



2019 Discharge

Answers by the **European External Action Service**
to the written questions of the Committee on Budgetary Control
(CONT) of the European Parliament

29 October 2020

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

In 2019, the EEAS focused on improving the workplace for all staff at Headquarters and in EU Delegations through continuous and intense work to **implement the recommendations of the Task Forces on “Career Development” and “Gender and Equal Opportunities”**. In this context, in January 2019, the EEAS launched the Career Advisory Service, with the aim of further improving the career development policy in the EEAS and establishing a more dynamic structure ensuring the continuity of service. In July 2019, the appointment of the EEAS Career Advisor and Talent Manager further strengthened the framework of career development in the EEAS. In March 2019, the first edition of the College for future Heads of Administration was launched, as the role of the Head of Administration is pivotal for the functioning of EU Delegations around the world, both in terms of overall efficiency and the working environment.

Still on implementing the Task Forces, the EEAS also intensified its efforts to improve the implementation of the zero-tolerance policy against any form of harassment. The campaign on preventing and addressing harassment in the workplace was successfully concluded in 2019, with the EEAS managers delivering a compulsory presentation to all staff on this subject, providing the necessary information on the support structures in place. The work continued with the follow-up and monitoring of the progress achieved. The EEAS also worked on the development of its own EEAS Disability Policy, in order to benefit from a more diverse workforce by improving its capacity to provide reasonable accommodation to staff with a disability and also to welcome visitors in an appropriate manner.

The EEAS strived to **enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the administration and to modernise its financial management**. A major revision of the rules and conditions governing the employment of local agents in EU Delegations took place in 2019, improving a wide range of employment benefits, and giving local agents greater legal certainty about their access to complementary EU social security cover. The rules of the new Financial Regulation entered into application on 1 January 2019 for the EEAS. The EEAS amended its Decision on the Internal Rules on the implementation of its Budget in order to adapt them to the dispositions deriving from the new Financial

Regulation and it also introduced new possibilities such as: the acceptance of corporate sponsorship for events organised by the EEAS in the framework of the public diplomacy activities or a more explicit and stronger basis for the use of provisional commitments. Following the evaluation of the Regional Centre Europe, the EEAS launched in 2019 an internal exercise with the aim to further simplify and modernise the working procedures. This in-depth review, named as "Innovative 2019", signalled the end of the pilot phase for the regionalisation project but it also demonstrated the efficiency of a centralised model for several processes currently performed in the Administration sections in Delegations. A central treatment will not only alleviate some of the ever-increasing workload in Delegations but it will also guarantee a homogenous application of the EEAS administrative rules in all Delegations. The Information Management Strategy, approved at the beginning of 2019, is an ambitious project going beyond the mere management of documents and aiming to create a comprehensive framework for the corporate management of information, as the EEAS is constantly improving towards a knowledge-centric organisation that recognises the role and importance of information.

Providing a safe and secure working environment for all staff at Headquarters and in Delegations and reducing the risk of accidents and injuries at work was a key achievement for the EEAS. In 2019, thanks to the support of the Budget Authority, concerted efforts were made to **foster a culture of security and safety across all entities**. The EEAS Headquarters Business Continuity Plan (BCP) was updated in October 2019: it ensures that the EEAS Headquarters has the personnel, procedures, infrastructure, tools (including IT) and budget to perform its critical and essential functions in the event of unexpected situations, which could lead to major disruptions of EEAS operations. The revised mandate of the EEAS Medical Service was adopted in January 2019, in order to further enhance the safety and security services provided to the staff in EU Delegations. The development of the future corporate classified platform, EC³IS, progressed in 2019: the new platform aims to replace the current systems by a consolidated platform able to address securely the EEAS's needs for highly classified systems. EEAS IT security was also improved with the deployment of a new set of security rules and services, including secure smartphones, laptops and document management both in Headquarters and Delegations. Promoting a genuine culture of safety and security is particularly crucial in times of crisis, as it strengthens and safeguards the resilience of the EEAS in a constantly changing and challenging environment.

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

In 2019, the EEAS faced a deterioration of the broader international environment. It was mainly marked by rising geopolitical rivalries and the readiness to use force to settle disputes and increase influence, the erosion of the rule-based international order, increasing protectionism, the persistence of conflicts and political and socio-economic instability, particularly in the EU's neighbourhood, and the rising influence of authoritarianism questioning human rights and democracy.

In particular, the US-China geopolitical competition has been straining the global order. The world has become more multipolar while multilateralism has weakened, as evidenced by the growing difficulties for the United Nations Security Council, the World Trade Organisation, and more recently the World Health Organisation. This takes place precisely at a time when global challenges, especially the climate crisis or health issues, are becoming more and more critical.

In 2019, main challenges included the EU leading international efforts to preserve the Iran nuclear deal (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action - JCPOA) after the US withdrawal; the need to advance the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue; to help de-escalate tensions and support conflict resolution in our neighbourhood from Ukraine and the Mediterranean; to strengthen ties and cooperation with regional organisations such as the African Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). At the same time the EU needed to adapt its positioning and relations with the US, China, Russia and others major powers to the changing geopolitical dynamics, and upgrade its responses to major global challenges such as terrorism, disinformation and maritime security and adapt to new security challenges such as cyber attacks and hybrid threats, and the ongoing challenge posed by climate change and security.

3. What measures did the EEAS take "to resolve the problems leading to the procurement errors identified and to prevent future infringements of the relevant rules"?¹ What measures has the EEAS implemented in order to improve its procurement procedures organized by delegations? What is the assessment of the improvements introduced in 2018 in procurement procedures by Delegations?

¹ P9_TA(2020)0094 Discharge 2018: EU general budget - European External Action Service - Paragraph 19

In 2019, the EEAS continued its efforts to enhance and support professionalism among public procurement practitioners across the organisation, through the following measures:

- Training: The EEAS organised regional training activities for EU Delegations. The training actions focused on a range of topics, including low and middle-value contracts, security contracts, procurement, IT tools and contract management. Furthermore, the training of Heads of Administration continued via the annual and pre-posting seminars.
- Templates: The EEAS provided a revised methodology to improve procurement practice. The measures included, for example, the revision and the development of specific templates of tender documents and guidelines for (very) low, middle-value and high-value contracts.
- Digitalisation: The EEAS launched the Finance and Contracts Support Portal, which became the single entry point for all incoming questions about public procurement and contract. In addition, the use of the web-based application Public Procurement Management Tool (PPMT) contributed to better planning, schedule, tracking and monitoring of procurement procedures from early planning up to contract signature.
- The yearly procurement plan for 2019 was, for the third consecutive year, compiled with contributions from Delegations and Headquarters Divisions in PPMT, thereby encouraging them to proceed to a more sound planning of their procedures. The procurement plan was revised mid-term to better align on the operational services' procurement priorities.
- Centralisation of high-value call for tenders covering supplies and services above the Directive thresholds and works contracts with a value above EUR 500,000: the EEAS reflected on innovative ways to develop a more appropriate architecture for the management of public procurement procedures handled by both the Headquarters and EU Delegations. This strategic analysis led to the adoption of ambitious roadmap for the centralisation of all high-value procurement procedures starting from 2020.

The assessment of the initiatives introduced in 2019 is positive. The EU Delegations welcomed all measures to comply with EU procurement law. They advocated further investment in training activities to increase their professionalism. The analysis of the initiatives highlighted the importance of the automatisisation of the processes and the implementation of a customer-oriented vision.

4. What type of errors did "reputational procurement errors" cover in 2019?
What is the assessment of the new error codes introduced in this area in 2019?

The new error codes introduced in 2019 concern the detection and reporting of procurement related errors, and are inspired by the error codes used by the European Court of Auditors. The new error codes allow for a more detailed identification of the type of error and the stage at which it occurred, such as publication, selection of tenders, evaluation, award, and isolating conflict of interest situations. Moreover, they also focus on the substance of the transaction, whereas the previous codes focused more on formalities (existence of documents and signature) and errors of more substance were aggregated in a single code. The new codes allow an analysis of possible causes and trends, adding important value to the audit activity.

Regarding the errors of reputational nature, the most significant infringements are related to:

- The absence of proper procurement procedures, without justification, or use of inappropriate procurement procedures.
- The lack of key documents to substantiate the procurement procedure or to provide evidence that the tendering was carried out in accordance with the principles of transparency, proportionality, equal treatment and non-discrimination.
- The unjustified substantial modification of the contract without a new tendering procedure.
- The maximum amount of framework contract being exceeded.
- Addenda to contracts and adding services not included in the initial procurement procedure, without an adequate justification, which should have been submitted to a new tendering procedure.

These reputational errors were found in 96 transactions. The annualised value of related contracts amounted to EUR 4.7 million. The procurement related error rate that would be comparable with the European Court of Auditors error rate is 0.49%, which is below the materiality threshold of 2% to provide reasonable assurance in what regards the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions.

5. If any, which delegations have been provided motivated reservations in 2019? Were there any issues with non-compliance of implemented contracts with procurement rules?

In 2019, only two EU Delegations (Syria and Djibouti) expressed reservations on the management of administrative expenditure. The reservations do not prevent the giving of a positive Declaration of Assurance of the EEAS overall.

The reservation in Syria relates to the impossibility of concluding a tender for security in the current political situation and to problems replenishing the local bank accounts, including income tax and the remuneration of local agents. The reservation in Djibouti relates to weaknesses identified on the management of the administrative budget, including lack of procurement procedures, lack of individual commitments for Press and Information activities, and lack of a register of exceptions. EEAS Headquarters has been working with the Delegation to develop an action plan with the aim of resolving the administrative weaknesses, in a very challenging local environment.

In 2018, a reservation was expressed by the Head of Delegation to the Council of Europe (Strasbourg) in relation to contracts, which were put in force by the former Head of Delegation. These concerns were successfully addressed in 2019, due to the support by the Headquarters, which conducted a review of all contracts, as a corrective measure in order to ensure compliance with the financial rules.

6. In 2018, EEAS reported the finalisation of the pilot phase of the Regional Centre Europe as well as "a comprehensive reflection on the future of the business processes within the Directorate for Budget and Administration aiming for modernisation, simplification and efficiency". Please report on the proposal issued after this reflection and specifically on "Innovative 2019".

"Innovative 2019" was the response of the EEAS Directorate General for Budget and Administration (DG BA) to the need to adapt the EEAS working methods to a rapidly evolving technological landscape as well as to simplify and modernise the current administrative model. In this context, 20 working groups covering a wide spectrum of administrative issues were launched in 2019; their work was concluded the same year and then they submitted their proposals to EEAS senior management. The proposals were in line with best practices from Member States and like-minded partners and they were directed towards ensuring the highest level of compliance with rules and regulations, that could yield results regarding the management of human resources, procurement procedures and finance.

Important actions are now in the course of implementation:

- Centralisation of the processing and payment of individual rights for staff in Delegations (accommodation allowance, removals and take-up duty travel).
- Centralisation of high-value procurement procedures above the EU directive threshold.
- Launch of EU Branding in order to ensure a uniform "look & feel" across EU Delegations around the world. EU Branding will be implemented through central tendering and logistics services.
- Launch of a central treasury with the aim of limiting the number of transactions executed locally via the Delegation's bank accounts in favour of a more centrally processing system and minimisation of petty cash payments.
- Ensuring business continuity for the role of Head of Administration and Authorising Officer by Sub-Delegations (AOSD), where necessary.
- Analysis and review of the EEAS IT systems in view of streamlining them.
- Renegotiation of the Financial Regulation to account for the particularities of EU Delegations in third countries.

In parallel with the "Innovative 2019" exercise and following the conclusion of the pilot project for regionalisation, a decision was taken to replace the Regional Centre Europe with a new Division, which will provide support to EU Delegations with a worldwide outreach. The new Division will act as a point of contact and of central support for all administrative questions. The new Division will also maintain its support for the 27 formerly regionalised EU Delegations. The new mission statement of the Division came into force in April 2020.

7. 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?

Providing a safe working environment to all staff at Headquarters and in Delegations remained a priority for the EEAS in 2019.

In 2019, the EEAS expanded its Security Awareness Programme launched in 2018, concerning all aspects of security, including cyber security, both at Headquarters and EU Delegations. The aim of the programme is to advise staff on appropriate behaviours regarding security and to build a sustainable security culture throughout the EEAS. In 2019, related actions included:

- Launch of two '*phishing*' campaigns targeting all EEAS staff at Headquarters and Delegations and two more campaigns targeting specific staff groups; Staff who got 'phished' attended specialised training, as a follow-up action to these campaigns.
- Production of three "do-the-basics" videos.
- Regular briefings on situational awareness to all staff categories, including, newcomers, trainees, and colleagues returning to Headquarters from EU Delegations.

In Headquarters, the EEAS continued implementing protective measures related to the Alert Status Level 2 in Belgium in all Headquarters' buildings. The EEAS also adopted a practical access guide to regulate the access regime for buildings, with relevant information for all staff. The guide contributed to a better understanding and improved implementation and of security rules in the EEAS. The safety of Headquarters' buildings is managed in cooperation with the European Commission's Office for infrastructure and logistics (OIB) in Brussels, as foreseen in the Service Level Agreement in force. This included evacuation exercises, regular assessments and tests on implementation of safety rules (fire protection, evacuation routes, signs), and maintenance of installations and infrastructure.

The EEAS continued to improve the security of the EU Delegations' buildings in the countries where the security risks assessments proved the need to implement additional mitigation and prevention measures. In particular, the EEAS invested on reinforced physical security measures to improve the protection of the buildings in the following regions:

- Several African regions witnessed a worsening of the terrorist threat. In 2019, the EEAS implemented security works in South Sudan, Sudan, Central African Republic, Congo, Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Comoros and the Republic of Congo.
- The security of compound in Afghanistan was reinforced, following several expert assessments, to reduce the residual risk for staff to an acceptable level.
- In the Asia and Pacific region, several EU Delegations improved the security of their buildings or relocated to new premises in 2019, including the Delegations to Myanmar, Nepal, Mongolia, Philippines, Cambodia, and Indonesia.
- In Latin America, following the increase of protests in 2019, the Delegation to Venezuela moved into new premises and the EU Delegation to Mexico undertook a complete renovation, implementing additional security measures.

- In the Middle East and Europe, the Delegations to Tunisia, Libya, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Georgia and Iceland implemented new protective measures improving the overall security of their buildings.

In 2019, the EEAS spent EUR 4.1 million on 18 additional armoured vehicles, including spare parts and training of drivers. The EEAS also purchased and deployed additional radio communications in Delegations for an amount of EUR 100,000.

The security services budget for EU Delegations (guards, close protection, alarms, etc.) increased by EUR 1.5 million, due to new security contracts in Burkina Faso and West Bank – Gaza Strip, and price increases for security services contracts in South Sudan, Sudan and Nigeria.

The work on upgrading security installations and maintenance contracts in Delegations continued in 2019 with a total amount invested of EUR 3.5 million. The EEAS developed a work programme for the gradual upgrade of older security installations, to be implemented in 2020 and 2021.

For Delegations, the EEAS provides advice and guidelines on safety matters, and organises Health and Safety inspections of buildings, carried out by a specialised contractor. The number of Health and Safety inspections was increased in 2019 (7 Health and Safety inspections in 2019 compared to 4 in 2018) and two sets of Health and Safety guidelines were commissioned, one for assessing new buildings, the other for enhancing Health and Safety awareness amongst staff.

The EEAS also continued its partnership with the European Gendarmerie Force (EGF). In 2019, the EGF completed a fact-finding mission to South Sudan including the performance of security risk assessments and provision of customised training for staff in the EU Delegation.

In 2019, the EEAS reviewed its policy regarding the vetting and screening of its staff at both Headquarters and EU Delegations. All staff posted in EU Delegations were required to be in possession of a valid Personal Security Clearance. The EEAS also finalised the identification of posts at Headquarters requiring a Personal Security Clearance. The EEAS continued providing and delivering briefings on counter intelligence to staff in order to raise awareness and ensure protection against hostile intelligence gathering activities. Staff highly exposed to the risk of espionage received personal coaching. The EEAS dedicated additional human resources to this end. The EEAS also finalised three new secure speech rooms and initiated the works for five further secure rooms – all in EU Delegations.

In the field of the high-classified systems and cryptographic tools, the EEAS performed the following activities:

- Continued investing on the development of the EC³IS, the new corporate classified communication and information system, which will replace the high-classified networks that are currently in use.
- Increased efforts to foster the acceptance of ZEUS, the new encryption software for classified information of the RESTREINT UE/EU RESTRICTED level. The new encryption software is mainly used by the EU Delegations and Member States' Embassies and its use is very satisfactory in regions prone to cyber threats and cyber espionage.
- Continued development of the new generation of the Security Operations Centre (SOC) for high-classified systems. The SOC monitors the security status of the classified networks, using state-of-the-art tools and procedures. It will be gradually applied to all the high-classified systems. In 2019, the EEAS started to implement the first tools and procedures to this end.
- Expanded the use of the EEAS Secure voice system to the CSDP missions, ensuring high-classified voice communication. The EEAS prepared and launched with the General Secretariat of the Council and the European Commission a new inter-institutional framework contract to pave the way for a unified high-classified voice system.
- Prepared the high-classified IT infrastructure for the NEO building, which will host staff that also work with classified information. During 2019, the EEAS developed and partly implemented the requirements for the fibre-optic network and related infrastructure.

Regarding physical and mental health at the workplace, the EEAS revised the mandate of the its Medical Service in January 2019 in order to meet the specific needs of staff serving in Delegations, for which the EEAS has a duty of care.

In 2019, the Medical Service continued to provide the assessment of operational health risks in the places of posting as well as medical and psychological care to staff posted abroad, and to handle medical evacuations. Based on the revised mandate, the EEAS Medical Service also initiated work on a programme concerning the reintegration at work after long-term sick leave, as well as on a policy for hardship postings. The EEAS Medical Service also provided assistance on issues related to medical examinations, consultations, first aid treatment, psychosocial support, medical and travel advice, pre-deployment advice, occupational health advice, reintegration after sick leave and other duties to protect the health of staff and dependants.

