

**INFORMATION ON THE BUDGETARY AND
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT OF PARLIAMENT
IN 2023**

AND

**REPLIES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE IN
PREPARATION FOR
PARLIAMENT'S DISCHARGE FOR 2023**

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Introduction

The first part of this document provides an overview of the main characteristics and events of 2023 and Parliament's use of financial resources in preparation of the decision on Parliament's discharge for budgetary and financial management for 2023.

The second part is composed of the Secretary-General's answers to the questions tabled by Members of the Committee on Budgetary Control to that end.

BUDGET OF PARLIAMENT IN 2023

In 2023, Parliament received a budget allocation of EUR 2 247 million, corresponding to a 3.95 % increase compared to the previous year. This allocation represented 19.7 % of Heading 7 of the multiannual financial framework (MFF). 2023, the third year of the current MFF period, 2021-2027.

In 2023, Parliament committed EUR 2 238 million of its allocated budget (99.6 %), made payments for EUR 1 890 million (84.4 % of commitments) and carried over EUR 348.3 million (15.6 %) to 2024. Only 0.4% (EUR 8 789 719) had to be cancelled. There were no non-automatic carryovers to 2024 during this period. This was achieved by a very high degree of implementation of the budget as requested by the financial authorities.

In 2023, six chapters accounted for 84.5 % of total commitments. These chapters are: Chapter 10 'Members of the institution'; Chapter 12 'Officials and temporary staff'; Chapter 14 'Other staff and external services'; Chapter 20 'Buildings and associated costs'; Chapter 21 'Data processing, equipment and movable property' and Chapter 42 'Expenditure relating to parliamentary assistance'.

Again in 2023 there was no end-of-year transfer due to the lack of funds following the continuing high inflation and the effects of the indexation of statutory expenditure. In 2023, the annual inflation rate amounted to 5.4% and the salary indexation was 2.7%.

MAIN CHARACTERISTICS AND IMPORTANT EVENTS OF 2023

In 2023, Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine significantly impacted the year and the subsequent exceptionally high level of inflation in the euro area, which had peaked at 10.6 % in October 2022 and, gradually declined to an annual inflation rate of 5.4 % for the year 2023¹. Furthermore, terrorist attacks on Israel on 7 October 2023 and the subsequent military operations in the Gaza Strip further exacerbated the overall geopolitical situation around the end of the year.

On 18 January 2023, the Conference of Presidents approved a mandate proposed by the President for a Working Group tasked with focusing on Parliament's legislative role and procedures, as well as examining improvements to its role and capacity as the arm of the budgetary authority and sole discharge authority.

On 7 December 2023, the Conference of Presidents endorsed a package of reform measures based on the recommendations of the Working Group "Parliament 2024" to be implemented by the end of the parliamentary term. These measures encompass five key areas identified in the Working Group's mandate: legislation, scrutiny, budgetary functions and budgetary control, plenary and external relations. The reform proposals aim to enhance Parliament's functioning as a co-legislator, strengthen its capacity for democratic oversight, and ensure accountability, particularly regarding other institutions, notably the Commission.

¹ Eurostat "Winter 2024 Economic Forecast" issued on 15 February 2024

A 14-point plan focusing on transparency, integrity, accountability, and anti-corruption, proposed by the President, was adopted by the Conference of Presidents on 8 February 2023.

On 13 July 2023, the Plenary endorsed recommendations for the reform of Parliament's rules aimed at combating foreign political interference, espionage, and corruption attempts. This includes the establishment of an interinstitutional EU ethics body and the adoption of stronger measures to address conflicts of interest.

Throughout 2023, the administration continued the implementation of Parliament's 'Building Strategy Beyond 2019' as endorsed by the Bureau in April 2018.

In Luxembourg, the construction progress of the West Wing of the ADENAUER II building reached 90 %, and the operating permit is in place since the end of 2023. As part of the same building, the construction progress of the Europa Experience facility reached 46 %, with delivery in 2024.

In Strasbourg, a significant development was the signing of the long-term lease for the VEIL building. Preliminary works for the initial fit-out necessary to facilitate the building's occupation started in autumn 2023. In addition, the level of completion of the works to secure the entrance of the WEISS building reached 84 % at the end of 2023. The renovation of the CHURCHILL restaurant and the establishment of the multifunctional space in the DE MADARIAGA building were finalised, and the opening ceremony took place in December 2023.

In Brussels, during its meeting on 12 June 2023, the Bureau discussed the next steps for the renewal of the SPAAK building. The Bureau expressed a preference for a comprehensive environmental renovation and approved the project on 11 December 2023.

Renovation works for the multifunctional restaurant facility in the SPINELLI building were completed, and the restaurant opened on 24 April 2023.

The strategic approach of 'going local' and 'closer to the citizen' in implementing Europa Experiences continued throughout 2023. In the course of the year, three Europa Experience facilities were opened to the public in Stockholm, Vienna, and Warsaw. By the end of the year, 50 % of the planned Europa Experience facilities had been inaugurated.

Concurrently, fit-out works were completed in the Houses of Europe located in Prague, Dublin, and Paris. Additionally, three offices in Paris, Vienna, and Helsinki, along with three Europa Experience facilities in Vienna, Ljubljana, and Stockholm, were equipped with selected furniture to convey a distinctive visual identity.

An integral component of the Environmental Management System under EMAS is the adoption of an environmental policy and targets. On 16 December 2019, the Bureau adopted the environmental policy and targets for the parliamentary term 2019-2024. The work towards achieving the ambitious targets set by the Bureau in 2019 was assessed in April 2024. Almost all environmental targets were reached (9 out of 11 targets, except for the sub-target on CO2 emissions from the transports of persons, and the target on the share of renewables produced onsite), whilst in some areas, Parliament exceeded the targets by a large margin. The process of gradually including European Parliament Liaison Offices (EPLOs) under Parliament's EMAS registration continued. The EPLOs in Vienna and Valletta received their EMAS registration in September 2023.

REPLIES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE IN PREPARATION FOR THE 2023 PARLIAMENT'S DISCHARGE

1. DG PRES chaired the administrative working group of the President's 14-point plan that was adopted in February 2023: what was the level of implementation of the measures in 2023? In this respect, what measures are proving to be the most difficult to implement for MEPs and the EP administration? Which measures have led to an increase in staff to handle the additional burden?

The Administrative Task Force for implementing the "14-point-plan" was a major inter-service cooperation, instrumental for swift implementation of the plan. By mid-October 2023, all points of the plan regarding Members and former Members were turned into relevant decisions:

- Rules 11, 35, 35bis, 123 176 and annex I (Code of Conduct) of the Parliament's Rules of Procedure
- Bureau and administrative implementing decisions on Former Members, Rules governing the participation of Interest Representatives in events held on EP's premises, Rules of Transparency Obligations of Intergroups and Unofficial groupings, Rules on Access to the EP, Implementing Measures for the Code of Conduct and Whistleblowing.

The implementation of the new Rules and decisions started immediately after their adoption or entry into force, with appropriate preparatory work.

DG PRES services focussed on the implementation of the new Code of Conduct for Members regarding Integrity and Transparency², and on the new Rules³ Governing the Participation of Interest Representatives in events held in Parliament.

With regard to the new Code of Conduct, the biggest challenge was the new version of the Declaration of Private Interests (DPI)⁴. All 705 Members of the outgoing Parliament were required to submit a new DPI, which was more detailed than the previous declaration, and to do this within a short deadline (end of the 2023). In addition to the new DPI, there were three other new declarations introduced by the new rules: Declaration of Assets, only for Members taking up their offices after 1 November, Declaration on Awareness of Conflicts of Interest, for appointments after 1 November, and Declaration of Input, for reports tabled after 1 November. This required both IT development and training of colleagues in Committees and Delegations. The workload resulting from the implementation of these measures led to an increase of staff: the Members' Administration Unit was reinforced in 2023 with one Contract Agent AD FGIV post and, in 2024, with two Contract Agents FGIII posts, two AD Temporary Agents and one permanent AST-SC post. Ultimately, all challenges were overcome resulting in an extremely high compliance rate.

² [Bureau Decision of 16 October 2023](#), Implementing Measures for the Code of Conduct for Members of the European Parliament Regarding Integrity and Transparency

³ [Bureau Decision of 12 June 2023](#) Governing the Participation of Interest Representatives to events held in Parliament

⁴ Formerly Declaration of Financial Interests (DFI)

With regard to the Participation of Interest Representatives in events held in Parliament, the new rules generated additional tasks, a need for increased helpdesk assistance and awareness raising efforts from the Transparency Unit. They required frequent cooperation with other Parliament services, Political Groups and Members and their Offices assisting them with the verification of the status of organisations in the Transparency Register, and ascertain whether or not certain organisations fall under certain exemptions. The number of training and awareness raising sessions increased significantly⁵, together with the preparation of guidelines to facilitate the practical implementation of the decision. The Bureau Decision of 12 June 2023 also envisaged a role of the Transparency Unit in the regular compliance checks, the first of which was carried out at the beginning of 2024 for (the relevant part of) 2023 and the preparation of an annual report on the implementation of the Bureau Decision. To help cope with the additional workload, the Transparency Unit staff was reinforced, in 2023, with one Contract Agent AST FGIII post, one AD Seconded National Expert, and one AD Temporary Agent (compensation of part time).

For the event organising services, the new rules meant added vigilance with regard to the registration of interest representatives in the Transparency Register and record keeping via Parliament's Meeting Request System (MRS). The parliamentary body or service of Parliament's Secretariat organising the parliamentary event or authorising the co-hosted event are responsible for ensuring compliance with the rules.

DG IPOL set up a monitoring mechanism to follow and enhance the implementation of the President's 14-point plan measures taken at service level and in particular within committee secretariats for parliamentary committee activities. The level of implementation in 2023 included the following actions under points 0, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, and 13 of the President's 14-point plan:

- the establishment of channels for communicating regular updates to staff and management in cooperation with other DGs with expertise in the relevant area,
- the organisation of tailor-made training sessions on the new measures,
- the design of IT tools with the introduction of an annex for Declaration of Inputs (DOI) for reports and opinions with a data protection notice,
- the training of colleagues on the new features available in the IT tools,
- the creation of a system to inform committee secretariats of the completion of the Declaration of Awareness of Conflicts of Interest (DACI) by Members nominated as Chair, Vice-Chair, Rapporteur or Shadow Rapporteur or as a participant in inter-institutional negotiations or in official delegations,
- the design of an IT tool between MEP-portal and ITER, creating a record-keeping system in all committee secretariats of decisions taken pursuant to the rules on transparency, in particular as relates to derogations granted under the Bureau Decision on events conditionality,
- the creation of a feedback mechanism with FAQ (intranet site 2024) for secretariats,
- the development of a team of 'transparency' experts within committee secretariats.

Within DG IPOL, the measures that proved to be the most difficult to implement for Members and EP administration were the Bureau Decision on events conditionality, the DOI (Art. 8 of Annex I to EP RoP) and the DACI (Art. 3 of Annex I to EP RoP).

DG ITEC implemented several changes and projects related to the President's 14-point plan in close cooperation with DG PRES and DG FINS.

⁵ In 2023, the Transparency Unit delivered 46 bespoke training sessions to Political Groups staff, APAs and Parliament staff. Additionally, information about the new rules and the accompanying guidelines were included in all regular internal training and information sessions on the Transparency Register.

To ensure that these additional measures did not result in particularly complex and burdensome operations for Members and staff, DG ITEC dedicated considerable efforts and financial investment in:

- digitalising and streamlining workflows as much as possible, creating integrations with existing EP or EC systems (for example, DG SAFE and EC IT systems for the accreditation of interest groups representatives), and
- investing in reporting tools to monitor the state of implementation of the measures (for example, for DG IPOL means to monitor the declarations of absence of conflict of interest or, for DG PRES, means to monitor declarations of meetings with interest groups).

The implemented measures are:

- modification of the e-form for the Intergroups and unofficial groups,
- new integrity webpage on Europarl,
- changes and enhancements of reporting on Members' meetings with interest groups,
- changes and enhancements on the Europarl Search form on Members' meetings with interest groups,
- implementation of the 'Pre-accreditation portal for lobbyists',
- changes related to Unique EP booking system (Meeting Request System and booking of events and exhibitions) for all meeting venues, with information related to the Transparency Register.

In addition to all mentioned above, DG ITEC provides recurring maintenance for the EP Accreditation Portal.

DG LINC provided interpretation for Members' training sessions as part of the awareness raising campaign, which was ongoing in 2023 and 2024.

Technological developments were implemented in the Meeting Request System (MRS) to reflect whether external guests are co-hosts or active participants in events on Parliament's premises, and to record the associated transparency number. All documentation and contacts concerning external requesters were updated to reflect the stronger checks on interest representatives. The logistical services processing meeting requests are furthermore tasked with verifying these requests and reminding requesters of their obligations.

The Meeting Request System is being further developed to provide a greater overview of meetings and events in Parliament, *inter alia* by including a larger number of venues in the booking system.

2. The entry in force of the new obligations for MEPs has unfortunately increased the tasks in the EP administration but also in Members' offices, with staff level remaining the same. What kind of actions has DG PRES taken to avoid the increase in bureaucracy due to the implementation of the new rules?

The additional administrative burden generated by the new set of Rules and requirements adopted by Parliament was mitigated by three main sets of actions: IT development, awareness raising and training, and personal advice and assistance to Members.

IT development: For the Members' Declarations, the IT application affected was E-Portal, already known to Members for their various administrative matters. E-Portal was adapted to allow the automatic publication of Declarations on the Members' profile pages. The extended obligation for publication of meetings was implemented in the MEP Only application, which is used, *inter alia*, for written questions.

This application also connects the meeting publication data with legislative databases (ITER and OEIL), one of the features required by the reform.

Awareness raising and training: DG PRES sent a complete easy-to-read guide to all Members twice: first after the adoption of the new Code of Conduct, and a second time, after the entry into force of the new Rules. Relevant Intranet pages were updated, with FAQ sheets. Furthermore in 2023:

- the Members' Administration Unit organised 23 training/informative sessions: six presentations for Political Groups or National Party Delegations, 12 individual on-demand sessions for Members, and six online sessions for APAs, totalling 450 participants,
- the Transparency Unit delivered 46 bespoke training sessions on the new rules Governing the Participation of Interest Representatives at events held in Parliament to Political Groups staff, APAs and Parliament staff. Additionally, information about the rules and accompanying guidelines were included in all regular internal training and information sessions on the Transparency Register.

