional cooperation.

Horizontal & general questions

1. **In a report published last year, the ECA pointed out that the majority of European institutions had not developed a real sustainable development strategy. What is the situation of your authority on this point?**

CoR answer to question 1:

The CoR's political priorities for the new mandate 2020-2025 contain the aim of Managing fundamental societal transformations: Building resilient regional and local communities, and responding to the major transformations our regions, cities and towns are facing today through a coherent, integrated and local European approach. Led by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, we will identify solutions to ensure the EU sufficiently supports local and regional authorities in responding to future emergencies and addressing the societal transformations taking place in their communities.

Within this context and as its contribution to achieving the goals of the Green Deal, the CoR continues the implementation of its environmental strategy and EMAS policy (see question 77 and 78).

2. **What measures have been taken in respect to the safety of staff, security of buildings and communications, including cybersecurity? What were the additional expenses for security in 2019? What measures have been taken in order to improve the physical and mental health at the workplace?**

CoR answer to question 2:

(Security of) Communications

As regards internal communications, the Committees' network is segregated into VLANs and protected with network access control. All remote access using VPN, is protected by end-to-end encryption. Important online applications such as Members Portal are protected by transport level encryption.

Increasing the security of e-mail communications between the European Institutions was a priority of the Inter-institutional IT Committee (CII). Their recommendation was that "Each EUI to implement TLS¹ and decide individually whether to implement 'mandatory' TLS"². The Committees have implemented this recommendation in full.

Cybersecurity activities in 2019

During 2019, the IT Security Officer remained active in raising user cybersecurity awareness for staff including a briefing for the IT Strategic Board and sectoral briefings at the level of individual departments. Users are systematically informed by the IT Helpdesk of any important security issues and, in particular, receive regular reminders as regards changing their passwords. The Committees took the lead in preparing the inter-institutional poster for the 2019 European cybersecurity month and redistributed the awareness-raising material of the European Parliament.

See the reply to Question 80 for a complete description of cybersecurity activities in 2019.

Additional expenses in 2019 for cybersecurity

In 2019 two additional projects were launched concerning cybersecurity. A project to finance advanced threat protection software was launched for an amount of 44 760

¹ "Transport Layer Security" – is used to encrypt traffic when it passes between mail gateways. For emails between the EU institutions, the message is encrypted before leaving a network and decrypted on its arrival to the network of the other EU institution. This prevents eavesdropping on the message as it passes over the internet.

² Decision from the CII meeting of June 15-16, 2017, held at the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

EUR. A second project to improve and optimise the configuration of the security incident management software system was launched for an amount of 34 425 EUR. The total additional expenses for cybersecurity were therefore (44 760 EUR + 34 425 EUR=) 79 185 EUR.

Security of buildings

The works for the renovation of the entrance hall of the BvS building, with the main objective to increase the security level and the service for members, staff and visitors were completed in 2019. During 2019, the perimeter of the BvS building (Remorqueur and Montoyer street) has been secured with anti-blasting windows on the ground floor as well as the entire ground floor of the JDE building in Remorqueur street (kitchen, à la carte restaurant and offices).

Security

The installation of a new CCTV system was concluded for all CoR buildings in 2019. The access control of the VMA building has been taken over completely by the Committees in 2019, and there was an increased number of surveillances due to the works in the BvS entrance hall.

In addition, new software was bought and implemented in 2019 for the badges. With these updates, the security standards for access control and badging have reached the same level as the ones of the EP and Commission. A new IT tool that will allow a better management of the visitor's access to the buildings was also acquired in 2019 and will be implemented in 2020. To enhance the efficiency of the access control at the entrances, the entrance hall of the JDE building has been refurbished in 2018 and new equipment for access control has been installed in the entrance hall of the BvS building in 2019.

In 2019, the security team has followed a special training program to face the criminal and terrorism threats and has started a cooperation with the EP regarding specific security trainings.

The security service for both Committees carries out investigations into security incidents and cooperates with the other EU Institutions as well as with the Host State's services in the domain of counter-intelligence and threat analysis. The security service was also involved in 2019 with the other EU Institutions to relaunch the security screening of external contractor's staff in 2020.

Health

In order to support the physical and mental health of staff, the Medical service focuses its work on preventive health services which includes, in addition to the yearly annual visits, also body mass composition test, measuring the muscle/fat/water ratio, eye test (Visiotest), individual stress measurement by means of Firstbeat heart rate monitoring, colon cancer tests for staff members aged 40 and over and/or with relatives who have had colon cancer and personalized nutritional and life style advice.

A number of collective preventive healthcare initiatives were organized for CoR staff, such as the melanoma screening days, where 25 colleagues attended in total and a few of them were advised to go to a medical consultation for further testing and treatment. Staff who are encountering high levels of stress have the possibility to benefit from the so called VIP2A test, which is an awareness-raising tool based on research in neuroscience, cognitive psychology and behavioural science. It enables individuals to become aware of their behavioural dynamics in motivation, assertiveness and adaptability and therefore gives insight into their susceptibility to stress. In 2019, 7 staff members took the test followed by several coaching sessions provided by the social assistant.

3. **Has your institution developed synergies or rationalizations with other European bodies? If so, which ones?**

CoR answer to question 3:

The CoR's inter-institutional cooperation on the administrative level is probably one of the best developed among all EU institutions. The CoR will continue to look for inter-institutional synergies as an equal partner while maintaining its full institutional autonomy.

One important example is the administrative cooperation between the CoR/EESC via the Joint Services, where some 470 staff (of which around 170 staff belonging to the CoR Staff Chart) and more than €50 million yearly (of which some €22 million by the CoR) are pooled together by both institutions, excluding salary related expenditure. Together with the concerned salary related expenditure, the yearly monetary value of the Joint Services operations exceeds €100 million.

In addition to operating the CoR/EESC Joint Services, the CoR cooperates with other institutions in order to ensure synergies. The CoR holds its Plenary Sessions in the European Parliament's and Commission's premises to compensate for the lack of capacity in its own conference rooms. The CoR also buys interpreting services from the European Commission (DG Interpretation) and the European Parliament, rather than having its own service. It also cooperates with the European Commission (for an annual fee) in other areas, such as:

- (i) handling of staff pension and departure files (PMO) and individual protocol rights (DG HR);
- (ii) training of staff (DG HR);
- (iii) early childhood centres and approved day nurseries (OIB);
- (iv) use of various IT platforms (the ABAC management and information system, including its accounting system and assets, as well as contract modules, NAP and Payment Factory software for salary calculations and the SYSPER 2 personnel management and information system, etc.) (DG Budget and DIGIT);
- (v) publications in the EU Official Journal (OP, as of 2020 included in the European Commission's budget).

Further administrative cooperation with the European Parliament takes place in the framework of the cooperation agreement from February 2014.

4. **The cooperation agreement with the Commission ended on 31 December 2019 but was extended for one year to negotiate a new agreement. Did you conclude a new agreement? If not, what are the problematic topics? If so, what are the changes compared to the previous agreement?**

CoR answer to question 4:

The CoR has concluded cooperation agreements which are still in place:

- European Parliament (5 February 2014). The agreement covers political cooperation (EP-CoR) and administrative cooperation (EP-CoR-EESC). A revision of this agreement is ongoing. For further details see response to question 5.
- European Commission (2005, addendum 2007)
- EESC (2016-2020). The negotiations for a new agreement for administrative cooperation were postponed due to the Covid-19 crisis which added to the complexity of the changes of mandate of the CoR (early 2020) and the EESC (autumn 2020). Both committees therefore agreed to extend the current agreement until 30 June 2021.

5. **How was the administrative cooperation between the Parliament and the Committee improved in 2019? What budgetary savings have been achieved through this cooperation?**

CoR answer to question 5:

In 2019, the cooperation based on the agreement continued to build on the achievements from the previous years.

The cooperation between the CoR and the EP in 2019 revealed a satisfactory progress on several levels. The following observations can be made:

- The relations between CoR commissions and EP committees show a steady progress and produce outcomes, such as increasingly popular exchanges between rapporteurs and new joint meetings and events.
- More efforts are essential to increase visibility of the CoR in EP hearings and scrutiny activities regarding EU legislation;
- New ways of cooperation such as contributions to implementation reports and fact-finding missions were further explored. Relevance, timing and advanced planning remain crucial for maximising their success. Meanwhile, a successful and impactful cooperation between the two institutions happens through the cross-party and cross-committee Intergroup on Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development of the EP. Further cooperation with other intergroups could be discussed once the final list of intergroups is available.

In 2020, a strong cooperation will be crucial to ensure that the initiatives of the new European Commission are closely connected to the needs and expectations identified at the local and regional level. A significant margin for improvement is indeed desirable in respect to the annual and multi-annual programming, and in particular the Joint Declaration of the EP, Council and European Commission on the legislative priorities and the monitoring of the annual work programme.

The political cooperation should continue to be further developed at the level of CoR/CCC Presidents, CoPs, CoR commissions and EP committees, and between EP and CoR rapporteurs, respecting the autonomy and the specific approaches used by each committee/commission. Especially in view of the EP's stepped-up role with a *de facto* right of initiative announced by the President of the European Commission and the key choices to be prepared in the Conference on the Future of Europe, the CoR would welcome a more systematic approach to the cooperation.

The cooperation on the administrative support has advanced in the following respects:

- The cooperation at members' level is successfully supported by the respective secretariats.
- Cooperation with EPRS is progressing and could be further enhanced via joint projects, such as: support for CORLEAP or ARLEM rapporteurs or rapporteurs working on files relating to the preservation of natural resources (NAT).
- Cooperation in communication and information has been stepped up across the board, initially in relation to the European elections and subsequently in relation to preparing for the Conference on the Future of Europe.
- Progress was made notably in the areas of security, interpretation and IT support.

At the same time, it should be noted that the EP has stated in the discharge resolution for 2018 "that the 2014 agreement was very unbalanced for the Committee and the EESC (the 'Committees'), which transferred a total of 60 translators to Parliament (24

from the Committee) and in exchange obtained only the use of the services of the European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS); notes with concern that as a consequence the Committees had to hire contract staff and outsource their translation services; notes with concern that to compensate for the reduction in translation staff, Parliament has provided additional funds (EUR 1 200 000 from 2015 to 2016) to the Committees to cover the outsourcing of translation services and that these funds can be reallocated to other policy areas if they are not fully used for outsourced translation; is of the opinion that these circumstances are not in line with the criteria of overall prudent and sound financial management and should be reviewed in the event of an extension of the present agreement or in the negotiation of a new agreement;"

The yearly savings resulting from the 24 posts that were transferred to the European Parliament's Research Service (EPRS) is estimated (on the CoR Budget) to be some € 2.9 million.

6. **What amount of money has the Parliament transferred to the Committee in 2019 with regards to the cooperation agreement? To which budgetary line(s) was that amount destined?**

CoR answer to question 6

During the budget year 2019 nothing was transferred from the Parliament to the CoR with regards to the cooperation agreement.

The Parliament acknowledged in the 2018 discharge resolution that the 2014 cooperation agreement was very unbalanced for the CoR. The CoR will claim to re-establish the balance as soon as possible and no later than as of 2022. The budget will be used for support to the political activities as foreseen in the cooperation agreement.

7. **To what extent does the collaboration with the Parliament contribute to achieving the Committee's mission? What can be done to better integrate the Committee's opinions into the Parliament's work? What would be the budgetary and staff implications?**

CoR answer to question 7:

The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the European Parliament (EP) have a long-standing cooperation. The legal basis for this cooperation is first and foremost Article 13 TEU ("The European Parliament, the Council and the Commission shall be assisted by an Economic and Social Committee and a Committee of the Regions acting in an advisory capacity.") and Article 307 TFEU ("The Committee of the Regions shall be consulted by the European Parliament, by the Council or by the Commission where the Treaties so provide and in all other cases, in particular those which concern cross-border cooperation, in which one of these institutions considers it appropriate.").

The cooperation agreement signed on 5 February 2014 by the Presidents is an expression of this cooperation, taking into account the reinforced roles of both the EP and the CoR in the Lisbon Treaty.

A significant margin for improvement is indeed desirable in respect to the annual and multi-annual programming, and in particular the Joint Declaration of the EP, Council and European Commission on the legislative priorities and the monitoring of the annual work programme.

The political cooperation should continue to be further developed at the level of CoR/CCC Presidents, CoPs, CoR commissions and EP committees, and between EP and CoR rapporteurs, respecting the autonomy and the specific approaches used by each committee/commission. Especially in view of the EP's stepped-up role with a *de facto* right of initiative announced by the President of the European Commission and the key choices to be prepared in the Conference on the Future of Europe, the CoR would welcome a more systematic approach to the cooperation.

In order to reach this goal from the CoR's side, it will be necessary to adjust the CoR's budget within the EU's administrative budget in a way that reflects its Treaty role as the political representation of approx. 1 million elected local and regional politicians. Solutions are required urgently in order to allow the other Institutions to benefit from the CoR's input to the EU decision making process in the interest of the citizens. (see attached info sheet).



CONTRIB-
Q7-Budget infographi

8. **What progress has been achieved in the cooperation with the EESC in 2019 based on the cooperation agreement that entered in force in 2016? What budgetary savings have been achieved through this cooperation?**

CoR answer to question 8:

The administrative cooperation between the CoR/EESC via the Joint Services pools some 470 staff (of which around 170 staff belonging to the CoR Staff Chart) and more than €50 million yearly (of which some €22 million by the CoR) by both institutions, excluding salary related expenditure. Together with the concerned salary related expenditure, the yearly monetary value of the Joint Services operations exceeds €100 million.

The difference in the above-mentioned contributions by each committee are due to the long and unjustified structural disadvantage of the CoR in comparison to the European Economic and Social Committee, which has to be addressed and rebalanced. Solutions are required urgently in order to allow the other Institutions to benefit from the CoR's input to the EU decision making process in the interest of the citizens.

In 2019, progress was made on the implementation of the building strategies of the CoR and EESC. The key project in this respect were the preparations for the take-over of the

VMA building from the European Commission in exchange for the committees' B68 and TRE buildings.

Negotiations on the future cooperation were prepared in 2019 but finally postponed due to the prolongation of the current agreement.

9. **What are the results of the new administrative cooperation agreement that was launched in 2019 with the EESC and the Parliament? How does the new administrative cooperation differ from the previous one?**

CoR answer to question 9:

The administrative cooperation agreement with the Parliament and the EESC concluded in February 2014 is still in place.

See also the replies to questions 4 and 5.

10. What amounts have been spent for inter-institutional cooperation such as service-level agreements for human resources and other administrative agreements?

CoR answer to question 10:

In addition to operating the CoR/EESC Joint Services, the CoR cooperates with other institutions in order to ensure synergies.

The CoR holds its Plenary Sessions in the European Parliament's and Commission's premises to compensate for the lack of capacity in its own conference rooms. The CoR also buys interpreting services from the European Commission (DG Interpretation) and the European Parliament, rather than having its own service. It also cooperates with the European Commission (for an annual fee) in other areas, such as:

- (i) handling of staff pension and departure files (PMO) and individual protocol rights (DG HR);
- (ii) training of staff (DG HR);
- (iii) early childhood centres and approved day nurseries (OIB);
- (iv) use of various IT platforms (the ABAC management and information system, including its accounting system and assets, as well as contract modules, NAP and Payment Factory software for salary calculations and the SYSPER 2 personnel management and information system, etc.) (DG Budget and DIGIT);
- (v) publications in the EU Official Journal (OP, as of 2020 included in the European Commission's budget).