During 2019, the EEAS Medical Service processed 140 requests for medical repatriations. Of these, only 24 were refused because they did not fulfil the required criteria (seriousness, emergency, absence of appropriate care locally). 114 medical repatriations were executed via commercial flights, whereas two repatriations required the intervention of an air ambulance.

The EEAS Medical Service also provided support to EU Delegations in case of epidemics and other emergencies. In 2019, it supported the establishment of standard operating procedures for Ebola medical evacuation and the establishment of contingency plans. It also developed health promotion tools, including a brochure on post-traumatic stress disorder distributed to staff in need in case of crisis. In addition, the Medical Service organised various trainings on travel advice and psychological support (TRE – Tension and Trauma Releasing Exercises – self-care techniques).

In addition, the EEAS Mediation Service dealt with situations of burn-out and other psychological health situations.

8. In a report last year, the European Court of Auditors deplored the fact that the majority of EU bodies had not drawn up a real sustainability strategy. Can you tell us what measures and initiatives have been taken in this area in your institution in 2019?

The EEAS welcomed the European Court of Auditors' report on sustainability and the contribution to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), taking stock of the work of EU institutions and agencies. The Court acknowledged that in the area of external action, the Commission has been working closely with the EEAS to adapt the performance reporting system in relation with the SDGs and sustainability.

Reporting on external action and development cooperation supports the implementation of the SDGs and is a specific commitment in the "New Consensus for Development". For instance, the 2019 Joint Synthesis Report (JSR) provides a summary of how the EU and its Member States are supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through development cooperation. This report contributes to the EU reporting at the UN High Level Policy Forum (2019 and every four years thereafter). The report focuses on the period since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in September 2015. It is accompanied by a Staff Working Document that provides more detail of actions by the EU and its Member States by SDG.

In addition, EU Delegations provide regular reporting on the contributions towards the achievement of the SDGs. In their "2019 Progress Report with regard to Sustainable Development Goals, Policy Coherence for Development, Working Better Together and Joint Programming, Partnerships with More Advanced Developing Countries", Delegations covered about 140 countries, providing a wide picture and capturing key conclusions, inspiring contributions and best practices.

The EEAS continued its efforts to integrate environmental sustainability concerns into its budget, policies and concrete actions in 2019 with a view to participating to the implementation of sustainable development goals. The EEAS formally included environmental factors as an objective of the EEAS building policy in 2018 and steps were taken to prepare for the establishment of an environmental management system (EMAS) in the EEAS.

9. [What improvement has been made in the consistency and coherence of the Union's external and internal action, as well as the need to strive for common positions and coordinated responses for the Union to be efficient in this role?](#)

The 2019 European Parliament (EP) elections and the subsequent appointment of a new European Commission, President of the European Council and HR/VP, occasioned a renewal of the EU's vision, leadership and working methods for external action. In her speech to the EP the then President-elect von der Leyen pledged to lead a "Geopolitical Commission", willing to assume leadership in an unsettled world, to defend multilateralism and to shape a better global order.

The HR/VP plays a key role in delivering on this ambition. Article 18.4 TEU gives him the responsibility to ensure the consistency of the Union's external action and to coordinate the external aspects of the work of all Commissioners. In his confirmatory hearing in the EP in October 2019, then HR/VP-designate Borrell committed to linking better the internal and external aspects of EU policies in order to use all the instruments in the EU toolbox, in particular the leverage provided by some of the internal policies.

The high priority the Commission under President von der Leyen attaches to external action has led to structural changes in the working methods. A standing item on recent developments in external relations has been introduced on the weekly College agenda for HR/VP to provide regular updates, to frame collegial discussions and to ensure that external action becomes a systematic part of the Commission's decision-making process. A new College preparatory body, the Group for external coordination (EXCO), has been set up. It is co-chaired by the Diplomatic Advisor of the President and the Deputy Head of Cabinet of the HR/VP

and is tasked to ensure full political coordination and coherence on external action matters. The HR/VP chairs the Commissioners' Group "A Stronger Europe in the World" which meets once per month and ensures a strategic and teamed-up approach in delivering on the political priorities.

Consistent and coordinated positions are a prerequisite for the EU to act effectively. The situation at the EU's borders and in its neighbourhood continued to be fragile and unpredictable. The HR/VP and the EEAS continue to champion multilateral cooperation and international partnerships, while at the same time strengthening the EU's resilience and strategic autonomy. For example, the EU maintained a leading role in the preservation of the JCPOA as integral part of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture, contributed to stability in its neighbourhood and to finding political solutions to the conflicts in and around Ukraine and in Syria and Yemen, supported stabilisation in the Sahel and Libya and responded to the external aspects of the migration challenges. Steady progress was achieved in the area of strategic communication, countering disinformation (including in the context of the EP elections) and public diplomacy. Finally, the EU continued work on addressing its security and defence needs, enhancing its capacity to act as security provider and its ability to cooperate with partners.

The HR/VP attaches high priority to the work initiated in the Council on reviewing modalities and working methods to ensure effectiveness and unity of CFSP and EU foreign policy. This includes using and applying the possibilities provided for by the Treaty of Lisbon, including the clauses that allow for certain decisions to be adopted by qualified majority voting, together with improving the ways foreign policy is implemented.

10. *"The EEAS Country Threat Assessment showed in 2019 an overall deterioration of the worldwide security situation"*². What is the future assessment, does the EEAS expect a further worsening in the years to come?

The EEAS produces the Country Threat Assessment (CTA) as a general tool to compare global levels of threats relating to different countries; for such an assessment it uses standardised quantitative data coming from well-recognised sources including international organisations, UN bodies, international institutes or other specialised sources providing detailed

² Annual report on Budgetary and Financial management European External Action Service Section X Year 2019, page 5

information on certain threats. The data takes into account past events, therefore the EEAS uses the CTA mostly internally to raise staff awareness on the presence of certain threats. The CTA is not used to produce security forecasts, as the indicators describe what happened in the past and do not necessarily take into account other important factors in anticipating future crises.

The evolution of the trends of the CTA's past editions shows a clear deterioration of the security landscape, with an increased number of countries with an overall threat level of 'high' (19 countries in 2015 to 25 in 2019) or 'critical' (8 countries in 2015 to 12 in 2019).

11. Do you intend to put in place rules concerning the recording of lobby meetings at lower levels?

The Commission regulates the meetings with lobbyists at Commissioner's and Cabinet's level, as well as at Director-General level. These rules are applied to the HR/VP in his capacity as the Vice President of the Commission.

Whilst the Commission is an Institution in the meaning of Article 13 of the TEU, the EEAS is not. The EEAS does therefore not hold meetings with organisations and self-employed individuals qualified as lobbyists in line with Article 11 of the TEU. The Commission, exercising the right of initiative in EU legislative procedures, needs to regularly coordinate with EU citizens and their representative associations in order to shape EU policies, but this framework does not apply to the EEAS, which has no direct role in EU legislation.

Imposing such an obligation, i.e. to record meetings with lobbyists in third countries, may make it difficult for Heads of EU Delegation to engage with EU economic interests in third countries.

The EEAS is not currently planning to put any such policy in place at lower level.

12. What were the results of the 20 proposals examined under the "Innovative 2019" project, which aims at modernising and simplifying the EEAS administration?

Please see also the reply to question 6. "Innovative 2019" was the response of the EEAS Directorate General for Budget and Administration (DG BA) to the need to adapt the EEAS working methods to a rapidly evolving technological landscape as well as to simplify and modernise the current administrative model.

The main actions include:

- EU Branding in EU Delegations: Visual identity to be defined as a starting point in determining a branding strategy; logistics tender to be prepared and launched as a pre-requisite for shipping goods and supplies to EU Delegations; calls for tender for implementation to be prepared and launched in 2020.
- Human Resources: Common administration sections to be established for Delegations that were relocated in other countries (Yemen in Jordan, Libya in Tunisia, Syria in Lebanon); 'minimum kit' concept with at least 4 expatriate staff members in any EU Delegation was introduced as the guiding principle for all Delegations; implementation of payroll module for local agents for all Delegations to be launched and completed within 2020; centralisation of the processing and payment of individual rights for staff in Delegations (accommodation allowance, removals and take-up duty travel).
- Finance - High-Value Procurement procedures from EU Delegations around the world to be centralised at Headquarters; current Financial Regulation to be renegotiated to take into account the particularities of the EU Delegations in third countries; centralisation of high-value procurement procedures; paperless financial workflows for Headquarters and Delegations to be implemented in a progressive manner; use of cash in Delegations to be reduced, helped by the introduction of corporate credit cards; central treasury: limit the number of transactions executed locally via the EU Delegation's Imprest accounts in favour of more central processing.
- Other actions included the analysis of the opportunity for the rationalisation of multiple EEAS IT systems ecosystem under a single software.

13. Please report any development of the project to create an institute dedicated to the education of future Europeans diplomats.

In 2019, the EEAS prepared a series of training maps aiming, *inter alia*, at ensuring that staff acquire a minimum set of skills and competences before taking on new responsibilities. The flagship of these is the training map for Political Officers, also known as "Diplomacy 101". Its objective is to train the new AD recruits of the EEAS, i.e. the future of European diplomacy. The training map was designed in line with Article 6 para 12 of the Council Decision 2010/427/EU. It was based on best practices already in place in Member States' training programmes for new newly recruited diplomats and adjusted, as appropriate, to meet the specific needs of the EEAS. The implementation of the above-mentioned training map, scheduled to run on a pilot basis in 2020, is intended to form in the future the core training for the successful candidates of EPSO competitions on external relations.

In 2019, the EEAS also finalised a review of the structural models of the European School of Administration and the European Security and Defence College, as well as the institutional specificities and processes of diplomatic academies in the Member States. As a result, the EEAS is currently considering the establishment of a virtual diplomatic academy, which, where appropriate, would link with universities and academies in Member States.

14. How does the EEAS support European trade export globally? What support mechanisms are in place for helping Member States in their export promotion activities?

The EEAS supports the economic interests of the EU around the world through diplomatic and other activities, including the work of EU Delegations in third countries.

While trade promotion is a competence of the Member States, the EEAS launched the EU Economic Diplomacy (EED) initiative in July 2017. The EED is based on a deeper cooperation mainly through the EU Delegations, with Member States, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the EU private sector, with the core aim of fostering jobs and growth in Europe as well as in EU's partner countries. EED priorities were successfully identified for 120 third countries with more than 1,000 concrete actions agreed to support them. These actions capture aspects of existing policy objectives, such as the circular economy, and include, *inter alia*, monitoring of joint or separate EU and Member States' advocacy or public diplomacy initiatives, proactively supporting EU business organisations or individual sectors or companies, expanding the instruments to foster the internationalisation of the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and promoting important investment projects by the EIB.

The extensive implementation of the EED since the 2017 Guidelines has demonstrated that the EED approach works in practice and enables the EU to develop a more coherent external action on economic issues. This makes the EU overall stronger and in a better position to deal with an increasingly challenging world stage.

15. How much of the EEAS's budget is allocated to : a. Administrative costs, b. Over-head costs, c. Operational costs, d. Staff remuneration, e. Staff entitlements/benefits, f. Paid leave.

- (a) 100%. The entire EEAS budget constitutes administrative appropriations, as it falls under Heading V (future Heading 7) of the MFF.
- (b) The term "overhead" is defined in a business context as "all costs on the income statement except for direct labour, direct materials, and direct expenses". This definition is not applicable in the context of an administrative budget.
- (c) 0%. Operational appropriations are only present in the Commission's section of the budget.
- (d) and (e) The EEAS employs the *Common Nomenclature* for its classification of expenditure which is relevant for these questions. "Remuneration of statutory and external staff" (which includes both salaries and benefits) corresponds to 52.4% of the EEAS' 2019 budget.
- (f) Paid leave is an integrated part of the salary expenditure and is not isolated as such in the budget systems.

16. What carry-over of appropriations has been made in 2019? Does the EEAS plan to make carry-over operation to the following year? Which measures could help you avoid or lower the carry-overs?

The Financial Regulation allows various types of carry-overs, both automatic and subject to a decision. At the end of 2019, the following carry-overs took place in the EEAS budget, which also include the amounts related to contributions received from the Commission, the European Development Fund and the EU Trust Funds to finance their staff in Delegations:

- Automatic carry-over of payment appropriations to 2020: EUR 83.9 million (automatic).
- Automatic carry-over of assigned revenue to 2020: EUR 92.8 million (automatic).
- Carry-over of unused voted appropriations on decision by the institution under FR 12(2)(a): EUR 0 (on decision).

The EEAS expects automatic carry-overs to take place to 2021 in the normal course of its budget execution. It does not plan any carry-overs on decision to 2021, based on currently available information. The carry-overs represent a necessary flexibility which has been provided by the legislator and without which the execution rates would be far lower.

17. What measures were taken during 2019 to make the Institution more cost efficient and to reduce overall administrative costs of the Institution? Could the EEAS outline the core cost-effective and sustainable measures in place for the EEAS' premises? How much savings were made in 2019 from which budget lines? Could it be indicated for which purpose these savings were used or transferred to other budget lines?

In terms of cost efficiency, the EEAS launched the "Innovative 2019" exercise (please see also questions 6 and 12) aiming at efficiency gains in procedures in the following areas:

- Centralisation of individual entitlements in EU Delegations (Housing, Removals, Take-up Duty Travel).
- Centralisation of High-value Procurement procedures.
- Launch of central tenders (in the context of EU Branding).
- Analysis and review of the EEAS IT systems.

However, the implementation of these actions started in 2020 and, as such, there is no reporting of the results at this stage.

Concerning the budget, the most important reallocations in terms of amounts were savings on staff expenditure in EU Delegations, due to higher than expected vacancies, which were mobilised for infrastructure, security, and other administrative costs (notably IT expenditure) in EU Delegations. Similarly, at Headquarters, savings on staff expenditure were reallocated to reinforce IT expenditure, infrastructure/security, fitting-out costs and secure communications.

As regards cost-effective and sustainable measures in place for the EEAS premises, for Headquarters, the EEAS will comply with the requirements of PLAGE (Plan Local d'Actions pour la Gestion Énergétique) the regulation issued by the Brussels Region, in order to further reduce the energy consumption and the related costs of its buildings in Brussels.

For EU Delegations, a programme of green initiatives and measures includes energy consumption monitoring and reduction objectives. Furthermore, environmental aspects have been taken into account during the selection process for future buildings either for rent or purchase, by specifying Class A energy performance and/or the achievement of certain minimum 'Green Building' ratings such as 'BREEAM (Building Research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method) Very Good' or 'LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold' or better. For existing buildings, the adoption

of environmentally-friendly features is strongly encouraged, such as the installation of solar panels or the use of construction material with a good energy and environmental performance, in the context of renovation works, including windows, façade insulations, floor and wall coverings including paint, plus sustainable furniture using a cradle-to-cradle recycling process.

The impact of these measures on the budget will be only identified in the long term and the savings generated will make it possible to recover the initial investment. For instance, this is obvious in the case of investments in energy efficiency improvements. In other cases, the impact may be less obvious for the EU budget, such as when investing in less polluting ways of generating electricity; yet, these measures generate positive externalities on the environment that cannot be measured only in budgetary terms.

18. What budgetary savings have been achieved through the cooperation with other institutions?

The EEAS has numerous service level agreements (SLAs) in place with other Institutions, mostly notably with the Commission, which give rise to economies of scale. The EEAS does not quantify the budgetary savings arising from the SLAs, however, in 2019, it launched an SLA inventory with the aim of further improving the efficient management of SLAs, better definition of its business needs and required service levels, stronger performance monitoring and improvements in the SLA renewal process.

19. *"In addition to the EEAS budget we also manage contributions from the Commission on 34 different budget lines relating to the administrative costs of Commission staff in delegations. Preliminary discussions are being held with the Commission to sound out possible ways of simplifying this extremely complicated management"*³. What actions have been taken to simplify the current budget nomenclature, as requested by the Parliament in previous years, to allow for easier and more efficient management of the EEAS? What is the current state of these talks? Has there been progress in the simplification? The EEAS reports in the AAR 2019 that it has started developing an alternative system to simplify the budget lines, Please report on the implementation of this system.

³ Annual report on Budgetary and Financial management European External Action Service Section X Year 2019, page 9

The discussions on the budget simplifications are currently ongoing. In early 2020, the EEAS made an ambitious proposal for a very far-reaching simplification, which was subsequently discussed in a joint EEAS-Commission working group. The core idea of this proposal was to remove the parallel detailed budget structure that the EEAS maintains inside its own budget in order to keep track of the Commission's contributions. This parallel structure is made up by copies of all the Commission's budget lines from which the Commission pays its contributions to the EEAS. Under the proposal, the amounts would be instead encoded on the EEAS own budget lines, thereby eliminating roughly 80% of the EEAS budgetary accounting plan.

The working group has achieved significant progress, notably by clarifying the legal environment and the limits within which the simplification may take place: however the Commission has raised concerns related to the principle of budgetary specification.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the EEAS considers that it is prudent to target the shift to a new and simplified system in 2022 only. Still, the new Commission nomenclature for the upcoming MFF as from 2021 also provides an additional opportunity to advance towards a simplification of the management of the financing of its staff in EU Delegations. In this context, the EEAS submitted another simplifying proposal to the Commission in September 2020. According to this proposal, the budget lines would be regrouped into less than 15 lines, in order to pool in the amounts paid by the Commission in fewer budget items inside the EEAS budget. The EEAS has also suggested providing a significantly more detailed reporting on the payments, and has also invited the Commission to present its needs in this respect.

20. In your annual activity report, you present the conclusions reached by ECA – special report. Were the KPIs updated according to ECA suggestions or are there new KPIs put in place?