Individual assistance: between November 2023 and February 2024, the Members' Administration Unit answered several hundred queries by email or by phone, and helped Members, in person, to fulfil their new obligations. This personalised assistance was essential to guarantee full compliance by the beginning of 2024. The Transparency Unit provided, in 2023, extensive helpdesk assistance with verifying the status of the interest representatives concerned on the Transparency Register to other Parliament services, Members and their offices with a view to foster best practices for the proper implementation of the rules.

3. Which measures and steps has DG PRES introduced in 2023 to prioritize trust-based regulation and implementing measures over reporting requirements?

The underlying philosophy of the Code of Conduct for Members is that they are personally responsible for the content of their declarations. There is no mandate to investigate or check the content and there is no legal basis to ask for proof or supporting documents.

DG PRES provides advice and helps Members to comply with the requirements of the Code of Conduct. A "general plausibility check" is performed to guarantee that the declaration is correctly filled in with the required level of detail.

A monitoring of the compliance rate is in place, to make sure Members submit all mandatory declarations. Members approaching the statutory deadlines receive reminders, together with an offer for assistance. By doing so, a 100 % compliance rate was reached. Awareness-raising sessions and training sessions also help build a trust-based regulation and implementation.

4. DG Presidency was also involved in reform of the Code of Conduct for MEPs, what are the actions taken by the administration in 2023 to reinforce the tools to fight against foreign interference (point 12 of President's 14-point plan) in view of the European elections in 2024?

Parliament takes very seriously any attempt to target the institution or its Members with disinformation or any actions aimed at misrepresenting their positions. Thanks to new EU legal and policy initiatives and strategies and structures inside the administration, Parliament services were prepared to tackle the challenges that are disinformation and information manipulation ahead of the European elections.

Already prior to the 2019 European elections, the Secretary-General set up a dedicated intra-service task force against disinformation. Its mission is to coordinate the work of Parliament services against disinformation and liaise with other EU institutions and partners, as appropriate. The task force intensified its work in 2023 in preparation of the 2024 elections.

As underlined in plenary resolutions, the most effective measure against disinformation is often proactive communication about Parliament's work and the elections.

This is particularly important, since many disinformation narratives aim to delegitimise elections and democracy as a system. Parliament's most powerful tool against disinformation is its positive, factual communication of its work, (see also reply to question 45 and for the general strategy against disinformation, see reply to question 46). The EP's communication service informed the public about the European Parliament's decisions and procedures via press releases (4 213) and through 2 517 posts on its various social media channels, as well as 523 Instagram stories.

In addition, and to learn from national experiences, Parliament paid close attention to reports about disinformation techniques and trends, and possible influence operations occurring during European national elections.

Parliament's services, especially DGs SAFE, ITEC and COMM, cooperated with EU institutions and Member State authorities in the months preceding the elections, to prepare for different scenarios relating to disinformation, cyberattacks and hybrid threats. As an example, Parliament's services hosted, in December 2023, a meeting for members of the EEAS-led Rapid Alert System against disinformation, the Council Horizontal Working Party on Enhancing Resilience and Countering Hybrid Threats and the European Cooperation Network on Elections to discuss insights and prepare for possible foreign interference-related threats.

Parliament's services also offered internal training and briefings on disinformation for staff in all relevant DGs (22 occasions) and organised 140 external briefings for the general public and specific audiences, such as media, civil society, teachers and students, multipliers, fact-checkers, together.eu volunteers and youth groups. In total, disinformation related awareness raising activities reached over 7 500 participants, coming from all Member States.

In the fight against foreign interference, Parliament's services (DG SAFE) held in 2023 58 awareness raising briefings for Members and staff and created videos and a series of flyers for counter-intelligence awareness in the Parliament.

In cooperation with the Council, Commission and EEAS, DG SAFE developed an eLearning course on Counter-Intelligence to promote awareness on Foreign Interference. Collaboration was also extended to a series of webinars to train staff on how to avoid interference attempts.

Parliament's security organigramme was further updated, with a view to strengthening its conditions to access EU Classified Information by identifying the positions in the administration that require a security clearance. An online version of the necessary security briefing for access to EU classified information is currently in production.

Moreover, in order for Parliament to have the capacity to process and ensure the security and safety of its high number of events, the services are developing an "early security and safety warning tool", which will allow a first assessment of all events with external participants on Parliament's premises in light of the potential security and safety risks, including information security.

A special team takes actions to prevent, detect, and neutralise technical surveillance technologies, commonly known as 'bugs'.

For the new mandate, a Welcome Kit for Members was produced by DG SAFE, in order to raise awareness on foreign interference and disinformation and present available services, such as briefings on the topic. An APA induction course with a dedicated part on security, including information security, was also created. Moreover, with the start of the new parliamentary term, training sessions on foreign interference and espionage will be offered to all Members.

According to its mandate and the 14-point plan on strengthening Parliament's integrity, independence and accountability, Parliament's service (DG SAFE) is reinforcing its constant cooperation with the Member States' security and intelligence authorities, on all issues affecting security, including the fight against foreign interference.

Parliament's administration also boosted its cybersecurity and resilience against cyberattacks. (See more in the reply to question 54).

As expected and prepared for, EU services observed an increase in information manipulation incidents during this period, including examples reported by the European Digital Media Observatory such as attempts seeking to attack the integrity of the election process, discouraging people to vote and distorting the public debate around the elections. However, services did not detect any major information manipulation attempt capable of disrupting or posing a significant threat to the elections in the days leading up to them, the key voting days 6-9 June or the immediate post-elections phase.

Qatargate and its aftermath shone a spotlight on the fight against foreign interference. After the reform, the Advisory Committee on the Conduct of Members began to also handle cases linked to foreign interference.

Some of the implemented reforms address relations with foreign interlocutors, like extension of the obligation to publish meetings with third country representatives, and the strengthened rules and monitoring of unofficial groupings, including so-called friendship groups.

5. How many cases in the Parliament were investigated by OLAF in 2023? On what issues? In 2023 has OLAF sent Parliament any requests to conduct inspections in the offices or access the electronic devices and servers of the Members? If so, what has been Parliament's response? Was there any whistle-blower case recorded in 2023? Was there any investigation opened or was any referred to OLAF or EPPO?

In 2023, OLAF investigated 15 cases involving Parliament. The investigations concerned Members' social and financial obligations (parliamentary assistance), possible misconduct by staff members (including APAs) and possible irregularities by political parties and groups.

Parliament did not receive that year any request from OLAF to conduct inspections in the offices or access the electronic devices and servers of the Members.

With regard to whistleblowing, the new internal rules adopted by the Bureau on 20 November 2023 entered into force on 1 December 2023. Only one case of whistleblowing was recorded for 2023, which concerned compliance with statutory obligations by an APA. The administration has opened disciplinary proceedings in that regard and the investigation was not referred to OLAF or EPPO.

6. What measures have been taken to check that the vehicles used by group chair persons are used solely for activities related to their duties as such?

Vehicles are assigned to the Chairs of the political groups on the basis of Bureau decision of 30 November 2011 on the rules governing transport arrangements for Members in the European Parliament's places of work, and in particular Article 2, paragraph 1, thereof, which stipulates that '*Official cars shall be assigned on a permanent basis to [...] each political group chair, who may use them in connection with the activities of their political group.*'

The use of official cars by Members, including Chairs of the political groups, must comply with the rules and conditions stipulated in the above Bureau decision.

7. Missions by the President: which missions outside the EP's three locations (Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg) were undertaken by the President in 2023? In the cases where a private flight was chartered, for what costs was it chartered and what justification was given for not taking the regular flight operators? For missions outside the EU: what was the purpose of the mission and who accompanied the President and in which function?

Missions by the President: which missions outside the EP's three locations (Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg) were undertaken by the President in 2023?

1. **06-07 January:** Bavaria
2. **19-20 January:** Davos
3. **20-23 January:** Valletta & Hamrun
4. **26-27 January:** Madrid
5. **02-03 February:** Dublin
6. **16-17 February:** Rome
7. **03-04 March:** Lviv
8. **09-10 March:** Helsinki
9. **17-19 March:** Valletta
10. **24-26 March:** Boston
11. **30-31 March:** The Hague
12. **24-25 April:** Prague
13. **26-27 April:** Copenhagen
14. **05-07 May:** London
15. **14 May:** Aachen
16. **15-17 May:** Attard & Tal-Qroqq
17. **19-20 May:** Lisbon
18. **20-21 May:** Chişinău
19. **24-25 May:** Frankfurt
20. **25-26 May:** Vienna
21. **28-29 May:** Milan
22. **29-30 May:** Bratislava
23. **31 May – 01 June:** Chişinău
24. **09-11 June:** St. Julian's
25. **15-17 June:** Lisbon & Braga
26. **19-20 June:** Zagreb
27. **22-24 June:** Rome
28. **30 June – 02 July:** Helsinki
29. **06-10 September:** Tokyo & Kyoto
30. **16-19 September:** New York
31. **20-23 September:** Floriana & Valletta
32. **26-27 September:** Split
33. **30 September – 01 October:** Nicosia
34. **04-06 October:** Granada
35. **06-09 October:** Swieqi
36. **13 October:** Tel Aviv, Kfar Aza, Re'im
37. **23 October:** Berlin
38. **27-30 October:** Valletta
39. **30-31 October:** Paris
40. **31 October – 02 November:** Msida & Paola
41. **09-10 November:** Berlin
42. **01-02 December:** Lisbon
43. **03-06 December:** Caserta, Lecce, Catanzaro, Palermo, Rome

In the cases where a private flight was chartered, for what costs was it chartered and what justification was given for not taking the regular flight operators?

Air taxis are authorised when no commercial alternatives can be found to fit agenda or security constraints

- **31 May – June 01:** Chişinău: Shared chartered flight with delegations from the European Council, Belgium & Luxembourg for the inbound flight due to the national authorities' decision to close the airport in Chişinău to commercial flights for security reasons linked to the European Political Community Meeting. Cost: EUR 916.67 per person;
- **13 October:** Tel Aviv, Kfar Aza Re'im: Shared chartered flight with the delegation from the European Commission, due to the cancellation of all commercial flights to Israel in the aftermath of the terrorist attack on 07 October. Cost: EUR 8 000 per person.

For missions outside the EU: what was the purpose of the mission and who accompanied the President and in which function?

- **19-20 January:** Davos: Address to the World Economy Forum [3 Members of Cabinet];
- **03-04 March:** Lviv: Meetings with the President of Ukraine and other Ukrainian leaders, wreath-laying ceremony at the Memorial to Fallen Soldiers, Participation in the United for Justice Conference and Town Hall discussion with President Zelenskyy and students at the Ivan Franco National University [2 Members of Cabinet];
- **24-26 March:** Boston: Keynote Address at the John F. Kennedy Jr. Forum at Harvard University [1 Member of Cabinet];
- **05-06 May:** London: Meeting with the Speaker of the House of Commons [4 Members of Cabinet] and Attendance at the Coronation of HM King Charles III [3 Members of Cabinet];
- **20-21 May:** Chişinău: Meetings with the President & the Prime Minister, and keynote address at the 'European Moldova Assembly Rally' [2 Members of Cabinet];
- **31 May – June 01:** Chişinău: Participation in the European Political Community Meeting [3 Members of Cabinet];
- **06-10 September:** Tokyo & Kyoto: Participation in the Meeting of the G7 Speakers [3 Members of Cabinet];
- **16-19 September:** New York: UN General Assembly; Meetings during the UN High Level Week; Speech at Columbia University [3 Members of Cabinet];
- **13 October:** Tel Aviv, Kfar Aza, Re'im: Visit to Israel on the invitation of the Speaker of the Knesset, including meetings with the President and the Speaker of the Knesset; Visit to Kfar Aza; Visit to Re'im & Visit to Ichlov Medical Centre. [1 Member of Cabinet].

8. What was the impact of inflation on the 2023 budget of the European Parliament and was the budget sustainable? What actions did the administration take in that line?

In 2023, Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine continued to impact global events. However, unlike in 2022, the high level of inflation in the Euro area, which had peaked at 10.6 % in October 2022, gradually declined to an annual rate of 5.4 % for 2023. Additionally, terrorist attacks on Israel in October 2023, followed by the subsequent military operations in the Gaza Strip, further exacerbated the overall geopolitical situation at the end of 2023.

Parliament's estimates for 2023, approved on 7 April 2022, were based on salary indexation forecasts of 6 % for 2022 and 3.7 % for 2023. On 8 September 2022, the Commission revised these forecasts to 6.9 % for 2022 and 2.6 % for 2023. An additional EUR 3 438 134 was included in the 2023 draft budget through Amending Letter 1/2023, which was subsequently approved as part of the 2023 budget on 23 November 2022.

In the spring of 2023, following the application of Chapter 2 of Annex XI of the Staff Regulations, an automatic salary adjustment of +1.7 %, prompted by high inflation in the second half of 2022, was implemented (effective from 1 January 2023). In early September, the Commission sent a note to all EU institutions, proposing to present, if necessary, a draft amending budget (4/2023) to cover any budgetary deficit resulting from the 1.7 % salary increase for the full year of 2023 and the difference between the last forecast for annual indexation in 2023 (2.6 %) and the updated forecast (2.7 %). This increase was to be paid retroactively from 1 July 2023 (with a six-month impact in 2023).

Parliament's administration reviewed the execution of the budget lines subject to statutory salary indexation and concluded that no additional appropriations were necessary within the context of the amending budget mentioned above. This forecast was confirmed by Eurostat in late October 2023, with the final annual increase in remuneration for 2023 amounting to 2.7 %.

Regarding contracts subject to indexation, the additional costs were financed through internal reallocations, achieved by postponing projects and making savings. This process was efficiently managed by the "Budget Taskforce," which involved all Directorates-General (DGs) and facilitated a quick revision of priorities.