Further administrative cooperation with the European Parliament takes place in the framework of the cooperation agreement from February 2014.

The main CoR budget lines concerned by inter-institutional cooperation, in addition to the already extensive CoR/EESC Joint Services cooperation, are as follows:

Budget Line	Final 2019 budget (€)	Commitment (€)	Payment C1 31/12/2019 (€)	Payment C8 30/09/2020 (€)	Payments so far* (€)	Payment / final budget* (%)
2000 "Rent" (VMA building rented from the European Commission, CoR share)	1,570,064	1,570,064	1,570,064	0	1,570,064	100%
1402 "Interpreting services"	3,815,614	3,805,444	2,622,102	1,075,966	3,698,068	96.9%
1408 "Entitlements in connection with entering the service, transfer and leaving the service"	140,000	140,000	79,481	0	79,481	56.8%
1612 "Further training of staff"	400,136	400,083	281,358	68,933	350,291	87.5%
1638 "Early childhood centre and approved day nurseries"	600,000	600,000	594,373	0	594,373	99.1%
2100 "IT" (software-related part)	365,121	364,542	344,542	3,492	348,034	95.3%
2604 "Official Journal"	39,731	39,731	39,091	0	39,091	98.4%
Total	6,930,666	6,919,864	5,531,011	1,148,391	6,679,402	96.4%

* The final payment rates will become clear at the end of 2020 once the validity of the C8 appropriations of 2020 expire. In general, the final payment rates are expected to come close to the commitment rates (ideally be the same) observed at the end of 2019 for the respective positions.

11. What type of activities were organised in the context of the "Reflecting on Europe/Future of Europe" campaign in 2019?

CoR answer to question 11:

The final report of the "Reflecting on Europe" exercise was submitted to the European Council in December 2018.

It was noted along with contributions from other EU Institutions and almost all the Member States as part of the European Council Conclusions.

The rules on droit de reserve prevent the European Committee of the Regions from organising local events ahead of elections (including the EP ones), so local events were not organised after February 2019.

In the context of our Future of Europe campaign, the following activities were carried out in 2019:

- the Bucharest Summit of Regions and Cities, bringing over 600 elected EU regional and local politicians together in an inclusive process ahead of the European Parliament elections;
- full cooperation in the European Parliament elections campaign as foreseen in the cooperation agreement between the CoR and the EP;
- a series of seminars, forums and networking events to bring together deliberative democracy practitioners from regions, cities and local authorities;
- the EuroPCom event in November 2019 jointly hosted with the European Parliament which looked back on the European elections and looked forward to the future of

Europe under the new mandates of the European Parliament and European Commission.

The CoR will build on this experience for its contribution to the Conference on the Future of Europe.

12. **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 make any changes in the way it handles data to adapt to this new legislation? What were those changes?**

CoR answer to question 12:

The CoR had to make the changes required by Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 in the way it handles personal data. In particular, the contract clauses and the privacy statements were updated in line with the new rules and published on Internet and Intranet. The record of processing activities and the central register of records of processing activities were created. A data breach procedure was set out. Training and meetings for explaining the new rules to staff were organised.

13. **What was the cost of outsourcing translation in 2019? What would have been the cost if the translations had been carried out by in-house services?**

CoR answer to question 13 :

According to the KIAPI methodology, the total cost of outsourced translation for the CoR and EESC was EUR 6 043 592 in 2019 (CoR part: EUR 2 492 830). According to the same methodology, the total cost of translation in-house would have been EUR 8 781 075 (CoR part: EUR 3 621 974).

14. **What are the main objectives of updating of the institution's Internal Financial Rules? How does the institution assess the implementation of this update?**

CoR answer to question 14:

The aim of the 2018 update of the internal financial rules (IFR) was twofold:

- to bring the IFR (incl. its annex "Charter of the authorising officer by delegation") in line with the new Financial Regulation that entered into force on 1st January 2019 and to integrate, where appropriate, the Rules of Application which were repealed; and
- to further optimise the functioning of the CoR by introducing a limited number of other changes or clarifications to existing procedures:
 - Deputising arrangements for the Director for Human Resources and Finance to ensure business continuity (Article 2);
 - Reserving specific decisions for Authorising Officers by Sub-delegation (AOSD) with the function of at least (deputy) head of unit: signature of framework contracts, waiving of recovery orders up to 5.000€ and requests for transfers to the unit in

charge of the budget where the budgetary authority is involved (Articles 6, 26 and 27);

- Possibility to appoint assistants as AOSD in duly justified cases, with a ceiling of 5.000€ per operation and, if considered appropriate, within an annual ceiling to be defined by the Authorising Officer by Delegation (Article 6);
- For the budget managed by the Joint Services, shared by CoR and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), codification of the possibility to appoint staff members of the as operational verifying agents (Article 7);
- The electronic receipt of invoices (Article 21) and electronic archiving of documents (Article 31) are foreseen.

The CoR assesses the implementation of this update as necessary and efficient. Further revision of the IFR is envisaged, i.a. to pursue and deepen the transition to a smart and modern administration by putting the emphasis on electronic treatment of financial files.

15. What explains the lower payment execution rate of “Title 2: Buildings, equipment and miscellaneous operating expenditure” in 2019 (73,2%) compared to 2018 and 2017?

CoR answer to question 15:

The major part of appropriations in Title 2 comes from line 2022. During December 2019 upgrade works for an important amount (550.000€) have been ordered. This entire amount together with the normal maintenance invoices for December explains the lower payment execution rate of this title in 2019. The correspondent appropriations were carried over to 2020 and most of them are already paid in full compliance with the Financial regulation.

Furthermore, a large part of the projects under the budget line 2007 have an execution period longer than one year. As a result, many payments are made in the year N+1. Consequently, the final financial statement of a project is very often only drawn up and paid in the year N+1. During the year 2019, more than in the previous years, large projects have been ordered.

16. What was the cost of the courses for Members in 2019? What kind of courses are eligible? How many Members took courses in 2019 and what was the cost per Member in average? What explains the low payment rate (52%) of this budgetary line?

CoR answer to question 16:

In 2019, fourteen applications for training courses were approved. Out of these fourteen, five were already paid during 2019 for an amount of 4077 € and nine other claims are expected to arrive in 2020. Six claims were already submitted in 2020 and

were paid out of the reported credits for an amount of 4272 €, three other claims are still to be expected. Language courses and self-tuition material are the only expenses allowed. The expenditure is in 2019 regulated by Regulation 003/2005. The low payment rate in 2019 is because a number of language courses do start in 2019 but continue in 2020 and final claim is submitted at the end of the course.

17. Please name three of the institution's main achievements and successes in 2019 from a budgetary/management perspective

CoR answer to question 17:

1) The CoR yearly **budget outturn** has been increasing steadily. The CoR 2018 budget outturn was 99.3%. At the time, it was the best result of all EU Institutions. As it turned out, the **CoR 2019 budget outturn** is even better - it is **99.6%**. This shows, among others, that the CoR is lately **using the available budgetary means close to the maximum** and there are not many internal reserves left.

2) CoR has reallocated some **€ 3.2 million (or 3.2% of its budget)** in 2019 by a number of internal transfers of appropriations not involving the Budget Authority and 4 external transfers of appropriations (€ 2.2 million in total, involving the Budget Authority). This, together with the excellent budget outturn as mentioned above, indicates the very good budget planning and it has allowed to finance a number of urgent and important CoR projects that did not have the financing in the initial 2019 budget, including in such lately systematically underfinanced domains as IT and upkeep of buildings.

3) successful implementation of quarterly in-depth budget execution reviews and the roadmap for the year-end transfers of appropriations (internal and external). For more details see the answer under point 21.

18. Please name the main challenges that you had to face in 2019.

CoR answer to question 18:

2019 was a year of transition at the EU level with the elections of a new Parliament in May and the nomination of the new College of Commissioners. The main challenge for the CoR was therefore to reach out in a timely and effective manner in order to make its contribution to the ongoing legislation and the long-term vision of the new institutional cycle.

The CoR did so by means of a continued reflection on the priorities of the Union, from the perspective of the one million local and regional elected politicians it represents. In the course of the year, the CoR convinced other EU institutions of the importance of ensuring a permanent system of citizens' consultations. Moreover, the CoR continued its efforts to ensure that the recommendations of the *Task Force on Subsidiarity, Proportionality and "Doing Less More Efficiently"* take root in the EU's framework, and promoted greater direct involvement of LRAs in European policy-making. The CoR significantly influenced the European Parliament on the Cohesion Policy legislative

package 2021-2027, with several opinions on a wide range of aspects. Paving the way for discussions that would become key the following year, the European Parliament and the CoR converged significantly on the first reading of other dossiers related to the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework. Other key dossiers to which the CoR contributed were the Commission's European Green Deal plan, an ambitious energy transition, and migration.

Throughout the year, the CoR involved Young Elected Politicians (YEP) in its work, a network of politicians aged 40 or below and holding office at the regional or local level in the EU.

Based on this work, the CoR prepared the key orientations for its new mandate starting in early 2020.

2019 was also a year of transition on the administrative level. The new Secretary General Mr Petr Blížkovský took office in mid-December and launched an ambitious programme aiming at boosting CoR impact through focused policy support and increased outreach, supported by a smart and modern administration. The Going for Impact scheme is being rolled-out in 2020, starting from an in-depth analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) and incorporating lessons learnt from the Covid-19 pandemic.

19. How much of the CoR budgets was allocated to: a. Administrative costs, b. Over-head costs, c. Operational costs, d. Staff remuneration, e. Staff entitlements/benefits, f. Paid leave?

CoR answer to question 19:

The CoR does not record or manage its operation based upon the criteria requested to full extent. The salary related positions are those made possible to apply as outlined in the Staff Regulations applicable for the EU-institutions. The following table illustrates the allocation of the CoR final 2019 budget listed by the most important categories of expenditure.

	2019 budget (€)
Salary related¹	56.504.141
Non-salary related	42.246.924
- Rent and lease of buildings ²	10.706.940
- Direct political expenditure ³	14.040.863
- Other expenditure ^{4,5}	17.499.121
Total budget	98.751.065

- (1) Chapter 12 (officials and temporary agents) + BL 1400 (contract agents, doctor, interims) + BL 1404 (detached national experts, trainees);
 (2) BL 2000_JS + BL 2001 (excluding BEL 100);

- (3) CH 10 + BL 1402 + BL 1422 + BL 2541 + BL 2546_members + BL 264;
- (4) Including other staff related expenditure, buildings' running costs, IT, technical equipment, outsourcing of translation, communication, external expertise, missions, etc.;

d. Staff remuneration e. Staff entitlements/benefits f. Paid leave

Budget Line 1200 – Officials and temporary staff remuneration and allowances is intended to cover, for official and temporary staff, **salaries** and the following **entitlements** and **benefits**, as integrated part of salaries: family allowances; expatriation and foreign residence allowances and payments related to salaries; flat-rate overtime allowances; other miscellaneous allowances and grants; payment of travel expenses for officials or temporary staff, their spouses and dependants from their place of employment to their place of origin. This budget line also covers the impact of salary weightings applicable to remuneration and to the part of emoluments transferred to a country other than the country of employment, as well as the institution's contribution to the Joint Sickness Insurance Scheme (insurance against sickness, accidents and occupational disease) unemployment insurance for temporary staff and payments by the institution to temporary staff in order to constitute or maintain their pension rights in their countries of origin; the severance payment of a probationer dismissed on grounds of manifest incompetence; the payment in respect of the termination by the institution of the contract of a temporary staff member. **Paid leave** is also covered by this budget line as integrated part of salaries.

Budget line 1202 - Paid overtime- for officials and temporary staff

Budget line 1204 - Entitlements on entering the service, transfer and leaving the service is intended to cover the following **benefits** due to officials and temporary staff: travel expenses due to officials and temporary staff (including their families) entering or leaving the service or being transferred to another place of employment; installation/resettlement allowances and removal expenses due to officials and temporary staff obliged to change their place of residence on taking up duty, on transfer to a new place of employment and on finally leaving the institution and resettling elsewhere, daily subsistence allowance for officials and temporary staff who furnish evidence that they must change their place of residence on taking up duty or transferring to a new place of employment.

Budget line 1220 - Allowances for staff retired in the interests of the service – it covers allowances due to officials: assigned non-active status in connection with action to reduce the number of posts in the institution; holding an AD 16 or AD 15 grade post who are retired in the interests of the service. It also covers the employer's contribution to sickness insurance and the impact of weightings applicable to those allowances.

Budget line 1400 – Other staff / contractual agents is intended to cover the **remuneration**, including for overtime, of contract staff (within the meaning of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union), the employer's

contributions to the various social security schemes, as well as **entitlements and benefits** : family, expatriation and travelling allowances from the place of employment to the country of origin and the impact of salary weightings applicable to the remuneration of these staff or the termination of contract allowance. **Paid leave** is also covered by this budget line as integrated part of remuneration.

20. **What carry-over of appropriations has been made in 2019? Does the CoR plan to make carry-over operation to the following year?**

CoR answer to question 20 (The current appropriations of 2019 (C1) and assigned revenues (C4 & C5) committed in 2019 but not yet paid out by the end of the year were carried over and converted into C8 appropriations of 2020 at the beginning of 2020. In total, **€ 11.7 million – or 11.8%** of the CoR's 2019 budget - were carried forward during January 2020. The total amount of credits carried forward from 2019 to 2020 was higher in monetary and percentage terms than in previous year when € 8.9 million or 9.3% of CoR's 2018 budget was carried forward to 2019. It is expected, that most of the carry-over appropriations from 2019 will be executed (paid) by the end of 2020.

Judging by the historical trends and the specificity of the CoR operations, it might be estimated that some 10% of the CoR 2020 current appropriations (C1 appropriations of 2020 that would be committed, but not yet paid by the end of 2020) are carried-over into 2021 (C8 appropriations of 2021) and paid thereafter.

21. **Several appropriations for budget lines remained unused in the past. What measures have been introduced to minimise budget overestimations?**

CoR answer to question 21:

The CoR is using the well-structured and planned Budget execution quarterly reviews (a quarterly exercise of in-depth analysis of the general CoR budget execution) in addition to its analytical budget execution monitoring tool "Budget Watch" as an efficient tool to optimise even further its budget execution and allocation of resources. These reviews are usually launched in spring, summer and autumn, with an aim to gather and analyse the managing services' budget execution projections for the remaining part of the year.

The results of the quarterly reviews are reported to the management and form a base for further discussions on the optimisation of the budget execution for the current year and reprioritisation of expenditure if and where needed. These discussions are usually concluded in early autumn and result, among others, in the roadmap for the year-end transfers of appropriations (internal and external). The results of the quarterly reviews and roadmap for the possible reallocation of resources is then further discussed with the CoR political representatives in the Committee for Financial and Administrative Affairs (CFAA).