The EEAS welcomed the European Court of Auditors' report on data quality in budget support and was pleased that the Court found that indicators used to disburse budget support were generally providing the intended incentive effect. Variable tranches and the use of outcome indicators can provide incentives for partner countries to improve performance on implementing policy reforms thus they should be well defined. The EEAS and Commission services agreed with the Court of Auditors' recommendations to improve the formulation of indicators used to disburse budget support payments and work has been ongoing since to address all the recommendations. The formulation of these indicators is closely linked to the political and policy objectives of budget support operations and to support meaningful progress. Internal work will continue to improve their

formulation and to safeguard their incentive effect on partner beneficiaries of budget support. With regards to the quality of the data used to disburse variable tranches, there is a clear commitment from the EEAS and Commission services to review the underlying evidence supporting the performance data in case data is declared unreliable.

21. In your annual report you have on the Budgetary and Financial management chapter, a subchapter entitled: "difficulties linked to the legal framework" which states that changes in the financial regulation would be needed. Could you please detail the changes that you would like to see in place to ease the work of EEAS delegations?

The EEAS is currently working on a report aimed at identifying the difficulties faced by the EU Delegations in the actual application of the Financial Regulation (FR) for the execution of the administrative budget. The report has been prepared on the basis of feedback from internal stakeholders who contribute to the sound financial management of Delegations including Heads of Delegation and services at Headquarters. Rules and best practices applied by Member States in the management of their Embassies have been also examined.

The main areas of the FR where the EEAS is seeking for amendments intended for simplification and efficiency gains are the following:

- Very low-, low- and middle-value procurement procedures (FR Title VII and Annex I): The application of the current FR provisions for procurement procedures for these contracts is inefficient. All purchases above EUR 1,000, which is the ceiling for direct purchases according to the FR, need the prior approval of the Head of Delegation/Deputy Head of Delegation-and they execute the payments as AOSD. The practices of Member States in this area are more flexible and efficient.
- High Value Procurement Procedures (FR Title VII and Annex I): Further simplifications in the management of the high-value procurement procedures are needed. This is a highly time-consuming exercise and there are many instances where procurement procedures have been cancelled because of the excessive workload it represents for potential bidders.
- Corporate Sponsorship (FR Art. 26): After the first two years of the application of corporate sponsorship, its provisions are in practice too cumbersome to implement and they discourage potential sponsors. There are very few EU Delegations which were able to implement this new instrument effectively. The main concern derives from the limitation of exclusivity of in-kind sponsorship. Another challenge is that the current text foresees heavy requirements *de facto* similar to those applicable to procurement procedures, which are perceived as too cumbersome and disproportionate by the potential sponsors and thus discourage them. The

model of sponsorship used by the Member States is less restrictive and it allows for financial sponsoring, which is also strongly encouraged by the Member States.

- "Buy European" (FR Art 176 and 177): Some goods purchased in Delegations have high visibility and often play an important role in the EU's representation abroad. The purchase of an EU brand is important to the EU's image and the quality of their characteristics (sustainability, manufacturing, design and innovation) contribute to the promotion of our values. There is a need to clarify which rules identify what is an EU product (rules of origin, etc), and we need to have selection criteria that refers to the EU image of the product.
- New local payment methods and use of credit cards (FR Art.86 (3)): The EEAS will explore innovative ways to execute small payments in EU Delegations by allowing the use of credit cards and, in general, aligning the FR dispositions to the most recent tools available in the commercial market for purchase/payment operations. Several Member States allow the use of credit cards, in order to simplify the payment operations for small expenses.
- Management of recovery orders in EU Delegations: The cashing of the revenues in the EU Delegations is implemented using the local bank accounts. A simplification in managing recoveries in EU Delegations would align the administrative burden to the amounts at stake and would not reduce the capacity in cashing.

22. On chapter 3.2.2. entitled Results from audits during the reporting year, you mentioned that the draft report was communicated to the auditee on February 2020, and recommendations of this audit are currently being discussed with the auditee. Could you please update us on the outcome of this procedure?

The draft report of the audit on information flows between the EEAS, Commission's Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security (DG HR) and Paymaster Office (PMO) was sent to the auditee DG BA in the EEAS in February 2020. A reply was received from the auditee in June 2020, an advance copy of the final report was sent in June 2020 and the auditee replied in July 2020.

As there were two disagreements and one conditional agreement on the recommendations, a virtual meeting with the auditee was organised in September 2020 to clear any pending misunderstandings. The outcome of this meeting was positive and useful: it was agreed that the auditee would review their position on the implementation of these recommendations. The final audit report will be issued after the final statements from the auditee about their action plan.

Staff related questions

23. Please provide a table of staff in delegations and headquarters broken down by nationality, type of contract, gender and grade for the year 2019 (figures and percentages), and an overview of how these figures compared with the year 2018?

EEAS Staff 2019 Nationality	Total HQ	Total Del	Total
Austria	29	20	49
Belgium	216	143	359
Bulgaria	25	21	46
Croatia	11	4	15
Cyprus	10	7	17
Czechia	37	15	52
Denmark	38	22	60
Estonia	16	14	30
Finland	44	20	64
France	204	149	353
Germany	122	76	198
Greece	58	34	92
Hungary	43	16	59
Ireland	29	15	44
Italy	189	91	280
Latvia	11	16	27
Lithuania	22	13	35
Luxembourg	1	1	2
Malta	6	7	13
Netherlands	54	31	85
Poland	89	24	113
Portugal	38	46	84
Romania	82	27	109
Slovakia	20	6	26
Slovenia	14	14	28
Spain	127	64	191
Sweden	70	30	100
United Kingdom	33	11	44
Total	1638	937	2575

EEAS Staff 2018 Nationality	Total HQ	Total Del	Total
Austria	30	21	51
Belgium	219	133	352
Bulgaria	24	18	42
Croatia	14	6	20
Cyprus	9	5	14
Czechia	33	15	48
Denmark	40	20	60
Estonia	14	10	24
Finland	43	22	65
France	198	145	343
Germany	128	69	197
Greece	51	26	77
Hungary	37	18	55
Ireland	31	16	47
Italy	188	91	279
Latvia	8	14	22
Lithuania	21	12	33
Luxembourg	2	2	4
Malta	10	6	16
Netherlands	51	26	77
Poland	86	23	109
Portugal	39	41	80
Romania	73	24	97
Slovakia	16	6	22
Slovenia	18	13	31
Spain	119	69	188
Sweden	63	30	93
United Kingdom	46	23	69
Total	1611	904	2515

EEAS Staff in 2019 - percentage of total						
Nationality	Officials	Temporary Agents	Contract Agents	Seconded National Experts	Total percentage of EEAS staff	Share of the country's population within the EU
Austria	1.0%	0.2%	0.3%	0.4%	1.9%	1.7%
Belgium	8.2%	0.8%	4.4%	0.6%	13.9%	2.2%
Bulgaria	0.5%	0.3%	0.6%	0.4%	1.8%	1.4%
Croatia	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.6%	0.8%
Cyprus	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	0.7%	0.2%
Czech Republic	0.9%	0.4%	0.1%	0.6%	2.0%	2.1%
Denmark	1.1%	0.3%	0.0%	1.0%	2.4%	1.1%
Estonia	0.5%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	1.2%	0.3%
Finland	1.2%	0.5%	0.1%	0.7%	2.5%	1.1%
France	5.5%	2.4%	3.4%	2.1%	13.4%	13.1%
Germany	4.2%	0.7%	0.9%	1.9%	7.7%	16.2%
Greece	1.8%	0.3%	0.5%	1.0%	3.5%	2.1%
Hungary	0.9%	0.5%	0.3%	0.6%	2.3%	1.9%
Ireland	1.0%	0.3%	0.2%	0.2%	1.7%	1.0%
Italy	5.9%	0.7%	2.6%	1.6%	10.9%	11.8%
Latvia	0.4%	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%	1.1%	0.4%
Lithuania	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	1.3%	0.5%
Luxembourg	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%
Malta	0.3%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%	0.1%
Netherlands	1.7%	0.6%	0.3%	0.7%	3.3%	3.4%
Poland	2.1%	0.7%	0.5%	1.1%	4.4%	7.4%
Portugal	1.5%	0.5%	0.9%	0.4%	3.3%	2.0%
Romania	1.5%	0.7%	1.3%	0.8%	4.3%	3.8%
Slovakia	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	1.0%	1.1%
Slovenia	0.6%	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	1.1%	0.4%
Spain	4.3%	0.7%	1.6%	0.9%	7.5%	9.1%
Sweden	1.8%	0.6%	0.0%	1.5%	3.9%	2.0%
United Kingdom	1.1%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	1.5%	13.0%

AST 2019	AST1	AST2	AST3	AST4	AST5	AST6	AST7	AST8	AST9	AST10	AST11	Total
Women	0	5	44	54	69	47	64	53	35	7	3	415
Men	0	1	19	47	30	24	20	11	25	12	10	211
Total	0	6	63	101	99	71	84	64	60	19	13	626
AST 2018	AST1	AST2	AST3	AST4	AST5	AST6	AST7	AST8	AST9	AST10	AST11	Total
Women	0	12	44	56	64	47	74	42	33	6	2	411
Men	0	1	28	46	27	26	20	10	27	12	11	216
Total	0	13	72	102	91	73	94	52	60	18	13	627

AD 2019	AD5	AD6	AD7	AD8	AD9	AD10	AD11	AD12	AD13	AD14	AD15	AD16	Total
Women	7	17	53	30	42	23	28	62	37	32	2	1	334
Men	9	13	60	29	69	41	40	152	90	101	18	3	625
Total	16	30	113	59	111	64	68	214	127	133	20	4	959
AD 2018	AD5	AD6	AD7	AD8	AD9	AD10	AD11	AD12	AD13	AD14	AD15	AD16	Total
Women	12	17	48	26	41	26	23	65	41	29	2	1	331
Men	10	14	42	36	60	39	53	138	103	100	18	4	617
Total	22	31	90	62	101	65	76	203	144	129	20	5	948

AST/SC 2019	AST/SC 1	AST/SC 2	AST/SC 3
Women	8	21	5
Men	4	7	1
Total	12	28	6
AST/SC 2018	AST/SC 1	AST/SC 2	AST/SC 3
Women	8	21	2
Men	3	5	0
Total	11	26	2

Contract Agents 2019	FG I	FG II	FG III	FG IV	Total
Women	14	136	60	76	286
Men	18	11	73	109	211
Total	32	147	133	185	497
Contract Agents 2018	FG I	FG II	FG III	FG IV	Total
Women	15	131	56	70	272
Men	17	9	73	96	195
Total	32	140	129	166	467

Local Agents 2019	LA1	LA2	LA3	LA4	LA5	Total
Women	102	135	246	89	3	575
Men	82	83	52	49	217	483
Total	184	218	298	138	220	1058
Local Agents 2018	LA1	LA2	LA3	LA4	LA5	Total
Women	99	134	237	95	3	568
Men	87	84	49	49	216	485
Total	186	218	286	144	219	1053

Seconded National Experts	2019	2018
Women	116	98
Men	345	351
Total	461	449

EEAS Staff Gender		AD	AST	AST/SC	CA	SNE	LA
2018	Women	331	380	31	272	98	568
	Men	617	208	8	195	351	485
2019	Women	334	381	34	286	116	575
	Men	625	199	12	211	345	483

24. How many EU ambassadors/heads of Delegations were in office in 2019, and of which nationalities? What progress has been made in ensuring the geographical balance of representation of each Member State?

The table below indicate the numbers of Heads of EU Delegation in 2019 and in 2018 distributed by nationality.

Heads of EU Delegation Nationality	2019	2018
Austria	6	5
Belgium	8	9
Bulgaria	2	2
Croatia	0	0
Cyprus	2	0
Czech Republic	1	2
Denmark	3	5
Estonia	3	1
Finland	3	3
France	15	16
Germany	16	15
Greece	2	2
Hungary	2	1
Ireland	5	4
Italy	20	21
Latvia	1	2
Lithuania	1	1
Luxembourg	1	2
Malta	1	1
Netherlands	4	2
Poland	4	5
Portugal	7	6
Romania	3	2
Slovakia	2	2
Slovenia	2	2
Spain	16	13
Sweden	7	7
United Kingdom	0	4

The EEAS strives for geographical balance among its staff. The population of Heads of Delegation is a relatively small group in the total staff of the EEAS. In 2019, the only Member State without a Head of Delegation was Croatia. In the rotation exercise for 2019, only 2 Croatian candidates applied (out of a total of 400 candidates), compared to 45 from Italy, 45 from Germany, 44 candidates from France, 35 from Spain and 22 from Belgium.

All posts of Head of Delegation are open for applications for candidates from the EU Institutions and from the Member States. The EEAS continues to encourage under-represented Member States to propose qualified candidates for the Rotation.

A positive example is Cyprus. In 2018, there was no Cypriot Head of Delegation. In the Rotation exercise for 2019, 5 Cypriot candidates applied and the EEAS appointed two Cypriot Heads of Delegation.

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

In 2019, 9 Heads of Divisions were appointed following a publication (5 male, 4 female). 10 Heads of Division were appointed in the annual mobility exercise for Middle Managers (4 male, 6 female). 3 Directors were appointed following a publication (all male). 4 Director General level (3 Deputy Secretaries General, 1 Managing Director) were appointed following a publication (all male).

26. How many staff members work in accession countries and countries of the Eastern Partnership? How many new positions have been created in these countries in 2019?

In 2019, the EEAS had 118 staff members in enlargement countries and 84 staff members in Eastern Partnership countries. In 2019, the EEAS created 5 new posts in enlargement countries and 3 new posts in Eastern Partnership countries.

These figures include EEAS expatriate and local staff posted in EU Delegations but they do not include Commission staff.

27. How many local agents were recruited/dismissed/promoted in 2019?
What progress has been made regarding the rules and conditions governing the employment of local agents?

In 2019, 197 local agents (LA) joined the EU Delegations and 170 LA left the Delegations, including 7 dismissals. 354 LA were promoted and 30 changed to a higher function group. Several instruments continued to improve working and living conditions of LA. The EEAS Directorate for Human Resources accompanied the Commission in its social dialogue with the Trade Unions for modernising and improving the conditions of employment and related social security schemes. The process advanced with the adoption of the three Joint Decisions that form the core of the reform. These Joint Decisions entered into force on 1 June 2020, marking the first reform concerning the working conditions of LA in EU Delegations in over 30 years.

28. Could you provide a list of EU Special Representatives in 2019 broken down by gender and nationality?

EUSR Gender	Male	Female	Total
	6	2	8

EUSR Nationality	Austrian	1
	Bulgarian	1
	Dutch	1
	Estonian	1
	Greek	1
	Irish	1
	Slovak	1
	Spanish	1

29. What concrete measures has the EEAS taken in 2019 to improve the overall wellbeing and safety of the staff?

The continued implementation of the recommendations of the two Task Forces mentioned under question 1 includes a series of changes linked to staff well-being. This includes strong promotion of work-life balance and fostering family-friendly policies in both Headquarters and delegations, including the use of flexible working arrangements, such as part time and teleworking, and better information and communication to staff in Delegations.

The improvement of the wellbeing of EEAS staff is included in the mandate of the newly created Social Policy Team established in November 2019. With a view to improve the work-life balance and wellbeing of staff members at Headquarters and EU Delegation, the EEAS authorised on a case-by-case basis and for a limited period of time teleworking outside of the place of employment in support of colleagues facing complex family situations. The management of social aid to staff who have children with a disability was taken over by the Social Policy Team allowing for a better and more personalised follow-up of each file. In 2019, the EEAS also started to work on a Disability roadmap with the aim of promoting a more inclusive working environment.

For Delegations, Health and Safety issues received particular attention, thanks to the increased number of Health and Safety Inspections of EU Delegations and to the more rigorous follow-up of the implementation of their recommendations (see question 7). The revised mandate of the EEAS Medical Service, (also see question 7) now allows it to work on programmes for reintegration at work after long-term sick leave, as a further way of ensuring staff well-being and safety.

The EEAS continued to put emphasis on flexibility, environmental factors and access for persons with reduced mobility with a view to improve the overall wellbeing and safety of staff. Access for people with reduced mobility was systematically assessed when prospecting and selecting new EU Delegation buildings. Relocation projects carried out in EU Delegations have integrated factors to improve accessibility, including installation of ramps, wide doorways, lifts and disabled toilet facilities.

The new technical support post created in 2018 in the Infrastructure Division also provided direct support to EU Delegations on building safety matters.

30. What specific measures were taken to ensure health safety for staff in the EEAS headquarters and in the delegations since the start of the COVID-19? Where there any changes made because of the COVID-19? What type of support is provided for home office equipment? What are the security restrictions in place when working remotely?

Please note that this question falls out of the scope of the 2019 Discharge. The reply summarises the exceptional arrangements the put in place by the EEAS to face the COVID-19 pandemic.

The health and safety of all EEAS staff in Headquarters and EU Delegations was paramount in the decisions taken during the COVID-19 crisis. The Secretary General regularly updated staff on the situation, the decisions taken and the subsequent measures adopted. These messages to all staff, together with a

dedicated COVID-19 intranet page, have been used to relay important information and advice to staff such as medical protocols, teleworking instructions, consular affairs, mission restrictions and social support. Furthermore, managers were acting as two-way vectors of information.

In Headquarters, at the peak of the first confinement, all staff were asked to telework. Only those staff responsible for essential tasks requiring physical presence were allowed to come to the office. The EEAS has thoroughly applied the rules of the Belgian authorities with regard to travel authorisations for professional or personal travel.

EU Delegations were asked to respect local regulations and also follow Headquarters' practice of generalised teleworking in place of employment, combined with a reduced physical presence of colleagues in Delegations' premises, while taking into account local rules and recommendations.. In a number of countries, additional measures were taken with a view to reducing the medical risks: In 78 countries where the health care systems were deemed fragile and medical evacuations were more challenging, the EEAS encouraged the departure of staff performing non-essential tasks, allowing them to telework from Brussels or exceptionally from their place of origin. Furthermore, all family members and vulnerable staff were encouraged to depart from Delegations and telework from Europe. The majority of those who departed at the beginning of the crisis have returned to their place of employment.

To support the most exposed EU Delegations, personal protective equipment and medical supplies were dispatched from Headquarters.