In 2023, 19 C-transfers were approved in accordance with Articles 31 and 49 of the Financial Regulation, amounting to EUR 77 986 378 (3.47 % of final appropriations). In addition, the President authorised 8 P-transfers of appropriations under Article 29(1) of the Financial Regulation, for a total of EUR 9 835 982 (0.4 % of final appropriations). One third of these transfers were used to neutralise the effects of inflation in the Parliament's budget, in respect of staff and Members remuneration and external contract subject to indexation.

More detailed information on C and P transfers executed in 2023, broken down by budget item and chapter, is provided in Annexes 1, 2, and 3 of Parliament's Report on Budgetary and Financial Management 2023, accessible via the following link:

www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/fr/cont/discharge-procedure/discharge-2023?tabCode=european-parliament

9. Can you explain the "mopping-up" procedure, and its intended purpose, including potential savings or efficiency gains? Can you indicate how much money was spent in the last month of the budgetary year 2023 and what were the funds spent on?

The mopping-up transfer seeks to finance identified priority areas from unused appropriations where no financing could be foreseen in the budget, and with a view to ensure sound financial management and avoiding budget increases in an environment of budgetary constraints. All budget items can potentially be involved to be either a donor or a receiving item.

The justifications for appropriations being partially unused are described more in detail in the transfer requests published in the BUDG meeting dossiers. The origin is in most cases that Parliament's budget is *de facto* established at the beginning of the preceding year, based on the need to comply with legal obligations and on the most accurate estimates available at that moment.

During the course of implementation however, fluctuations are probable, and they are more likely in some areas (briefly summarized as follows):

- in Members and staff expenditure: fluctuations in estimated expenditure and real outturn (lower than planned number of recruitments, lower number of applicants for benefits, lower than estimated increase in salaries, etc.);
- in matters of infrastructure, logistics, IT, etc.: postponement of projects, delay in awarding and/or implementing contracts, etc.);
- in matters of political and communication activities: postponements, cancellations, lower number of participants, etc..

The average rate of unused appropriations before mopping-up does not exceed on average 3%, which underlines the overall accuracy of the budgeting process. In addition, all decisions with respect to mopping-up transfers have always been duly taken by Parliament, in its capacity as budget authority.

In 2023 there was no “mopping-up” procedure, the ratio of unspent funds at the end of the year 2023 was extremely low, which did not allow for an end-of the year transfer.

10. Which measures did DG FINS plan or execute in 2023 to reduce bureaucratic burden and increase assistance on clarifying rules with regards to financial allowances for MEPs, assistants, and staff, e.g. in terms of documentation, overhaul of systems, less control loops, increased digitalisation or to reduce undue delays?

Reduced bureaucratic burden by increased digitisation:

In 2023, DG FINS further pursued its strategic goal to develop the e-Portal as the single digital platform for Members’ interactions with Parliament’s administration relating to all their financial, social and administrative matters, and to fully integrate it with the back-office applications used by the administrative services for Members’ requests to be treated faster, more smoothly and efficiently. This in turn enables the allocation of more resources for providing personalised and tailor-made advice and information to Members.

DG FINS further spent a significant part of the year preparing the necessary changes resulting from the new Implementing Measures for the Statute for Members (“IMMS”) adopted by the Bureau in September 2023 and which entered into force on 16 July 2024. In particular, many new electronic forms were deployed or substantially changed in the e-Portal for Members application.

In 2023, DG FINS also invested in improving the back-office applications, mainly PAM-ASSIST and PAM-ITEMS, chiefly to proceed faster with payments to Members and adapt to the changes introduced by the new IMMS and the change of legislature in 2024.

Moreover, most of the applications managing Members’ salaries, pensions and General Expenditure Allowance (GEA) have been replaced in 2023 by new applications based on SAP technology. Further changes are planned for 2024 and 2025.

Members are strongly encouraged to use the e-Portal in order to significantly reduce the processing time of their requests and for faster payments, as the e-forms and back-office applications are integrated.

As regards the assistance concerning their financial entitlements, Members were informed by Quaestors’ Notice 10/2023 of the launch of a new chatbot (“PAMbot”) to assist them and their staff, and in particular their paying agents, with questions related to local parliamentary assistance. The PAMbot is available on Parliament’s intranet and on the extranet for paying agents (TIPAnet).

In addition, Members were informed by Quaestors' Notice 22/2023 about a new functionality in the e-Portal to consult data on leave of their APAs and trainees.

Increased assistance to Members

Quaestors' Notice 24/2023 informed Members of the possibility to book via the MEPs' Portal personalised individual information sessions on the management of their financial and social entitlements.

These sessions also included practical and personalised guidance, simulations of transitional allowance and pensions rights, and on the parliamentary assistance envelope with a view to anticipating any end of mandate costs and ensuring the financial and legal feasibility of potential changes. A total of 381 individual info sessions were organised in 2023.

Comprehensive information on Members' financial and social entitlements is also included in the regularly updated brochure "Frequently Asked Questions", which is available on Parliament's intranet in e-format and in PDF, and as a printed booklet in the MEPs' Portal in all 24 languages.

Moreover, in 2023, for the first time, the competent services organised information sessions for Members' paying agents. The aim was to explain the relevant rules and procedures, and answer questions.

After the revision of the rules relating to the GEA by the Bureau in October 2022, Parliament's competent services prepared a guide offering advice on good practices for carrying out voluntary bookkeeping and auditing of the GEA. It is aimed at Members as well as auditors and accountants designated by Members for that purpose and is available on the relevant intranet page and on TIPAnet. This guide also includes a model table that Members may use to create the annex to the voluntary declaration mentioned above, should they so wish. Members were informed by Quaestors' Notice 29/2023 about the management possibilities offered to Members in relation with the GEA.

Already in 2023, DG FINS started preparations for the change of legislative term in 2024. With Quaestors' Notice 21/2023, Members were informed in July 2023 about the measures to be taken with regard to their personal staff at the end of their mandate so as to allow them to plan well in advance and to avoid unexpected expenses and possible recovery of any unduly paid amounts.

11. Which measures did DG FINS introduce to reduce the backlog of reimbursements for travel expenses of Members in 2023? Can you specify the (direct and indirect) costs related to the late reimbursements? Which measures to speed up reimbursements did you introduce?

The increase of the backlog during 2023 was caused by a higher amount of reimbursement requests (ca. 10 % to previous year) as Members' travel continued to increase after the end of the pandemic in the previous years.

DG FINS continued in 2023 its efforts for further automation and simplification as well as for more digitisation in relation to the treatment and reimbursement of Members' travel expenses.

In particular, the automation of the reimbursements of travel and subsistence expenses applied to airline tickets purchased by Parliament's travel agency and to daily attendances was extended in autumn 2023 to the Charter trains for the Strasbourg sessions. Technical improvements were implemented in summer 2023 to facilitate the deduction from reimbursements to Members of the invoices advanced by Parliament but not eligible for reimbursement.

Finally, after a thorough risk analysis, several simplifications were introduced in the handling process to enable reimbursements in a timely manner. This allowed for an important reduction of the treatments backlog in 2024. In turn, more emphasis is placed on ex post controls based on risk assessments.

While late reimbursements do not entail direct costs (such as e.g. default interests), it is not possible for the competent unit to quantify the potential indirect costs associated with these delays.

12. How many objections by m-Members did you receive in 2023 for decisions concerning travel reimbursements and other office related financial requests and can you quantify the main reasons for these objections?

Most of the objections concerning Members social and financial entitlements are solved via direct communication between the Member concerned and the staff member treating the file, in order to clarify the facts and avoid misunderstandings.

The table below details the number of complaints submitted to the Secretary-General pursuant to Article 72 of the IMMS then in force per entitlement concerned.

Financial entitlement concerned	Number of complaints to the Secretary-General
Parliamentary assistance	8
Travel expenses	1
General expenditure allowance	3
Daily allowances	1
Pensions	2

Item 400

From the claims introduced by non-attached Members under budget item 400 for political and information activities, claims for an amount of EUR 104 443 were refused or withdrawn on request. The main reasons for refusal or withdrawal were the non-compliance with the requirement that an activity has to be connected to the European Union’s political activities, the lack of the required visibility (appearance of name, status of non-attached Member or disclaimer) and errors in or lack of supporting documents. No non-attached Member introduced a formal objection against the refusal decisions of the administration.

For Members affiliated to Political Groups, the latter manage the funds related to budget item 400 expenses allocated to them in accordance with the principles of indirect management and, as such, independently administer their financial workflows.

13. Is DG FINS working on a risk-based approach for new implementing measures instead of additional rules to decrease administrative burden for members and their offices, staff and the administration themselves?

The adoption and the amendment of the Implementing Measures for the Statute for Members of the European Parliament (IMMS) fall within the competence of the Parliament’s Bureau. On 11 September 2023, the Bureau, based on a proposal from an ad-hoc Bureau working group, adopted a comprehensive set of amendments to the IMMS, which entered into force at the start of the 10th legislative term on 16 July 2024. As mandated by the President, the revision was conducted taking due account of transparency, accountability, simplification and sound financial management, also bearing in mind the principle of the independence of the parliamentary mandate and the importance of avoiding unnecessary administrative burden for Members’ offices and Parliament’s services.

In accordance with the Financial Regulation and the Internal Rules governing the implementation of the European Parliament's budget, DG FINS has established an internal control system where every operation undergoes initiation tasks (i.e. financial and operational preparatory tasks), followed by ex-ante verification and validation by the authorising officer responsible.

The ex-ante verification approach is tailored taking into account several factors, including the nature of the transactions, risk analysis, cost-effectiveness considerations, and outcomes from previous controls. This approach is adjusted regularly to account for changes in risk levels, results of controls, shifts in the control environment and updates to the legal framework, including modifications to the IMMS.

In addition, DG FINS put in place ex post controls, aimed at detecting and correcting errors and irregularities in operations after they have been authorised. These controls are also determined following a risk analysis, with cost-effectiveness and performance in mind. However, with the entry into force of the new IMMS on 16 July 2024, operations authorised under these new rules may be subject to ex post controls later in 2024 or beginning 2025.

14. What is your assessment on the implementation of the new measures, do you think that the significant budgetary variations are due to this reform? What would be the causes of these variations (EP AAR, pages 29-31)?

The amendments to the Implementing Measures for the Statute for Members of the European Parliament (IMMS) were adopted by the Bureau on 11 September 2023 and entered into force at the start of the 10th legislative term on 16 July 2024, and therefore had no impact on the execution of the budget for the financial year 2023.

However, it is true that DG FINS shows in its 2023 annual activity report a net budget surplus of EUR 33.9 million, primarily resulting from:

- the use of assigned revenue on items 4020, 4030, 4000, 4220 amounting to EUR 20.5 million to cover current year expenditure on the same items, thus resulting in the release of an equivalent amount of current year appropriation. The assigned revenue comes mainly from reimbursements by European political parties and foundations of unused contributions and grants received from the EP, as well as repayments by political groups following the final calculation at year-end of the distribution of the Budget Article 400 funds among the political groups and the non-attached Members;
- a surplus of EUR 5.1 million on item 4220 "Parliamentary assistance expenses", of which EUR 4 million were transferred to DG PERS, with which DG FINS shares the management of item 4220, to cover an equivalent deficit. It is current practice for the two DGs to reallocate the funds between the sub-items during the execution of the budget and this has no impact on the overall budget consumption for item 4220. The remaining surplus results from the under-use by Members of their parliamentary assistance envelope;
- a surplus of EUR 2.8 million related to item 1006 "General expenditure allowance", which results mainly from the Bureau's decision on 13 February 2023 not to increase the amount of the general expenditure allowance;
- a surplus of EUR 2.4 million on item 4020 "Funding of European political parties". The funding available for the financial year 2023 under Article 402 of Parliament's adopted budget amounted to EUR 46 million. In accordance with the amended Regulation 1141/2014, the annual funding is calculated as the minimum amount between the amount for contributions requested by the European political parties, the amount allocated according to the distribution key and the amount of 90 % of the reimbursable expenditure from the parties' estimated budget. Therefore, as the total funding awarded by the Bureau to the European Political Parties for the year 2023 (43.6 million EUR) was lower than the adopted budget, the surplus was made available for transfer;

- a surplus of EUR 1.5 million on item 1005 "Other travel expenses" is the result of lower spending levels with reimbursement of additional travel expenses and travel expenses incurred in the Member State of election on the basis of reimbursement claims introduced by the Members.

15. What measures has DG FINS implemented to ensure that the internal parliamentary rules on the reimbursement of travel expenses for local assistants comply with national labour laws and do not conflict with them?

Local assistants are hired by Members under private contracts subject to national law. These contracts are administered by a paying agent who is responsible for ensuring that national and Union law is properly complied with in respect of the contracts he or she manages.

The conditions for the defrayal by Parliament of the expenses incurred by Members in relation to such contracts, including travel expenses, are set out, in particular, in the Implementing Measures for the Statute for Members of the European Parliament ('IMMS').

In September 2023, the Bureau adopted new IMMS. The new rules, which entered into force on 16 July 2024, clearly state that the travel expenses of local assistants are defrayed by Parliament up to the minimum provided for by the applicable national law (see Article 30(15) IMMS).

16. What have been the greatest advances made in 2023 in the area of digitalization with a positive impact on administrative and budgetary efficiency and transparency? And to assist Members and their teams in fulfilling their mandate?

In 2023 Parliament made major efforts in the area of administrative digitalisation across the DGs to increase efficiency and transparency.

In the e-Portal for Members application, many new electronic forms have been deployed or substantially changed during 2023.

Digitalisation of workflows has significantly improved and the increased integration between e-forms in e-Portal and back-office applications used by the competent units allows for automatic integration of data, replacing manual encoding, thus reducing payment delays. Members are consistently encouraged to use the e-Portal.

The e-Portal application has also been adapted to comply with the new IMMS in force as from 16 July 2024. This application was also prepared for the change of term in order to help Members with the setup of their mandate (e.g. recruitment of accredited and local assistants, declaration of travel costs, consultation of data etc.).

Several declarations linked to integrity and transparency of Members as required by the Rules of Procedure (under the responsibility of DG Presidency) can now only be submitted through the e-Portal for Members and are then automatically published on the Europarl Website.

In 2023, regarding the management of claims submitted by non-attached Members under the 400 Article, DG FINS invested resources to enhance the in-house digital administrative software, which is integrated with the e-Portal, enabling a fully digital workflow. This 100 % digital process has led to significant improvements in file management and Members' follow-up. The digital workflow has proven to be an efficient administrative process, strengthening the security and archiving of documentation while ensuring faster and more transparent handling. DG FINS continues its long-term plan to offer more detailed information to non-attached Members through the e-Portal.