22. **How many call for tenders did your institution organise in 2019? Please indicate the value and the number of applicants for each tender.**

CoR answer to question 22:

In annexes 1a and 1b below are presented the tender procedures of a value above 15.000,00€ as a result of which the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) signed a contract in the course of 2019 (with indication of the value and the number of tenders received for each tender).

Whereas annex 1a enumerates the tender procedures organised by the CoR Own Services, annex 1b lists the tender procedures organised on behalf of the CoR by the Joint Services, shared by CoR and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC).

Annex 1a:

Table: CoR procurement procedures whose contracts were signed in 2019 with a value above EUR 15 000 (contracts awarded in areas of competence of the CoR 'Own services')				
No.	Leading Institution	Title / Scope	Amount	Number of tenderers per call for tenders
1	CoR	Rental of Interpretation services for the SEDEC Commission meeting and Conference- Palermo 18/19-02/2019	26, 370.00 €	2
2	CoR	Rental of Digital Conference and Interpretation Systems, Booths, Audio-Visual Equipment and Accessories for the CoR SEDEC 22nd Commission meeting to take place in Palermo, Italy on 18 February 2019	19, 029.00 €	1
3	CoR	Technical equipment, mobile interpretation booths - Arlem Meeting Seville- 26/27-02/2019	16, 100.20 €	2
4	CoR	Location de cabines mobiles d'interprétation, webstreaming et accessoires pour le Sommet du CdR qui se tiendra à Bucarest les 14-15 mars 2019 et de la réunion du groupe PPE	95.098,00 €	2

5	CoR	Location de cabines mobiles d'interprétation et accessoires pour la réunion du groupe PPE à Bucharest (RO) le 16/03/2019	17, 176.00 €	2
6	CoR	Rental of Digital Conference and Interpretation Systems, Booths, Audio-Visual Equipment and Accessories for the CoR ECON 23rd Commission meeting to take place in Druskininkai, Lithuania on 6 May 2019	16, 544.00 €	2
7	CoR	Studies in the fields of Economic Policy	600, 000.00 €	3
8	CoR	Studies in the fields of Social Policy	200, 00.00€	7
9	CoR	Technical equipment, mobile interpretation booths - CoR Extraordinary Bureau meeting TURKU, FINLAND-13/09/2019	20, 201.50 €	2
10	CoR	Hosting of the CoR website.	394, 00.00 €	1
11	CoR	Media partnership with National press Agency from Italy	60, 000.00 €	1
12	CoR	Media partnership with National press Agency from Poland	60, 000.00 €	1

Annex 1b:

CoR procurement procedures whose contracts were signed in 2019 with a value above EUR 15 000 (contracts awarded in areas of competence of the Joint Services)				
No.	Leading Institution	Title / Scope	Amount	Number of tenderers per call for tenders
1	CoR	Interior shutters - Supply and maintenance, cleaning and associated services	84.000,00 €	2
2	CoR	Insulation and renovation of green roof	175.687,50 €	3

3	CoR	Omnium and ecological maintenance of indoor and outdoor green spaces and green roofs	666.000,00 €	1
4	CoR	Audit of carbon balance sheet data	42.000,00 €	2
5	CoR	Sale of green certificates	56.964,75 €	2
6	CoR	Banking services - ATM	not awarded: no offers	0

23. What measures has the CoR implemented in order to improve its procurement procedures?

CoR answer to question 23:

CoR has implemented a number of measures throughout 2019 in order to simplify its internal procurement procedures and to move towards increasingly paperless tendering processes.

Negotiated procedures below the directive's threshold (<139.000€) are currently organized in a paperless setting: documents are generated and signed via an internal electronic workflow (Adonis), and tender documents are sent and offers are received electronically. Open and restricted procedures above the directive's threshold (>139.000€) are launched electronically (contract notice and tender documents published via TED and e-Notices), but offers are received and the procedure is currently handled in a paper based manner.

Furthermore, the internal procedures for running procurement at CoR have been simplified in late 2019, introducing additional elements of administrative proportionality for lower value tenders. Thus, for instance, for tenders of a value up to 60.000€, and based on a risk assessment, Authorising Officers by Sub-delegation (AOSD) are given the possibility to renounce to an evaluation committee and to entrust the evaluation to a person of his/her choice. Also, below the directive threshold (<139 000€), the formal appointment of an opening committee is no longer mandatory and the opening is as a rule organized directly by the CoR public procurement cell, on behalf of the AOSD. Finally, below directive threshold, the correspondence with tenderers is also managed directly by members of the procurement cell, on behalf of the AOSD.

In order to improve its procurement procedures, the Directorate for Logistics, one of the EESC-CoR Joint services managed jointly under the CoR-EESC cooperation agreement has updated its internal procedure whose purpose is to professionalize the management of procurement procedures, to describe each step, and to clarify the responsibilities of each actor. Moreover, in order to ensure the widest access of economic operators to the procurements of the CoR, the Directorate for Logistics has increased the use of the open procedures for works including for values below the Directive threshold.

24. What efforts have been made to promote the modernisation of procurement processes related to IT tools?

CoR answer to question 24:

Preliminary steps have been undertaken to deploy the e-Submission tool (developed by DIGIT – European Commission) at CoR, so as to allow further steps towards e-tendering for procedures of a value above the directive's threshold (>139.000€). A Service Level Agreement (SLA) with DIGIT has been negotiated and signed in 2020, preparing the ground for an ulterior onboarding of e-Submission at CoR. The roll out of e-Submission will allow economic operators taking part in procurement procedures launched by CoR to submit their tenders via a secure on-line platform, thus doing away with the submission of voluminous paper tenders.

Further perspectives to attain a fully paperless tendering environment for all procedures (both above and below directive's threshold) may be envisaged in the future. This would imply that CoR acquires the PPMT tool (Public Procurement Management tool) developed by JRC, alongside the development or acquisition of an improved back-office document management system. Given the significant operational and financial implications of such a change, further in-depth analysis of this possible evolution is however needed.

25. Could the Committee confirm whether the remaining of the very important recommendations of the internal audit were implemented (ref objective 2, pag 59 of the Annual report)?

CoR answer to question 25:

All recommendations were implemented by the end of 2019.

26. Did the Ombudsman issue any recommendations to the CoR in 2019 and how did you follow-up on them?

CoR answer to question 26:

The Ombudsman did not issue any recommendation that specifically concerned the CoR in 2019. However, in March 2019 the Ombudsman issued her 'Practical recommendations for the EU administration on the use of official EU languages when

communicating with the public'. Shortly afterwards, in April 2019, the CoR Secretary-General distributed these practical recommendations to all the staff, stressing the importance of following them in order to avoid instances of maladministration.

In 2019, the CoR administration also took the initiative of issuing a guide about staff complaints to the Ombudsman.

27. **What is the rate of compliance of your institution with regard to the recommendations of the Ombudsman in 2019?**

CoR answer to question 27:

The CoR considers having fully complied with the recommendations of the Ombudsman in 2019 (see the answer to question 26).

28. **From 2014 to 2017 transfers of posts from the linguistic services to the services of Parliament needed to be compensated for by an increased number of contractual staff. What actions have been taken to remedy the situation?**

CoR answer to question 28:

The transfer of staff required new outsourcing framework contracts to be concluded allowing for a higher share of outsourced translations. During the transition period, the transformation of the translation services required a temporary reinforcement by contract staff. In-between, appropriate revision and control mechanisms were put in place in order to ensure appropriate quality of outsourced translations. The rate of outsourced translation increased considerably from around 4% to around 20%. In 2019, the number of long-term contract staff had significantly decreased in the Directorate for Translation compared to the years 2013-2017 and has since then remained exceptional, mainly with a view to the replacement of long-term absences (maternity/parental leaves, long term sick leaves, etc.).

29. **Considering the suggested change of the system of one signature to confirm the presence of members on meetings, to the system of two signatures - one signature at the beginning and one at the end of the meeting - why did the relevant CoR bodies decide to maintain the existing system until a further revision? Why is a further revision necessary and when will this revision take place?**

CoR answer to question 29:

The Plenary Assembly of the CoR decided on 14 October 2020 the launching of a revision of the Rules of Procedure of the CoR (RoP). This revision will provide the frame for tackling these and other issues related to the presence of Members, which will be followed later by more specific provisions on the reimbursement.

Staff

30. **How many trainees have worked in 2019 at the CoR? Have all of trainees received an allowance that covers at least their living costs?**

CoR answer to question 30:

The CoR offers three types of traineeship: standard traineeships, short-term study visits and internships reserved for governmental officials.

The CoR hosted 46 standard trainees who received a monthly basic traineeship grant 1.196,84 € (25% of AD5/1). In addition, the standard trainees were entitled to travel costs reimbursement, mobility allowance for public transport in Brussels (25 €/month), contribution to health insurance cover (CoR pays 2/3 of the premium). The trainees were automatically covered by the CoR accident insurance policy.

Besides standard trainees the CoR hosted 34 short-term study visit trainees who were in certain cases remunerated by their university or via a partner region programme.

Only one governmental trainee was present in 2019. As this was a secondment program, the remuneration and health insurance were provided by the sending institution.

31. **How many cases of burnout at the CoR have been reported in 2019? What measures are implemented to provide access to psychological support and programs for mental health?**

CoR answer to question 31:

10 cases of burnout were registered in the CoR in 2019.

The Social service collaborates with the Medical service in providing assistance during the illness period (when requested by the staff member concerned) and upon return to work.

The social worker is readily available to provide emotional and administrative support and to assist in handling conflictual and personal issues via coaching techniques. When possible, the VIP2A Pro test is used as an awareness raising tool. It enables individuals to become aware of behavioural dynamics in motivation, assertiveness and adaptability and therefore gives an insight into the susceptibility to stress.

The CoR staff has access to psychosocial support provided by the European Commission (e.g. consultations with psychiatrists, psychologists, counsellors) through a service level agreement which links both institutions.

32. **What was done to improve the well-being of the staff and promote better work-life balance?**

CoR answer to question 32:

Following an evaluation and wide-range consultations with staff representatives, new rules for telework were adopted in 2019 resulting in a flexible system which provides for improved work-life balance for all and better controlling mechanisms for managers. The single formula of a yearly exercise starting on 1 January has been replaced by the possibility of starting a structural telework regime at any time in the year and with formulae between 3 and 12 months. New patterns were also added, such as half-day a

week (if the other half-day is not worked) and one day a week. The objective has been to allow staff and managers to find together the best formulae in everyone's interest and foresee enough flexibility to adapt the patterns wherever necessary.

On the same occasion, the provisions on occasional teleworking were also clarified with an increased yearly ceiling set at 30 days a year.

In 2019 3 additional political groups (PSE, AE and ECR) were integrated in the flexitime scheme, which had previously not participated. The use of some flexible working time arrangements (part-time, parental leave, family leave) is increasing, particularly part time, both as regards part-time granted and the number of staff concerned.

The Medical service designs and implements the institution's preventive health policy which includes, where appropriate – and in addition to the standard features of the preventive examination – personalised services such as:

- body mass composition test, measuring the muscle/fat/water ratio;
- eye test (*Visiotest*);
- individual stress measurement by means of Firstbeat heart rate monitoring;
- colon cancer tests for staff members aged 40 and over and/or with relatives who have had colon cancer;
- personalised nutritional advice.

A number of collective preventive healthcare initiatives were organised for CoR staff, such as the melanoma screening days, where 25 colleagues attended in total and a few of them were advised to go to a medical consultation for further testing and treatment.

The social assistant intervenes at the request of a staff member or upon referral by the Medical service or the Administration. Individual assistance, advice, coaching and mediation (whenever necessary) are mainly provided in the following fields: hospitalisation, reimbursement of medical costs, administrative questions related to the Staff Regulations and/or the Belgian administration, financial problems, difficult family situations, long-term illnesses, personal problems, stress and conflicts at work. The Social service is also the contact point for colleagues and family members of deceased colleagues. In total, 165 visits were registered in 2019 (excluding requests made by telephone or email).

As a continuation of the "Stress and Burnout Prevention Programme", the VIP2A test (personality inventory) has been available to staff. This is an awareness-raising tool based on research in neuroscience, cognitive psychology and behavioural science. It enables individuals to become aware of their behavioural dynamics in motivation, assertiveness and adaptability and therefore gives insight into their susceptibility to stress. In 2019, 7 staff members took the test followed by several coaching sessions.

33. Could you please provide a table of all human resources broken down by nationality, type of contract, gender and grade for the year 2019, and an overview of how these figures compare with the year 2018?

CoR answer to question 33:

31/12/2018 31/12/2019 2019-2018

Total workforce	609	610	1
Statutory staff by type of the contract	537	538	1
Officials	404	418	14
Temporary staff	84	71	-13
Contract staff	49	49	0
Non statutory staff	72	72	0
Seconded national experts	12	11	-1
Special adviser (doctor)	1	1	0
Trainees	25	27	2
Service providers	26	25	-1
Interim	8	8	0

Staff by status				
Status	2018	2019	2019-2018	
Officials	404	418	14	
AD	240	252	12	
AST	162	162	0	
AST/AC	2	4	2	
Temporary staff	84	71	-13	
2c	50	46	-4	
2b	30	22	-8	
2a	4	3	-1	
Contract staff	49	49	0	
3a	23	21	-2	
3b	26	28	2	
Special adviser (Doctor)	1	1	0	
Seconded national experts	12	11	-1	
Total	550	550	0	

Staff by age				
Status	2018	2019	2019-2018	
Officials	47,17	47,72	0,55	
Temporary staff	40,29	41,11	0,82	
Contract staff	44,06	43,90	-0,16	
Total	45,80	46,50	0,70	

Staff by Nationality (officials, temporary and contract staff)			
Nationality	2018	2019	2019-2018
Allemagne	30	31	1
Autriche	4	4	0
Belgique	84	81	-3
Bulgarie	17	18	1
Chypre	3	1	-2
Croatie	11	11	0
Danemark	6	6	0
Espagne	35	36	1
Estonie	8	8	0
Finlande	14	14	0
France	39	37	-2
Grèce	22	19	-3
Hongrie	16	18	2
Irlande	13	13	0
Italie	51	54	3
Lettonie	13	13	0
Lituanie	11	11	0
Luxembourg			0
Malte	6	8	2
Pays-Bas	6	6	0
Pologne	33	33	0
Portugal	18	22	4
Roumanie	29	29	0
Royaume-Uni	12	12	0
Slovaquie	14	13	-1
Slovénie	15	14	-1
Suède	11	10	-1
Tchéquie	16	16	0
	537	538	1

Statutory staff by gender				
	2018	2019	2019-2018	
Women	56,2%	55,6%	-0,6%	
Men	43,8%	44,4%	0,6%	

Active statutory staff by grade/ function group			
	31/12/2018	31/12/2019	2019-2018
Total	537	538	1
Administrators	294	297	3
AD16	1	1	0
AD15	5	5	0
AD14	18	18	0
AD13	15	12	-3
AD12	28	28	0
AD11	12	15	3
AD10	27	32	5
AD9	43	47	4
AD8	38	33	-5
AD7	37	43	6
AD6	33	26	-7
AD5	37	37	0
Assistants	187	182	-5
AST11	3	3	0
AST10			0
AST9	9	12	3
AST8	12	14	2
AST7	18	20	2
AST6	24	25	1
AST5	36	35	-1
AST4	34	35	1
AST3	39	25	-14
AST2	5	7	2
AST1	7	6	-1
Assistants/Clerks	7	10	3
SC1	7	10	3
Contract staff	49	49	0
GFI	23	21	-2
GFI1	3	3	0
GFI2	3	2	-1
GFI3	17	16	-1
GFII	5	4	-1
GFII4	1	2	1
GFII5	3	1	-2
GFII6	1	1	0
GFIII	7	5	-2
GFIII8	1	1	0
GFIII9	2	2	0
GFIII10	2		-2
GFIII11			0
GFIII12	2	2	0
GFIV	14	19	5
GFIV13	4	4	0
GFIV14	2	3	1
GFIV15	3	2	-1
GFIV16	4	5	1
GFIV17		2	2
GFIV18	1	3	2

34. Could you please provide us a table of staff broken down by type of contract and average duration (of contractual employments) for 2013 and 2019?