For those staff who were physically present to carry out essential functions for business continuity reasons, the workspaces were adapted appropriately. The EEAS liaised with the Commission (OIB) to ensure that measures were put in place in the Headquarters buildings. Guidance was provided to Delegations on the measures that could be adopted in their offices and residences.

Measures included enforcing social distancing inside the buildings, particularly in common areas, such as markings on the floor and limited occupation of meeting rooms and social areas. Hand hygiene was promoted throughout the building and hand sanitisers were available in the buildings' reception areas and in all common areas. An enhanced cleaning protocol was adopted, including the disinfection of contact points (lifts, door handles, etc.) and deep disinfection of offices upon detection of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 cases. The air conditioning and ventilation were modified to limit the risks of transmission of the virus. For front-line staff Plexiglas panels were installed for protection.

The sudden shift to teleworking for all staff in Headquarters and Delegations required the EEAS to put in place a remote working project, providing a working environment away from the office with the same level of security as working in the office network. Once the extent of the COVID-19 pandemic became clear, the IT services stepped up the ongoing migration to Windows 10. All staff in Headquarters were provided with a corporate laptop. Additional laptops were purchased and over 5,000 were dispatched to the EU Delegations, despite the challenge of delivery in countries with quarantine or lockdown measures.

The IT infrastructure was ramped up to meet the requirements of full-scale teleworking, including increasing the internet capacity and the capacity for video conferencing. Videoconferences became the new norm for all staff and guidance was circulated on best practices for hosting and participating. Staff were encouraged to limit the length and the number of video conferences each day in order to have time 'off screen'.

31. What are the teleworking conditions for staff in the EEAS headquarters and in the delegations and the evolution of teleworking in the EEAS (Headquarters and Delegations)? Has there been a development in the frequency in 2019? How many people have opted for this option in 2019 compared to previous years?

Please note that the reply to this question focuses on 2019 and not on the exceptional arrangements , which were necessary as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Every EEAS staff member at Headquarters may request to telework on a structural or occasional basis. This is in essence a flexible working arrangement; no hours worked in excess of 4 (half day) or 8 hours (full day) shall be recorded during telework. Teleworkers bear the cost of their internet subscription and of the communication charges incurred while teleworking, regardless of the chosen teleworking option or type of access.

Teleworkers should be able to organise the teleworking day as they wish, as the purpose of telework is to help them reconcile work and family life. However, teleworkers should be contactable during core times and should consult their e-mails several times during the normal working hours. They may be called upon at any time to return to the office, for urgent reasons relating to the interests of the service.

Occasional teleworking allows staff to telework, on a temporary basis, for a maximum of 60 working days per calendar year in case of specific personal or family problems, transportation and mobility issues. Weekly presence in the

office may not, in principle, be less than two and a half days per working week. By derogation, occasional teleworking may be granted in individual cases for a period of consecutive days that exceeds two and a half days per working week. If a staff member has temporarily lost their mobility but is still able to work outside the work place, occasional teleworking may be granted even beyond the 60-day limit per calendar year, upon the staff member's request and upon recommendation of their general practitioner: the period granted must be necessary for recovering the ability to return to the workplace.

The EEAS is empowered to allow occasional telework for longer periods for all or part of a service or department. In cases of force majeure, the EEAS is also empowered, after consultation of the concerned service, to request staff members to telework.

Since January 2018, a pilot project has been running to implement occasional teleworking in 23 EU Delegations for both expatriate and local staff, following essentially the same principles as those of the existing Commission and EEAS Decisions on teleworking in Headquarters. The feedback has been broadly positive, although the level of participation has differed significantly between EU Delegations. The possibility to participate in occasional teleworking is viewed positively by staff and there have not been negative consequences for the management of the workload and overall presence in the office. In general, EU Delegations welcomed the increased flexibility for staff to deal with unforeseen circumstances, while continuing to manage the normal workload. All Delegations and the teleworkers welcomed teleworking as a positive work tool enhancing productivity, improving morale, job satisfaction and work-life balance. Reports also showed that teleworking has been mostly used on an *ad hoc* basis (70%) rather than on a regular basis (30%). The results gathered will be used to develop the legal basis to extend teleworking across the whole network of EU Delegations in 2021.

In 2019, 558 staff members teleworked at Headquarters compared to 422 in 2018 and to 299 in 2017. In 2019, 97 staff teleworked in EU Delegations.

32. What is the overall and overseas gender distribution in the EEAS staff? What measures have been taken to improve gender mainstreaming? Do you also have this breakdown by Function? And geographical distribution?

The tables below indicate the overall distribution by gender of EEAS staff in Headquarters in Delegations. The breakdown is by function group, as well as geographical distribution.

EEAS Staff 2019	HQ			DEL			Total
	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total	
AD	221	361	582	140	268	408	990
AST	265	128	393	108	78	186	579
AST-SC	37	13	50	1	0	1	51
LA	-	-	-	588	483	1071	1071
SNE	98	306	404	23	40	63	467
GFI	14	15	29	0	4	4	33
GFII	57	8	65	84	4	88	153
GFIII	48	28	76	22	39	61	137
GFIV	72	56	128	20	58	78	206
Total	812	915	1727	986	974	1960	3687

EEAS Staff 2019	Women	Men	Total
Afghanistan	2	21	23
Albania	3	9	12
Algeria	7	9	16
Angola	5	6	11
Argentina	7	3	10
Armenia	7	2	9
Australia	8	7	15
Austria	14	10	24
Azerbaijan	5	6	11
Bangladesh	6	7	13
Barbados	7	3	10
Belarus	7	4	11
Belgium	812	915	1727
Benin	6	5	11
Bolivia	7	4	11
Bosnia and Herzegovina	10	7	17
Botswana	5	4	9
Brazil	8	5	13
Burkina Faso	4	9	13
Burundi	4	9	13
Cabo Verde	5	4	9
Cambodia	4	3	7
Cameroon	4	9	13
Canada	7	8	15
Central African Republic	5	6	11
Chad	1	10	11
Chile	6	5	11
China	15	15	30
Colombia	8	8	16
Congo	7	5	12
Costa Rica	6	4	10
Cuba	4	5	9
Democratic Republic of the Congo	6	11	17

Djibouti	4	6	10
Dominican Republic	7	3	10
Ecuador	5	2	7
Egypt	7	12	19
El Salvador	2	4	6
Eritrea	6	4	10
Eswatini	3	4	7
Ethiopia	19	17	36
Fiji	8	8	16
France	4	8	12
Gabon	6	5	11
Georgia	12	6	18
Ghana	7	7	14
Guatemala	4	6	10
Guinea	5	8	13
Guinea-Bissau	6	6	12
Guyana	7	7	14
Haiti	8	7	15
Honduras	2	3	5
Hong Kong S.A.R	4	7	11
Iceland	4	3	7
India	10	14	24
Indonesia	9	13	22
Iraq	6	8	14
Israel	10	5	15
Italy	5	1	6
Ivory Coast	6	9	15
Jamaica	9	5	14
Japan	20	14	34
Jordan	11	11	22
Kazakhstan	6	5	11
Kenya	8	11	19
Kosovo	12	13	25
Kuwait	2	2	4
Kyrgyzstan	5	7	12
Laos	5	1	6
Lebanon	7	16	23
Lesotho	4	2	6

Liberia	2	7	9
Libya		2	2
Madagascar	7	9	16
Malawi	8	4	12
Malaysia	6	4	10
Mali	6	9	15
Mauritania	8	5	13
Mauritius	9	4	13
Mexico	6	10	16
Moldova	8	3	11
Mongolia	3	3	6
Montenegro	6	4	10
Morocco	7	12	19
Mozambique	5	11	16
Myanmar/Burma	5	7	12
Namibia	8	2	10
Nepal	4	5	9
Netherlands			
New Zealand	6	2	8
Nicaragua	4	7	11
Niger	6	8	14
Nigeria	7	13	20
North Macedonia	8	6	14
Norway	6	4	10
Pakistan	7	12	19
Panama	4	2	6
Papua New Guinea	4	5	9
Paraguay	4	5	9
Peru	8	3	11
Philippines	7	8	15
Russia	22	11	33
Rwanda	5	6	11
Saudi Arabia	5	10	15
Senegal	9	8	17
Serbia	12	7	19
Sierra Leone	5	7	12

Singapore	6	3	9
Somalia	4	4	8
South Africa	10	8	18
South Korea	11	5	16
South Sudan	4	6	10
Sri Lanka	8	3	11
Sudan	3	11	14
Switzerland	28	22	50
Syria	1	1	2
Taiwan ROC	6	3	9
Tajikistan	7	3	10
Tanzania	7	5	12
Thailand	9	11	20
The Gambia	3	6	9
Timor-Leste	4	4	8
Togo	3	7	10
Trinidad and Tobago	4	1	5
Tunisia	11	18	29
Turkey	15	12	27
Turkmenistan	3	1	4
Uganda	7	7	14
Ukraine	10	14	24
United Arab Emirates	5	6	11
United Kingdom	14	7	21
United States	58	45	103
Uruguay	5	4	9
Uzbekistan	4	3	7
Venezuela	6	6	12
Vietnam	9	5	14
West Bank and Gaza Strip	9	12	21
Yemen	1	2	3
Zambia	10	6	16
Zimbabwe	9	5	14
Total	1798	1889	3687

Gender mainstreaming into the EU foreign and security is positioned as a key political priority for the EU and its Member States in order to achieve gender equality. Gender mainstreaming, in the sense of improving, developing and evaluating all policy processes to ensure the systematic integration of a gender perspective is the key strategy and tool used. Gender equality as well as the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda are prominently included in EU political positions and dialogues with partner countries, regional and international organisations. The establishment of Gender Advisors and Gender Focal Points networks in Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) military and civilian operations and missions as well as the creation of annual Gender Action Plans and a Gender Focal Points Network in EU Delegations underlines the way the EU is systematically mainstreaming a gender perspective, based on gender analysis into all EU's external action. The Gender Action Plan (GAP) II (2016-2020) will in the coming period be followed by GAP III (2021-2025) where all EU external policy will be included such as CFSP, Trade, Climate, Digital. The EEAS is committed to ensuring consistent internal-external policy coherence on the main priorities regarding WPS. In 2019, approximately 20% of all EU Mission staff members were trained on WPS related matters, and reported changes in their working methods. CSDP missions and operations systematically conduct training with a gender component. All civilian CSDP missions are instructed by the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC) to gender mainstream all trainings, internal and external. A gender component was integrated into the trainings of EUCAP Sahel Niger, EUPOL COPPS, EUMM Georgia and EUCAP Somalia⁴ in 2019. Furthermore, the European Security and Defence College provided a variety of training courses on gender and human rights.

The gender equality perspective is actively considered in all phases of policy design and resource allocation in EEAS externally as well as internally. Although gender budgeting principles and methods are designed for public policy budgets with a direct impact on society, the EEAS has notably considered gender aspects when preparing staff policy decisions on work-life balance and family-friendly policies and in procurement. The EEAS has also allocated resources to strengthen gender awareness in the areas of training, networking and mentoring.

To ensure a better oversight of gender mainstreaming in internal policies, the EEAS established a Joint Committee on Equal Opportunities (COPEC) in 2020, in which staff representatives and the EEAS administration work, *inter alia*, on gender and equal opportunities strategies, policies and implementation.

⁴ European Union Capacity Building Mission in Niger, European Union Police Mission in the Palestinian Territories, European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia and European Union Capacity Building Mission in Somalia.

The EEAS also plays a role in promoting gender mainstreaming with EU Member States and third partners. This is notably a standing item in the regular meetings of EU27 Secretary Generals and State Secretaries, as well as in dialogues with third countries

33. What steps and progress were made in order to improve the gender balance, in particular in middle and senior management positions and in positions of head of delegations? Please present a gender and nationality breakdown of your middle and senior management positions as well as the EU ambassadors.

The EEAS has been actively working to improve gender balance and is striving for further significant advances in the coming years. It is important to ensure gender balance at all levels of the Service, not only as a matter of rights, resources and representation, but also because all research shows that decisions made by a gender-balanced and diverse team are better and more sustainable and that productivity of the team increases. In 2019, as noted under question 1, the work to implement the recommendations made by the Task Forces on gender and career development launched by the Secretary General in 2017 continued.

In 2019 and in order to further improve gender balance, the EEAS took dedicated actions in three fields: (1) Gender Equality; (2) An open and inclusive working environment; and (3) Result-oriented, flexible working conditions incorporating work-life balance.

Concrete actions in these areas included:

- Further improvement of EEAS panels for selection and recruitment, notably in adopting specialised training on interview techniques and unconscious bias; interview panels have both male and female members.
- Further development of talent-spotting and the mentoring process. Mentoring is not limited only to women but also covers all EEAS newcomers.
- Anti-harassment campaign committing to EEAS zero tolerance on the issue. The campaign included the development of information material on the rules and procedures related to harassment in the workplace, which EEAS Managers presented and discussed with staff at both Headquarters and EU Delegations. The feedback received from staff will inform the work towards an improved anti-harassment policy.
- Facilitation of a better work-life balance, through improved flexible working arrangements with the introduction of flexitime and teleworking also in EU Delegations.

- Cooperation with Member States on improving possibilities for spouse employment in third countries, so that both persons in a couple can work when one is posted in EU Delegation; this included a strengthened policy for dual postings.
- Working closely with Member States is important, as one third of EEAS AD staff comes from Member States. Therefore, equality is a standing agenda point when State Secretaries and Secretaries General meet; Member States have been constantly encouraged to present women candidates for all positions.
- Networks, both at management and pre-management levels, including training, talks and peer support are also playing part on improving gender equality.
- Continued dedicated training and coaching for women in management and aspiring to joining management positions.
- Review of competitions and vacancy notices, through ensuring that the formulations are not unconsciously gendered.

The EEAS recruitment and selection panels may use positive action, i.e. opting for the candidate of the underrepresented gender when the candidates are else equal on merit; or prolonging application deadlines in case no female candidates apply. However, the EEAS does not use affirmative action, i.e. promoting the underrepresented gender at the expense of a better candidate of the overrepresented, as selection is based on merit. In 2019, the number of applications of women remained below that of applications of men in general.

EEAS Management 2019 - Gender	Middle Management	Senior Management	Total
Women	68	13	81
Men	149	37	186
Total	217	50	267

Head of EU Delegation - Gender	2019
Women	38
Men	99
Total	137

Year	Women in middle management	Women in senior management	Women Heads of Delegation
2015	23.60%	9.80%	19.50%
2016	24.70%	13.60%	20.60%
2017	26.00%	18.00%	21.90%
2018	28.40%	21.60%	25.20%
2019	31.30%	26.00%	27.70%

EEAS Management 2019 Nationality	Middle Management	Senior Management	Total
Austria	7	2	9
Belgium	16	4	20
Bulgaria	2		2
Croatia			0
Cyprus	2		2
Czech Republic	1	1	2
Denmark	3	3	6
Estonia	1	2	3
Finland	4	2	6
France	30	5	35
Germany	26	6	32
Greece	5	3	8
Hungary	2		2
Ireland	9	1	10
Italy	35	8	43
Latvia	1		1
Lithuania	2		2
Luxembourg	1		1
Malta	1		1
Netherlands	9	1	10
Poland	8	1	9
Portugal	9	3	12
Romania	3		3
Slovakia	1	1	2
Slovenia	4		4
Spain	20	4	24
Sweden	13	3	16
United Kingdom	2		2
Total	217	50	267

Heads of EU Delegation 2019 Nationality	Middle Management	Senior Management	Total
Austrian	5	1	6
Belgian	7	1	8
Bulgarian	2		2
Cypriot	2		2
Czech	1		1
Danish	2	1	3
Estonian	1	2	3
Finnish	3		3
French	13	2	15
German	13	3	16
Greek	1	1	2
Hungarian	2		2
Irish	4	1	5
Italian	17	3	20
Latvian	1		1
Lithuanian	1		1
Luxembourgish	1		1
Maltese	1		1
Netherlands	4		4
Polish	4		4
Portuguese	6	1	7
Romanian	3		3
Slovak	1	1	2
Slovenian	2		2
Spanish	14	2	16
Swedish	6	1	7
Total	117	20	137

34. What anti-harassment measures has been taken in 2019 in order to prevent harassment cases, to increase staff awareness about harassment situations and to enforce a culture of zero tolerance towards harassment?

- Please report on the anti-harassment awareness raising initiative launched by the EEAS Secretary General in 2018.
- Please provide the percentage of Delegations where the anti-harassment policy was presented to the staff, as well as the numbers of presentations given at the HQ. Is the implementation of the initiative monitored and what is the assessment so far?

Throughout 2019, the EEAS continued its efforts to ensure respect and dignity in the workplace. The anti-harassment awareness-raising initiative launched by the EEAS Secretary General in 2018 successfully concluded in June 2019. Over 120 presentations were delivered at Headquarters and 98.5% of managers presented the policy and the existing support structures in the EU Delegations.

This exercise enabled the EEAS to collect a series of comments and suggestions through exchanges with staff members, as well as proposals from staff representatives. The feedback shared by stakeholders laid the foundations for reviewing and further developing policy and actions. The Human Resources Policy Division, in cooperation with the EEAS Mediation Service, continued to give presentations on the topic to colleagues posted in Delegations and on an *ad hoc* basis. Moreover, a mandatory anti-harassment training course was developed and made available to managers in 2020 in the context of the career paths and training maps endorsed by the Secretary General.

Within this review process, the mandate of the EEAS Mediation Service was also revised with the adoption of a new Decision at the beginning of 2020. The objective of the update was to reflect the independent nature of the Mediation Service – directly attached to the Secretary General – and to better clarify for which staff categories the Mediation Service is available. In addition, the new Decision strengthens the mechanisms to ensure that the EEAS Administration is informed about cases of serious or repeated allegations/incidents and clarifies that all Commission staff in Delegations fall under the mandate of the EEAS Mediation Service.

35. How many cases of harassment were reported in your institution in 2019 and how have the cases being resolved?

The EEAS Mediation Service works as an informal body, in which the Mediator assists parties in working together to identify their respective interests, explore options and seek mutually agreeable solutions to the problems they are encountering. The EEAS Mediation Service does not formally judge or investigate on the alleged facts.