Finally, the Qualified Electronic Signature (QES) was implemented, which has the same legal value as a handwritten signature. The administration started to use QES to sign contractual documents. The utilisation of QES for signing these documents electronically will be mandatory as of 1 December 2024.

In 2023, the principal projects finalised by DG PERS that contributed to enhanced administrative efficiency and transparency include:

- Recruitment process for the different statutory populations;
- Reimbursement of expenses linked to annual medical check-ups;
- Declaration of marriage process to establish individual entitlements;
- Management of work shifts;
- Dashboard for payroll;
- Teleworking scheme;
- Management of 3rd language (art.45(2) Staff Regulations);
- Budget calculation reporting (Table with figures related to personnel movements per year (in-out) together with the average annual salary per grade);
- Management of pension rights transfers.

More specifically, digitalisation activities for the Members included:

- HR dashboard for Members in the ePortal: providing Members with immediate access to crucial working time information related to their APAs and trainees, thus facilitating better management and oversight;
- recruitment and management of APA contract lifecycle: a new IT solution was developed to provide a centralised tool for efficiently managing all administrative operations related to APA contracts, with access available to Members as well.

The implementation of Robotic Process Automation enhanced digitalisation and facilitated integration between different systems, eliminating repetitive manual tasks. The automation mainly focused on encoding and modifying APA contracts, verifying data to detect inconsistencies between salary and HR software, validating financial reports, extracting financial data for analysis, consolidating training course lists for distribution to various entities, automating the exchange of information regarding mandatory medical check-up results for recruitment, and automatically retrieving and uploading blood test results.

Concerning DG COMM's responsibilities, the following tools could be mentioned:

- a Media Intelligence Hub was launched in December 2023 allowing Members and EP Staff to access products prepared by the Media Intelligence Unit, and including news agency wires and news summaries;
- for sponsored groups of visitors, the declarations of expenditure incurred during the visit can be submitted electronically since 1.1.2024, allowing for transparency and reducing the administrative workload for both the heads of the visitors groups and the administration.

In 2023, DG LINC's work on the joint procurement procedure on access to multilingual videoconferencing platform was continued. Chambers of all national parliaments were invited to participate and contributed to the development of the technical specifications. A joint contract will allow participating parliaments to access quality videoconferencing and remote simultaneous services in a sound organisational environment and a competitive price.

In 2023, DG LINC introduced two new EP Events software modules designed to enhance efficiency in event management, namely a seat-planning module and a bridge with the V-Pass application.

The seat-planning module visually maps out the seating arrangement, making it easier to manage last-minute changes, maximise space efficiency and ensure priority seating without confusion or errors. The V-Pass instantly transmits attendee data from EP Events to DG SAFE. Real-time updates ensure that accreditation records remain updated, prevent delays and avoid critical errors that could pose security risks.

The European Youth Event (2023) marked the first large-scale implementation of QR access control via the EP Events Gate app for approximately 8,000 attendees across 32 separate stations. It increased administrative efficiency by speeding up check-in processes, reducing the need for manual verification, and minimising the risk of human error.

17. Are there any planned projects or major upgrades to improve your digital systems? And to integrate systems with other EU institutions for budget savings or better coordination?

In terms of digital system improvements in the field of financial management, during 2023, most applications managing MEP entitlements (with the exception of parliamentary assistance and travel expenses) were replaced with a SAP solution based on its S4HANA platform as part of the HCM (Human Capital for MEP) project. HCM introduces electronic workflows, paperless processes, automated transactions, and intelligent reporting for Members' salaries, allowances, and pensions. Furthermore, it is fully integrated with Parliament's financial management system, which uses the same SAP platform and technologies.

Currently, a major upgrade of the SAP platform used for the Parliament's computerised financial management system and for applications related to Members' payroll, is underway. The current SAP version is from 2019, and the upgrade to the 2023 version will be fully operational by September 2025.

As part of further digital improvements, two projects are planned: one to replace the external Members pensions fund and Members' health insurance applications with SAP solutions integrated into the current EP SAP platform, and another for feasibility studies to improve Members' local parliamentary assistance and Members' ePortal systems.

Regarding integration with other institutions, there are plans to integrate the European Commission's tendering and procurement tool with Parliament's financial management system.

DG FINS plans together with DG ITEC, as the service provider for development, to enlarge the scope of the e-Portal for Members as the single digital platform for Members' interaction with Parliament administration for their financial, social and administrative affairs (any legislative matter is excluded). Currently, the e-Portal application includes e-forms regarding the Members' social and financial rights (DG FINS) and also some e-forms from DG PRES and DG PERS. Further DGs are interested to join this project.

DG PERS is working on several major projects:

- completing the investment in the solutions for recruitment of officials and temporary agents;
- investing in the digitalisation of processes to manage the pensioner population;
- continuing the technological alignment with Parliament's corporate standards and cybersecurity framework;
- digitalising the missions management process (eMISS).

With a view to transitioning to a more integrated interinstitutional approach, Parliament is currently engaging with the European Commission on enhancing the digitalisation of Paymaster Office (PMO) and European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) services.

The corporate IT system Pericles, several tools of which are currently used by Parliament for booking and managing meetings and related services, is based on outdated technology.

DG LINC has planned to further converge into a central online event space within the corporate IT system. With all event venues available to Members and meeting organisers (e.g. exhibition spaces, conference venues and catering spaces *inter alia*) housed under one system, it will become much simpler to access and book them. Furthermore, having a better overview of the availability of different venues will ensure smoother service to Members and a better range of options, as well as providing more structured information to the support services.

18. Please provide us with up-to-date information regarding possible misuse of allowances paid to Members', local and accredited assistants as well as EP officials respectively:

- How many investigations were carried out in 2023?
- Which allowances were involved?
- What amounts were at risk?
- What amounts were retracted?
- What were the results of these internal investigations?
- Can you divide the cases into occurrences per political group?

The following investigations were carried out in relation to the parliamentary assistance allowances (local and accredited), and the appropriations from budget Article 400:

- Investigations carried out in 2023: 7 concerning Members belonging to two political groups and non-attached Members;
- Allowances involved: 6 Parliamentary Assistance allowances (1 case concerned local assistants and 5 cases concerned APAs) and 1 Article 400 Budget (financing of political groups and non-attached Members);
- Amounts at risk: EUR 2 896 178;
- Amounts recovered: EUR 49.082,54;
- Results of these internal investigations: 6 recovery procedures.

Following investigations were carried out by the Parliament's "Administrative Inquiries and Disciplinary Procedures Service" in relation to disciplinary matters:

- Investigations carried out in 2023: 4;
- Allowances involved: 2 expatriation allowances and 2 medical expenses;
- Amounts at risk: EUR 141 526 for the expatriation allowances; EUR 10 126,05 for the medical expenses;
- Amounts recovered: medical expenses have been recovered by the PMO; for the expatriation allowances, the cases concerned are currently being analysed by DG FINS for possible recovery;
- Results of these internal investigations: 1 reprimand, 1 written warning; 2 procedures still ongoing.

19. What were the total costs of EP prevention policies in the areas such as anti-harassment and whistle-blowers' protection implemented in 2023 (information campaigns, trainings) compared to the total costs in these areas for (if any) EP's internal procedures and possible court cases? The Whistleblower Directive adopted in 2019 by the Parliament affords better protection than the internal rules currently applicable to parliamentary staff. When will the Parliament revise its internal rules to bring them fully in line with the protections and standards contained in the EU directive and implement the Court's ruling about the EP's whistleblower protection being insufficient?

In 2023, Parliament organised a total of 82 training courses on ethics, anti-harassment and whistle-blowers' protection for Members, EP staff and managers. The total cost of these courses was EUR 166 825.

No costs for anti-harassment campaigns were recorded in 2023, nor did the work of the harassment committees generate additional costs. The payment of legal fees to victims in cases of harassment amounts to EUR 12 286,16.

As regards whistleblowing, the General Court ruled (T-793/22, TU v Parliament) that the EP internal whistleblowing rules then in force were adequate as regards the protection to be given (paragraphs 157 to 162). In the case at stake, the General Court also stated that the inadequacy of the protective measures adopted by Parliament was not due to the internal rules, but to their application (paragraph 158). As for the costs, Parliament was ordered to pay the applicant EUR 10 000 as compensation for the non-material damage suffered.

On November 2023, the Bureau adopted new internal rules, which entered into force on 1 December 2023, to clarify the duty of staff members to report serious irregularities and further increase and guarantee the protection of their legitimate interests and the confidentiality of the information provided. A new system to allow whistleblowers to submit notifications online was developed as September 2023 for an estimated cost of approximately EUR 25 000. The link can be found on Parliament’s intranet under <https://epintranet.in.ep.europa.eu/home/browse-as/human-resources/rules-rights/staff-conduct-rights-obligations/rights-duties-officials-apa.html>.

20. What was the minimum and maximum amount of travel expenses reimbursed to an MEP in 2023?

For a single Member exercising his/her mandate during the whole of 2023, the minimum amount of total travel expenses (excluding daily allowances) reimbursed was EUR 1 963.57 while the maximum amount was EUR 179 846.75.

21. What is the most up to date status of the deficit of the pension fund (what was the deficit in 2023 in comparison with 2022)? What was the highest, lowest and average pension paid from the voluntary pension fund in 2023? What decisions and actions have been taken to reduce the actuarial deficit of the voluntary pension fund? Since the foundation of the fund, how many members left the fund and had their contributions paid back in 2023?

On 12 June 2023, the Bureau adopted the following measures, effective from 1 July 2023, to reduce the actuarial deficit of the fund:

- a) reduce the nominal amount of pension entitlements by 50 % for all beneficiaries;
- b) freeze the yearly indexation of the pension amounts for all beneficiaries;
- c) raise the retirement age from 65 to 67 years for beneficiaries not yet in pension;
- d) introduce the possibility of a voluntary and definitive withdrawal from the Scheme until 31 December 2023 by receiving already paid contributions plus a one-off lump sum final payment.

This decision had a considerable effect to improve the sustainability of the Fund. The estimated actuarial deficit decreased from EUR 310 million at the end of 2022, to EUR 99 million at the end of 2023.

The highest, lowest and average pensions including survivors and orphans for the period before and after the 50 % pension reduction were as follows:

Period	Max	Min	Average
2023 January-June	EUR 7 133.58	EUR 134.19	EUR 2 216.65
2023 July-December	EUR 3 627.43	EUR 67.10	EUR 1 107.85

The number of Members and former Members who left the fund is as follows:

Year	Number of withdrawals
1995	7
1996	3
1997	1
1998	85
1999	39
2000	8
2001	5
2002	3
2003	8
2004	29
2005	30
2006	10
2007	13
2008	8
2009	68
2010	7
2011	2
2012	1
2013	1
2014	6
2015	2
2016	3
2017	0
2018	1
2019	0
2020	0
2021	2
2022	4
2023 January-June	2
2023 July-December (including receipt of the one-off lump sum final payment)	58
Total	406

22. How many Members have left office in 2023 (in comparison to 2022)? How many of those have notified the Parliament of their new employment after leaving office? Have these notifications been checked? If yes, how and by whom? In how many cases were the notified activities found to influence, or enable others to influence, EU policy or decision-making?

In 2023, 25 Members left Parliament (compared to 30 Members in 2022). Most departures were consequences of national elections and the forming of new governments in Member States. Such posts do not require a notification to Parliament.

There are two types of notifications required under the relevant rules:

According to the Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament regarding Integrity and Transparency, former Members who engage in professional lobbying or representational activities directly linked to the EU decision-making process should inform Parliament thereof. The President sends a letter to all Members leaving the Parliament reminding them to comply with the relevant rules on lobbying and representational activities following the end of their mandate. Compliance with the relevant rules is monitored (registration to the Transparency Register, access to Parliament and other facilities provided to former Members), also in relation to the six months cooling-off period provided for by the Bureau decision of 17 April 2023 on former Members.

In 2023, one former Member notified the President of their new employment, linked to the EU decision-making process.

In addition, pursuant to Article 49 IMMS (former Article 46 IMMS), Members who apply for or receive a transitional allowance need to notify Parliament in case they assume a mandate in another parliament or take public office. In these cases, the corresponding salary is offset against the transitional allowance. In 2023, 19 departing Members applied for the transitional allowance and of those, 11 included a notification of their new professional activity.

The responsible services check the notifications with a view to determining the type of notification, and the right to the transitional allowance and corresponding amount. In 2024, DG FINS plans to carry out a thorough ex-post control with regard to the respect by former Members of the receipt of the transitional allowance, following the large number of Members who left Parliament after the 2024 European Elections.

The ex-post verification was initiated with a kick-off meeting between the Budget, Verification and Procurement Unit ("BVPU") (entity performing the ex-post control) and the Members' Salaries and Social Entitlements Unit (operational entity paying the Transition Allowance to Members) on 6 September 2024 and is still ongoing.

As of 14 November 2024, BVPU has verified 277 former MEPs and has sent interim findings to the operational unit. Several cases have already been analysed by the latter and closed on the BVPU side, since no incompatible positions were found. BVPU expects to have the conclusion document ready by mid-December.

23. Please provide us with figures regarding the costs of the 12 missions to Strasbourg in the 2023 financial year: a) Reimbursement of travel costs for EP staff; b) Reimbursement of travel costs for Accredited Parliamentary Assistants; c) Costs of charter train Thalys; d) Costs of transport of the "cantines"; e) Cost of external contractors; f) The total amount of all costs.

a) EP staff missions 2023

Total costs of travel: EUR 3 320 567

Total costs of daily subsistence allowance (DSA): EUR 6 042 330

Total costs of accommodation: EUR 6 136 968

b) APAs missions 2023

Total costs of travel: EUR 2 484 003

Total costs of daily allowances (DSA+ accommodation): EUR 7 075 921

c) The cost of the chartered Eurostar (ex-Thalys) trains to monthly commute to Strasbourg was EUR 4 334 601 in 2023.