CoR answer to question 34:

Active statutory staff by type of the contract

	31/12/2013	average duration of the contract (months)	31/12/2019	average duration of the contract (months)
total	539		539	
Contract staff	34		49	
3a	20	<i>indefinite</i>	21	<i>indefinite</i>
3b	14	23,3	28	22,61
Temporary staff	64		71	
2a	4	<i>indefinite*</i>	3	<i>indefinite*</i>
2b	23	17,7	22	27,30
2c	37	<i>indefinite</i>	46	<i>indefinite</i>
Officials	440	<i>indefinite</i>	418	<i>indefinite</i>
Special adviser (doctor)	1	24	1	24

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

35. We would appreciate a comprehensive overview of staff on sick leave in 2019, broken down by the total number of staff members that were on sick leave and by how many days they were on sick leave in total.

How many days did the three longest cases of sick leave last for? How many days of sick leave were taken on Mondays and Fridays in 2018? What was the evolution since 2013?

CoR answer to question 35:

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

In 2019, 455 staff members had at least half a day of sick leave. With a reference population of 550 staff members:

- ✓ 95 staff members (17,2 % of the total) had no sick leave during 2019;
- ✓ 242 staff members (44 % of the total) had between 0.5 and 7 days of sick leave;
- ✓ 323 staff members (58,7 % of the total) had between 0.5 and 14 days of sick leave.

It follows that 61 % of the reference population had between 0 and 7 days of sick leave in 2019, i. e. less than a week including a weekend.

Moreover, 76 % of staff had between 0 and 14 sick leave days in 2019. This means that an overwhelming majority of staff have been sick less than two weeks (including weekends) in 2019.

Below is a comprehensive overview of staff on sick leave in 2019, broken down by the number of staff members that were on sick leave and by how many days they were on sick leave.

	Staff on sick leave in 2019	(WE et JF compris)		
	Number of days of sick leave	Number of staff	Total of days	
	0,5	8	4	
	1	49	49	
	1,5	7	10,5	
	2	34	68	
	2,5	6	15	
	3	25	75	
	3,5	6	21	
	4	23	92	
	4,5	6	27	
	5	27	135	
	5,5	4	22	
	6	16	96	
	6,5	16	104	
	7	15	105	
	7,5	6	45	
	8	12	96	
	8,5	3	25,5	
	9	9	81	
	9,5	4	38	
	10	11	110	
	11	9	99	

	11,5	4	46	
	12	3	36	
	12,5	5	62,5	
	13	6	78	
	13,5	1	13,5	
	14	8	112	
	15	6	90	
	15,5	1	15,5	
	16	6	96	
	17	5	85	
	18	7	126	
	18,5	2	37	
	19	1	19	
	20	6	120	
	21	4	84	
	21,5	1	21,5	
	22	1	22	
	22,5	1	22,5	
	23	5	115	
	24	1	24	
	25	1	25	
	26	5	130	
	26,5	2	53	
	27	3	81	
	27,5	1	27,5	
	28	4	112	
	29	1	29	
	31	2	62	
	32,5	1	32,5	
	33	3	99	
	33,5	1	33,5	
	34,5	1	34,5	

	35	3	105	
	36	1	36	
	39	2	78	
	39,5	1	39,5	
	40	1	40	
	41,5	1	41,5	
	43	2	86	
	44	3	132	
	45,5	1	45,5	
	46,5	1	46,5	
	47	2	94	
	48	1	48	
	52,5	1	52,5	
	53	1	53	
	54	1	54	
	56	1	56	
	58	1	58	
	59	1	59	
	62	1	62	
	72	1	72	
	73	1	73	
	73,5	1	73,5	
	76	2	152	
	76,5	1	76,5	
	78,5	1	78,5	
	84	1	84	
	89	1	89	
	94	1	94	
	98	1	98	
	102	1	102	
	106	1	106	
	106,5	1	106,5	

	115	1	115	
	118	1	118	
	119	1	119	
	122	1	122	
	125,5	1	125,5	
	132	1	132	
	136,5	1	136,5	
	143,5	1	143,5	
	144	1	144	
	150,5	1	150,5	
	151	2	302	
	151,5	1	151,5	
	156	1	156	
	157	1	157	
	173	1	173	
	262	1	262	
	280	1	280	
	319	1	319	
	363	1	363	
Total		455	9123,5	

How many days did the three longest cases of sick leave last for?

The three longest cases of sick leave lasted for 363, 319 and 280 days respectively and corresponded to serious illnesses.

How many days of sick leave were taken on Mondays and Fridays in 2018? What was the evolution since 2013?

Below is an overview of statistics relating to sick leave on Mondays only and Fridays only, in 2018:

Weekday	Number of days of sick leave in 2018
Monday only	234.5
Friday only	231
Total	465.5

As part of its absenteeism policy, the CoR has pursued a comprehensive policy on well-being, health and absence management with a tight and personalised follow-up of absences and the implementation of a structured return-to-work policy. In particular, tailored measures are taken to foster smooth return to work after a long-term absence.

The evolution of the situation since 2013 in terms of absences at the CoR should be understood in the light of the average age of staff at that time, when CoR staff was one of the youngest in average in all EU institutions. The absence rate – which was then very low - increased from 2013 to 2014 to reach levels comparable with those of other EU institutions of similar size. With the comprehensive absence management policy that has since then been put in place, all efforts are done to avoid long-term absences and to reintegrate staff at work wherever possible. As a result, the absence rate has been decreasing every year from 2015 to 2018 and stabilising since then.

36. **How many requests for promotions were submitted in 2019? How many promotions between function groups were postponed or denied in 2019? Were any of these a consequence of the 2014 staff reform?**

CoR answer to question 36:

As all the European institutions, the European Committee of the Regions grants promotions in full compliance with Article 6 and Annex IB of the Staff Regulations. In the framework of the 2019 promotion round, out of 190 officials (105 AD, 84 AST and 1 AST/SC) who met the eligibility criteria according to the CoR's internal promotion rules and in line with the statutory requirements, after a comparative assessment of their merits, 103 were promoted by the Appointing Authority (53 AD, 49 AST and 1 AST/SC). In this way, 54% of the eligible officials benefited from this statutory career progression.

37. **What were the most important actions taken by the institution in 2019 in order to have a more diverse workforce?**

CoR answer to question 37:

The CoR is committed to diversify its workforce in terms of geographic balance, gender balance and ensuring fair and equal access to recruitment procedures for all candidates. It continuously monitors this in the yearly follow-up of its equal opportunities action plan.

One action to be highlighted in 2019 was the organization of several trainings regarding unconscious bias, specifically catered to managers and HR staff involved in selection procedures. It was also mandatory for the HR contact points in each Directorate. The goal of the training was to underline potential biases that might occur during the selection procedures, for example regarding gender, age, disability, etc. The raised

awareness ensures fairer recruitment procedures and more opportunities for all candidates.

The CoR fights against all types of discrimination and states clearly in its vacancy notices that as an employer, it applies a policy of equal opportunities, precluding any discrimination. Proactively and for many years, the Recruitment sector systematically protects all personal information in the application files, by hiding personal data such as birthday, age, nationality, marital status or address from the selection panels in order to prevent all forms of possible bias or discrimination.

In addition, selection panels also receive an internal note on discriminatory practices to be avoided during the selection process. All panel members must comprise representatives of both genders.

In terms of gender balance and access of female colleagues to managerial positions, additional measures have been developed in the framework of our ambitious annual Equal opportunity action plan (access to trainings, network of internal female mentors, functional management functions etc.) – see Question 48 hereafter. Middle managerial positions (type of post: head of unit) are first advertised internally in order to encourage especially female candidates to apply and access to formal managerial responsibilities.

In order to grant the largest possible basis for its recruitment, the CoR is one of the few European institutions to publish its vacancy notices openly on its Internet website in order to increase chances for laureates from across the whole EU to apply, without any geographical discrimination. Recruitments are always complying with the provisions of Article 27 of the Staff Regulations.

38. Were there any changes made to the organisation of workspaces in 2019? Could you please provide a table of the current workspaces and their capacity?

CoR answer to question 38:

The CoR shares its buildings with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). The CoR's 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 improvement in four key areas related to the organization of workspace:

- ✓ reorganization of office allocations; Commission's services (DG HR, DIGIT, OIB) have been contacted to exchange experiences in relation to "The Workplace of the Future";
- ✓ refurbishment of existing buildings in view of creating healthier workspaces aligned to ergonomic standards such as renovation of some of the older offices and common areas – technical audits of VMA and BvS buildings have been finished; works have been launched to improve the ventilation of meeting rooms and to upgrade the capacity of elevators in BvS building; the ventilation system as well as

the video cabling system within the conference rooms in the JDE building have been upgraded;

- ✓ increasing the security level of buildings such as the renovation of the BvS entrance hall and reinforcing the inside windows with an anti-blast film;
- ✓ reduction of electricity consumption and alignment to environmental obligations – improvement of evacuation routes, lighting, installation of energy counters in some buildings.

In addition, the ergonomist made recommendations for improving the ergonomics of more than 50 workstations following his office visits. His recommendations were subsequently implemented. For example, the desks of several people were replaced by electrically height-adjustable desks.

The current workstations capacity of the buildings is the following:

BUILDING	B 68	BvS	JDE	REM	TRE	VMA	TOTAL
Work stations in use	228	419	488	30	160	225	1550
Work stations not in use	19	88	51	40	24	19	241
TOTAL work stations	247	507	539	70	184	244	1791

39. **Has the building strategy changed since 2017 and in what way? What were the recommendations of the joint working group on working conditions and were they taken into account?**

CoR answer to question 39:

The building strategy has not been changed since 2017 as its general principles are still fully valid today. What has been changed is the implementing scenarios of the building strategy taking into account the signature with the OIB of an administrative agreement for the exchange of the VMA building against the B68 and TRE buildings as well as the proposal of the EEAS to have the Committees taking over the rental contract to the B100 building as from 2021.

In this context, a working group has been created on the future allocation of space in order to analyse the needs and distribution of office space during the foreseen renovation works of the VMA building as well as after its exchange with the B68 and TR74 buildings, foreseen in September 2022.

The Working Group drew up a proposal for criteria and principles to be applied when allocating space to the different services, proposed different simulations for the occupation of the buildings and recommended one of those simulations.

In all possible simulations for occupation, the Working Group considered the one having an additional building such as the B100, with a capacity of around 200 staff

Members, as essential to be able to create good working conditions for Members and staff. With the B100, the average office space per person at the Committees will be 16 m², which is in line with the average of the European institutions according to the study undertaken by the Court of Auditors in 2018.



Document de travail (26/03/2020)

Distribution des surfaces pour les services administratifs pendant et après les travaux de rénovation du VMA

INTRODUCTION

En vertu d'un accord signé avec la Commission européenne portant sur l'échange des bâtiments TRE/B68 et du bâtiment VMA, les Comités prendront possession du VMA en septembre 2022. Des travaux de rénovation seront effectués du début de l'année 2021 jusqu'à l'été de 2022. Afin d'éviter toute nuisance pour les collègues qui occupent le bâtiment et d'accélérer les travaux de rénovation, les étages du bâtiment VMA hébergeant des bureaux seront entièrement évacués. Pour ce faire, il est prévu de reloger le personnel en deux phases:

- ☐ phase I: évacuation en temps voulu du bâtiment VMA de manière à commencer les travaux de rénovation au début de l'année 2021;
- ☐ phase II: occupation du bâtiment VMA rénové et évacuation des bâtiments TRE/B68 à partir de l'été 2022.

Afin d'assurer le bon déroulement de ce processus et sachant que la capacité totale d'accueil du bâtiment VMA est inférieure à celle des deux bâtiments TRE/B68 (déficit d'approximativement 10.000m²), les Comités souhaitent à compter de janvier 2021 de reprendre le bail du bâtiment B100, contigu au bâtiment VMA (capacité d'environ 5.000m²).

Il est prévu de décider de l'attribution future des espaces d'ici la fin du mois de mars 2020, à la fois pour la phase I (afin de préparer les multiples déménagements à programmer en temps utile) et pour la phase II (afin de permettre aux directions amenées à occuper le bâtiment VMA après sa rénovation de se pencher sur l'aménagement pratique souhaité des étages).

Il importe que l'attribution des espaces soit opérée sur la base de paramètres objectifs et justes, en fonction du nombre et profil des services respectifs des deux Comités. C'est dans ce but que le présent document de travail formule des propositions en termes de:

- capacité d'occupation des immeubles, exprimée en Unités de Poste de Travail (UPT),
- règles d'allocation des UPT,
- principes d'allocation des espaces entre les services des deux Comités.

Sur cette base, une décision pourra être prise concernant les bâtiments qui hébergeront les services touchés par les travaux du VMA et l'échange de bâtiments susmentionnée, tant pour la phase 1 que pour la phase 2.

CAPACITE D'OCCUPATION DES IMMEUBLES

1. Définition d'une unité de poste de travail (UPT) au sein des Comités

Définition: Une "*Unité de poste de travail*" (UPT) est l'espace nécessaire à l'installation et au bon fonctionnement d'un poste de travail, comprenant son mobilier et ses équipements. Cette unité est un espace pourvu de lumière naturelle. Une "*Unité de poste de travail*" est susceptible d'accueillir 1 poste de travail normalement équipé. Un bureau peut être constitué de un ou de plusieurs unités de poste de travail.

Mesurer l'espace attribué à une entité basée sur le concept de l'UPT théorique permet de neutraliser les différences de la surface d'un bureau standard d'un bâtiment qui peut varier selon sa trame architecturale. Ainsi, la valeur d'une UPT pour un occupant de bureau est indépendante de la configuration des espaces actuelle ou future de l'immeuble concerné³.

Le Groupe de Travail VMA propose de considérer **une UPT comme étant une surface minimale de 10 m²** calculée intra muros. Il est à souligner que cette norme est supérieure à celle utilisée dans d'autres institutions (8m² à la CE; 7m² au PE).

Surface intra muros des bureaux — nombre d'unités de poste de travail (UPT)

< 10 m ² :	0
10 m ² < et < 15 m ² :	1
15 m ² < et < 20 m ² :	1,5
20 m ² < et < 25 m ² :	2
25 m ² < et < 30 m ² :	2,5

³ Une UPT théorique se distingue d'une Unité Hébergement (UH) classique dans la mesure où ces dernières tiennent compte de l'apposition des murs existante. Il en résulte que le nombre de UPT théoriques d'un immeuble est supérieur au nombre d'UH de celui-ci. Il importe toutefois de souligner que l'objectif de l'UPT théorique n'est pas de réduire les espaces alloués actuellement. L'approche en UPT a pour seul et unique but de fournir une image neutre et objective des espaces réellement disponibles (image objective qui n'est pas possible en utilisant les UH).