In 2019, the EEAS Mediation Service dealt with 183 requests and cases. The cases concerned either unsolved disagreements around rights and obligations or different kinds of conflicts at work including allegations of harassment. See further question 37.

In 2019, with regard to the use of formal procedures by EEAS staff, the EEAS received 5 requests for assistance for psychological harassment, reported under article 24 of the Staff Regulations. For 4 of these cases, following a thorough assessment of the allegations brought forward by the requestor, conducted by the Investigation and Disciplinary Office of the Commission (IDOC), by virtue of the SLA signed by the EEAS and DG HR, no beginning of proof of the existence of such harassment was found, which could justify the opening of an administrative inquiry into the matter. These cases all concerned situations of conflictual relationships at the workplace rather than harassment. The persons involved no longer work together. For one case, it rather concerned a behaviour constitutive of defamation, which justified the opening of an administrative inquiry in order to shed some light on the facts at stake. This procedure is still ongoing.

36. What progress has been made in extending the network of confidential staff counsellors?

The EEAS Confidential Counsellors are EEAS staff members having taken on this responsibility on a voluntary basis. During their term of office, the Confidential Counsellors are coordinated and supported by the EEAS Mediation Service. They remain attached to their original department and retain their duties there. There are 12 EEAS Confidential Counsellors, among them 7 based in EU Delegations and 5 based at Headquarters. A Confidential Counsellor cannot deal with a case brought up by a colleague from his service or Delegation for reasons of potential conflict of interest. The EEAS network of Confidential Counsellors took part in supervised sessions proposed on a monthly basis together with the Confidential Counsellors from the Commission.

37. How many requests were submitted to the EEAS Mediation Service, processed and filed in 2019? Could you break down the number of cases by the category of the issue (i.e. disagreements around rights and obligations, conflict at work, psychological and/or sexual harassment...)? How many of those requests had to be reported to OLAF?

In 2019, the EEAS Mediation Service dealt with 183 requests and cases. As in previous years, cases of conflict at work, allegations of moral harassment and poor management make up a majority of cases and represented 69% of all requests. The second type of cases with 22% concerned disagreements around "rights and obligations". Allegations of sexual harassment concerned 2% of all cases and the remaining 7% concerned mostly heavy stress and burn-out cases. In 2019, there was no case reported to OLAF by the Mediation Service.

38. Is there a framework in place to support the partners of EEAS staff that are posted abroad? If yes, could you please detail in what the support consists?

The framework in place to support the partners of EEAS staff posted abroad has been established in the form of a Joint EEAS – Member States Action plan. This Action plan was adopted in November 2019 and was preceded by meetings both of EU Human Resources Directors in the Human Resources Network and of discussions at the level of EU State Secretaries and Secretaries-General.

The main objectives include the improvement of access to information and support services for spouses/partners; the promotion of concrete opportunities to facilitate spouse employment and; finding solutions to overcome administrative obstacles.

In 2019, the following actions were taken:

- Facilitation of double postings for couples when both are EU staff (6 couples in 2019 rotation) and while guaranteeing the principle of equal merits during recruitment.
- Inclusion of specific information in the post reports drafted by EU Delegations, which would systematically provide information on spouse employment and LGBTI+ rights, and thus improving the quality of the post reports.
- Revival of the EU network of spouses in Delegations (EUFN –European Union Families Network) in 2019 with the election of a new board.
- Review of the rules regarding the allocations for childcare and pre-school in view of the 2020 Rotation exercise.

- A number of questions targeting the condition of spouses in Delegations were included in the 2019 Survey on Protocol-related issues.

As the local employment of spouses has an impact on the privileges and immunities granted by the host state, the possibility of such gainful employment has been included since 2019 in the negotiation of the so-called establishment agreements on the opening of new EU Delegations.

39. The EEAS claims to apply an equal opportunities policy. According to the EEAS, flexibility to assert such a policy is ensured through the possibility to postpone or reopen a deadline, should the list of applicants contain, for example applicants of only one gender. Has the equal opportunity policy been applied to prevent imbalance in the composition of staff regarding nationality, too? If so, since when and how do you explain extreme disproportionality of employees among nationalities?

The EEAS recruitment policy is merit-based with the possibility of positive action in case of equal merit between two candidates of different gender. The possibility of postponing a deadline has hitherto only been applied in the case of under-representation of a given gender in a category or in a team, as allowed by Article 1(d) of the Staff Regulations.

In the case of nationality, except the rare cases with one or two applications, several nationalities have always been represented among the different candidates. No extension of deadline has been considered on this basis.

Any imbalance between the proportion of EEAS staff from one EU Member State and the proportion of the population of that country within the EU could be explained by a number of factors affecting mainly the number of applicants:

- Size of the Member State.
- Years since the Member State joined the EU.
- Level of awareness and acceptance of the EU within a Member States.
- Attractiveness of the EU career in comparison to the national career.
- Attractiveness of the Contract Agent conditions in comparison to the national labour conditions.
- Level of promotion among its diplomatic service and support by the Member States to a posting in the EU (in the case of Temporary Agents)
- Country hosting an EU institution.

40. Looking at the EEAS staff by nationality, it is incomprehensible why there are huge discrepancies between countries with comparable population size and between West and East European countries. To be concrete, in 2018, 347 posts out of 2491 were occupied by Belgian citizens, i.e. almost 14% of total EEAS jobs. Belgium has 11,5 million habitants representing only about 2,6% of all EU citizens (446 million), implying that Belgium is more than 5 times overrepresented in the EEAS positions. Czech Republic has 10,7 millions inhabitants but only 48 posts, i.e. more than 7 times less than Belgium. Please explain why Belgians are evidently so overrepresented in your institution. In this connection, can you reveal the distribution of nationalities in the panel responsible for the selection process? What instruments and immediate follow-up will the EEAS introduce to ensure proportion between merit based and geographically balanced recruitment? What progress has been made in ensuring the geographical balance of representation of each Member State at staff level? Please provide a table for EEAS staff nationality for 2019.

Recruitment to the EEAS is based on merit, whilst ensuring adequate geographical and gender balance.

The EEAS strives to a meaningful presence of nationals from all the Member States. All Member States, including the UK, remained represented in all categories of staff apart from two: Malta, like in 2018, did not have any national in the contract agents' category, and Luxembourg, which was represented by a total of two nationals and thus was the least represented Member State.

The proportion of EEAS staff who are Belgian nationals is influenced by the fact that Belgium hosts the seat of an important number of EU Institutions, Agencies and other Bodies, including the EEAS, which increases awareness and attractiveness to nationals. The percentage of Belgian nationals at the EEAS has decreased from 15.55% in 2011 to 13.9% in 2019.

With the aim of ensuring adequate geographical balance, the EEAS:

- Monitors carefully the information on gender and geographical origin per type of post. The annual EEAS Human Resources Report⁵ outlines these figures.
- Informs systematically the Member States about the profile of the candidates and of the recruited staff with the view to promote adequate candidates.

⁵ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/3618/eeas-human-resources-reports_en

- Promotes, through institutional, formal and informal activities, both within the organisation and in its contacts with the Member States, the need to attract good candidates to the published posts.
- Encourages under-represented Member States to propose qualified candidates.

For the table on the distribution of EEAS staff per nationality in 2019, please see the answer to question 23.

41. Allegedly, according to unconfirmed reports EEAS post have been exclusively reserved for specific persons. Did the EEAS observe or has there been any activities reported to EEAS indicating that such illegal trading of posts might have taken place? How do you explain the increased number of Italian heads of delegation over the last two years?

The EEAS is not aware of any kind of "trading of posts". The EEAS organises its selection procedures fully based on merit, whilst ensuring an adequate geographical balance.

Vacant posts of Head of Delegation are filled through the annual rotation exercise. This exercise is open to EEAS officials and temporary agents, including Member States' diplomats. Italy, alongside Germany, France and Spain, has one of the largest populations amongst Member States and one of the most extensive diplomatic network, both in number of staff and presence across the world. In 2019, the proportion of EEAS staff who were Italian nationals was 10.9%, below the share of the country's population within the EU of 11.8%.

In the rotation exercise for the posts available in 2019, 45 of the 400 applicants were Italian (11,25 %), 45 were German (11,25 %), 44 were French (11 %), 35 were Spanish (8,75 %) nationals. Out of them, 4 Italian nationals were appointed as Heads of Delegation compared to 6 German, 8 French and 5 Spanish. In the rotation exercise for the posts available in 2018, 22 of the 200 applicants were Italian (11 %), 17 were German (8.5% %), 18 were French (9 %) and 14 were Spanish (7 %). In the 2018 rotation 2018, 3 Italian nationals were appointed as Heads of Delegation compared to 2 German, 3 French and 2 Spanish.

42. The 2018 Discharge of EEAS states that the EEAS terminated the unpaid traineeship program in 2017, following a recommendation of the European Ombudsman's to pay all trainees an appropriate allowance:

- Does the discontinuation of unpaid traineeship programmes only refer to certain EEAS policy areas?
- How many unpaid trainees did you have in 2019? Why there have been still unpaid traineeship offers after 2018? (<https://eutraining.eu/content/unpaid-compulsory-traineeship-european-external-action-service-eeas?>)
- What type of internships were offered in 2019? How many trainees worked at the EEAS headquarters and delegations during the budgetary year 2019? Please indicate the place of affectation, gender, nationality and average salary per type (including unpaid internship when applicable). Have all of trainees received an allowance that covers at least their living costs?

The discontinuation of unpaid traineeship programmes followed the Decision ADMIN(2017)28 of 22 December 2017 on the Rules related to Traineeships in the EU Delegations.

The unfunded traineeship programme was maintained with a view to strike a balance between expanding the opportunities for local students and minimising the impact on the overall budget of the scheme. It is considered that opportunities can be provided to students that already study and reside in the host country as part of their education and thus without remuneration. Given the changes in the unpaid traineeship programme, an important decrease in number of unpaid trainees in EU Delegations was observed between 2018 and 2019.

In 2019, the EEAS offered the following internships:

- At Headquarters, 60 so-called Blue Book traineeships were offered paid traineeships based on the Decision of the European Commission.
- In Delegations, 555 trainees were employed in EU Delegations based on the Decision ADMIN(2017)28.

Under this 2017 scheme, the EEAS offers 4 types of traineeship, for nationals from the Member States, host country, or candidate countries which already signed an Accession Treaty:

- Funded traineeship for young graduates with less than one year of professional experience. The monthly grant corresponds to 25% of the basic monthly salary of a Local Agent Function Group I and the ceiling of the grant is limited to EUR 1,200 per month.

- Traineeship for students who require a compulsory traineeship and are already residing and studying in the host country.
- Traineeship for students of national administration schools of Member States or of candidate countries which already signed an Accession Treaty.
- Traineeship for trainee civil servants Member State's Administration as part of their professional compulsory training.

In 2019 555 trainees were employed in EU Delegations: 447 funded by the EEAS, 36 paid by other Institutions and 72 unfunded students undergoing compulsory traineeship. Thus, 483 out of 555 trainees were paid (87%) and when taken into consideration the 60 funded Blue Book trainees employed at Headquarters, a total of 543 out of 615 trainees were funded, i.e. 88%. The average grant is estimated to 778 EUR per month.

By place of employment:

By region	Total number of trainees	Percentage	Number of trainees funded by EEAS	Percentage	Number of trainees funded by Others	Percentage	Number of Unpaid trainees - compulsory traineeship	Percentage
AFRICA	50	9.01%	44	9.84%	2	5.56%	4	5.56%
AMERICAS	126	22.70%	83	18.57%	6	16.67%	37	51.39%
ASIAPAC	138	24.86%	132	29.53%	0	0.00%	6	8.33%
EURCA	70	12.61%	57	12.75%	3	8.33%	10	13.89%
GLOBAL	119	21.44%	85	19.02%	19	52.78%	15	20.83%
MENA	52	9.37%	46	10.29%	6	16.67%	0	0.00%
Total	555	100.00%	447	100.00%	36	100.00%	72	100.00%

By gender:

Gender	Number of trainees	Percentage
Women	316	56.94%
Men	239	43.06%
Total	555	100.00%

By nationality:

Nationality	Number of trainees	Percentage
EU	374	67.39%
NON EU	181	32.61%
Total	555	100.00%

Nationalities	Number of trainees	Percentage
Austria	12	3.21%
Belgium	21	5.61%
Bulgaria	1	0.27%
Croatia	2	0.53%
Cyprus	0	0.00%
Czech Republic	3	0.80%
Denmark	2	0.53%
Estonia	1	0.27%
Finland	12	3.21%
France	72	19.25%
Germany	42	11.23%
Greece	4	1.07%
Hungary	1	0.27%
Ireland	6	1.60%
Italy	80	21.39%
Latvia	1	0.27%
Lithuania	4	1.07%
Luxembourg	1	0.27%
Malta	0	0.00%
Netherlands	16	4.28%
Poland	18	4.81%
Portugal	6	1.60%
Romania	5	1.34%
Slovakia	4	1.07%
Slovenia	0	0.00%
Spain	47	12.57%
Sweden	9	2.41%
United Kingdom	4	1.07%
Total	374	100.00%

43. Could you provide a list of Seconded National Experts in 2019 broken down by place of affectation (HQ/Delegations), civilian/military, gender and nationality?

SNE distribution by military/civilian status 2019

EEAS SNEs 2019	Military	Civilian	Total
HQ	200	197	397
DEL	2	62	64
Total	202	259	461

Out of the 259 civilian SNEs working in the EEAS in 2019, 131 were working in specialised functions.

SNE distribution by gender 2019

SNEs 2019	HQ	Delegations	Total
Women	96	20	116
Men	301	44	345
Grand Total	397	64	461

SNE distribution by nationality 2019

EEAS SNEs 2019	HQ	Delegations	Total
Austrian	10	1	11
Belgian	11	3	14
Bulgarian	10		10
Croatian	4	1	5
Cypriot	6		6
Czech	12	4	16
Danish	15	10	25
Estonian	5		5
Finnish	16	2	18
French	41	13	54
German	46	2	48
Greek	21	4	25
Hungarian	12	2	14
Irish	6		6
Italian	37	4	41
Latvian	3		3
Lithuanian	8		8
Maltese	1		1
Netherlands	15	4	19
Norwegian	3		3
Polish	25	4	29
Portuguese	8	1	9
Romanian	19	1	20
Slovak	5		5
Slovenian	3		3
Spanish	24		24
Swedish	29	8	37
Swiss	1		1
UK	1		1
Total	397	64	461

44. At the moment EEAS cannot initiate disciplinary proceedings against seconded national experts. Would you find it useful to have such a possibility?

National experts seconded to the EEAS (SNEs) are employees of their sending Institution, which is alone empowered to initiate disciplinary proceedings. The SNEs serving with the EEAS are bound by obligations set out in the Decision HR DEC(2014)01 of the HR/VP establishing the rules applicable to SNEs. This Decision is sufficient to allow the EEAS to take the necessary measures, including termination of the secondment, in case of breach of obligations. The EEAS can also launch an administrative inquiry, the aim of which is to establish the facts and circumstances of a case and determine whether there has been a failure to comply with obligations.

45. How can the EEAS protect its staff and especially seconded national experts against retaliation by third countries?

The EEAS exercises its duty of care towards all its staff, including SNEs. This duty of care is also exercised through different forms of training and information measures to equip our staff with the necessary tools to resist interference or retaliation by third countries.

The Staff Regulations and their implementing decisions also provide protection measures for EEAS staff serving in third countries, including protection in the form of diplomatic privileges and immunities.

In accordance with Article 1 of Annex II of Council Regulation 1417/2013 of 17 December 2013 laying down the form of the laissez-passer issued by the EU, SNEs are considered as 'special applicants' and are issued with an EU laissez-passer. SNEs are accredited and notified to the receiving state as diplomatic staff; consequently, they benefit from the privileges and immunities foreseen by the establishment agreement that the EU has for each receiving state.

46. What kind of special provision does the ethics policy guidelines contain for Heads of delegations who are by nature more exposed to certain risks?

Heads of EU Delegation are more visible through their expected political and representation functions and are therefore at greater risk of exposing themselves, their Institution or the European Union to criticism which could affect their credibility and the image of the institutions. Particular caution is required when choosing their outside activities or assignments. The activities of

Heads of Delegation's spouses must also be considered from the point of view of their compatibility with an individual's diplomatic function.

Educational activities, job related academic and teaching activities shall always be performed *pro bono* and, where relevant, be covered by a cost-free mission request. The number of educational activities performed during the same academic year remains limited.

Concerning social and charitable activities, Heads of Delegation are often invited, or take the initiative, to participate in charitable activities in the local or expatriate community. Such activities may be undertaken as long as they do not involve any remuneration in cash or in kind. It is also essential to draw a clear distinction between private social activities and the official representative function as EU official and Head of EU Delegation. Organisers of social or charitable activities often seek the patronage of EU Delegation staff, knowing that the diplomatic status of their guests would have attract more attention to their cause. It is important to make sure that an activity did not appear to be supported by the EU when in fact it could be a private engagement by the staff member.

Furthermore, it is required that a Head of Delegation leaves the post before his/her successor arrives and before the new Head of Delegation effectively resumes duties. Similarly, the predecessor shall avoid returning to their former posting for a reasonable period after the successor has taken up duties, even for professional reasons. This period is at least six months and, even after that, high profile contacts with the local authorities should be avoided. Even after a longer absence, a former Head of Delegation should also, as a matter of courtesy, inform their successor of an intention to return to the country, whether for private or professional reasons. This rule is particularly important if an ex-Head of Delegation were to decide to take up residence in a former host country, for example after retiring. In any case, a former Head of Delegation shall seek prior authorisation before speaking in public or participating in an official event in the country of former accreditation.

Finally, for senior staff leaving the EEAS, special obligations apply, namely for a period of twelve months after leaving the service senior staff may not engage in lobbying or advocacy vis-a-vis staff of their former Institution for their business, clients or employers on matters for which they were responsible during the last three years in the service.