It shall be noted that the costs for the chartered Eurostar trains are included in the amounts of reimbursement of travel costs to Strasbourg for different categories of travellers (Members, Parliamentary Assistants, Parliament staff, etc.).

d) Costs of transport of the ‘cantines’

The average cost for a part-session is about EUR 8 000, broken down as follows:

Transport costs: EUR 1 800

Handling costs (external movers): EUR 6 200

This represents an annual total cost of about EUR 96 000.

e) Costs of external contactors

1. Costs related to catering services

Parliament operates on a concession model, however Parliament covers the following costs related to catering services and maintenance, which amount to about EUR 21 000 for a part-session and are broken down as follows:

- water fountains maintenance and hygiene: EUR 7 400;
- in-room beverage service: EUR 1 900;
- maintenance of coffee machines: EUR 1 800;
- change of parts and maintenance cost linked to the session: EUR 1 800;
- provision, collection and washing of glasses near the fountains: EUR 8 100.

This represents an annual total cost of about EUR 252 000.

2. Costs of people transport

The average cost is about EUR 72 000 per part-session, which represents an annual total cost of about EUR 864 000. This covers the services provided by an external company complementing Parliament’s fleet, especially during rush hours.

f) Costs of external interpretation

As an additional information, Conference Interpreting Agents (ACIs) travel expenses to Strasbourg amounted to EUR 7 600 000 in 2023 (accommodation, travel expenses and daily subsistence allowances).

24. How many MEPs claim the transitional allowance? How many have another job alongside it? What is the total amount of transitional allowance over 2023?

Article 49 IMMS (former Article 46 IMMS) stipulates that when former Members who are entitled to the transitional allowance hold a mandate in another parliament or a public office, the salary to which they are entitled shall be offset against the transitional allowance.

In 2023, 19 former Members have applied for the transitional allowance out of which 11 Members had income from professional activities falling into one of the two categories above. Other professional activities are not notified to the responsible service in the context of the transitional allowance.

The total gross amount of the transitional allowance paid in 2023 was EUR 780 359.69.

25. In 2023, the European Parliament revised the rules on teleworking. What measures has the European Parliament taken to implement them? How has the European Parliament staff received these new rules, could you give us an overview?

In 2023, following the consultations with Staff Committee and other services, the Secretary-General adopted new teleworking rules that came into force in March 2024.

Parliament quickly adjusted its HRM teleworking module to the new teleworking arrangements introduced by the rules. This included, *inter alia*, the possibility for staff members to request 5 days of telework away from the place of employment and 10 days in cases of family circumstances such as those that could justify family leave. All actors in the approval chain were enabled to manage the relevant requests digitally. User guides illustrating how to introduce and manage requests were made accessible to staff members and managers on HRM Portal.

When it comes to communication, Parliament issued two notices to staff ahead of the entry into force of the new rules, updated the dedicated teleworking page and published two articles on the Newshound webpage. Guidelines on teleworking were issued in May 2024 to further detail the provisions laid down in the teleworking rules. These Guidelines were also the subject of a notice to staff and a Newshound publication.

Based on written reactions to the DG PERS Teleworking mailbox, the opinion of staff was overwhelmingly positive. Especially teleworking away from the place of employment and the special teleworking arrangements for colleagues with a disability or a family member with a disability are highly appreciated.

26. We are aware from the last discharge exercises that many DGs have difficulties to recruit staff for certain profiles to meet the services' needs. What changes are required to improve EPSO competitions and make recruitment easier? Which alternatives did DG PERS roll-out in its recruitment procedures in 2023 to attract specialised staff?

Setting up adequate and robust recruitment procedures ensures that Parliament's Directorates-General and services can recruit suitable candidates swiftly and efficiently.

For that purpose, EPSO would need to make the new competitions model (NCM) launched early 2023 operational and prove that it can deliver high-quality candidates swiftly and efficiently.

Now as before, Parliament stands ready to contribute to EPSO's competitions by providing the necessary resources in the form of subject-matter experts, selection board members, terminology experts and markers. Parliament's experts can, via their investment in this work, give input to *inter alia* the drafting of the competition notices and tests, thereby ensuring that Parliament's needs are properly reflected.

In early 2024, however, it became clear that EPSO could not continue working with its test provider and the contract in place was therefore terminated. To remedy that problem, EPSO has set up a new call for tenders and a new provider is expected to be operational mid-2025.

In the meantime, Parliament has been organising more and more specific competitions to recruit specialised staff with the skills that the institution needs. These competitions are either external and open to any EU citizen, or internal and open only to Parliament staff.

In 2023, Parliament completed the following specialist competitions (along with other competitions and selection procedures):

- an open competition for DG TRAD for Intercultural and Language Professionals (grade AD 5; 5 languages) featuring 61 successful candidates;
- two specialist internal competitions, one for DG PRES (Paralegal assistants grade AST 2/AST 3; 4 languages) with 12 successful candidates, and one for DG COMM (Data analysts grade AD 6) with 19 successful candidates.

Furthermore, in 2023, Parliament published the following specialist competitions (along with other competitions and selection procedures), either already completed in 2024 or very likely to be completed by the end of the year:

- another internal specialist competition for DG COMM (Public Relations Specialists, grade AD 5);
- an open selection procedure for DG FINS to attract highly specialised Business analysts SAP, placing 11 successful candidates on an AD 6 list and 7 successful candidates on an AD 9 list;
- an open competition for DG INLO for Logistics services coordinators (grade AST 1);
- another open competition for DG TRAD for Intercultural and Language Professionals (grade AD 5; 5 languages).

All these competitions are tailored to best meet the needs of the services concerned.

In terms of outreach, Parliament's Talent Selection and Outreach Unit participated in 15 events in 2023, connecting with a total of 2 675 professionals, many of whom were targeted for specialised roles. In 2023, Parliament also started to work with LinkedIn Job Slots, which primarily serves to attract specialised staff from hard-to-reach profiles. Additionally, the same unit strengthened its collaboration with all Directorates-General to promote their specialised vacancies through targeted outreach campaigns.

With regard to interpreters, DG LINC has extensive contacts with conference interpreter-training institutions to try to ensure that there is a steady supply of graduates in all official languages with the suitable skills and competencies for Parliament's needs. The services also endeavour to counterbalance the general decline in the number of interpreter training courses in Member States. Joint intervention by Parliament and the European Commission at governmental level and a programme of grants for universities has led to the reintroduction of at least one such training course (Denmark). Similar efforts are made in the case of other languages, such as Maltese, Croatian, English, Irish, Portuguese and Finnish, for which grants, study visits and awareness raising measures are implemented, directed to the potential student population.

Parliament runs specific projects offering support for newcomers, such as the Next Generation Professionals scheme. Since recently, accredited interpreters are offered a guaranteed number of contract days over a predefined period of time and receive targeted training and mentoring to facilitate their integration and skill acquisition. A total of 1869 contract days were offered as a long-term recruitment package to 56 Conference Interpreting Agents participating in the 2023 Next Generation Professionals programme.

Finally, the administration emphasises that for young professionals, certain profiles from a number of Member States are difficult to recruit as entry salary and financial packages in those countries are higher than those foreseen in the EU staff regulations.

27. What has been done about the initiative to create a Schuman Recruitment and Development Programme for APAs?

Parliament recognises the importance of APAs in terms of supporting Members in the parliamentary work that they do on a daily basis. It is also clear that Members wish to continue to benefit from the services of the best APAs throughout the duration of the parliamentary term. At the same time, Parliament recognises the legitimate concern of APAs at the end of the parliamentary term in the event that their Member were not to stand again or be re-elected.

For these reasons, there currently is an initiative under consideration to provide APAs, who are in such a situation after the 2024 European elections, with the possibility to be invited to sit the CAST-P tests run by EPSO. If they are successful in these tests, they would then be eligible for future employment in any EU institution as members of the contract staff for auxiliary tasks (CEOS article 3b), including in Parliament. Such an approach would be the fairest and most efficient way forward, while also ensuring that the opportunity to be tested is open to a large number of APAs.

28. With regards the challenges to recruit, develop and retain specialised human resources, causing a critical skills gap. Which measure the EP has taken to adapt the staff regulations and staff selection procedures to this specific recruitment processes?

Parliament's Secretariat keeps close relations with the Secretariats of the other EU institutions, in a number of different fora. These fora concern multiple subjects, at multiple levels, and consider topics such as HR policies and the implementation of the Staff Regulations. Nevertheless, it is important to note that pursuant to Article 336 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), the Staff Regulations are established by an EU Regulation, which can only be amended through the ordinary legislative procedure. Under this procedure, it is the prerogative of the European Commission to submit a proposal to the European Parliament and the Council.

Parliament services are looking at different ways to speed up competitions and optimise the length of recruitment to make them more efficient in selecting and recruiting the best candidates for Parliament's needs, within the limits set up by the Staff Regulations and case law. For example, the sequencing and the order of the phases of a competition are adapted to the different competitions and job profiles that are sought. Parliament services will continue to adapt every notice to the specific needs of each case.

29. We are also aware of the difficulties faced by Parliament in filling positions in Luxembourg. What has DG PERS done last year to remedy the situation?

In close cooperation with other EU institutions, which share Parliament's concerns on the attractiveness of the Luxembourg site, Parliament services have advanced in a series of actions in this regard. *Inter alia*, the institutions have initiated steps towards organising an EPSO competition specific to the Luxembourg site. In addition, the preparatory work for setting up an inter-institutional database aimed at retaining temporary and contract agents working for the institutions was almost concluded in 2023 (as of today, the database is already in use). In 2023, Parliament, together with other institutions, proposed the introduction of a housing allowance as a social measure aimed at facilitating the access to housing in Luxembourg to staff in the lowest grades. While in 2023 the budgetary authorities did not include this allowance in the EU budget for 2024, the institutions fine-tuned their proposal with the perspective of putting it in place in the budget 2025. The budgetary authorities included this allowance in the EU budget 2025, thanks to Parliament's efforts during the budgetary negotiations.

In addition, under the leadership of the Parliament, the institutions present in Luxembourg have underlined the importance of this site by organising a series of hubs of excellence (legal, digital, financial, linguistic and data and information management), representing the fields where Luxembourg has a crucial role or offers many possibilities for any professional working in these domains.

In 2023, Parliament services carried out several outreach initiatives focused on Luxembourg. These included participation in job fairs such as Moovijob (the largest annual careers fair in Luxembourg, targeting a broad audience) and Unicareers (a careers fair dedicated to junior professionals and recent graduates in Luxembourg). Parliament also hosted the launch of the 2023 EPSO Student Ambassador programme, specifically promoting the Luxembourg site as a place of work. Additionally, Parliament services participated in the inter-institutional REA (Relations with European Academia) network, which organised various events, including a two-day Staff Ambassadors conference to train Luxembourg-based EPSO Staff Ambassadors. Furthermore, REA network also managed a dedicated stand promoting EU careers in Luxembourg during Europe Day.

30. What was the ratio of staff in the administration to staff in political groups in 2023?

In 2023, the breakdown was as follows:

- 69.4 % of staff was working in Parliament's Secretariat
- 10.7 % of staff was working in the secretariats of the political groups
- 19.9 % were APAs.

31. What is the detailed cost of implementing the 2023 gender action plan (HR, events, round tables, ensuring that gender-neutral language is implemented, etc.)? What are the concrete results? Does this also apply to other directorates and what is the cost, if any?

The gender action plan adopted in 2020 was implemented thanks to the subsequent gender roadmap (2021-2022) through a coordinated approach involving all Directorates-General of the EP Secretariat and – for certain measures – the HR of the political groups. The implementation continued through 2023 for those measures that had been delayed for various reasons. All measures have been implemented by the Directorates-General, using a rational approach to existing resources, and adhering to the key principles of gender mainstreaming, which involved simply changing the perspective and angle of analysis.

Main achievements:

- A strengthened cooperation between internal bodies and with the political groups. Cooperation between the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, Gender Mainstreaming Network and the High-Level Group has improved. Political groups also participated in the latest gender roadmap by submitting data on various topics.
- an increased use of gender-neutral language. Parliament's Secretariat has implemented an IT tool designed to monitor the use of gender-neutral language in legislative texts.

32. Which are the average costs per Parliament's participant for the certification procedure in which AST officials can qualify for the AD career? How many certified officials were at the end of the year 2023 not on an AD post? Which efforts are undertaken to provide them with such a post?

The average cost for certifying a candidate in 2023 was approximately EUR 7 500, covering only the training programme expenses.

At the end of 2023, the number of certified AST officials not yet appointed to the AD function group was 9. Two of these 9 colleagues were recruited as AD in the course of 2024.

The HR units of the Directorates-General are actively supporting and encouraging certified colleagues to apply for vacant AD posts.

- 33.** How many EP organigram posts have been vacated in 2023 for the following reasons:
1. regular retirement
 2. resignation
 3. CCP for longer than 6 months
 4. secondment
 5. invalidity
 6. leave in the interest of the service, based on art. 42c staff regulations
 7. retirement in the interest of the service, based on art. 50 staff regulations
 8. other reasons (please explain which)?

In 2023, Parliament’s posts were vacated (by officials and temporary agents on permanent post excluding Political Groups staff, as this information is not available to DG PERS) as follows:

1. 159 retirements;
2. 9 resignations;
3. 32 requests for leave on personal grounds longer than 6 months;
4. 9 requests for secondment to other institutions;
5. 26 invalidity decisions;
6. 10 cases of leave in the interests of the service (Art. 42c of the SR);
7. 2 retirements in the interests of the service (Art. 50 of the SR);
8. 8 deceased.

- 34.** In 2023, how many employees requested to work beyond the regular retirement age and how many requests have been granted?

In 2023, DG PERS services received 39 requests to work beyond the regular retirement age of which 38 were granted.

- 35.** Could you provide us with an overview of how many assistants (APAs and local assistants) MEPs had in 2023? How many have had 1, 2, 3, 4 APAs and so on? How many APAs were employed and on which salary scale in 2023?

Number of APAs per Member on 31/12/2023:

MEPs	APAs/MEP	TOTAL APAs
5	0	0
36	1	36
165	2	330
281	3	843
210	4	840
7	5	35
TOTAL		2084

Out of the 5 Members with no associated APAs, only one had no APA. All the others were in groupings, which had valid APA contracts, without having any of the grouping APAs accredited to them.

In all cases where Members had 5 APAs, one contract was a “replacement” contract.