Seule la surface 'premier jour' avec une profondeur maximale de 5,5m (distance par rapport la fenêtre) **est compatibilisée** dans ce cadre.

2. Nombres d'UPT par bâtiment

Le Groupe de Travail VMA a été mandaté pour traiter des questions relatives aux espaces alloués aux services administratifs. Pour cette raison les espaces alloués aux Membres, Groupes Politiques et SG ne sont pas pris en considération.

Par ailleurs, vu la spécificité de certains services, le groupe de travail VMA propose de **'neutraliser' les surfaces atypiques** suivants dans le calcul des UPT des bâtiments:

- BVS +0: imprimerie, ...
- BVS +9 en partie: les espaces occupés par les services médicaux et les Comités du Personnel
- BVS: quelques espaces à besoins spécifiques (installation des prestataires externes de la DL, atelier de peinture et salle polyvalente gérée par le CdP au BvS+3, studio d'enregistrement au BvS+6)
- JDE +1: bibliothèque, service catering, ...
- JDE +5: régie des salles
- JDE +6: régie des salles
- TRE+0: espaces d'exposition

De même, les personnes ayant leur bureau/poste de travail dans les surfaces 'neutralisées' dans le calcul des UPT sont également 'neutralisés' dans l'approche de distribution des surfaces.

Ainsi, les UPT théoriques des immeubles respectifs et exclusion des espaces utilisés par les Membres, les SG, les groupes et les groupes politiques, sont comme suit:

- JDE : 364,5 (après neutralisation du +0, +1, +5 et +6)
- BVS : 601,5 (après neutralisation du +0 et +1, +9[partiellement])
- REM : 79
- VMA : 249
- B68 : 232
- TRE : 211
- B100 : 268,5

Durant les différentes phases du projet immobilier, ceci signifie la disponibilité des capacités en UPT théoriques suivantes:

Situation actuelle	Lors des tvx VMA	Après tvx VMA
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JDE	364,5	364,5	364,5
BVS	606	606	606
REM	79	79	79
VMA +2 à +9	249	12	249
B68	231,5	231,5	vide
TRE	211	211	vide
B100	pas dispo.	215,5	268,5
	1.741	1.719,5	1.567

REGLES D'ALLOCATION DES UPT

Règle n°1 - Espace de travail alloué en fonction du grade/statut

Les règles d'occupation sont destinées à être appliquées lors de l'attribution des espaces bureaux aux services administratifs des deux Comités (voir point 2 à la page 2 ci-dessus).

L'application de ces règles déterminera la surface totale de l'espace devant être attribué à chaque entité administrative. Cet espace est constitué d'un nombre d'UPT correspondant à une surface nette de bureaux.

L'attribution proposée des UPT en fonction du grade est la suivante:

- Dir/Dir Adj : 3
- Chef d'Unité : 2
- AD : 1
- AST : 1
- AC GF III et IV: 1
- AC GF I et II : 0,75
- Stagiaires : 0,75
- Externes : 0,75
- Télétravailleurs structurels : 0,75

L'application des règles d'allocation des UPT sur la population (de l'organigramme des deux Comités) donne les besoins suivants:

GLOBAL TOTAL : 1.150 UPT

Or, un nombre d'espaces ne peuvent pas être pris en compte pour la (re-)distribution parmi les services CdR et CESE. Notamment:

- a) la différence entre la disponibilité d'UPT actuelle (1.736,5) et la disponibilité d'UPT finale à l'issue des travaux et de l'échange des bâtiments (1.567,5), soit 169 UPT à absorber afin de pour pouvoir héberger l'ensemble des fonctionnaires,
- b) une réserve 70 UPT afin de pouvoir réaliser progressivement des travaux de rénovation après Septembre 2022 dans les autres immeubles que le VMA (l'équivalent à un étage au BVS).

De ces faits, une redistribution des UPT suivants pourra être envisagée:

$1.567 - 70 - 1.150 = 347$ **UPT excédentaires**, à redistribuer en plus des 1.150 attribués directement au titre de la population. Cela correspond à un supplément de 30% par rapport aux 1.150 UPT résultant de l'application des paramètres susmentionnés.

Le groupe de travail VMA propose de garder une marge de 3% pour faire face à des besoins spécifiques de certains services et à d'autres éventuelles neutralisations d'espaces outre celles déjà indiquées ci-dessus. Par la restante partie, il est proposé d'effectuer une **majoration proportionnelle de 27 %** des UPT attribuées à chaque service.

Règle n°2 - Adaptation du nombre d'UPT alloué en fonction des bâtiments

Compte tenu de la diversité architecturale des bâtiments occupés par les Comités, la surface moyenne des modules diffère d'un bâtiment à l'autre. Par souci d'équité lors de l'attribution des UPT, une correction tenant compte de la spécificité des espaces alloués pourra être appliquée sur proposition du service en charge de l'attribution des espaces. Par ex. la présence ou non d'une zone centrale d'un immeuble, sans lumière naturel mais utilisable en tant que salle de réunion

Règle n°3 – Espace de travail alloué pour le personnel ayant des fonctions particulières

Bien qu'ils ne soient pas comptabilisés comme espace de travail, des locaux spécifiques appropriés sont attribués aux entités suivantes :

- Edition, Distribution, Imprimerie,
- Bureaux de voyages, - Services médicaux,
- toute autre entité qui devra faire l'objet d'une analyse spécifique.

PRINCIPES D'ATTRIBUTION DES ESPACES

Il est proposé que l'allocation des espaces (UPT majorés) soit gouvernée par les principes suivants:

- **Respecter les principes de l'accord de coopération et notamment les clés de répartition** entre les deux comités – toute future occupation à l'issue des travaux de rénovation du VMA doit maintenir le partage des surfaces agréé entre les deux comités.
- **Attribution préférentielle:** les locaux des bâtiments JDE et VMA seront attribués de façon préférentielle à l'activité des Membres, aux Groupes Politiques du CdR et aux Groupes du CESE, aux cabinets des Présidents et des SG ainsi qu'au personnel chargé du support direct aux Membres. Il appartient à chaque Comité de déterminer les services qui doivent impérativement être hébergés au JDE/VMA en application de ce principe, ce qui n'exclue pas le bâtiment BvS d'héberger quelques-unes de ces fonctions.
- Le **regroupement** d'une même entité organisationnelle (direction/service) dans un même bâtiment ou dans des bâtiments contigus sera privilégiée dans la mesure du possible, à moins que cela ne soit pas souhaitée pour des raisons opérationnelles. Par ailleurs, **conserver la cohésion des services** qui seront déménagés est également un objectif. Pour ce faire il sera nécessaire de cibler des surfaces qui puissent héberger des unités voire des directions entières. A titre d'exemple, il est possible d'intégrer les niveaux du REM aux niveaux correspondants du BvS et ainsi créer des clusters ayant un nombre des PT (postes de travail) plus important.
- **Egalité de traitement** – la réduction de la disponibilité en termes d'espaces de bureaux dans la phase II, doit être partagée de manière proportionnelle et équitable entre toutes les entités concernées par les opérations de relocalisation. Pour cela il est nécessaire d'établir des paramètres qui permettront de traiter de façon équitable les différentes entités (direction, service, etc) en fonction de la position hiérarchique, du grade, statut, présence au lieu de travail des agents qui les composent. Ces paramètres seront d'abord appliqués aux entités qui occuperont les bâtiments dans lesquels il y aura des travaux d'envergure ou qui seront touchés par des déménagements massifs. Par la suite ils seront appliqués à tous les bâtiments lorsque l'occasion se présentera (travaux déménagements).
- **Simplification** – Dans la mesure du raisonnable, les opérations (et coûts) des déménagements devraient être limités. Ainsi, il serait par exemple souhaitable que:
 - on anticipe dans la mesure du possible la situation envisagée à la Phase II déjà au stade de la Phase I (priviliégiant les déménagements vers les endroits définitifs),
 - on concentre l'opération en premier lieu sur les services directement concernés par les travaux du VMA et l'échange de bâtiments en évitant dans la mesure du possible d'impacter tous les autres services,

- on évite idéalement de devoir effectuer des travaux de réaménagement du B100 avant son occupation (en tenant compte de l'agencement actuel du bâtiment lors de l'attribution des espaces).
- **Dialogue, communication et transparence** : l'objectif est de faire en sorte que le processus soit le plus inclusif possible. Ceci implique, par exemple:
 - concertation avec les organisations syndicales sur les éléments clés du plan d'action et le calendrier des prochaines étapes de la politique immobilière des Comités,
 - information du personnel et de ses représentants (comités du personnel, comité paritaire du CdR pour la sécurité et l'hygiène au travail et comité paritaire du CESE pour la prévention et la protection au travail) de l'évolution du dossier,
 - association des comités du personnel aux travaux du groupe de travail inter-service chargé de préparer la distribution future des espaces sur la base de paramètres objectifs et équitables,
 - association des directions qui seront amenées à occuper le bâtiment VMA à l'issue de la rénovation à la phase de conception des étages au regard de leurs besoins respectifs,
 - consultation d'autres parties prenantes dans la mesure des besoins (Groupes Politiques du CdR et Groupes du CESE, Membres, etc.).

40. **Can the institution assure that the VMA building is completely safe for the staff regarding the presence of asbestos? What concrete measures have been taken on this issue? How has the institution communicated with staff regarding this issue?**

CoR answer to question 40:

The VMA building is fully compliant with all regulatory requirements on asbestos applications.

In September 2019, an update of the asbestos inventory has been made by a certified supplier by checking all construction materials containing potentially asbestos. Furthermore, in September 2019, a check of the air quality was done at each floor of the building, including the basement. No asbestos fibres were detected in the air at any floor.

Thanks to these two actions, the above mentioned certified supplier has delivered an *asbestos safe certificate* in September 2019. This certificate specifies that the building contains asbestos, but it does not represent any risks for the users of the building.

All relevant information about asbestos in Committees' buildings, such as asbestos policy, asbestos safe certificates as well as the asbestos inventories, have been published on the intranet webpage of the Directorate for Logistics.

Staff has been informed and all documentation is available on the CoR intranet. The new secretary general has paid particular attention to this issue. In February 2020, he

organised in-situ visits with staff representatives and together with staff representatives addressed staff in a video message about the asbestos situation. Procedures have been launched to safely remove the asbestos asap.

41. **What specific measures were taken to ensure health safety for staff in the CoR since the start of the COVID-19? Were there any changes made following the outbreak of the COVID-19?**

CoR answer to question 41:

Early on the CoR adopted an exit strategy outlining the different phases of the practical management of the situation including the subsequent return to the office in a structured, well planned and anticipated manner ensuring safety for staff and business continuity at all times.

The Medical service ensured the proper procedure for market research as a basis for the purchase of masks and individual bottles of hand gel for all its staff members, which were sent to all staff through a decentralised distribution system via the line managers. Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, CoR staff have been adhering to a large scale telework scheme, whereby only those considered essential for the functioning of the service would be present in the office. In June 2020, a rotational shift work was introduced on a voluntary basis, whereby staff could come to the office every other week based on a system of bubbles, in close dialogue with their line managers.

The social assistant launched a call for interest to set up a network of volunteers to help colleagues in need, be it colleagues suffering from social isolation or colleagues being ill and therefore not able to go to do groceries or fetch medicines at the pharmacy.

Ahead of the summer holiday period, a special derogation for telework from abroad was established for staff who were facing particular difficulties, either due to travel restrictions and quarantine measures in place, or due to the social/medical situation they were facing. In total, 55 CoR colleagues made use of this special arrangement, which came to an end on 1 October.

In order to ensure full transparency, the HR department created a weekly newsletter to keep staff continuously informed of the measures in place as well as give them support and tools to cope with the situation. Such information included, inter alia, ergonomic information, numbers of help lines where staff in distress could call, recommendations on how to organise work and help children with online learning. Specific instructions have been sent to managers to support the management team with additional information and recommendations. In October, a new communication channel was called into creation by the HR department, The "CoR Covid News Flash" in order to ensure up to date information and instructions related to Covid cases to inform of possible cases of positive Covid cases, the procedure for contact tracing etc. In total, the CoR has communicated 32 times with staff between the outbreak of the pandemic and mid October so as to ensure transparency and clarity at all times.

One representative from the CoR has participated in the weekly interinstitutional Covid meetings in order to coordinate the Covid response with the other EU institutions.

42. Flexible working arrangements:

- a) What flexible working arrangements does your institution offer?**
- b) How often are they used? Was there a development in the frequency in 2019?**
- c) What is the share of men and women respectively using these working arrangements?**
- d) To what extent does your institution encourage staff who are parents to make use of flexible working arrangements to better combine family life with their career?**
- e) Can all categories of staff apply for these working arrangements?**

CoR answer to question 42:

a) What flexible working arrangements does your institution offer?

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

The Staff Regulations provide a number of working arrangements, including part-time, parental leave and family leave. Under certain conditions, these flexible work arrangements constitute a right for staff. In terms of working patterns, the part-time decision in the Committee of the Regions foresees a wide range of part-time formulae. Standard part-time (shorter working days) is possible with 50%, 62.5%, 75%, 80%, 90%, 95% (as well as 95% paid 100% in case of serious hardship subject to a particular procedure). Special part-time (time-credit in half-days) can be taken over periods of 1 month, 3 months or 6 months: 75% of working time (10 free half-days per month), 80% of working time (8 free half-days per month) or 90% of working time (4 free half-days per month). In terms of rights to part-time, provisions of 55a SR apply. Moreover, statutory provisions such as parental leave (article 42a SR) and family leave (article 42b SR) are applied at the CoR.

Finally, the CoR has rules in place to allow staff to telework. The CoR teleworking scheme foresees structural telework and occasional telework. In most of 2019, structural telework could be done through a telework convention over 1 year, based on certain pre-defined formulae; this was smoothened as from October 2019 with the possibility to start structural telework at any month, for any duration ranging from 3 months to 1 year and the authorised formulae were also diversified. Staff could also telework in individual days – occasional telework - up to 28 days a year (30 as from October 2019) without prior authorisation by the Appointing Authority, and beyond this maximum if prior authorisation given by the Appointing Authority.

b) How often are they used? Was there a development in the frequency in 2019?

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

Statistics show that facilities on working time arrangements (part-time, parental leave, family leave) continue to be used by a relatively limited number of staff members, mostly women. The use of part-time and parental leave has very slightly increased as compared to 2018. Statistics for 2019 are illustrated below:

Part Time

Number of staff working part-time	78
% of staff working part-time	14.18%
Number of women working part-time	59
% of women amongst part-timers	75.64%

Parental leave

Number of staff taking parental leave	81
% of staff taking parental leave	14.73%
Number of women taking parental leave	51
% of these being women	62.96%

Family leave

Number of staff taking family leave	8
% of staff taking family leave	1,45%
Number of women taking family leave	4
% of these being women	50.00%

Telework has been in place since 2012 at the CoR and is on the increase.