47. The EU Heads of delegations are the authorizing officers by delegation according to the Financial Regulation. These people are mostly diplomats and not always equipped with knowledge or skills necessary for EU budget implementation. Are there any training programs available for them on budget execution? Are these courses voluntary or obligatory to attend?

The EEAS offers a training programme entitled "EEAS ABAC Delegation Authorising Officers" addressing financial and budget implementation, targeting newly appointed Heads of Delegation and all new Authorising Officers by Subdelegation (AOSD) in the EEAS. The purpose of the training is to meet the requirement of equipping the AOSD with the essential knowledge on the EEAS Delegations' budgetary and financial context. This includes training on budget execution.

This course is mandatory and takes place prior to receiving the rights to act as Authorising Officer by Subdelegation in the financial IT tool of the EEAS. The EEAS closely monitors the participation of relevant staff members and ensures compliance with the mandatory participation requirement. Several training courses are organised throughout the year in order to ensure full coverage of training needs of the target population.

48. What are the duties of the EEAS's ethics correspondent?

The EEAS ethics correspondent is the general entry point for requests concerning ethical obligations under the Staff Regulations. They prepare the file for hierarchy, making assessments, gathering information and responding to staff queries. They keep a register of ethics files, contribute to the ethics chapter of the Human Resources annual report, and follow the related jurisprudence of the Court of Justice, the reports of the Court of Auditors and the recommendations of the EU Ombudsman. They also provide training and advice to staff on matters related to ethics.

Transparency

49. What activities/efforts has the EEAS started and implemented in order to improve transparency of the institution in 2019?

Throughout 2019, the EEAS Transparency Team, which is part of the EEAS Division dealing with Parliamentary Affairs (SG.AFFGEN.2), continued to treat requests for access to documents according to Regulation 1049/2001 and its implementing rules, i.e. the HRVP's Decision of 19 July 2011 and its modifications. The EEAS Transparency Team delivered further increase of internal awareness in the field of transparency and additional guidance to EEAS Divisions and EU Delegations, notably through the presentations in seminars of newly recruited staff and pre-posting in EU Delegations; and the update and active circulation of the internal guidelines.

The EEAS Transparency Team also continued to promote and improve the e-EEAS-register, a search tool established by the EEAS, which enables citizens to directly search for EEAS documents online, without launching a request via the EEAS Transparency team. Internal efforts to make the register more functional and to increase registration have been successful.

In addition, an important aspect of the EEAS activities in the field of transparency is the handling of public requests for information in accordance with the rules of the Code of Good Administrative Behaviour. The EEAS, in cooperation with the Commission (Directorate-General for Communication), responded to questions arriving through the information service Europe Direct Contact Centre (EDCC). In 2019, the EDCC replied to 1,792 questions on foreign policy and external relations. Out of these, the EEAS drafted 380 replies, with the average response time of 10.7 working days. In addition, EU Delegations received direct requests and questions from citizens in their respective host countries, to which they replied directly.

50. How many requests to access documents through e-EEAS Register did you receive? What is the average time of response to these requests?

The number of requests for access to documents received by the EEAS in 2019 was 169. Full access to the documents was given to 66 applications (39% of total applications). Partial access was granted to 24 requests (14%). In 33 cases (19.5%), there was no document held by the EEAS matching the request. In 42 cases (25%), access to documents was denied. In four (4) cases (2.5%), the EEAS did not receive any reply to its clarification request and therefore could not

process the request further. It is worth noting that 62 requests (37%) came from the academic sector.

The reason for (partial or total) refusal was the protection of the public interest as regards international relations (Art. 4.1.(a) third indent of the Regulation 1049/2001).

Out of 169 initial requests to access documents, 116 requests (69%) were received through the e-EEAS Register. Out of these 169 initial requests, 85 responses (50.2%) were provided within 15 working days, 36 replies (21.35%) within 30 working days, and 44 replies (26%) in more than 30 days.

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

In 2019, the European Ombudsman opened only one inquiry to the EEAS in the field of transparency based on a complaint claiming that the EEAS was wrong in not disclosing a document. Following an inspection, the European Ombudsman concluded that no maladministration occurred and that, therefore, the EEAS was justified in (partially) refusing access to the requested documents on the basis of the protection of the international relations of the EU. The European Ombudsman issued no recommendations in this context.

The EEAS is fully committed to follow-up on any recommendations issued by the European Ombudsman, as proven by the 100% compliance rate established in the Ombudsman report published in December 2019.

Conflict of interests

52. What measures / rules were introduced in 2019 by EEAS to prevent conflict of interests / avoid revolving doors between the public and private sector, and especially lobby companies?

The EEAS conducted several trainings for different target groups within staff, such as newcomers, staff going out to/coming back from Delegations and Heads of Delegation and Deputy Heads of Delegation. In addition, the EEAS published retroactively (from 2014) the annual reports on the occupational activities taken up by its former senior staff, under Article 16.4 of the Staff Regulations. The EEAS is currently developing its self-standing implementing provisions on outside activities and assignments, which create a *sui generis* legal basis for Heads of Delegation to better protect the image and reputation of the EU as a whole.

53. How many staff members did notified their intend to leave the institution to join a company registered in the Transparency Register? How many ex-staff members are on a cooling-off period of two years to avoid any conflict of interest?

In the 2019, there were 13 staff members that notified activities after leaving the service under article 16 and that were in the cooling-off period of 2 years. Out of these 13 staff members, 2 requests involved entities registered in the Transparency Register.

54. Do you consider the cooling off period to engage in an occupational activity after leaving EEAS long enough?

The EEAS systematically applies lobbying and advocacy ban of 12 months for senior staff after leaving the service, following the recommendations of the EU Ombudsman and in line with the practice of other Institutions. Should those recommendations change, the EEAS is ready to adjust its relevant policies.

55. Do you consider the provisions of the Staff Regulations sufficient enough to define the conditions of post office employment?

The EEAS considers that the current provisions provide the right balance between the protection of the EEAS interests and the fundamental right of its former staff to work. Should the provisions in the Staff Regulations be reopened, the EEAS is willing to feed in to the process through the relevant committees.

56. What is the percentage of seconded national experts compared to the previous year? What measures are being taken to avoid conflict of interests while recruiting seconded national experts?

In 2019, SNEs represented 12.8% of EEAS staff, compared to 12.7% in 2018. The EEAS publishes all SNE posts or programmes open to all Member States. Decision HR(2014)01 of the HR/VP establishes the rules applicable to National Experts seconded to the EEAS. The Decision pays special attention to avoiding any conflict of interest or appearance of such a conflict in relation to the Expert duties (Articles 1, 4).

SNEs are seconded from Member States' public administrations and international organisations. Any exception to this shall warrant special attention to ensure any potential conflict of interest is avoided. The job description for the post is defined in advance of the publication. The tasks to be performed by the SNE are sent with the publication letter. The members of the selection panel sign a declaration of impartiality and confidentiality. Both the employer and the SNE are requested to declare in writing any conflict of interest. The secondment letter is sent out with the relevant declarations to that end. The EEAS verifies such declarations as well as, if appropriate, the professional activity of the spouse. In the case of extension request of the secondment period, the EEAS verifies the job has not been modified so that additional declarations of conflict of interest would be required. Once the secondment is finished, the SNE continues to be bound by the relevant provisions of the abovementioned Decision for the purposes of integrity and discretion in the exercise of any new duties as well as per any new occupational activity different from his employer during the secondment.

The military SNEs are also included under the scope of this Decision. Nevertheless, they are selected in accordance with the EUMS – MPCC Manning and Turnover Policy.

Whistleblowing

57. 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?

In 2019, the EEAS did not register cases of whistleblowing. The EEAS did not conduct a survey on awareness of staff regarding whistleblowing procedures; however, the EEAS promotes information on the use of whistleblowing and safe channels on its Intranet and in the different trainings it offers to its staff.

58. What policies and procedures does the EEAS have in place, especially in delegations, when facing a case of whistleblowing?

The EEAS applies the Commission's Guidelines on Whistleblowing⁶ and makes them available to staff on the EEAS intranet. These guidelines apply to EEAS and Commission staff posted in EU Delegations. The guidelines explain to staff when and how to "blow the whistle" and where to seek guidance in case of doubt. They also highlight the protection offered to whistle-blowers acting in good faith, including measures to safeguard the confidentiality of the identity of the whistle-blower and to protect the whistle-blower against any form of prejudice as a result of their whistleblowing. The Staff Regulations (Articles 22a, 22b and 22c) require staff to report any information pointing to corruption, fraud and other serious irregularities that they discover in their line of duty.

⁶ SEC(2012)679 final.

Interinstitutional cooperation

59. What is the status of the service level agreements with the European Investment Bank, European Border and Coast Guard Agency and European Union Aviation Safety Agency? Please provide a summary for each agreement including the objective, key joint activities and their overall estimated cost.

The latest status of the three EEAS service level agreements mentioned also reflecting 2020 developments is as follows:

Partner	Status	Delegations concerned	Indicative annual fees
European Investment Bank	Signed on 19/03/20. Next step: converting the existing 18 individual co-location arrangements into Office Hosting Arrangements to be annexed to the SLA.	18 Delegations (Albania, Barbados, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cameroon, China, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Ivory Coast, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Russia, Senegal, Ukraine, US-Washington). 2 more (Georgia, UN-New York) are being finalised	EUR 1,532,000
EU Aviation Safety Agency	Signed on 6/09/2019	4 Delegations (Canada, China, Singapore, US).	EUR 315,000
European Border and Coast Guard Agency	Negotiations at a final stage – signature expected in 2021.	5 Delegations (Albania, Niger, Senegal, Serbia and Turkey).	EUR 83,000

The objective of Framework agreements is to establish the standard principles and rules applicable to all co-locations with a given partner, while they defer the specific operational arrangements of each co-location to individual agreements annexed to the main body.

These Framework agreements primarily concern the provision of office space from the EEAS to other EU Institutions, but may also regulate the provision of specific services associated to the co-location. These services range from the provision of security to broader administrative support (e.g. office furniture, ICT support, mail delivery). The agreements also regulate the costs recovery system, through which co-locators reimburse to the EEAS the costs deriving from the provision of office space and related services.

60. How many European Parliament staff members were posted in EU Delegations as part of the Administrative Agreement between the EEAS and the EP? Please provide a list with the Delegation of destination. How are those staff member recruited? Is this information public?

In the context of the Administrative Agreement between the EEAS and the European Parliament (EP) for short assignments of their staff members, a total of 5 EP staff members were posted in 2019 in the following EU Delegations: Delegation to Brazil, to Norway, to Saudi Arabia and to the African Union in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The call for expression of interests is published internally in each Institution. The Administrative Arrangement stipulates that the average number of participants per year is estimated at 12 participants per Institution. Interested EP candidates' applications are submitted to the EXPO Director for approval. They may decide not to approve a double assignment (Headquarters and EU Delegations) and agree only on a single one (Headquarters). Taking into account the Directorate's interests, they may also propose another destination Delegation than the one chosen by a candidate.

Fraud and corruption

61. What efforts were made to refine the EEAS anti-fraud strategy and cooperation with the Commission and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)? How did the EEAS contribute to the EU anti-fraud strategy, in particular what was the EEAS' contribution to the Fraud and Detection Network?

The EEAS has been identified together with RELEX-family Commission services as a cluster of actors who share similar risks of fraud and wrongdoings, due to the importance of the activities carried out in third countries. In 2019, this cluster had three meetings, chaired by OLAF. The focus of these meetings was the preparation for the adoption of a specific anti-fraud strategy for external relations and, in this context, a number of guidelines were examined in depth. The EEAS together the Commission services are currently drafting the specific guidelines, which will also undergo peer review according to a procedure set by OLAF.

62. Were any cases transmitted/referred to OLAF in 2019?

In the course of 2019, the EEAS notified two cases to OLAF. It should be noted that cases of potential conflict of interest can be notified to OLAF anonymously by other sources and not necessarily through the EEAS.

63. How many OLAF investigations related to the EEAS were closed and reported to the institutions in 2019?

In 2019, the EEAS was informed of the results five investigations carried out by OLAF. No information is available regarding other EU Institutions.

64. Has the EEAS identified any specific policy fields, where collaboration with OLAF needs to be improved?

A comprehensive list of EEAS-OLAF areas of cooperation will be included in the upcoming anti-fraud strategy. In the meantime, the cooperation has already been strengthened in the area of training, in particular by including a specific slot in the pre-posting package for staff to be deployed in EU Delegations. In this context, detailed presentations are offered jointly by EEAS, OLAF and IDOC. In addition, *ad hoc* training has been provided by OLAF for staff posted at Headquarters in order to tackle fraud in procurement procedures.

65. What actions has the EEAS in 2019 to prepare the future collaboration with the European Public Prosecutor's Office?

In 2019, the EEAS was not involved in discussions with the EPPO on working arrangements, particularly given the fact that the EPPO was not fully operational. The EEAS is aware of ongoing discussions between the EPPO and other EU Institutions and intends to build on them in order to put in place as appropriate its own bilateral arrangements with the EPPO.

66. What was the EEAS's budget for communication activities in 2019 and how has it been used?

In 2019, the EEAS budget was EUR 10.5 million for its information and outreach efforts implemented directly across the 143 EU Delegations and a further EUR 1.1 million implemented by the Strategic Communications Division at Headquarters. This budget is implemented by the EEAS under the work programme of the European Commission's Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI). The budget covered press and public diplomacy activities across the Delegations network and provided the means to fulfil identified priorities in the areas of advancing multilateralism and strengthening partnerships through campaigns; the EU's strategic role as global actor and strong partner on security and defence; economic diplomacy and cultural and climate diplomacy amongst others. It allowed EU Delegations to promote EU values and policies through numerous outreach events and campaigns for priority local audiences.

At Headquarters, a combined budget of EUR 4.6 million⁷ allowed the EEAS to implement communication campaigns, targeted communication actions and curated events. It assured outreach via the EEAS websites and those of the Delegations, and other forms of digital presence and social media outreach. The campaigns and events included the production of audio-visual outputs as well as print and publications. The public outreach efforts in the form of events and press trips allowed the EEAS to reach both targeted and wider audiences.

Notable campaigns included the gold-award winning campaign on the rights of the child, in coordination with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), a ground-breaking event in Georgia, bringing together civil society from across the EU Neighbourhood in raising awareness of and improving societal resilience to disinformation and its harmful impacts; and the "Europeans Making a Difference" campaign to raise awareness among EU and third country audiences of a shared culture and shared values with the people of the Western Balkans.

The budget also allowed for the dissemination of best practice exchange, training and internal capacity building in terms of strategic communication abilities, and knowledge management within EU staff. This includes the

⁷ Including the aforementioned information & outreach budget, along with EEAS budgets for news and knowledge sources, print and publications, strategic communication capacity, communication channels and public events.

Strategic Communication Seminars with participating staff from the 143 EU Delegations on the policy priorities to communicate and to train on new communication activities, tools and platforms. The seminars ensured a more comprehensive and coherent approach to communicating on the main EU policies, developments and challenges inside and outside Europe. They specifically adopted an inter-institutional perspective and also took into account the views of the European Parliament.

Thanks to the support of the European Parliament, a EUR 3 million preparatory action, allowed the Divisions' three Task Forces (East Stratcom Task Force, the Western Balkans Task Force and Task Force South) to strengthen their capacity to analyse and respond to disinformation campaigns. The action helped to analyse and tackle the disinformation challenge in a comprehensive and efficient manner, in line with the Action Plan against Disinformation. The budget also allowed raising awareness of disinformation campaigns and threats, monitoring of disinformation campaigns both within and outside the EU and taking a data-driven approach to the analysis and understanding of the challenge. It was also used to deliver better outputs for the product of that analysis such as the translation and dissemination of products in local and EU languages, including for the exchange of information and best practice with Member States, G7, NATO and international partners via the EU's Rapid Alert System, established in March 2019.

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

The EEAS website⁸ promoted the EU's key policies and external actions in an innovative way, putting human stories at the forefront. The website was enhanced with new functionalities that have improved the user experience with clearer and more user-friendly menus, improved responsiveness and better navigation.

The main outcome of those technical developments was the release of a special template to advertise and promote campaigns. Combining visual, audio-visual and textual elements in an appealing and fully customisable way, these webpages support EU's external actions, while promoting the role of the EU as a strong global actor.

⁸ <https://eeas.europa.eu>

Particular attention was paid to ensure compliancy with the EU data protection regulation, especially in terms of data collection, third party cookies and privacy policies. The EEAS released a new cookie consent kit and updated the collection of web tools to comply with the EU GDPR regulations. "About us" section on the EEAS website was fully revamped in order to reflect the new Commission. The section was translated into all 24 EU official languages, in line with new language policy for the EEAS website.

In 2019, the EEAS website was visited more than 8 million times, with roughly 13.7 million of unique pages views. The EEAS Headquarters' website alone was visited 3.7 million times and had 6 million of unique pages viewed, an increase of 20% compared to 2018.

A better interlink between the EEAS website and the EEAS social channels improved digital communication with the public. Efforts concentrated on the main streamlined social media channels (Twitter, Facebook and Instagram). No free open-source self-hosted social network platforms have been implemented so far.

On social media, the EEAS has enhanced its approach to the wider audiences to reinforce the image of the EU as a key global actor and connect with citizens by making EEAS and EU policies understandable and accessible, addressing socially relevant topics.

In 2019 the EEAS increased its efforts on campaigning towards key audiences and boosting the capacities and skills of Headquarters' and EU Delegations' social media teams. The EEAS ran three main social media campaigns in 2019: First, the "Europeans Making a Difference" campaign focused on six human stories from the Western Balkans. Six citizens from the region that contribute in an outstanding way to a positive image of the Western Balkans, towards the people in the region as well as to the European citizens. The second campaign was launched in the context of the Syria Brussels Conference, portraying the protagonists - Syrian people. The EEAS used the occasion of the Conference to draw attention to the human tragedy brought on by the war. The #TheyAreSyria campaign was based on a series of five video testimonials of Syrians living the war in different ways. The third large campaign was Human Rights centred. It was launched to mark the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The aim again was to use this occasion to engage with the real actors: the children and young adults.