On 31 December 2023, there were 1 760 local assistant contracts, of which 1 503 had an employment contract and 257 were hired with service provider contracts (Article 30(1)(b)IMMS)). On average, Members and Groupings had three local assistant contracts. These figures reflect the situation on 31 December 2023. Obviously, there may have been fluctuations during the year.

The salary scale relating to APAs employment on 31 December 2023 was as follows:

APAs grade	N. of APAs
AP1	41
AP2	41
AP3	25
AP4	59
AP5	95
AP6	94
AP7	172
AP8	182
AP9	259
AP10	210
AP11	190
AP12	158
AP13	153
AP14	112
AP15	89
AP16	65
AP17	58
AP18	26
AP19	55
TOTAL	2084

36. Could DG INLO elaborate on the financial expenditure related to the conclusion of the long-term lease agreement with the French State for the OSMOSE building? How did DG INLO allocate the additional square meters (services, political groups)?

On 12 June 2023, the Bureau endorsed the conclusion with the French authorities, of a long-term lease contract, extending up to 99 years, for the VEIL building. At its meeting of 19 July 2023, the Committee on Budgets subsequently confirmed the request for prior approval. The contract was signed on 25 September 2023 and the works are planned to be finished at the end of 2024.

The yearly rental price amounts to EUR 0.7 million. The initial fit-out to allow the occupation of the VEIL building has a total estimated cost of EUR 10.4 million, out of which EUR 4.8 million were committed in 2023. The final cost will be known after finalisation and acceptance of all the necessary works to allow occupation by Parliament staff. In addition, the total amount for the acquisition of furniture is estimated at EUR 1.8 million, which will be complemented by the reuse of furniture available in stock.

The VEIL building offers 15 000 m² spread over seven floors. The available office space has been allocated to administrative services of the following Directorates-General: INLO, COMM, LINC, FINS, PERS, TRAD, ITEC and PART (the latter for representatives of national Parliaments). This includes offices, open space areas and meeting rooms.

37. Can DG INLO provide a final number for the costs of the Citizen's house in Brussels? During the early warning, it was stated that DG INLO was going to work internally on a budget of 4.5 million EUR, that 5.5 million EUR was the maximum expected, but the note provided came with a budget of 6 million EUR. Have there been higher/additional costs due to the listing of the building? What are the costs of acquiring, maintaining and studying the work on the Maison Wiertz and the Citizens' Garden for the EP? How are the service providers selected?

On 26 October 2022, the Committee on Budgets approved the renovation and extension project of the Citizens' House in Brussels with a maximum budget of EUR 5.5 million.

The cost of the project has increased but remained within the budgetary estimates information given to the Committee on Budgets. Some specific new requirements stemmed from the listed heritage status of the building and its site. In addition, the current environmental and energy performance criteria and the increase in the price of building materials have resulted in the cost of the works being reviewed at EUR 5.36 million. The final cost will be known after the finalisation and acceptance of the works.

The currently estimated total costs are as follows:

- acquisition: under the terms of the partnership agreement, the Belgian Government made the house and garden available to Parliament under a 50-year lease for a symbolic euro;
- works: EUR 5 363 344 (contract value);
- preparatory studies: EUR 488 127.

Additionally, the maintenance costs represent an estimated EUR 80 000 per year and the energy consumption costs EUR 12 000.

The service providers (design team and building contractor) have been selected through public tender procedures.

38. What is the cost of installing solar panels? And for which sites and which buildings? Given that the solar panels installed on the EESC and CoR buildings in Brussels produce 0.25% of their annual energy consumption (cf. 2022 discharge reports), why pursue this costly policy with no results? What are the expected savings? Concerning DG INLO AAR (point 6 page 27): Does this imply that the expected energy renovation of the SPAAK building will then be rolled out to all the other EP buildings? With the cost that this may represent and the difficulty of permanently moving colleagues from buildings undergoing renovation?

Firstly, it should be recalled that the future environmental renovations are imposed to public buildings in Europe following the adoption, and future implementation at national level, of the Energy Efficiency of Buildings Directive.

Brussels

Currently, 11 out of the 18 buildings of Parliament in Brussels are equipped with photovoltaic panels: CAMPOAMOR, MONTOYER 70, ARENDT, MONTOYER SCIENCE, ANTALL, BRANDT, SPINELLI, MARTENS, ZWEIG, REMARD and WAYENBERG. The total cost of installation of the photovoltaic panels was EUR 1.8 million.

The buildings with the highest percentage of electricity generated by their own solar panels are MONTOYER SCIENCE and MONTOYER 70, which produce 7 % and 6 % of their electricity consumption, respectively. Other buildings with panels generate between 1 % and 4 % of their electricity needs.

During 2024, a total of 0.9 % of the electricity consumption of Parliament's Brussels site is expected to be reached. In terms of yearly savings, this corresponds to approximately EUR 80 000, at the current price of electricity.

With regard to the SPAAK building, its environmental renovation, as decided by the Bureau in December 2023 and confirmed by the BUDG Committee in February 2024, will feed into the experience and knowledge of the Institution regarding such processes.

In Brussels, Parliament has the obligation to follow the local legislation on Energy Efficiency of buildings (national implementation of the EU directive) known as PLAGE (*Plan Local d'Action pour la Gestion Énergétique*). The legislation requires that the energy efficiency of all buildings is substantially improved over time. This can only be achieved through changes in building conception (insulation of the building's envelope, heat and cold production and distribution) and requires the execution of works. A Masterplan for the environmental renovation of the Brussels buildings is currently under preparation, with the first projects to be rolled out in 2027-2028, after the approval of the Bureau.

Strasbourg

Concerning Strasbourg, a study on the use of photovoltaic panels showed that it was possible to install around 950 m² of photovoltaic panels on the PFLIMLIN and DE MADARIAGA buildings and around 750 m² on the CHURCHILL building. Including structural reinforcement works, the installation of photovoltaic panels on the roofs of the CHURCHILL, DE MADARIAGA and PFLIMLIN buildings, were finalised at the end of October 2024. At the same time, safety and maintenance works on the roofs had to be executed in order to enable the installation and future maintenance of the photovoltaic panels. The start of the electricity production is foreseen by the end of 2024. The cost of installing photovoltaic panels in Strasbourg is EUR 1.6 million.

A total of 0.9 % of the electricity consumption of Parliament's Strasbourg site is expected to be reached via photovoltaic panels. The expected savings are estimated at EUR 45 000 per year, at current prices.

Luxembourg

The ADENAUER building is equipped with 2 300 m² of photovoltaic panels, which produce 3 % of its electricity needs. The installation cost of the solar panels in Luxembourg was EUR 1.07 million.

At current prices, the annual savings are estimated at EUR 46 000.

39. What costs have been incurred and what progress has been made on the entrance to the WEISS building in Strasbourg? Has the work been completed?

The works started in February 2021 and the inauguration of the pavilion by the President took place during the April 2024 part-session. The pavilion opened to the public on 5 July 2024.

It is expected that the costs approved by the Committee on Budgets in early 2020 (EUR 17.8 million) will be slightly exceeded due to the price increase in the construction field, related to the effect of inflation and the problems in the supply chain of construction materials since the COVID-19 pandemic, and aggravated since the start of the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine.

Furthermore, additional (new) security-related requests were made by the responsible French authorities. The final cost will be known after finalisation and formal acceptance of the works, foreseen by mid-2025.

40. How many transactions or sums considered exceptional or derogatory have been allowed, and for what reasons?

In the Annual Activity Report 2023, a total of 20 transactions were considered exceptional or derogatory. These cases relate mainly to contract modifications that have been allowed to ensure business continuity pending the signature of new contracts, as well as to payments of invoices without prior budgetary commitment for services or/and goods. These latter invoices were authorised, since the services, goods or works in question had been effectively delivered and were payable.

DG INLO introduced in 2023 an updated procedure for handling exceptions, in line with the Internal Control Framework and with Article 36(3) of the Financial Regulation. All deviations from standard processes must be justified, centrally recorded, and approved at the appropriate level before proceeding. Exception-related events are reported using standardised forms to ensure consistency, and justifications for exceptions are referenced in the Financial Management System.

An annual review of exceptions is conducted to identify emerging trends, systemic weaknesses, and recommend corrective actions. Remedial measures include initiatives such as reminders of practices and applicable procedures. Additionally, a learning path and structured training are promoted to support continuous education and skill development.

The reporting of exceptions is incorporated into the internal control annual assessment. Exceptions are recorded in the register of exceptions of the Directorate-General, kept centrally at the level of ex-ante and procurement coordination.

41. What is the total cost of the Europa Experience? What variation in cost compared with 2022? What is the cost of the 3 new centres (Stockholm, Vienna and Warsaw)? And the same questions for House of Europe 3 (Prague and Dublin).

The total amount of yearly running costs in 2023 of the 11 Europa Experience centres opened until that year was EUR 12.315.209. For these centres, the total initial investment costs was EUR 33.835.540. The figures for the three new centres opened during 2023 are included in the following table:

Location	Opening date	Running costs 2023	Initial investment
Berlin	2016	€994.994	€3.427.085
Ljubljana	2017	€348.382	€660.738
Helsinki	2018	€298.239	€953.997
Strasbourg	2018	€1.335.392	€4.881.589
Copenhagen	2019	€401.390	€1.619.061
Tallinn	2020	€683.676	€1.647.096
Paris	2022	€2.982.457	€4.952.305
Rome	2022	€1.658.026	€2.614.375
Stockholm	03/2023	€1.382.598	€4.033.676
Warsaw	05/2023	€768.636	€4.293.972
Vienna	06/2023	€1.461.419	€4.751.645
TOTAL		€12.315.209	€33.835.540

Concerning the Europa Experience centres opened during 2024 in Prague and Dublin, the following table shows the running costs for that year (provisory figures) and the initial investment costs:

Location	Opening date	Running costs 2024 (provisory)	Initial investment
Prague	03/2024	€1.074.224	€3.668.681
Dublin	10/2024	n.a.	€13.369.050

42. Please provide a list of what was the precise use of the fleet of vehicles of the EP (percentage of trips between airport/EP premises in Brussels/Strasbourg, between train station/EP premises, and so on).

In 2023, Parliament's service fleet available for the transport of Members has been used as follows.

Brussels

- First priority: 36.50 % (trips between Parliament premises and airports 30.40 % and trips between Parliament premises and train stations 6.10 %);
- second priority: 59.23 % (within 20 km of Parliament premises);
- third priority: 4.27% (beyond 20 km of Parliament premises).

Strasbourg

- First priority: 16.90 % (trips between Parliament premises and airports 9.02% and trips between Parliament premises and train stations 7.88%);
- second priority: 74.90% (within 20 km of Parliament premises);
- third priority: 8,20% (beyond 20 km of Parliament premises).

Due to the work pattern of Members, the second priority is inevitably more pronounced in comparison to the first one. While the first priority of journeys typically consists only of two instances of transport during a working week either in Brussels or Strasbourg, as the Members arrive and depart, the second priority covers the work-related transport requirements during the parliamentary working week for the Member.

In 2023, Parliament's service fleet available for the transport of goods was used as follows:

- transport between the three places of work (mail, furniture): 310 return trips;
- transport of mail between buildings in Brussels: 4 times per day all year and twice per day during the summer recess (31 July 2023 to 18 August 2023);
- lorry transport to/from Strasbourg (12 sessions): 48 return trips;
- transport of written-off furniture, to be donated to charity organisations, from the three places of work: 7 return trips.

43. With regard to the Environmental management system (EMAS), what results have been achieved in 2023 in terms of reducing carbon dioxide emissions and reducing waste, especially plastic?

Achievements in reducing carbon dioxide emissions

Within the framework of the EMAS environmental management system, in 2023, Parliament reduced its overall greenhouse gas emissions per full time equivalent (FTE) by 47 % compared to 2006, exceeding the 40 % target set by the Bureau.

The indicator stood at 6.4 tCO₂e per FTE in 2023, compared to 12.1 tCO₂e in 2006. The main contributing factor was the reduction of Parliament's energy consumption.

As regards greenhouse gas emissions from the transport of persons, in 2023, Parliament reduced emissions by 27 % compared to 2006 (3 percentage points below the target set by the Bureau), i.e. a reduction from 5.5 to 4.0 tCO₂e per FTE between 2006 and 2023. This was due to, *inter alia*:

- sustainable mobility projects (e.g. co-financing of public transport, improved infrastructure and awareness raising activities);
- occasional voluntary use of economy instead of business class for travel;
- the use of chartered trains between Brussels and Strasbourg for part-sessions;
- continuous renewal of the car fleet, including electric vehicles and hybrid cars, as well as continuous extension of the bike fleet, including e-bikes.

In October 2023, responding to the development of rebounding greenhouse gas emissions from transport that impact Parliament's environmental performance and the progress towards reaching its environmental target, Parliament's Bureau adopted a number of measures to reverse the trends in emissions from travel. These measures included *inter alia* the request to green the staff mission rules and to explore the possibilities of developing and implementing a calculation tool for CO₂e emissions from transport to raise awareness among travellers on the carbon footprint of travel and to allow them to compare the emissions of their journeys with different types of transport modes. Furthermore, services were tasked with exploring ways to improve train travel to Strasbourg during part-sessions.

Achievements in reducing waste

In 2023, Parliament continued to make significant progress in **waste reduction** and recycling as part of its Environmental Management System (EMAS).

In 2023, Parliament reached a cumulative **average recycling rate** of 72.1 %, exceeding the 70 % target set by the Bureau for the legislative term 2019-24. This was achieved through initiatives such as the deployment of five-compartment waste bins at all three Parliament sites which increased the accuracy of waste sorting.

Efforts to reduce **non-recycled waste** were also successful. Parliament achieved a reduction of non-recycled waste per full-time employee (FTE) by 42.7 % compared to 2012, exceeding the target set by Parliament's Bureau of 20 %. The decision of the Bureau to set a target in this area, internal communication campaigns and a focus on sustainable purchasing, particularly for construction materials, contributed to achieving the target.

Parliament significantly reduced **food waste** per meal by 50.6 % compared to 2016, lowering it to just 43 grams per meal in 2023. This was achieved by eliminating certain self-service buffets and implementing better portion control and planning. Initiatives such as the "sustainable Friday" menu and the use of smart scales contributed to further minimising waste and improved food waste measurements. Parliament's catering services received several certifications for its high-quality sustainable food practices contributing to a lower environmental impact and reduced carbon emissions.