In 2018, 60 staff members (10.9% of CoR staff) used structural telework and another 300 (54.5% of CoR staff) used occasional telework. Women made up 71.6% of structural teleworkers and 62.7% of occasional teleworkers.

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

Please refer to the answer to point b).

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

Staff Regulations foresee that flexible working arrangements such as parental leave and part-time constitute a right under certain circumstances.

For the application of these provisions, the CoR favours a good understanding between staff and managers conducive to the best work-life balance possible while ensuring service needs are met.

Moreover, for young parents, HR provides a personalised guidance in order to ensure that parents find the best possible work pattern, tailored to their needs in order to best combine family life with their career.

The decisions and arrangements possible for flexible working arrangements are also advertised in various ways, such as on the intranet, via brochures and through info sessions to staff, featuring among others "Having a child: what do I need to know?", "What do I need to know about part-time work?", "What do I need to know about flexitime?", "What do I need to know about teleworking?". The different provisions were also advertised through a conference on life cycles.

End 2019, following a wide evaluation and concertation process together with staff representatives, new, modernised and more flexible rules on telework entered into force. These new rules on telework focused *inter alia* on flexibility and on how to accommodate better young parents' needs wherever this would be compatible with the needs of the service. As a result, a new range of teleworking formulae were developed.

The decisions and arrangements possible for flexible working arrangements are advertised in various ways, such as on the intranet, via brochures and through info sessions to staff, featuring among others "Having a child: what do I need to know?", "What do I need to know about part-time work?", "What do I need to know about flexitime?", "What do I need to know about teleworking?".

e) Can all categories of staff apply for these working arrangements?

Flexitime is applied all year long to CoR staff, except managers, staff of certain political groups, staff in the President's cabinet, security staff and drivers, who do not benefit from this arrangement.

All categories of staff can apply for part-time, parental leave and family leave.

All categories of staff may apply for telework, except staff working under shift work (security staff) which is explicitly excluded from the scheme. However, eligibility conditions for structural telework require, *inter alia*, to perform duties that are compatible with telework, that are mainly carried out using communication and IT tools and can be performed independently, at distance. These eligibility conditions exclude *de facto* some types of jobs such as drivers and ushers.

43. **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?**

CoR answer to question 43:

No staff member was placed on leave in the interests of the service according to Article 50 of the Staff Regulations in 2019.

44. **What were the costs in 2019 respectively for away days, training of staff, conferences or similar events?**

CoR answer to question 44:

	Total cost
Away days (14)	8,966.85 €
Training of staff (own-initiative training actions, 17 in total)	6,305.20 €
Conferences for staff (2)	3,000 €

45. **How many recruitments of Heads of Unit, Director and Director' General were organised in 2019? How many women and men were selected as Heads of Unit, Director and Director-General?**

CoR answer to question 45:

The CoR published 1 vacancy notice for a Deputy Director position (type of post head of unit or equivalent) in the Directorate for Logistics in 2019 (joint services with the EESC). A male candidate was selected (only male candidates applied for this position).

The CoR organized 1 recruitment procedure for a Secretary-General (temporary staff member 2a) in grade AD 16) in 2019. A male candidate was selected.

46. **What is the overall and overseas gender distribution in the CoR staff? Do you also have this breakdown by Function? And geographical distribution?**

CoR answer to question 46:

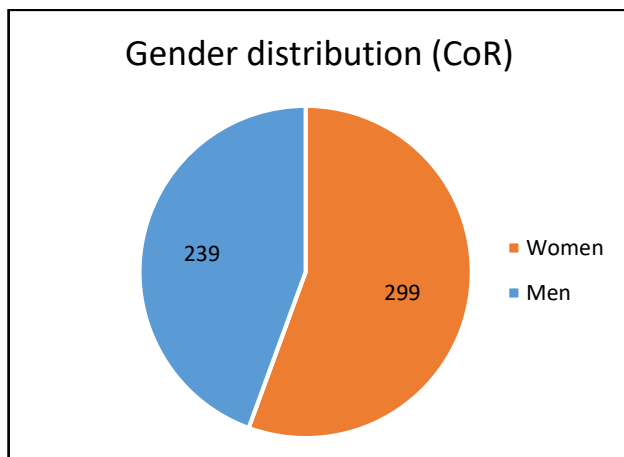
Nationality	F	M	Total	% total
Allemagne	11	20	31	5,8%
Autriche	2	2	4	0,7%
Belgique	41	40	81	15,1%
Bulgarie	12	6	18	3,3%
Chypre		1	1	0,2%
Croatie	6	5	11	2,0%
Danemark	6		6	1,1%
Espagne	17	19	36	6,7%
Estonie	8		8	1,5%
Finlande	9	5	14	2,6%

France	21	16	37	6,9%
Grèce	5	14	19	3,5%
Hongrie	13	5	18	3,3%
Irlande	4	9	13	2,4%
Italie	26	28	54	10,0%
Lettonie	9	4	13	2,4%
Lituanie	9	2	11	2,0%
Malte	6	2	8	1,5%
Pays-Bas	5	1	6	1,1%
Pologne	23	10	33	6,1%
Portugal	12	10	22	4,1%
Roumanie	18	11	29	5,4%
Royaume-Uni	6	6	12	2,2%
Slovaquie	7	6	13	2,4%
Slovénie	7	7	14	2,6%
Suède	6	4	10	1,9%
Tchéquie	10	6	16	3,0%
Total	299	239	538	100%

Nationality	AD	AST	AST/SC	GFI	GFII	GFIII	GFIV	Total
Allemagne	23	6					2	31
Autriche	3	1						4
Belgique	21	47	2	10			1	81
Bulgarie	12	4			1		1	18
Chypre							1	1
Croatie	11							11
Danemark	2	4						6
Espagne	15	15	1	1	1	1	2	36
Estonie	5	3						8
Finlande	11	2	1					14
France	22	9		1		2	3	37
Grèce	7	8		3			1	19
Hongrie	13	3			1		1	18
Irlande	7	4		1			1	13
Italie	31	17	1	3	1		1	54
Lettonie	10	2	1					13
Lituanie	9	2						11
Malte	4	4						8
Pays-Bas	4	1					1	6
Pologne	18	12	1	1			1	33
Portugal	9	10	1			1	1	22
Roumanie	15	12	2					29
Royaume-Uni	7	4		1				12
Slovaquie	10	2					1	13
Slovénie	10	4						14

Suède	8	2						10
Tchéquie	10	4				1	1	16
Total	297	182	10	21	4	5	19	538

Column1	Column2	Column3
Women	299	55,6%
Men	239	44,4%
Total	538	100%



47. What is the gender distribution in your instance especially for top management positions?

CoR answer to question 47:

Management

F	M	Total
14	30	44
32%	68%	

Senior Management

F	M	Total
2	6	8
25%	75%	

48. What are the most important actions taken by the CoR in favour of gender equality and geographical balance?

CoR answer to question 48:

The **Bureau's decision of 9 April 2019 to establish an ambitious gender balance strategy for the members participation in the work of the European Committee of the Regions is the most important action in favour of gender equality at the political level of the European Committee of the regions.** The European Committee of the Regions as a political body and its secretariat are inextricably linked, including in terms of its image vis à vis the other institutions, the media and European citizens.

The CoR is committed to reaching a better gender balance in management through a range of incentives, laid down in the annual action plans since 2017. Such incentives include the formal recognition of management responsibilities below head of unit level and **the creation of an informal *Network for gender balance in management*, officially launched on 22 March 2019 with the support of the Administration.**

The first actions by the network have been to create and manage a network of internal mentors to support women in their careers by providing guidance and advice. Mentors, both female and male, have been identified via a call for volunteers which resulted in 15 mentors being paired up with 15 mentees. In order to create the best conditions for success tailored training was provided to the mentors on mentoring and coaching techniques. The 1st mentoring exercise was launched in October 2019 and ended in March 2020.

Overall targeted actions have been taken to ensure maximum **participation of women in pre-managerial training**, increase women's interest in management functions, make management functions more attractive for female colleagues in particular and strive for an adequately balanced representation of men and women on selection boards.

Another important measure introduced on the basis of a service instruction that entered into force in early 2019 following a COPEC recommendation, was to make **the presence of both genders on selection panels compulsory for the very first time.**

Particular attention is also paid to the geographical balance among CoR staff. The situation at the CoR can be regarded as relatively satisfactory in that regard, comparable to that of other institutions. The geographical balance within the management team is largely in line with the overall geographical balance among the CoR's workforce (the nationalities most represented are also the most represented among managers).

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

CoR answer to question 47:

No former Members or high officials (from AD 14) received money from the budget of the CoR as advisors, contract agents or others in 2019.

50. **What was the amount dedicated by the Institution to travel for Members in 2019?**

CoR answer to question 50:

The amount dedicated to members to travel allowing them to participate at meetings and activities organised by the CoR, is 8 920 000 €.

51. **What were the costs of the institution for interpretation, translation and languages classes in 2019?**

CoR answer to question 51:

The amount dedicated for **interpretation** expenses in 2019 was EUR 3 815 614. An amount of EUR 2 622 102 was invoiced in 2019 and an amount of EUR 1 075 966 was invoiced beginning 2020. This brings the total expenditure to EUR 3 698 068 for 2019.

The amount for **language courses for members** is detailed under point 16 here above.

According to the KIAPI methodology, the total **cost of translation** for the CoR was EUR 26 018 206 in 2019.

The cost of **language classes for staff** are detailed below:

	Total cost	Remarks
Language classes for staff (EC training courses)	EUR 56 722	This is the "virtual" cost, since the final price is paid to EC on a 3-year consumption average
Language classes for staff (CoR internal courses)	EUR 0	

52. **What were the costs in 2019 respectively for away days, closed conferences or similar events for staff? How many staff members participated in the respective events? Where exactly did these events take place?**

CoR answer to question 52:

	N° of events	N° of participants	Total cost	Place
Team buildings, including external trainers costs	2	23	4,527.75 €	Brussels

Away days	14	245	8,966.85 €	Brussels and its surrounding area, Ghent, Eupen, Maredsous, Maastricht, Antwerp
Management Seminars	1	21	2,629.13 €	Brussels

53. How many Members have registered address in Belgium?

CoR answer to question 53:

Only the Belgian members and alternate members have an official address registered in Belgium (24).

54. What is the whole amount of daily allowances paid in 2019?

CoR answer to question 54:

A total amount of 2 924 642 € corresponding to 9226 meeting allowances has been paid to members and their alternates to participate to CoR meetings and activities (they are included in the global amount mentioned in answer to question 50).

55. How many trainings concerning harassment, whistleblowing, preventing conflict of interest or other ethical issues did your institution organise in 2019 and how many staff members participated in such programmes?

CoR answer to question 55:

Training sessions' topics	N° of sessions	N° of participants
Preventing Harassment Course for all staff	2	15 (6 from EESC)
Preventing Harassment Course for managers	2	17 (8 from EESC)
Ethics and integrity	4	35 (8 from EESC)

Harassment

56. What measures are in place to enforce a culture of zero tolerance towards harassment? How many complaints have there been in 2019 and how have the cases being resolved?

CoR answer to question 56:

Building on a previous consultation with concerned stakeholders, the CoR Administration started actively in mid 2019 an open dialogue with the Staff Committee, the network of confidential counsellors, COPEC and other interested staff members to review the current internal decision n° No 362/2010 of 29 November 2010 concerning psychological and sexual harassment at work within the secretariat of the CoR on basis of a newly drafted proposal for a changed framework to combat harassment with the aim of broadening the scope of the matter by including prevention measures and conflict resolution means, as well as to reinforce the principle of zero tolerance towards harassment. This open dialogue and very regular discussion rounds organized by the CoR Administration allowed to signal clearly to staff the willingness to enforce a culture of zero tolerance towards harassment. In addition, the different courses on preventing harassment contribute to raising awareness on the CoR zero tolerance policy.

No complaints or requests for assistance have been submitted in 2019, except the complaint mentioned under point 62.

57. **How many a) new b) ongoing c) closed harassment cases were there at your institution in 2019?**

CoR answer to question 57:

In 2019 the CoR had no new/ ongoing/ closed cases, except the case mentioned under item 62.

58. **Has the CoR put in place a legal framework to deal with harassment cases involving its members, as recommended by the Ombudsman and the Parliament?**

CoR answer to question 58:

The CoR adopted on 5 December 2019 a Code of Conduct for its members, which was published in the Official Journal on 24 January 2020 (L 20) and is since then binding for the CoR and its members. Article 9 of this Code lays down a detailed procedure in the event of alleged harassment of a staff member by a CoR member that is in fact largely based on the Parliament's Bureau Decision of 2 July 2018 on harassment complaints.

59. **Has there been any modification to your anti-harassment rules or actions?**

CoR answer to question 59:

As mentioned in item 56, the CoR has given priority in 2019 to review the current decision No 362/2010 of 29 November 2010 concerning psychological and sexual harassment at work within the secretariat of the CoR. (ongoing in 2020).

60. **Does the Committee have a legal framework in place with which to deal with harassment cases involving its members? What sanctions does the framework include?**

CoR answer to question 60:

As indicated under in reply to question 58, the CoR adopted on 5 December 2019 a Code of Conduct for its members. The Code includes a number of sanctions in order to ensure its observance. They are laid down in Article 8(4) and may consist of: a reprimand, with or without publication; temporary suspension from participation in CoR activities for a period between one week and six months; in the case of a breach in the obligations of confidentiality, a limitation in the rights to access confidential information for up to one year; and prohibition of the member from being elected as office-holder of the CoR, from being appointed as rapporteur or from participating in an official delegation, and, if the member already holds these posts, dismissal from them.

61. **What were the expenditures in 2019 for the management/follow-up to Court sentences of harassment cases?**

CoR answer to question 61:

No expenditure was incurred in 2019 in relation to any harassment-related case.

62. **How many Members and staff received formal complaints against them?**

CoR answer to question 62:

In 2019, there was no formal complaint concerning harassment.

Whistleblowing

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

CoR answer to question 63:

In 2019, no new whistleblower case came out of the CoR.

64. **What protection, help or assistance was offered to whistle-blower(s) in the CoR harassment cases? Was (were) whistle-blower(s) recognised their status?**

CoR answer to question 64:

Concerning the last whistleblowing case that came out in 2016 and which was not related to any harassment case, the CoR Administration dealt with the identity of the whistleblower with utmost confidentiality, followed-up without delay the report by notifying it to OLAF and since then duly informed the whistleblower on the procedural steps undertaken.

65. **How many cases of whistleblowing were reported in your institution in 2019? Did your institution conduct surveys concerning the awareness of staff regarding whistleblowing procedures? What are the safe channels that your institution provides for potential whistleblowers?**

CoR answer to question 65:

No new cases have been submitted in 2019.

End 2019, the CoR Administration launched a survey on staff ethics-awareness, containing specifically numerous questions on the awareness of staff regarding whistleblowing procedures. The outcome has been followed-up in 2020.

The decision n° 508/2015 defines the safe channels at the disposal for a staff member to address their whistleblowing report internally to any manager of CoR of their choice or directly to OLAF. Before launching such procedure, guidance may be sought from the persons responsible for ethical and statutory matters in the Directorate for Human Resources, being the HR Legal advisor and the Head of sector rights and obligations.