The EEAS engaged with youth in the way and place where they express themselves and connect with others: social media. The campaign was conceived to give them the floor by launching a social media "challenge" #TheRealChallenge in TikTok, one of the most popular social media platforms for young audience. The young audience was invited to take #TheRealChallenge by imitating in their own way some scenography representing children's rights that are challenged and unprotected around the world: family unity, bullying, child labour and gender equality. The goal of the campaign: children sharing with children their understanding of their own rights.

The two first mentioned campaigns had a regional angle and the EEAS reached millions of social media users in the related regions - Syria and neighbouring countries and Western Balkans - increasing the number of regular followers. #TheRealChallenge campaign was a global exercise through TikTok influencers in many countries and the valuable support of the EU network of Delegations. This campaign reached more than 450 million people on the platform, which is an unprecedented social media impact for the EEAS and for the EU. It was awarded several international communication prizes.

To empower the entire network to better connect with the wider audience, the EEAS invested in professionalising the management of social media and the production of content for social media. During 2019, the EEAS contracted the services of Social Bakers, a powerful tool to manage the content across social media channels and evaluate the performance of all account. EU Delegations' social media accounts are also linked to the platform, allowing the EEAS to have an overview globally and by region of the social media performance of the EEAS as a whole.

The EEAS continued its efforts to enhance the social media professional skills of colleagues in Headquarters as well as in Delegations, with a focus on audio-visual storytelling as a key element to succeed reaching a wider audience with human stories, in the EU and beyond. The EEAS included social media training in all Communication Regional Seminars in 2019. The social media team included for the first time a regular "Social Media Hands-on" training in the EU Learning Catalogue for Headquarters and Delegation social media practitioners (3-day sessions in English and French). The programme included in-house trainings with the EEAS social media team as well as external experts on video production and paid/boosted campaigns on social media.

In 2019, the EEAS increased the number of followers on the main social media channels to 69,000 in Twitter (+21%), 34,000 in Facebook (+15%) and 45,000 in Instagram (+65.5%).

68. What are the new actions or main improvements achieved in 2019, in comparison with 2018, on fighting disinformation? How much budget was allocated to the East Strat Com Task Force during 2019?

The EUR 1.1 million Preparatory action of 2018 increased to EUR 3 million in 2019 and was available thanks to the support of the EP. It allowed the EEAS, through the East Stratcom Task Force (ESTF), to strengthen its capacity to detect, analyse and expose pro-Kremlin disinformation campaigns. The budget was used to seek the following improvements: the EEAS expanded its regular monitoring of pro-Kremlin outlets in 17 languages⁹; it provided analysis of pro-Kremlin disinformation cases in these languages; and it employed data analysis in multiple languages on pro-Kremlin disinformation spread online. Over 2,600 new disinformation messages were registered in the EUvsDisinfo database throughout 2019.

In 2019, one of the most important topics that ESTF focused on was raising awareness about pro-Kremlin disinformation, including around the elections to the European Parliament. A campaign in the EU Member States raised awareness about the methods and narratives employed in the foreign interference in electoral processes around the world. The campaign, conducted in close cooperation with the EP (EP liaison offices in Member States) and the Commission (Commission's representations in Member States), targeted influencers, media and multipliers during 13 sessions in the EU capitals and interviews to the international media. The background briefings were delivered to 300 journalists and resulted in improved understanding and coverage of the negative impact of disinformation. Results of this work are presented at dedicated section¹⁰ of the EUvsDisinfo website¹¹.

The EEAS planned and implemented broad outreach campaigns, the most prominent of which took place in November 2019 in Georgia. Unprecedented in scale and scope, it brought together strategic communication experts, EU officials, diplomats, young professionals, civil society and media from across the EU, the Eastern Partnership countries, Western Balkans and the Middle East and North Africa region. As the key event of the week, the "Disinfo Alert" conference gathered 240 participants and was covered by all leading Georgian and Eastern Partnership's online and audiovisual media, with maximum cumulative outreach to 34 million people.

⁹ English, Russian, Arabic, German, Spanish, French, Italian, Polish, Georgian, Armenian, Romanian, Belarusian, Azerbaijani, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Greek and Serbian.

¹⁰ <https://euvsdisinfo.eu/european-elections-2019/>

¹¹ For a summary of EU's activities countering disinformation around the EP elections, please see the Report on the implementation of the Action Plan against Disinformation (JOIN(2019) 12 final).

As for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, the EEAS completed country-per-country mapping of disinformation threats to better understand the actors, techniques, tools and objectives. On the response side, the team exposed pro-Kremlin disinformation in the MENA region on the EUvsDisinfo platform through cases, articles and videos. Several country-specific responses were implemented in order to mitigate the effect of disinformation on the conflicts and protect EU's policy options and reputation. A regional network of experts was established and met in November 2019 to foster local societal resilience. The integrated communications campaign within the context of the Brussels III Syria Conference was launched to counter disinformation narratives targeting EU's position on the returns of Syrian refugees.

Concerning the Western Balkans, the EEAS invested in the design and installation of a holistic knowledge framework capable of identifying trends, narratives and motivations, assessing hostile intended effects, and tracking misperceptions in order to address them with relevant proactive campaigning, advocacy, policy recommendations, and/or project planning. This framework did not only focus on identifying cases of disinformation, but also on understanding the why and how disinformation flows in the Western Balkans information environment. This monitoring relies on an active regional network of experts. On the response side, special attention was given on supporting EU Delegations and other EU elements on the ground, ensuring the highest level of situational awareness.

The cooperation with international partners such as G7 (Rapid Response Mechanism) and NATO was strengthened and led to more frequent exchange of information and insights (including via Rapid Alert System) and participation in joint events.

69. What has EEAS done to prevent information leakage of sensitive data?

Article 17 of the Staff Regulations provides that an official shall refrain from any unauthorised disclosure of information received in the line of duty, unless that information has already been made public or is accessible to the public. In addition, Article 19 of the Staff Regulations specifies that an official shall not, without permission from the appointing authority, disclose on any grounds whatever, in any legal proceedings, information of which he has knowledge by reason of his duties. Permission shall be refused only where the interests of the EU so require and such refusal would not entail criminal consequences as far as the official is concerned (authorised disclosure). An official shall continue to be bound by these obligations after leaving the EEAS.

As of 15 November 2019, the Rights, Obligations and Medical Cell Division is in charge of preparing the files where the lifting of the duty of discretion under Article 19 of the Staff Regulations is at stake. The Division had no such cases in 2019. By contrast, unauthorised disclosure -such as the leakage of sensitive data- is regarded as a breach of the obligation set out in Article 17 of the Staff Regulations and shall make the staff member concerned liable to disciplinary action, in accordance with Article 86.1 of the Staff Regulations.

In 2019, the EEAS further expanded its Security Awareness Programme, which includes crucial elements about the protection of information, both at Headquarters and in EU Delegations. The EEAS has also issued three notes to all staff regarding sensitisation to the protection of sensitive information and include best practices on handling and protecting sensitive and EU classified information, as a practical hands-on tool. Security briefings on the protection of information were provided to EEAS staff, including senior management, newcomers, trainees and staff returning to Headquarters from Delegations. For 2020, the EEAS is also planning of reinforcing the sector mandated to carry out investigations, including on breaches of rules regarding the protection and compromise of sensitive and classified information.

70. Has the EEAS developed a long-term strategy for the rapid alert system?

The goals of the Rapid Alert System have been clearly set out in the 2018 Action Plan against Disinformation. Due to the rapidly changing threats landscape, the Rapid Alert System kept its flexibility and comprehensive approach to tackling disinformation, encompassing not just analysis, but also exchanges on possible responses to disinformation campaigns and discussions on the terminology, methodology and scope of response. The lessons learned from actions taken in light of protecting the 2019 EP elections were applied for the further development of the RAS community and for technical adjustments made to RAS online platform. In addition, the regular meetings of the RAS Points of Contact were used to reach a consensus on the direction of RAS development. Since the RAS is not an EEAS instrument, but a network that relies on the contributions of all the EU Member States and EU Institutions, the EEAS developed the RAS in close cooperation with the Points of Contact in the EU Member States and taking into account growing international cooperation in addressing disinformation with partners, e.g. G7 Rapid Response Mechanism.

71. How did the EEAS promote the EUvsDisinfo.eu website and how many views did it get in 2019?

In 2019, the EUvsDisinfo.eu webpage was viewed over 1,085 million times. The website is consistently promoted through EUvsDisinfo social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter. A large number of public events and awareness raising activities tackling the issues of disinformation and manipulative interference, especially ahead of the 2019 EP elections, contributed to the visibility of the webpage. A publicly available database of disinformation cases added 2,661 cases to its library and remained a unique reference source for fact-checkers and researchers. The cases were part of gradually expanding monitoring operation, which currently covers pro-Kremlin disinformation sources in over 20 languages. EUvsDisinfo.eu published a number of investigations on pro-Kremlin disinformation, including investigation into an outlet sharing RT content and targeting decision makers in the EU raised media attention and increased the visibility of the website. The content of the website was available in English and Russian. In 2020, the structure of EUvsDisinfo website data was improved, which resulted in a larger number of website visits.

72. What measures have been taken to foster internal digitalisation in the EEAS?

In 2019, the EEAS took important steps to implement full electronic financial workflows. This has been successful and led to a great reduction in paper flows at Headquarters. Further projects were started to improve digitalisation of the EEAS following in pilot phase: for instance, the EEAS is actively participating in the inter- institutional committee for digital signature and is exploring different ways to implement a solution to this end.

73. How much was invested in IT projects and equipment in comparison with 2018?

In 2019, the amount of money invested in equipment and IT projects was similar to the 2018 amount (EUR 14,790,000 in 2019, EUR 14,291,000 in 2018, and EUR 3,785,000 for security for both years).

74. Has the new financial e-workflows system, which aims to contribute to a reduction of the error level, been implemented as intended at headquarters at the end of 2019? What are the benefits and disadvantages of this system?

The EEAS implemented the new financial e-workflow system at Headquarters at the end of 2019 for financial transactions stemming from public contracts, which replaced the paper workflow. Its gradual implementation throughout 2019 included a set of accompanying measures, covering the organisation of training activities and the drafting of guidance documents.

The added benefits of this system were numerous: electronic “certified correct” on payment, improved document management and audit trail, environmental friendly solution, higher transparency of the workflow, files being instantly available to the next agent in the workflow. The main disadvantage of this system is linked to the fact that two IT tools are to be used (ABAC and Ares) and, therefore, most of the agents in the workflow have to sign the transactions in both systems.

75. How do they use open-source software and hardware in order to prevent vendor lock-ins, improve European strategic sovereignty and save taxpayers money?

The EEAS uses a variety of open-source software solutions within the IT infrastructure and services. The EEAS actively aims to use solutions that guarantee strategic sovereignty, but the market for software solutions is for the time being dominated by non-European vendors.

76. Apart from the Security Awareness Programme for EEAS staff, what IT safety measures have been implemented to protect the EEAS digital infrastructure from outside cyber-attacks?

In 2019, additional safety measures were taken to protect the EEAS's digital infrastructure from external threats and attacks. The EEAS tightened its collaboration with Computer Emergency Response Team for the EU Institutions, bodies and agencies (CERT EU) and invested in additional measures, which are confidential in nature.

77. What steps have you taken towards improving the cybersecurity strategy of your institution? Is the EEAS considering the use of block chain technologies in this field?

In 2019, the EEAS organised awareness campaigns, 'phishing' campaigns targeting all EEAS staff at Headquarters and Delegations and a 'cyber week' event, in order to improve its cybersecurity.

The EEAS has not considered using block chain in the field of cyber security. Block chain has been considered for a specific use case related to archiving and digital signatures, but no decision has been taken yet.

78. Were any of these steps coordinated with any other EU institution?

The EEAS is working closely with the Commission services and CERT EU and coordinates its approach in cybersecurity.

Building policy

79. "Co-locations generated non-negligible new sources of revenues for the EEAS amounting to EUR 52,1 million, providing room for manoeuvre to develop its real estate purchasing policy"¹². What was the EEAS's real estate policy in 2019 regarding the purchase, rental or management of buildings? What is the EEAS planning in this regards? How many buildings has the EEAS sold and purchased in 2019, and what were there costs?

The Building Policy of the EEAS for 2019 is described in the Annual Working Document, established in accordance with Article 266 of the Financial Regulation. One of the priority action areas of the EEAS is to pursue efforts to increase ownership: as stated in past Working Documents, one of the aims of the real estate policy of the EEAS is to achieve stability. Purchasing, when financially interesting, provides long-term stability to the EU Delegation and removes the uncertainty of having to re-negotiate extensions to the lease contracts. It also helps the EU safeguard its investment in the buildings, for instance fitting out of security works and it reduces costs in the long run. The EU currently owns 19% of its real estate in EU Delegations, following the purchases in Washington, D.C., South Africa and Ecuador in 2019, still far below the ratio of the largest Member States. To this end, purchase projects are envisaged in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Argentina, with early warnings sent to European Parliament and Council in November 2017 and March 2020, respectively.

In 2019 the EEAS purchased the following buildings:

Country	Building Type	Usable Surface Area (m ²)	Purchase Price	Date of Purchase
South Africa	Office building	2110	EUR 3,055,405	02/2019
USA-Washington	Office building	4990	EUR 90,427,550	03/2019
Ecuador	Office building	581	EUR 1,518,942	06/2019

¹² P9_TA(2020)0094 Discharge 2018: EU general budget - European External Action Service - Paragraph 48

A sales process for the former Residence in South Africa was initiated and the following purchase projects are envisaged:

Country	Building Type	Usable Surface Area (m ²)	Purchase Price	Date of Purchase
Argentina	Office building	1188	EUR 7,200,000	Q1/2021
DR Congo	Office building	2200	EUR 10,000,000	Q2/2022

80. In comparison, what was the budget solely dedicated to renting buildings? Could the EEAS provide the full data about the annual rent paid for its external buildings?

In 2019, the EEAS spent EUR 72.8 million on renting office buildings and Residences in EU Delegations and EUR 19.1 million on renting office space in Headquarters. These amounts include unrecoverable taxes, parking spaces and rental related costs.

The EEAS provided full data regarding EU Delegations office buildings and residences rented in 2019 in the frame of the Working Document 2020 on the EEAS Building Policy and annexes. The annual rent paid for each Delegation building in 2019 can be found in Annexes 2 and 3 to the 2020 Working Document.

81. When was the last feasibility study of the renting compared to buildings' ownership done? How did the EEAS adopt to the recommendations from such a study?

Every Building File prepared by EU Delegations for real estate in third countries must include a comparison between rental and purchase options. Each option is assessed on its own merits, taking into account local real estate market conditions and market opportunities. The Building Committee of the EEAS then issues the appropriate recommendations on each Building File.

82. Is the EEAS planning to open/merge/terminate functioning of some of its representation offices in some countries in 2019? Which might that be and what would be the main reasons?

In 2019, the EEAS strengthened the EU presence in the Middle East and in Central Asia with the opening of Delegations in Kuwait and Turkmenistan.

The EU established its presence in the State of Kuwait in July 2019. This decision was based on the shared interest in a substantial upgrading of bilateral relations, and on the fact that the Gulf countries are very important economic and trade partners for the EU. Furthermore, the presence in Kuwait also allows the EEAS to better distribute the tasks of representation and presence in the wider region, as the new Delegation also covers Qatar.

In July 2019, the EU intensified its presence in Central Asia and engaged in areas of strategic interest such as energy and security by opening the new EU Delegation to Turkmenistan.

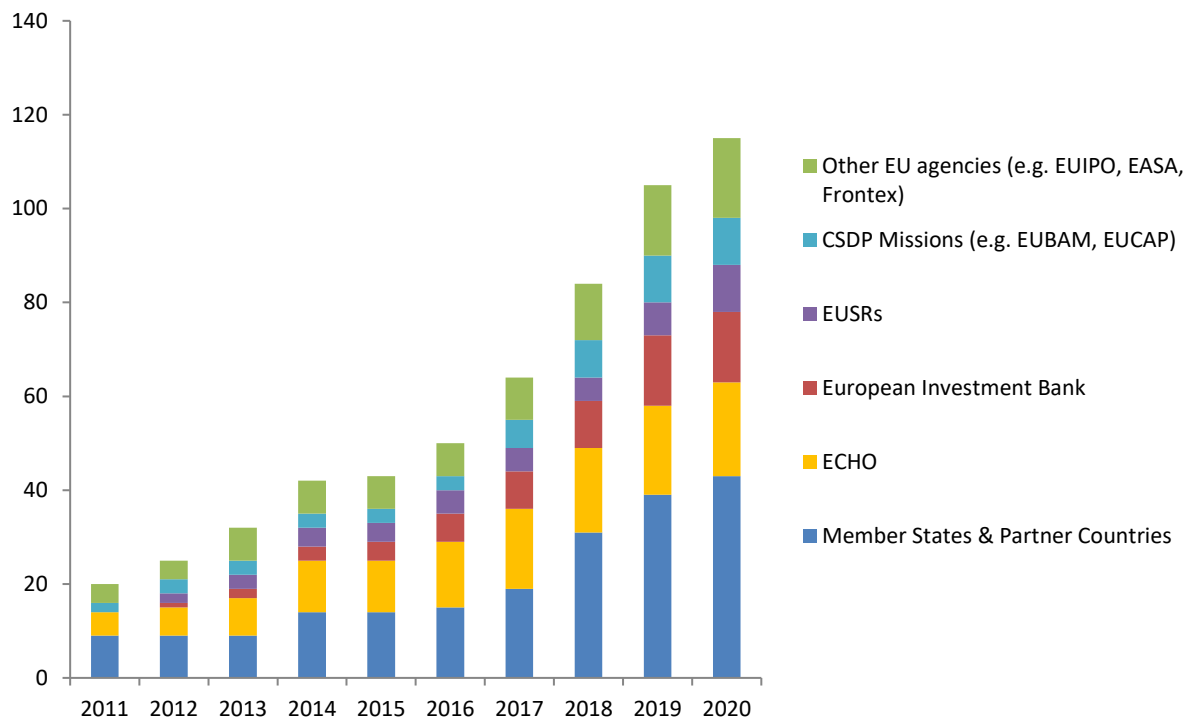
Considering the growing political importance of the work that takes place at the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the EEAS created in February 2019 a place of assignment in The Hague to pursue, in close collaboration with the Member States, its engagement in the work of the OPCW and of other international organisations present in The Hague.