Plastic waste reduction remained important for Parliament, particularly in line with the EU's Plastic Waste Strategy. Parliament's decision of 2019 to ban plastic bottles and the installation of water fountains are steps on the way to phase out the use of single-use plastic.

44. The catering and cleaning staff is still hired through external companies. Internalization of the driver service revealed that social and workers' rights were improved. Is the Secretary-General considering internalizing the catering service as well, also to avoid layoffs? Could you provide an estimation of the cost of an Internalization of the cleaning service and catering service?

a. Internalisation of cleaning service

The current annual cost of the outsourced cleaning service for Parliament's buildings is approximately as follows:

- Brussels: EUR 11.0 million;
- Strasbourg: EUR 4.5 million;
- Luxembourg: EUR 3.4 million.

At the Strasbourg site, cleaning activities vary significantly depending on the type of week: pre-session week, session week, or other weeks. Most of the cleaning staff are on part-time contracts with the service provider (3 hours per day and/or only during specific weeks).

A potential internalisation of cleaning service would imply the creation of a specific unit at each site, considering the high numbers of workers involved. Based on 2023 payroll data, the indicative annual staff cost for an internalised cleaning service is estimated as follows:

- Brussels: EUR 13.4 million;
- Strasbourg: EUR 8.4 million;
- Luxembourg: EUR 3.3 million.

Concerning staff costs, the internalisation would be EUR 6.2 million more expensive than the current externalisation of cleaning service, not counting overheads and management costs.

In addition to the staff cost, other considerations that would increase the global cost of internalisation of the cleaning service would need to be taken into account:

- cost of cleaning equipment, cleaning products, work clothes, etc.;
- management, storage, maintenance and repair of cleaning equipment and products;
- considerable cost of replacing absentees;
- cost of sub-contracting certain tasks (e.g. waste disposal);
- administrative and financial burdens (e.g. procurement);
- space allocation, as workstations will have to be foreseen for cleaning agents.

By contrast, such costs are currently included in the annual cost of the outsourced cleaning service.

b. Internalisation of catering

At its meeting of 10 June 2013, the Bureau adopted guidelines for the modernisation of Parliament's Restaurant and Catering Strategy, with a view to improving the food offer, the budgetary situation of the Parliament and the quality of service by enhancing competition through a diversification of service providers, and by offering solely new non-subsidised, concession type contracts. These measures were gradually introduced in all three places of work as of 2015.

Currently, as decided by the Bureau, Parliament therefore operates a concession model for its catering service, i.e. the financial risk is borne by the operators selected by tender, whilst Parliament provides the premises and utilities.

By contrast, the estimation of the cost of internalising the catering service would lead to the following staff costs, implying the creation of a specific unit at each site:

- Brussels: EUR 8 million;
- Strasbourg: EUR 2.7 million;
- Luxembourg: EUR 2.3 million.

In addition to this, interim staff needs to be taken into account for specific activities (e.g. part-sessions, events outside working hours), at an estimated cost of EUR 1.2 million for Strasbourg and EUR 1.1 million for Brussels.

Finally, other costs to be considered are:

- food costs: EUR 1.9 million;
- maintenance and upkeep: EUR 2.2 million;
- overheads: EUR 0.5 million.

Taken together, the above costs would amount to EUR 19.9 million.

Outsourcing catering services plays a crucial role in supporting Parliament's daily operations and business continuity. It offers several advantages, including greater flexibility to adapt to fluctuating demand driven by Parliament's dynamic activities and specific calendar. External providers also benefit from economies of scale, allowing them to purchase supplies at lower costs, and bring specialised industry expertise to ensure high-quality service delivery.

45. Can you specify the preparation costs for the EP elections 2024 and provide a breakdown? What is the detailed cost of the electoral message promoted for the 2024 European elections, whether directly or through partnerships, the use and development of new tools, etc.?

Following a mandate received by the Bureau, Parliament ran an institutional communication campaign for the 2024 European elections, aimed at raising awareness about the elections and encouraging people to vote. The strategy was based primarily on the development of a robust network of partners and campaign allies.

The overall budget for the information and communication actions had been set at EUR 37 million when the budgets for the years 2023 and 2024 were adopted (as compared to a budget of EUR 33.33 million for the 2019 election campaign). The budget was spread over two budgetary years (EUR 27.5 million for commitments in 2023 and EUR 9.5 million for commitments in 2024). In addition to the election budget, the funds available for grants during the years 2022, 2023 and 2024 for a total amount of 11.7 million were also entirely targeted towards the elections.

The institutional communication strategy was implemented across several key pillars to achieve the overarching goals:

- a comprehensive **media outreach strategy** encompassing print, audio-visual, online, radio, and podcasts, tailored to diverse audiences across all Member States;
- a **multiplier outreach strategy** coordinated centrally and across Member States;
- a **"Go-to-vote" campaign**, including video and other assets.

These pillars had a common, clear and impactful visual identity that tied all the communication elements together and provided a useful template for multipliers to base their own communication on the subject. This also served to enhance visibility for the Members, equipping them with tools, training and support to amplify their own communication efforts about the work done during the past legislature effectively.

Key components of the media outreach strategy

The main three components were the media grants programme, the invitations to journalists and the audiovisual coverage:

- The overall budget for the media grant programme of the 2024 European elections was EUR 9.2 million. This programme financed 71 projects from 25 Member States. The most valued criteria in the selection was the reach of the actions proposed. This allowed selecting media that have the broadest distribution of their content in the respective Member States and the highest return on investment. The grants programme attracted among the biggest (in terms of audience) public and private media in many EU Member States, including for example De Standard and Kleine Zeitung in Austria, RTBF and VRT in Belgium, France Television and 20 Minutes in France, Mediaset and Corriere della Sera in Italy, Gazeta Wyborcza and TOK FM in Poland, Antena 3 and Romanian Public TV and radio in Romania, La Sexta and El Mundo in Spain.
- The Programme for Invitations to journalists and content creators to Parliament is a tool for DG COMM services to fulfil one of its core objectives: generating media coverage about Parliament. This programme, with an additional budget for elections of EUR 0.35 million, contributes essentially to the presence of journalists in plenary sessions – especially in Strasbourg.

The prominence in visibility has been confirmed by the latest ‘Media Impact Report of the 9th Term (2019 - 2024)’, which points to a 26.5 % increase in visibility of Members in the media compared to the previous term, which is in line with the strategic objectives of supporting Members in their work for EP’s core business.

- The audiovisual coverage related to the election campaign, for a total cost of EUR 5.1 million included:

a) Editorial coverage during the campaign: Delivery and Go to Vote phase

The Delivery phase led to several video and photo coverages that were published on the Multimedia Centre. 50 topics in the Multimedia Centre were updated with delivery content produced until the last plenary of the 9th term (April 2024).

From January 2024, the Audiovisual Unit covered the “Go to vote tour” in photo and video.

To help journalists cover the campaign, a series of videos were produced. Those image banks on the functioning of the EP and the main achievements of the 9th Legislative term were massively used by TV channels (almost 3500 times by over 100 broadcasters).

b) Lead candidates’ debate

The preparation of the debate included the integration of the Lead Candidates process in the campaign strategy, the organisation of a more dynamic debate and the partnership with the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) for co-producing all editorial aspects. The involvement of all EPLOs contributed to a pan-European live programme. 14 channels picked-up the Eurovision debate signal for a total duration of 15 hours and 8 minutes of EP-sourced footage broadcast live across 11 countries.

After the event, 94 TV channels used EP footage of the Eurovision debate close to 1 900 times in total, amounting to about 34 hours of content related to the debate being broadcast to report on the 2024 Eurovision debate.

According to EBU, 145 channels used the material in 40 countries. Footage was detected 3 374 times on broadcast and online for a total of 37 hours 39 minutes and 5 seconds.

c) *Election Night - audio-visual infrastructures and coverage*

149 channels picked-up the Election Night signal until Monday 10 June for a total duration of 9 hours 12 minutes of EP-sourced footage broadcast across 51 countries (from which 24 channels broadcast the Election Night signal live).

- Other media outreach elements

a) *Liaison Offices in the Member States*

Following a decentralised approach, EUR 10.5 million were spent through the Liaison Offices in the Member States. EPLOs played a pivotal role in the campaign during both the delivery and go-to-vote phases by executing 292 media buying actions across various platforms, including editorial projects. As regards the use of their election budget, they prioritised "out-of-home" advertising, followed by "online/display advertisement" and "social media." These decentralised efforts were key in tailoring central assets to fit national and local contexts and generated over 288 million impressions in total.

As part of the election campaign DG COMM developed for the first time ever a scheme of very low value grants in two rounds for national engagement projects. Both rounds together saw a huge interest from NGOs and small groups of individuals. After careful evaluation and a split based on geographical balance, more than 100 projects received funding with a total of 3.9 million over the two budget years.

b) *Public opinion monitoring and projections*

EUR 3 million were spent on the projection of the composition of the EP, data intelligence, surveys, and various IT tools, *inter alia*:

- Projection of the composition of Parliament before and during the 2024 Election Night - Parliament disseminates the results of the European elections from all EU Member States, including and culminating in an aggregation of the national election results to a projection of the future composition of Parliament. The accuracy of estimated turnout was close to actual turnout figures.
- Eurobarometer surveys - The two Eurobarometer (EB) surveys focused largely on the 2024 European elections and citizens' voting behaviour. The spring 2024 Eurobarometer received the highest media coverage of all EB surveys conducted during the 9th term - 336 reports. In comparison with the autumn 2023 (258 reports) and spring 2023 surveys (202 reports), there was an increase both in the volume of coverage and the EP's visibility.
- A specific post-electoral Eurobarometer survey was conducted directly after the European Elections, providing deep-level insight in citizens' voting attitudes and behaviour as well as their expectations for the upcoming legislative period.

c) *Election results website*

The elections results website, at a cost of EUR 1.45 million provided comprehensive information in 24 languages to citizens, media and stakeholders. It served as the authoritative source for all European election related information. More than 150 media partners expressed interest in using these data (raw data, widget) during the election night to display election results on their platforms. As a result, the site received 10 million visitors in less than three months.

Multiplier outreach strategy

Celebrity engagement aimed at mobilising celebrities across selected entertainment industries - mainly cinema, music, sports & fashion - both on pan-European and local level, seeking partnerships with influential stakeholders in the respective sectors. With the amplification of the 'go-to-vote' message as a main goal, celebrities were free to engage in whichever authentic way they were comfortable with, all involvement being pro-bono.

The financial investment amounted overall to EUR 0.7 million for the development and activation of the campaign.

The effort involved contacting 800 celebrities centrally and an additional 590 at national level. 107 celebrities in all four entertainment sectors undertook concrete actions, resulting in a combined social media reach of 125 million followers. The celebrities' activities ranged from video testimonials or sharing personal content with a call to vote, to posting the use-your-vote video.

The biggest engagement achieved was in the sports sector with a 76+ million combined reach. In the fashion sector, a 34 million combined reach was obtained engaging influential design houses, models and fashion magazines. An up and coming Belgian designer designed a scarf interpreting the Use Your Vote slogan into a colourful pièce unique. In the music sector a total combined reach of 6+ million was obtained.

For the cinema sector, the engagement with the 45 actresses, actors and film directors resulted in about 5+ million of combined reach. At the Cannes Film Festival, an event organised by Parliament gathered together actors, directors and producers for a photocall and video statements.

DG COMM awarded 19 grants intended for pan-European civil society and multiplier organisations for a total amount of EUR 3.1 million to enable civil society and other multiplier organisations to harness the potential of their networks and their capacity to reach out to citizens, by funding their capacity building activities, so that citizens become change-makers for the European elections, and play an active role in the communication around the European elections and in mobilising others to vote.

Go to vote campaign: movie and assets

The primary goal of Parliament's institutional "Use your vote" campaign was to raise awareness about the European elections and explain the importance of voting to EU citizens in a way that was engaging.

A total of EUR 3.8 million was invested in the creation and production of an integrated system of "Go To Vote" assets. This ecosystem provided various formats of social media spots, TV, cinema and radio ads, print assets, promotional items etc. covering all phases of the campaign for all needs and languages used. The approach ensured that a single message and creative concept was adapted into various formats and versions for different channels and stakeholders.

According to the 2024 Parliament Post-Election Survey, 29 % of respondents said that seeing the campaign influenced their decision to vote in the European elections. Additionally, 48 % discussed the campaign with friends or family, 36 % saved the date for the elections, and 32 % sought more information about the elections after seeing the campaign.

The distribution and purchase of advertising space for these campaigns and the cost for the editorial support amounted to EUR 6.4 million.

This budget included the central paid promotion of the Use Your Vote campaign aimed at driving as many views as possible to the four-minute Use Your Vote video via its ecosystem of video assets, on a variety of digital placements including YouTube, Meta, Connected TVs, online and mobile apps, video networks and more.

The central Use your vote campaign, managed with global communication group Havas, achieved 1.2 billion ads impressions across the EU, 525 million video views of which 338 million completed views of the video assets and 17 million completed video views of the four-minute video. Thanks to this campaign, Parliament reached half of the overall EU voter population at least five times, resulting in a “more than a billion” exposure: an estimated 226 million Europeans were reached at least once via the centrally managed Havas campaign.

Overall, the campaign reached 226.4 million individual EU citizens at least once.

It is to be noted that social media played a pivotal role in Parliament's communication strategy for the European elections 2024. Since January 2023, Parliament's central channels shared hundreds of election-related posts and stories, reaching 411 million users with 114 million engagements, with both organic and sponsored actions managed in-house by the Web Communication Unit. Overall cost of editorial support amounted to EUR 1.2 million.

Other outreach data

It is to be noted that social media played a pivotal role in Parliament's communication strategy for the European elections 2024. Since January 2023, Parliament's central channels shared hundreds of election-related posts and stories, reaching 411 million users with 114 million engagements.

The Elections results website, launched in March 2024, provided comprehensive information in 24 languages to citizens, media and stakeholders. It served as the authoritative source for all European election related information (what are European elections, why vote, how to vote, results, etc.). More than 150 media partners expressed interest in using these data (raw data, widget) during the election night to display election results on their platforms. As a result, the site received 10 million visitors in less than three months.