66. **What progress has been made in the mediation process with former internal auditor Mr McCoy in 2019 until today? Provide us with exact description of the process of the mediation with Mrs. Sophie d’Veldt, and the reasons the process has not yet been finished, as requested by the Parliament.**

CoR answer to question 66:

- 11-13/02/2020 Inaugural session of the new CoR term of office
- 13/02/2020 Proposal from MEP in 't Veld to the new CoR President Mr Tzitzikostas for a tripartite meeting (date tbc)
- 28/02/2020 E-Mail on behalf of CoR President to MEP in 't Veld suggesting to have written proposal from Mr McCoy with concrete demands.
- 28/02/2020 Response by MEP in 't Veld suggesting to explore options in a meeting without written proposals.
- 23/03/2020 First meeting, cancelled at short notice due to urgent obligations of MEP in 't Veld
- 13/05/2020 EP discharge resolution granting discharge to the CoR. The resolution contains several observations regarding the McCoy case.
- 10/07/2020 Meeting President Tzitzikostas with MEP in 't Veld for a first informal exchange on the McCoy case.
- 14/07/2020 Follow-up letter of President Tzitzikostas to MEP in 't Veld, asking for her expectations in line with her mandate as an impartial mediator on behalf of the European Parliament. Proposing a second face-to-face meeting with MEP in 't Veld, possibly in presence of relevant members of the European Parliament's Committee on Budget Control and of the European Committee of the Regions' Commission on Administrative and Financial Affairs. Possibility of a meeting with MEP in 't Veld, Mr McCoy, the CoR administration and CoR President.
- 06/08/2020, e-mail by MEP in't Veld to President Tzitzikostas as follow-up to the meeting of 10/07/2020, declaring her availability for further mediation efforts if so

desired by both parties. Considering that a meeting with Mr McCoy should take place at political level as a means to reconciliation rather than negotiation.

- 01/10/2020, CONT coordinators agreed to discuss the state of play and next steps during an upcoming CONT meeting. The CoR shall be invited to that CONT meeting.

- 21/10/2020, e-mail by discharge rapporteur MEP Ghinea to CoR President, inviting for a meeting. The meeting has been convoked for 5 November 2020.

67. **“The CoR is willing to resume the negotiations with Mr McCoy, subject to the approval of the CoR Bureau, which is his Appointing Authority. The Bureau was supposed to take a decision at its meeting of 24 March 2020 but due to the Covid-19 pandemic this discussion had to be postponed. During this period, pursuant to the CoR Rules of Procedure (Rule 38.6), the Bureau cannot take a decision relating to individuals (like Mr McCoy's) by written procedure. The Bureau will take a decision at an upcoming meeting.”⁴**

Did the Bureau of the CoR take a decision by now? When does the CoR plan to continue the mediation process?

CoR answer to question 67:

The Bureau decision in spring 2020 had initially been foreseen to renew the mandate for an offer to Mr McCoy from the last CoR's term of office. In view of the developments outlined in the response to question 66, the CoR Bureau will take a decision as soon as the next steps of the procedure have been clarified. The Commission on Financial and Administrative Affairs, in charge of preparing the work of the Bureau on matters of budget and discharge, has been informed of these developments and discussed about the matter on 18 June 2020 and 23 September 2020.

Communication

68. **What was the CoR budget for communication activities in 2019 and how was it used?**

CoR answer to question 68:

The communication budget of the CoR in 2019 was €2.200.000.

€539.000 was allocated to organisation of events (including with other EU Institutions) – one example was the 17th European Week of Regions and Cities which attracted nearly 70 MEPs as well as a record participation of nearly 10,000 people.

€795.000 was allocated to press relationships (including media partnerships, journalists travel and audio-visual services)

€901.000 was allocated to digital communication including the CoR website and social media.

An external evaluation of the communication strategy of the CoR was also carried out in 2019 funded from this overall budget.

⁴ European Committee of the Regions Annual Activity Report for 2019, Annex 10, p. 124

This was conducted in accordance with the standards applied by all other EU Institutions using the shared framework contract. The report is published on the CoR website [here](#). Half yearly and annual reports of the communication outreach achieved are also published on the CoR website.

69. What has been done to improve digital communication to the public and the use of free open-source self-hosted social network platforms?

CoR answer to question 69:

During 2019, improvements in the CoR's digital communication included additional social media channels (Instagram, LinkedIn), improved multilingualism (trialling artificial intelligence in digital translation) and creation of a platform for young elected politicians to network.

70. What has been done to improve the visibility of studies for CoR stakeholders and interested EU citizens compared to previous years?

CoR answer to question 70:

In recent years, studies commissioned by the CoR have been the object of reinforced publicity efforts. All CoR studies are made publicly available on the CoR website, as well as on the website of the EU Publications Office's and through the Inter-institutional Database of EU Studies. More recently, CoR studies are now also publicised on social media such as LinkedIn.

The full new branding of CoR Publications started in 2018 was rolled out across all studies published in 2019.

Transparency

71. What activities has the CoR started and what policies were implemented in the area of greater transparency in 2019?

CoR answer to question 71:

The CoR already conducts its work, and more specifically its advisory role of the Commission, the Parliament and the Council, in a very transparent manner.

At commission level (similar to committee level in the Parliament):

- The CoR Rules of Procedure requires making draft opinions, other discussion documents and amendments available electronically to members before the date of the meeting. In practice such documents are made publicly available to all citizens at the same moment via the Members' Portal in the CoR website.
- The meetings of the CoR commissions are announced in the CoR website, where it is also possible to consult their draft agenda. Commission meetings are often webstreamed and in all cases citizens and/or interest group can request access to the CoR premises to follow the meeting (obviously not during the current pandemic).

At Plenary session level:

- The meetings, agendas and documents (including opinions and amendments) of plenary sessions are made publicly available in advance via the Members' Portal in the CoR website.
- Plenary sessions are always webstreamed. The attendance of citizens and/or interest groups will depend on the security arrangements of the institution that hosts the plenary session (i.e. the Parliament or the Commission).

The CoR is not part of the Transparency Register, which for the moment only applies to the Commission and the Parliament. However, the only categories of people that can obtain a long-term (1 year) access badge are assistants to CoR members, national delegations' coordinators, representatives of regional/local offices and a limited number of EU-wide associations representing regional/local entities.

72. Did the Ombudsman issue any recommendations to the CoR in 2019 and how did you follow-up on them?

CoR answer to question 72:

The Ombudsman did not issue any recommendations to the CoR in 2019 (see also the replies to questions 26 and 27).

Fraud & Corruption

73. How many OLAF investigations were carried out in 2019 with regard to the CoR? How many of them led to a concrete sanctions carried out?

CoR answer to question 73:

As indicated under item 65, no new cases came up in 2019 and no new investigations by OLAF concerning the CoR have been carried out or were still pending in 2019.

The last OLAF report was received in January 2019, which is since followed up by a disciplinary procedure which is currently ongoing.

74. How did you cooperate with OLAF and ECA in the spheres of prevention, investigation or corrective measures?

CoR answer to question 74:

The CoR follows the recommendations of OLAF and provides annual report on the status quo of the ongoing case.

Conflict of Interests

75. Has the CoR established a code of conduct for its members related to the prevention and fight of Conflict of interests? Did you deal with any alleged case of Conflict of interest?

CoR answer to question 75:

As indicated in the reply to question 60, the CoR adopted on 5 December 2019 a Code of Conduct for its members. One of the objectives of the Code is to avoid, or at least minimise, instances of conflict of interests. This objective is consistent with the members' obligation to exercise the duties assigned to them with independence, in the Union's general interest (Article 300(4) TFEU). To this end, the Code of Conduct lays down a definition of conflict of interest (Article 4) and the obligation for members to submit a declaration of financial interests (Article 6). Members who submitted a public declaration of financial interests in accordance with national or subnational legislation must send to the CoR a statement that they have submitted the declaration, together with a web link to it. Alternatively, members who did not previously submit a public declaration of financial interests in accordance with national or subnational legislation must submit to the CoR a declaration using the model set out in the Appendix to the Code of Conduct.

The CoR did not deal in 2019 with any alleged case of conflict of interests involving CoR members.

76. What measures / rules were introduced in 2019 by CoR to prevent Conflict of interests?

CoR answer to question 76:

See the reply to question 75.

Activities to Lower the Environmental footprint

77. Has the CoR developed an environmental management system, which includes a concrete action plan aimed at lowering its environmental footprint in headquarters and delegations?

CoR answer to question 77:

The environmental management system EMAS was launched in the Committees in 2008 and the Committees received the EMAS registration in 2011 for the first time. Since then, many concrete actions have been proposed and carried out in order to achieve the objectives set and these actions, together with their follow-up, are presented in the Environmental Statement every year (see column "details of measures taken" in the table extracted in attachment). This long-standing commitment of the Committees to lowering their environmental footprint has brought important results in most environmental indicators, as shown in the table below:

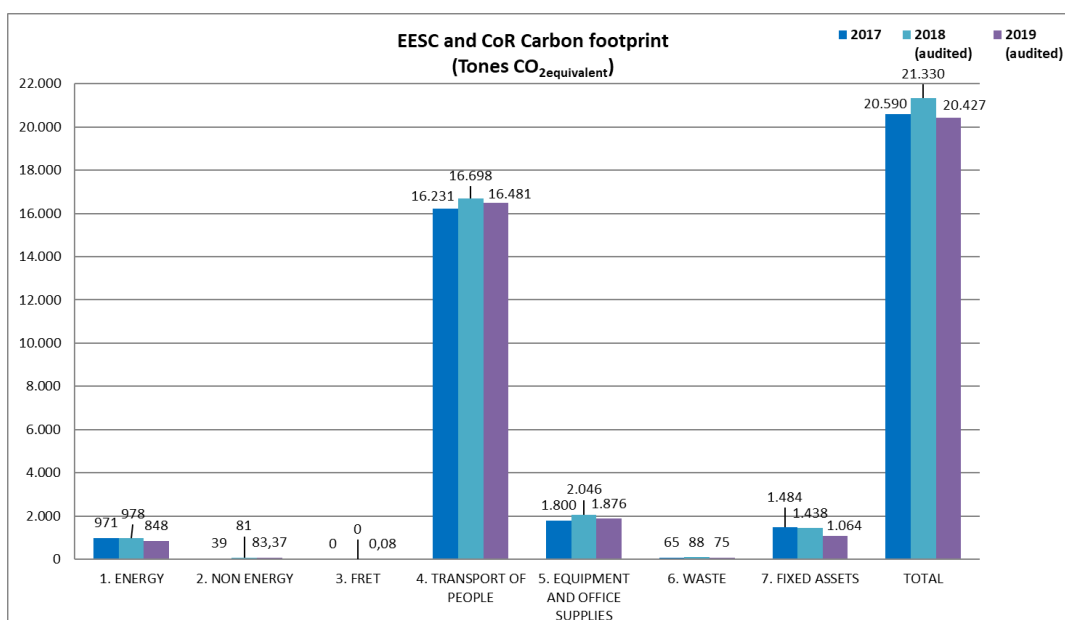
2019 results <small>Vs 2018</small>	2019 results <small>since 2009</small>
Electricity - 3 %	Electricity - 31 %
Gas - 15 %	Gas - 57 %
Water - 8 %	Water - 35 %
Paper - 42 %	Paper - 74 %
Waste + 34 %	Waste - 40 % (since 2010)

78. **What results have been achieved compared to 2018 and 2017 in lowering the carbon footprint and plastic, food and paper waste?**

CoR answer to question 78:

As far as it concerns the carbon footprint, there is hardly any evolution during the last three years. The main contributor remains the transport of people.

See detailed figures in the graph below:



Nevertheless, the reduction of the carbon emissions is one of the most important EMAS objectives for the coming years. Several actions related to this issue have been decided in the last EMAS Steering Committee:

- To establish before summer 2021 a carbon emission reduction target and the related timeline, divided in two strands:
 - ✓ the first for the categories that the General Secretariat does control (buildings consumptions, IT, procurement of goods and services, etc.) and taking into account the available financial resources;
 - ✓ the second for the categories outside this control (mobility of staff and members);
- To use the year 2016 as the year of reference in order to define a CO2 reduction target.
- To participate in the Joint Offsetting project with the EP, the ECB, the CJ and the ECA in 2020, for offsetting the CO2 emissions of 2019

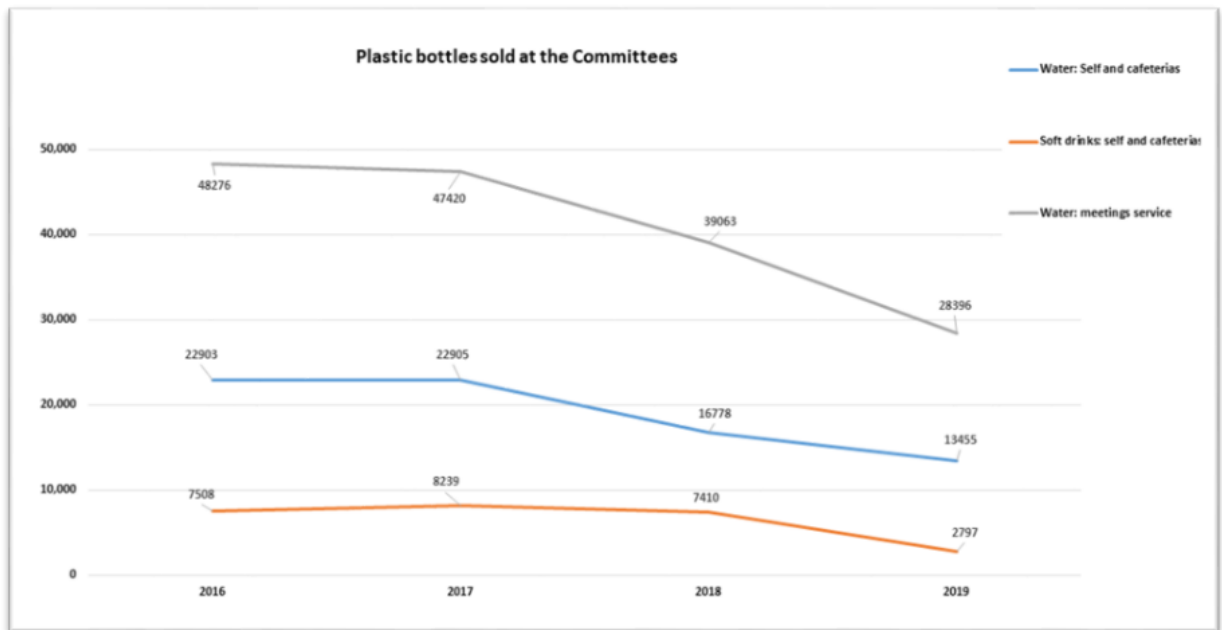
Furthermore, as the Commission intends to do, the Committees will elaborate a comprehensive plan to implement for themselves the principles and recommendations presented in the Green Deal, with the general objective of becoming climate neutral by 2030.

Regarding the reduction of plastic waste:

The Committee's canteen is the first EU institution canteen to go plastic free. Disposable plastic and plastic packaging are no longer used. Furthermore, in a view to reduce single plastic use, all Members and staff received reusable water bottles made from stainless steel. This measure was accompanied by installation of several water fountains in the premises.