Finally, there were some adjustments to the network of Delegations in the African continent: The accreditation to Equatorial Guinea was transferred from the Delegation to Gabon to the Delegation to Cameroon, allowing for improved connections to the country. Efforts towards ensuring the opening of an EU office in São Tomé and Príncipe continued in 2019.

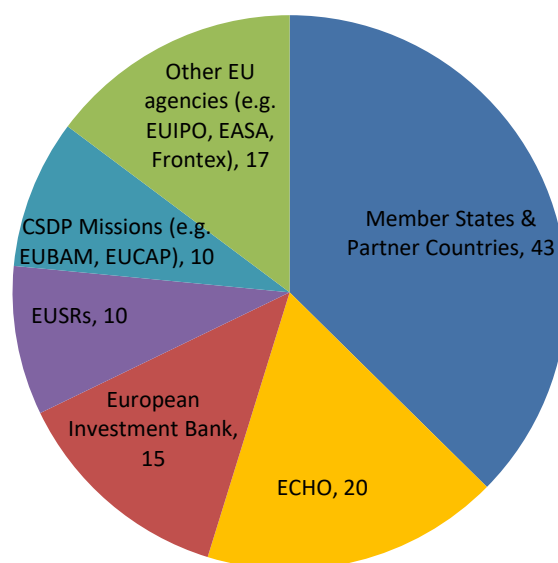
83. How many co-location arrangements of Union delegations with Members States and EU bodies are in place compared to the previous year?

Currently, there are 115 co-location arrangements in 68 EU Delegations, with 37 different EU partners. The EEAS signed 22 new co-location arrangements in 2019, compared to 20 agreements signed in 2018. The graphs below provide an outline of the evolution and the existing composition of the EEAS co-location portfolio.

Graph 1 – Evolution of co-locations



Graph 2 – Composition of co-locations



84. How is the security policy of delegations abroad managed? Is the level of security regularly reassessed? Are specific measures implemented for countries in a situation of war or terrorism? Could you please tell us what extra measures did you put in place to recruit/keep staff in the delegations that face security issues?

The EEAS applies Security Risk Management (SRM) principles for the security of EU Delegations. These principles apply internationally recognised standard ISO 31000: 2009, "Risk Management – Principles and Guidelines". This global standard is generally seen as best practice in risk management and has been adopted in national legislation worldwide, including in most EU Member States.

The EEAS introduced the new SRM methodology in Delegations progressively over 2019 and in 2020. The SRM requires specific security assessments of threats and risks at country and local level performed by security specialists at both Headquarters and EU Delegations.

62 Regional Security Officers (RSO) deployed in Delegations assess locally threats and risks to which the Delegation and the staff are exposed. According to the resulting level of risks, the RSOs recommend a list of complementary security prevention and mitigation measures. The security management teams of EU Delegations implement the measures, following the approval by the management.

In 2019, the EEAS intensively trained the RSOs on a standard implementation of the new SRM process and methodology. Training sessions for deployed RSOs were organised in five different regions after which all officers were operational in the use of the new methodology adapted to their local and regional contexts.

The RSOs usually revise risk assessments minimum once per year in a stable security environment. They can revise their assessments whenever there are changes in the security environment of the EU Delegation or of the areas where Delegation's staff perform missions. In cases of increasing levels of threats related to armed conflict or terrorism, the RSOs assess additional types of threat scenarios and propose additional measures to reduce the risks. These measures take into consideration the location and the building's characteristics. In 2019, the following measures were put in place in some EU Delegations, due to the deterioration of the security situation: reinforced Delegation's perimeter controls and physical barriers, increased frequency of patrols, arming security guards, reinforcing guarding in accommodations and premises, increasing number of armoured vehicles, reduce movements of staff to minimum. When the risk level increases in buildings with large glass surfaces, the EEAS adopts

additional mitigating blast measures such as anti-blast films at the windows and cables catch system or blast curtains.

As a last resort, when the implementation of additional protection or mitigation measures is not possible and the residual risk levels are at unacceptable levels, the EEAS would evacuate from the place of posting dependents and if necessary also staff performing non-essential functions, by either relocating them to a safer neighbouring country or bringing back to Headquarters.

85. What were the additional expenses for security in 2019?

As noted under question 7, in 2019, the EEAS spent 4.1 million on 18 additional armoured vehicles, which included spare parts and training of drivers. The EEAS purchased and deployed in 2019 additional radio communications in Delegations for an amount of EUR 100,000.

Regarding the security budget for EU Delegations, there was an increase of around EUR 1.5 million due to new security services contracts in Burkina Faso and West Bank - Gaza Strip and price increases for security services contracts in South Sudan, Sudan and Nigeria. The amount invested in the upgrade of security installations in Delegations was around EUR 3.5 million.

86. Can you indicate the presence of the EEAS in 2019 in the acceding countries, in connection with the Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership countries?

In 2019, EEAS had 118 staff members in enlargement countries, 84 staff members in Eastern Partnership countries and 164 staff members in South Neighbourhood countries. See also question 26.

These figures include EEAS expatriate and local staff posted in EU Delegations but they do not include Commission's staff.

Management of third countries assistance

Questions 87, 88, 89 and 90 do not relate to the EEAS administrative budget and fall outside the scope of 2019 Discharge procedure.

87. Questions concerning Belarus:

The External Aid Management Report (EAMR) for Belarus emphasizes the enhancement of Civil Society Organizations' (CSOs) role in the coordination Group and constitutes that EU funding remains an important source for civil society activities seeking to strengthen democracy and improve the human rights situation in the country.

- a. What civil society activities and projects to promote democracy and enhance human rights in Belarus were funded? On the basis of which criteria the civil organizations were selected? How did the EEAS ensure that receiving organizations were not undermined by the Belorussian administration?

In 2019, the EU identified six new projects to promote democracy and human rights in Belarus with a total budget of EUR 3,995,782.5 within the call for proposal "Engaging with Civil Society in Belarus"¹³. This call for proposals intended in particular to the promotion of citizen participation in general and building of the capacity of women, youth or other underrepresented groups in particular to take part in decision making processes; and to the promotion of realisation of Fundamental Rights and building of capacity of Human Rights Defenders.

Two projects in support of independent media were selected from an international open call for proposals "Supporting Enhancement of Professional Reporting and Free Flow of Information in Belarus"¹⁴ with a total budget of EUR 1,552,997. All contracts were awarded following a thorough assessment of the technical and financial capacity of the applicants as well as the quality of the proposal.

While it had been the initial understanding that all projects would be able to register in compliance to government procedures, this requirement is currently reviewed with respective operators to look for alternatives to ensure continuity of the projects.

¹³ EuropeAid/162112/DD/ACT/BY

¹⁴ EuropeAid/162368/DD/ACT/BY

- b. The European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) have provided significant funds to support the economy, particularly projects of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Belarus. How and with which instruments are the projects monitored to ensure the funds provided are spent for the specific purpose?

The EIB supports SMEs through credit lines with selected local partner banks, chosen for their focus on, and ability to serve, the SME segment in line with EIB's contractually determined eligibility criteria. The implementation of such credit lines is based on EIB's allocation procedures that require the intermediary banks to submit every sub-project promoted by SMEs to the EIB for approval. Upon submission of allocation proposals, EIB determines their eligibility, and may request further information on sub-projects as it deems necessary, such as on environmental compliance, procurement, or expenditure. Once satisfied, EIB issues an Allocation Letter to the intermediary banks confirming acceptance of the allocation proposals. Further, there is a re-allocation procedure in place that allows the bank to have the full picture of the portfolio funded.

When it comes to EBRD, the EU has funded advisory support to privately owned SMEs, through local and international industry consultants, with the aim to improve their competitiveness. The monitoring and evaluation of the implementation is carried out under EBRD standard procedures, based on indicators and as part of a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system put in place. EBRD has also provided – through its own funds and using the EU grant co-financing–loans to SMEs through local banks (3 privately-owned and 2 state-owned banks that were restructured and have direct relations (without going via sovereign) with the EBRD).

More specifically, when it comes to direct lending, EBRD provides direct loans to SMEs (exclusively privately owned ones) either by co-investing with local banks (sharing the risk) or by taking direct risk of an SME. These transactions are approved by EBRD on the basis of the proceeds from the EBRD loan being used for clear and identifiable purposes. Additionally, integrity checks are performed on all relevant parties for each transaction. Just before the loan is disbursed, confirmatory work is conducted to ensure that the originally identified "use of proceeds" continues to be valid. After the loan is disbursed, regular monitoring for each investment takes place, with periodic assessments of how the SME is performing. As for intermediate lending to SMEs it is carried out via partner financial institutions selected and approved according to EBRD's strict processes and criteria for prudent banking, integrity, and transition. The partner

banks have direct relations with the EBRD and present to EBRD regular reports about utilisation of received loans for on-lending to SMEs in accordance with strict sub-borrower eligibility criteria based on the EU definition of SMEs and exclusively in private ownership.

- c. The EAMR report states that the absorption capacity (KPI 3) further deteriorated in Belarus. In this connection, can the EU delegation tell if the worsening of the absorption capacity does also affect programmes/projects/CSOs that are aiming to strengthen democracy and improve human rights? Has the EU delegation observed if the aforementioned group of organisations/projects have disproportionately suffered from extraordinary long delays for government registration?

Remark: Absorptive capacity measures whether programs can spend the budgeted funds. Measure will focus on the top focus countries with strong links to ongoing initiatives to strengthen supply chains and to address other "absorption" challenges.

The main reason for deteriorated absorption capacity in Belarus is linked to constraints imposed by the authorities notably in relation to registration of all projects. This issue has been repeatedly raised by the EU at various levels including at the discussions within the EU-Belarus coordination group. However, despite some indications of openness, there has not been any improvement. Delays in registration, which remained an arbitrary process, affected most projects regardless of the type of activities, including actions aiming at strengthening democracy and improve human rights. One case was observed where the government after much delay refused to sign a financing agreement because proposed (and during programming negotiations confirmed) sub-contracting with local civil society organisations was not accepted.

It should be noted that taking into account the current stage of EU-Belarus relations following the 9 August 2020 presidential elections, the EU is reviewing its relations with Belarus, including financial assistance, which will be recalibrated to ensure it benefits the population at large. This review may have an impact on the issue under question.

88. Questions concerning Armenia:

- a. In 2019, the EU's assistance to Armenia amounted to €65 million. Only 3% of that budget, i.e. € 2 million has been allocated to Civil Society. Can the EU delegation elaborate on the fact why such a relatively low amount has been attributed to Civil Society?

The Annual Action Programme 2019 for Armenia foresaw EU support of EUR 65 million, EUR 2 million of which is a contribution to the flagship Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility. The facility's component for Armenia aims at increased civil society organisations (CSO) capacities, in particular management and leadership skills.

Civil society plays a key role for the implementation of other programmes under the same annual programme such as the Comprehensive Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) Facility, which includes, *inter alia*, support to the CEPA CSO Platform (with the objective to monitor CEPA implementation), the EU4Sevan action on environmental protection (with a component on community communication and awareness), and the Local Empowerment of Actors for Development (LEAD) programme. The latter, with funding amounting to EUR 14 million, will work closely with local CSO as key stakeholders and drivers of change to promote local growth and development through community engagement.

Following the 2018 peaceful demonstrations and December elections, 2019 was the first year for the new administration to shape new policies and the overall government reform agenda. In this context, the EU paid particular attention to the public oversight and the "watchdog" role of civil society. The EU has pooled 2019 and 2020 funding from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, Civil Society and Annual Action Programmes 2018-2019 budgets in 4 calls for proposals targeting civil society organisations with a total envelope of EUR 8.6 million for human rights, policy dialogue and public oversight as well as for service delivery purposes. In addition to that, Armenia also benefits from actions financed from the regional budget of the Eastern Partnership's Civil Society Facility, as well as a mechanism for rapid response to unexpected changes, which was mobilised for COVID-19 response in 2020, an impact monitoring tool, and regional social entrepreneurship actions. This is further evidence that assistance to civil society is prominent in EU programming representing over 15% of EU's portfolio of assistance to Armenia in the programming period 2017-2020. Moreover, in 2019 a number of EU funded civil society projects funded from previous Annual Action Programmes were still being implemented in Armenia.

- b. Can the EU delegation explain the reasons why the existing portfolio focused on fostering institutional and good governance reforms, private sector development and infrastructure investments (blending) is particularly geared to the regions of Shirak, Lori and Tavush?

Over the past years, a key objective of European Neighbourhood Policy was to increase the impact of the EU assistance in the regions beyond the capitals of partner countries. The focus on the northern regions of Shirak, Lori and Tavush, bordering with Georgia, was jointly agreed with the Armenian government, in the margins of the negotiations for the 2017-2020 Single Support Framework. The selected project area covers infrastructure investments, which are part of wider regional connectivity actions and will be conducive to develop synergies with EU programmes in Georgia. In addition, the chosen regions were also heavily affected by the earthquake in 1988, the aftermath effects of which is still a concern today resulting in the highest poverty rates in Armenia, with Shirak being the poorest region of the country¹⁵. Actions in these regions target mainly regional development, human capital and education, and private sector support, including creative industries and tourism. Infrastructure investments through blending follow prioritisation on the basis of the merits and the maturity of individual projects (for instance, transport infrastructure follows the prioritisation in the Indicative TEN-T investment action plan agreed as part of the extension of the TEN-T core network, which goes beyond the three focal regions).

89. Questions concerning South Sudan:

- a. Does the EEAS plan to initiate a cooperation agreement with South Sudan to extend humanitarian and development aid?

The EU has been advocating for South Sudan to join the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) and the Cotonou Agreement since its independence in 2011. The decision rested with the Government of South Sudan and limited our cooperation action with the country. The Delegation continued nevertheless to implement a cooperation portfolio of EUR 260 million, approximately EUR 50 million per year, in the areas of rural development, education, health and governance. The needs in these sectors were very high, given that South Sudan was ranked at 187 on the UN Human Development Index.

¹⁵ Shirak 42.2%, Lori 29.4% and Tavush 25.6%, the national average is 23.5%.

This decision did not affect the way the EU provides humanitarian aid to South Sudan. The EU aid, which was guided by the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence, was not extended to the Government of South Sudan but rather channelled directly to partners, such as the United Nations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that provided emergency assistance to the most vulnerable, based on needs. With more than EUR 590 million in humanitarian funding since 2014 (out of which over EUR 44 million mobilised so far in 2020), the EU is one of the leading humanitarian donors in South Sudan.

EU development aid to third countries in Next Multi-annual Financial Framework will be guided by the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) Regulation and on programming guidelines. The goal is to reach an agreement on development aid for human development (education and health), jobs for youth and resilience on the one hand, and support to progress in the peace process, more enabling government institutions and civic space on the other hand. Women and youth will be central. Depending on the progress towards democracy, transparency and accountability of the Government of South Sudan, either the EU will be able to cooperate with the government through a genuine cooperation agreement, or EU will continue channelling its development outside government structures.

- b. According to the EAMR report, the current political and economic situation of the country does not allow channelling funds through country systems. Instead, direct and indirect management funding methods are applied. What are the criteria to decide whether indirect or direct management of funds are appropriate?

Project modality was the way to implement projects in South Sudan, given the absence of the possibility to have budget support or other direct cooperation with the government. Funds could not be channelled through Government structures, due to the lack of transparency, accountability and respect of fundamental values. Therefore, projects were implemented either via grants and service contracts concluded by EU with third contractors/NGOs or via delegated agreements concluded by EU with International organizations or third country agencies. The choice depended on the nature of the project and of the implementing partner identified. The adoption of a direct or indirect management approach derived from the elements above.

90. Questions concerning Turkey:

The situation in Turkey with regard to the Civil Society situation is highly concerning and requires support from the EU. Can the EU Delegation tell which specific area of the civic sector is jeopardized the most? Does the EU Delegation consider increasing funding for CSOs and HRDs as recommended in the EAMR report especially for the aforementioned group?

As highlighted in the 2020 Commission's annual report on Turkey¹⁶, civil society has come under continuous pressure and their space to operate freely has continued to diminish. Journalists and media professionals, Human Rights Defenders and CSOs working on minorities and vulnerable groups were most at risk. Women's movements and CSOs working on gender equality issues should also be taken into account, especially in the current COVID-19 pandemic context, which has negatively impacted on the situation of women and girls, in particular to help combat violence against women. The EU has already increased funding to civil society substantially over recent years; there is however a persisting and increasing need for funding to these sectors as recommended in the External Aid Management Report but also as expressed repeatedly by the Commission in several occasions and fora.

¹⁶ SWD(2020) 355 final.

Activities to Lower the Environmental footprint

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

Preparatory work started at the end of 2019 and in 2020 the Secretary General gave a formal mandate to set up an Environmental Management System, with the aim of fully complying with the EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme's (EMAS) requirements for activities and buildings of the central administration of the EEAS. At the same time, the EEAS will implement a light coordination and management system for EU Delegations, which is envisaged to be gradually extended according to the different local possibilities and needs.

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

The EEAS continued its efforts to lower its carbon footprint and plastic, food and paper waste, in collaboration with the Commission's Office for infrastructure and logistics (OIB) in Brussels, as per the Service Level Agreement in force. The EEAS and the OIB took steps to gradually reduce single-use plastic items in canteens and cafeterias, promote energy efficiency and encourage environmentally friendly modes of transport amongst its staff.

Efforts were also made to enhance awareness of the environmental impact of buildings and applicable environmental norms. In line with these criteria, relocation projects carried out in EU Delegations have integrated environmental factors, such as solar panels, LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold certificates and rainwater recuperation.