With the new Catering contract started in June 2020, no more single use plastic will be available in the Committees' catering facilities. In addition, only glass bottles and-or glass jars will be allowed for all meetings.

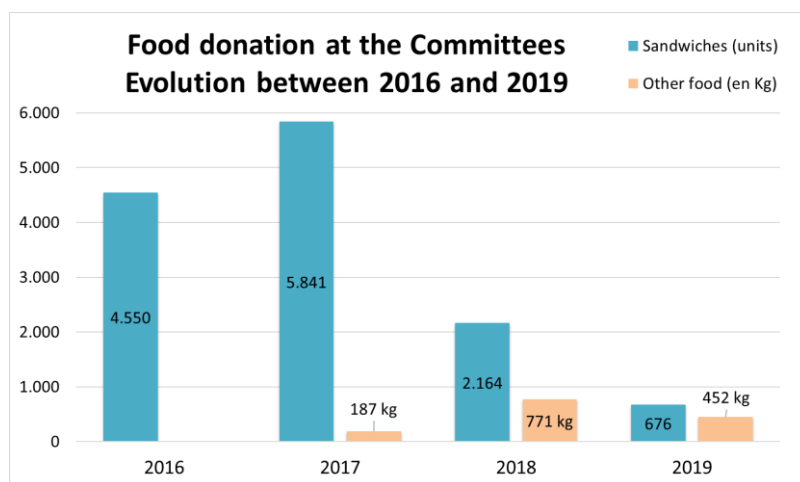
Evolution during the past years of the
number of plastic bottles sold:



Regarding the food waste in the canteen, the overall objective since years is to have less than 10% of food waste at the canteen. Very low rates of food waste have been reached the last years and there is a continuously decreasing tendency: 3.2% on average in 2017 vs 2.2% on average in 2018 and 0.9% on average in 2019.

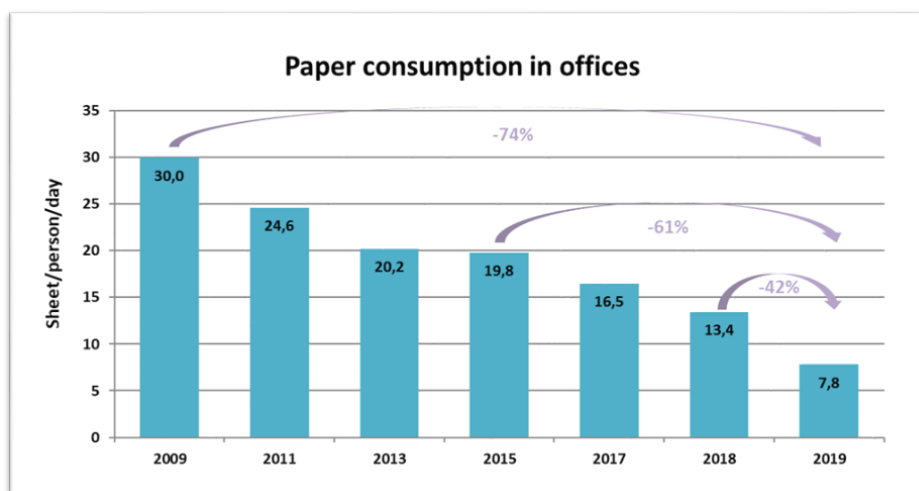
In order to prevent and reduce waste during the events (buffets), some actions have been implemented, such as the introduction of the Green event guide for food waste prevention and sustainable food, the monitoring of buffets in three stages and the introduction of a service procedure (gradually serving of food).

A project that was implemented since 2017 is the Food Donation Project, which started with the donation of sandwiches. From spring 2018 food donation has been extended to other kinds of food. Around 450 kg of other type of food and 676 sandwiches were donated in 2019. As the main goal is to reduce the waste production, by cascade effect, the food donation decreased.



Regarding the reduction of paper:

The paper consumption in offices is keeping on decreasing in the last years, especially due to the fact that personal printers have been replaced by the MFD (only 9 individual printers left in total in the Committees):



Furthermore, an important number of actions has been implemented with IT and other services in charge of organising conferences and meetings in order to digitalise, as much as possible, the different processes and workflows.

Digitalisation and Cybersecurity

79. **Did the CoR implement a new digital strategy and multiannual IT expenditure plan as requested by the Parliament? Please provide a detailed overview of both the digital strategy and IT expenditure plan.**

CoR answer to question 79:

Yes, the CoR adopted a new digital strategy in June 2019 – [here](#) is the full document which is being implemented.

:

Digital Strategy and IT expenditure plan

The COR bureau adopted the Committee's **Digital Strategy** at the beginning of 2019. The starting point of the strategy is the Tallinn Declaration on e-Government with its core principle of "Digital by default". The main deliverables of the strategy are member-centric information systems to support the Political Work of the Committee, information systems to support paperless administrative processes and a Digital Workplace programme. The executive summary of the COR Digital Strategy is quoted *in extenso* in the table below.

Executive Summary of the CoR Digital Strategy

The Digital Strategy "aims to shape its future digital environment that is compatible with a modern administration. It envisages a digitally transformed, user focused and data-driven Committee with a common culture of data sharing and collaborative working practices and proposes the framework that would allow achieving this vision within the next years.

The strategy strives to achieve the creation of a leaner and more flexible organization, enabling the widening of its role towards the EU citizens and partners. It will transform the Committee's activities as well as its relationship with the regions, cities and, in the end, with the European citizens. To draw up projects, it is therefore necessary to think how the role of Committee should evolve in the next term of office. Digitalization is a major evolution for any organization as it changes the way the outside world perceives it nor can it be done in isolation if we want to achieve an increased impact of the Local and Regions Authorities (LRA) in the European legislative cycle.

However, in order to be successful, the consultative role of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the processes underpinning it must remain at the centre of the digital strategy. This will require us to rethink the current work processes and prepare for the change it will inevitably bring. The implementation should be done in an "open, efficient and inclusive" manner and providing the "borderless, interoperable, personalized, user-friendly, end-to-end digital public services" foreseen by the EU eGovernment Action Plan and the Tallinn Declaration.

The strategy sets out a number of objectives to achieve as well as some proposals. The first part deals with strategic objectives: it reflects the "chantiers"; political and administrative priorities of the Strategic Management Plan 2018-2019 and the second part focuses on operational objectives linked to administrative priorities. To assess the feasibility and prepare this long-term strategy, the objectives link to several concrete proposals. The review of these proposals must take into account the current ongoing improvements as well as the need to consolidate the current IT landscape with its high number of "homemade/improved" applications if we want to build a solid digital environment. It should also incite us to reach out to the other EU institutions to share and align our vision and needs. As an example, a benchmarking exercise of LRA bodies in which the Committee could participate not only has value for us but also for the E.C. nor might the Committee be able to fund it on its own.

Achieving this corporate transformation requires committed sponsorship at political level, support from senior management and the active participation of all services. Furthermore, its

success will be critically dependent on senior and middle managers becoming aware of the value of the data they are responsible for and leading the digitalisation of their services.

Finally, in order to obtain the main results from the implementation of the Digital Strategy within the next years, extra resources will be necessary, especially to maintain momentum after 2020. If no extra resources are made available, the present strategy will still be valid but will take much more time to be implemented."

80. What steps has the CoR taken towards improving cybersecurity of the institution in 2019? Were any of these steps coordinated with any other EU institution?

CoR answer to question 80:

Cybersecurity actions during 2019

- The Endpoint Detection and Response (EDR) platform that was evaluated in 2018 was deployed in all windows workstation. Leveraging big-data and machine-learning algorithms, behavioural signals are translated into insights, detections, and recommended responses to advanced threats.
- Evaluation and selection of the solution to enhance the security of Remote Access to applications by using Multi-Factor Authentication
- Improvements in the implementation of patching process by automatic installation of updates in test and acceptance environments.
- Improvements in the email security by implementing the DMARC standard.
- The EESC-COR IT Security Officer delivered user awareness sessions aiming to educate the users on cyber threats

Cybersecurity cooperation with other EU Institutions/Agencies during 2019

- Based on the inter-institutional arrangement for the set-up of CERT-EU, two IT official 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:
 - On the job training for cloud security using the major cloud platforms (Azure, AWS)
 - Cyber Threat Intelligence information for targeted attacks against EU Institutions
 - Incident Response and Forensics Services
 - Vulnerability Assessments for Web Applications
 - A phishing exercise to test end-user awareness

- The Committees participated actively in the CII (Interinstitutional IT Committee) Security subgroup. A presentation of the selected EDR platform was delivered to CII security subgroup meeting in September 2019.
- The EESC-COR IT Security Officer represents the EU Institutions/Agencies in the Modern Email Security Standards for EU(MESSEU) forum

81. What steps have been taken in 2019 to enhance digitalization in your institutions? How much was invested in IT projects and equipment in comparison with 2018?

CoR answer to question 81:

IT actions during 2019

During 2019, the IT unit worked to deliver Information Systems and the Digital Workplace in line with the Digital Strategy.

Information Systems support four operational domains: Political Work, Document Management, Communication and HR/Finance. Important developments during the year included:

- Members Portal – a range of improvements including a redesigned meetings document page for supporting papelessmeetings,
- The Common Consultative Platforms were maintained and developed in line with business requests. Notably, the setup of the new Network of Regional Hubs for EU Policy Implementation.
- The Adonis document workflow tool added support for document versioning A key enabler of the digitalisation of many administrative circuits.
- The translation tools were connected to the new machine translation application,
- HR & Finances – the EVA staff assessment application was deployed at the COR for the first time. E-invoicing was also introduced and the IT applications adapted as necessary.

As regards Digital Workplace, progress was made with all aspects of the programme:

- Devices (significant increase in the number of "one PCs", smartphone consolidations),
- Office Automation (important software upgrades),
- Mail and Calendaring (important software upgrades),
- Unified Communications (consolidation and configuration for mobile devices),
- Social Media and Collaboration (making best use of existing tools)
- Integration and Access Management (system and network upgrades).

This work quickly proved its value at the start of the Covid-19 crisis. The improvements made to Members Portal greatly contributed to the successful transition to a hybrid meetings regime. The improved document workflow tool and e-invoicing greatly facilitated the introduction of paperless workflows. The 2019 staff assessment exercise was mainly carried out online; supported by the EVA application (implementing the new evaluation procedure) and with assessment interviews largely carried out using the Unified Communications application.

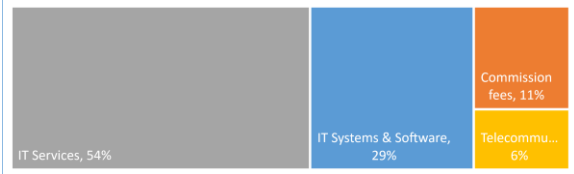
Comparison of 2018 and 2019 expenditure on IT

The initial spending plans were largely identical for 2018 and 2019. This can be seen from the following tables which show how the initial budget was distributed between:

1. IT equipment and services,
2. Fees paid to the Commission (mainly for the use of Sysper and ABAC),
3. IT services (External contractors for systems administration, helpdesk and information systems development),
4. Telecommunications.

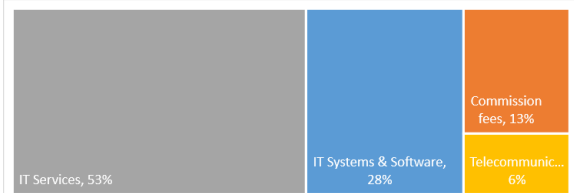
2018 Start of year – High level spending plan

Budget Line	Activity	(EUR)	(%)
BL 2100 JS	IT Systems & Software	2,084,389.08 €	29%
BL 2100 OS	Commission fees	768,686.00 €	11%
BL 2102	IT Services	3,808,172.00 €	54%
BL2103	Telecommunications	451,274.00 €	6%
	Total	7,112,521.08 €	100%



2019 Start of year – High level spending plan

Budget Line	Activity	(EUR)	(%)
BL 2100 JS	IT Systems & Software	2,083,954.06 €	28%
BL 2100 OS	Commission fees	945,182.00 €	13%
BL 2102	IT Services	3,880,872.00 €	53%
BL2103	Telecommunications	460,425.00 €	6%
	Total	7,370,433.06 €	100%



However, there is a significant difference in the level of end of year transfers to IT budget lines of appropriations made available by other departments:

Year	Final IT budget	Percentage of initial budget
2018	7,963,825.00 €	12%
2019	9,082,838.76 €	23%

In 2019, these end of year transfers amounted to almost 25% of the initial IT budget and were used to finance the following projects:

- 6 projects to finance IT infrastructure projects (servers, storage & network improvements),
- 3 projects to finance end-user devices (notably 270 extra "one PCs"),
- 11 projects to reinforce system administration and application development.

As the investments were made at the end of 2019, the benefits were obtained from 2020 onwards.

Interinstitutional cooperation in the domain of digitalisation

Many of digitalisation projects concern the digitalisation of Human Resources and Financial processes, where the Committees use the Sysper and ABAC systems provided by the Commission. Unfortunately, this process of application sharing has been severely set-back by the charge-back policy of the Commission. In this respect, the level of interinstitutional coordination and cooperation is disappointing.

82. **Has the COR considered the use of open-source technology, using software and hardware in order to prevent vendor lock-in, retain control over its own technical systems, provide stronger safeguards for user's privacy and data protection, increase security and transparency for the public? What measures have been taken in this regard?**

CoR answer to question 82:

The Committees are active in the area of open source technology. This is clearly stated in the "IT Guide" which is distributed to all new users.

A general inventory of open source software in used at the Committees is kept in the IT Portfolio. For 2019, 39 open source software applications are included in the inventory of software packages.

The main use cases for open source software are end-user tools (some 25% of tools in the standard configuration), development tools and database server operating systems. Some of the most important operational applications used at the Committees have been developed using Open Source tools. The new Digital Signature Portal will be based on Open Source software (DSS library funded under the CEF programme). There is currently an active project to implement an open source database management console.

The Committee has participated actively in the EU-Fossa project and IT officials have participated in the EU-Fossa hackathons.

83. Only 3% of the Committee's budget has been spent for IT products and equipment, which caused structural underfinancing and backlogs of IT projects and systems. Does the CoR consider increasing the budget for IT services and products?

CoR answer to question 83:

Already for a number of years non-salary related expenditure is capped by the European Commission during the yearly budget processes. This repeated capping has caused a structural under budgeting and underinvestment in the CoR, especially in the fields of upkeep of buildings, security of buildings and staff and IT (including cyber-security).

The CoR is trying to address these structural issues through improved multi-annual planning of expenditure and using the savings identified during the budget implementation to reinforce the domains in question through transfers, if and when possible.

However,

(i) this can be done only to a certain extent

and

(ii) as already presented during the 2016-2021 budget exercises, additional means will be necessary in order to preserve these areas in the medium to long term.

Both Committees have started to address the structural issues in the 2019-2021 budget processes, however, these efforts have been undermined by important cuts in the said domains during the budget process by the European Commission or/and Council. Some progress has been made in the previous couple of years, however, there is still a long way to go to normalise the situation.

Ensuring the proper financing for the IT has become even more important in the light of the Covid-19 situation.