46. How much did DG COMM spent in 2023 on activities to combat disinformation campaigns targeted at the work of the European Parliament and its members? What detailed costs (HR, equipment, subscriptions, subcontracting where applicable, etc.) were allocated in 2023 to the fact-checking teams in their fight against disinformation? What are the future prospects for this activity? Both centrally and via the liaison offices in the Member States.

Awareness raising and the fight against disinformation is part of the portfolio of the Spokesperson's Unit, which works directly under the Director-General and is composed of 12 persons. In close collaboration with all services of the DG, they support services in DG COMM and other DGs by:

- providing lines-to-take to respond to non-legislative media queries and all reputational issues;
- maintaining online FAQs on Parliament;
- responding to false and erroneous information on the EP;
- delivering fact-checking support to media outlets and press officers;
- strengthening existing networks internally in the EP, with other EU institutions, Member State authorities and external partners (e.g. fact-checkers, platforms).

Besides the aforementioned staff, the only other expenditure incurred in 2023 are the costs of data analysis tools for an amount of EUR 189 483.

As detailed in the answer to question 54, DG COMM has implemented Parliament's recommendations on the matter of foreign interference (INGE resolution of 9 March 2022).

DG COMM has dedicated special efforts to protecting Parliament from information manipulation and interference. The most effective measure is often proactive communication about the work of Parliament and the elections. All measures to prevent, detect and counter foreign interference are designed in a way that respects and promotes fundamental rights, including freedom of expression. The focus of the administration's work is on manipulative behaviour, not on the content.

The administration works on fact-checking on two strands:

- Firstly, communications staff in Brussels and in liaison offices answer a wide range of media queries about Parliament every day. In many cases, journalists want to check information about Parliament. If factually incorrect information is published and widely spread, Parliament's staff occasionally contacts editors to share the correct information. This is part of the general communication work (see also answer to question 45).
- Secondly, EP services have direct contact with fact-checking organisations at European and national level. With the expected increase of election-related disinformation in the run-up to the 2024 European elections, DG COMM co-organised a three-day conference with fact-checking organisations EDMO⁶ and EFCSN⁷ in November 2023. The aim of this conference was to share insights and facilitate contacts between fact-checkers and Parliament's staff.

47. Concerning sponsored visitors' groups: Is there a difference in implementation of the subsidy payment for sponsored visitors' groups before and after COVID period? Have visitors' group visits resumed at the same level as before?

Visitor groups have developed in the following way since COVID:

Year	MEP Sponsored		Implementation rate
	Participants	Groups	
2017	77 691	2 282	82%
2018	80 610	2 438	85%
2019	68 638	1 983	78%
2023	81 865	2 496	74%

Concerning the implementation rate in 2023, it should be noted that members could use in addition remaining quota from the COVID period.

48. Could you state the level of thefts within the premises of the EP in 2023 and the financial damage to the EP budget?

In 2023, there were 75 cases of declared theft within Parliament's premises on all sites, including EPLOs, for a total amount to EUR 13 138.

⁶ European Digital Media Observatory
⁷ European Fast-Checking Standards Network

49. Could DG ITEC state the number of software and IT applications used across all services of the administration and outline their level of interoperability? Which projects did the administration undertake in 2023 to increase interoperability and avoid duplication or even triplication of checks/ input/ uploads, in particular for actions related to travel arrangements, reimbursements and staff hiring? Which actions did DG ITEC work on to better integrate applications and what was the timeline to complete them?

DG ITEC monitors applications and software portfolio used across all services of the administration. The portfolio includes around 1 300 applications and software covering the various business areas of Parliament. It is in constant evolution due to the new demands as well as the integration and rationalisation efforts.

Several actions have been taken over the past years to rationalise the applications' portfolio. In 2024, Parliament introduced a master plan to ensure that all in-house applications developed by DG ITEC are aligned with the corporate standards in terms of their technology stack (<https://ep-foundry.in.ep.europa.eu/>), whether running on premise or using the cloud environment. The objective of this programme is to ensure the target architecture, clearly defined for each application, and to achieve 80%+ compliance by the end of 2025. The programme also looks at applications, which are at end of life and the steps required to replace or sunset them.

For new projects, a "Reuse-Before Buy-Before Build" policy is in place. The policy aims at limiting the development of bespoke applications only to specific needs related to the peculiarity of parliamentary works.

Given the evolution of technologies and the needs of Parliament's business, those efforts are ongoing and an end-date is not foreseen.

Concerning eLegislate, an initiative has been set-up to ensure the better integration of the different applications of the legislative chain.

The integration for the Committee stage was completed by the end of 2023. This includes the integration of all applications participating in this part of the legislative cycle, including but not limited to the following applications:

- ITER (a data management application supporting the legislative work of the Parliament by registering the meta-data for this process – such as references for procedures, committee dossiers, meetings and document references);
- AT4LEX (2 applications, Dashboard & Editor, to manage the workflow and draft documents based on the LegalDocML – legal document XML standard);
- EPS (a set of centralised applications providing services necessary for the rendering, storage, validation and diffusion of LegaldocML documents);
- AT4AM (tool used by MEPs and APAs to draft amendments; and by committee secretariats to generate Amendment Lists);
- DST (editor used by DLA for assisting in reviewing the legislative and linguistic quality of amendments submitted via AT4AM);
- EPADES2 (IT system a workflow definition, event recording and document repository system for documents processed within the legislative chain);
- GEPRO+ (system designed to handle the status of documents submitted for translation);
- TOP (application which supports the verification workflow for legislative documents);
- iVOTE (an iPad/iPhone app to digitalise the preparation and running of votes).

A key factor to enable the successful integration of the different applications is the setup of repetitive testing exercises performed with the active participation of all the teams and DGs. This policy increases the robustness of the integration and interoperability by ensuring that the technical/functional evolution of individual applications does not impact the integration, by early detection and fixing of any issue that might arise.

50. How is your institution tracking the return on investments in digitalisation projects? Are there any benchmarks or KPIs linked to the digital transition? What projects does the Parliament administration have underway regarding the use of Artificial Intelligence? Has Parliament implemented any training programs for staff or Members' teams in the use of AI?

Parliament periodically performs an analysis of cost-savings, which are expected to be achieved via automation and an analysis of benefits for all IT projects. However, as an Institution of the European Union, Parliament often implements projects based on public interest or political priorities, which cannot be measured in terms of economic return. Examples include the introduction of a remote voting system during the COVID-19 pandemic and the implementation of an open data portal.

Parliament tracks several Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) related to digital transformation, including:

- **Client satisfaction surveys** performed by different IT units to assess the level of customer satisfaction with digitalisation implemented via IT projects;
- **Time-to-market of software selection & implementation projects** to assess the duration of the projects, which aim at implementing commercial-off-the-shelf software in the EP;
- **Analysis of cost-savings**, which are expected to be achieved via automation;
- **Analysis of benefits, incl. employee productivity** achieved via automation;
- **Digital Skills Assessment**: the services consult all managers every year to make sure that their needs in terms of digital skills are covered.

Based on this consultancy process, Parliament plans ahead the learning and development actions for the year. Furthermore, digital skills data are available in terms of training: every year, the services extrapolate reports showing how many staff members were trained in different areas, covering a wide range of digital skills (cybersecurity, data management, digital accessibility, cloud, project management tools, etc.).

As part of its innovation's activities, DG ITEC has built several AI Proof Of Concepts (POCs) and experiments that have been introduced through the INNOVATE Platform. Some successful POCs such the EUROVOC classifier model has been deployed in a production environment and others are still under evaluation by their respective business owners (such as enhanced invoice processing for DG FINS, Agenda Formatter for DG EXPO, technician planning automation for DG LINC).

Several training modules have been developed. The first module for managers was launched in July 2024, the training for end-users will soon be available in order to tackle the AI literacy inside the Parliament. Another training focused on AI for staff working in the Cloud Unit is also ready for delivery. These trainings are developed by the DG PERS Learning and Development Unit in collaboration with the DG ITEC training team, targeting managers and staff. DG ITEC is planning to offer workshop sessions to explain specific sides of AI technology.

DG LINC started a series of webinars for staff and freelance interpreters on AI, its potential use cases in meeting preparation and terminology work and to raise general awareness about developments in the field of language and technology. DG LINC also began offering workshops on AI as a speech-drafting tool and started preparations for a series of workshops on the use of a Computer-Assisted Interpreting tool (CAI).

51. Has your institution detected or experienced any serious cyberattacks, breaches or foreign interference activities in 2023? What damages have been caused and how are those incidents investigated? In terms of data protection, has the European Parliament experienced any data breaches involving its cloud storage and how are such data breaches handled by the Parliament? The Parliament recently informed non-permanent staff of a huge data breach that apparently occurred in early 2024. Did something similar happen already in 2023?

When cybersecurity incidents are detected (through security logs, user flagging, external threat intelligence, etc.), they are dealt with by EP-CERT (Computer Emergency Response Team), which is part of DG ITEC and which works closely with local IT departments in other Directorates-General and with the political groups. Potential damage varies greatly depending on the incident, and can be operational or reputational (in case of service outage). DG ITEC has an established incident response process and an associated incident management policy, which applies to all Parliament services. Significant incidents are also reported to CERT-EU for inter-institutional collaboration and response. In line with the EU Cybersecurity Regulation, the CERT-EU has provided all Institutions bodies and agencies with guidelines on defining, handling and reporting significant incidents. Parliament has taken this guidance on board and aligned its cybersecurity incident response mechanism accordingly.

In 2023, Parliament did not detect or experience any serious cyberattacks leading to a breach in its ICT infrastructures, including its cloud storage.

Moreover, in 2023, no significant data breach comparable to that of 2024 was detected.

52. Which safeguards and other cybersecurity projects did the service put into place or develop in 2023 to protect private data and the working environment of members, assistants, and staff? How many cyberattacks and phishing attempts did ITEC register in 2023 and did they include any ransom attacks? If yes, what was the financial damage?

2023 was the last year of the implementation of the projects under the umbrella “Cyber Defence Capabilities”, which strengthened the capacity of capturing and analysing security event logs into a centralised platform. In addition, user awareness including phishing campaigns have been held, reaching directly more than 3 500 end users in the year. Moreover, in 2023 a lot of progress was made in the MDCM (mobile device configuration management) project, which will provide a new end user environment which will have embedded security controls. Lastly, it is important to note that all ongoing services that are run by DG ITEC’s cybersecurity services (risk assessments, security operations centre, EP-CERT (Computer Emergency Response Team), vulnerability and threat analysis, penetration testing, etc.) are ultimately supporting the objective of protecting data.

No ransomware attacks with associated financial damages have been reported in 2023. The Cybersecurity Directorate keeps statistics on the number of incidents reported. The type of attacks varies greatly (e.g. phishing attacks vs. DDOS attacks), most of them had a low impact. Detailed statistics on types of incidents should not be made publicly available, as it may facilitate the reconnaissance phase of malicious entities.

Storage of data is done in ITEC-managed servers and remote access is only possible with hardened devices provided by Parliament and approved by DG ITEC. In addition, where the control is appropriate, access to systems is also secured with a two-factor authentication - even if accessed from inside Parliament to ensure the protection of personal and sensitive data. It is worth noting that the power of attorney, which Members can give their APAs, runs under the same secured technology and is revocable at any moment.

Lastly it should be noted that many cybersecurity controls are application-agnostic. Network security, threat intelligence, disaster recovery planning, datacentre redundancy are examples of controls that aid in securing sensitive data processing and are applicable to all applications running on Parliament's ICT infrastructure.

53. What tools and strategies are in place in your institution for real-time threat monitoring and identifying vulnerabilities in your systems? How do you conduct risk assessments (including third-party vendor risks) and train staff to prevent cyber incidents? Has Parliament implemented any training programs for staff or Members' teams in cybersecurity? And some awareness-raising campaign? What are your incident response plans, recovery measures, and lessons from past cyberattacks? Are there any current requests for additional resources to improve your institution's cybersecurity infrastructure?

DG ITEC reviews incoming threat intelligence reporting, in close collaboration with CERT-EU, for its relevance to Parliament and takes action when needed. In addition, it runs a SIEM (Security Incidents and Events Management) System, which allows to flag possible incidents and analyse vulnerabilities.

DG ITEC's Cybersecurity Directorate has a service that performs risk assessments for new systems and projects or when significant changes to software in production are implemented. It follows an established methodology based on international best practices and includes identification of risks related to vendor/third parties.

The Directorate has an annual cyber awareness plan, which includes awareness raising sessions and trainings, events on the three sites of Parliament, anti-phishing campaigns, etc. Both the plan for the following year as well as the report of the previous year have been presented to the then Bureau Working group on ICT. In addition, the services are currently exploring how to better embed cybersecurity awareness into the existing induction courses for newcomers.

Cybersecurity incidents are treated by the EP-CERT (Computer Emergency Response Team), with its established associated processes. It collaborates closely with CERT-EU. Organisational recovery measures are put in place as part of the Business Continuity Plan, which is established at corporate level (Secretary-General). Technical recovery is performed by the relevant services, depending on the nature of the incident.

The annual budgetary exercise includes a detailed breakdown of cybersecurity needs, including additional budget requests for infrastructure specific to cybersecurity services (e.g. Public Key Infrastructure) that relates to an increased demand of cybersecurity services.

In 2023, DG ITEC organised 19 workshops for end-users (Members and Parliament's staff).

For cybersecurity professionals within DG ITEC, the Learning & Development unit organised an intensive one-week training on Cyber Threat Intelligence for the entire Cybersecurity Directorate.

For IT professionals outside the Cybersecurity Directorate, the unit provided 10 licenses for Rangeforce, an online on-demand platform for technical cybersecurity training.

54. What measures has the Parliament put in place to implement the recommendations included in the 2022 report on Foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union?

Parliament's administration is working on many strands against foreign interference and disinformation (for more details see answer to question 4).

The Special Committee for Foreign Interference in all Democratic Processes in the EU including Disinformation (hereafter INGE) report provided the administration with valuable guidance on how to build on this work, especially ahead of the 2024 European elections.

1. Need for an EU coordinated strategy against foreign interference (§1-14)

Parliament's administration contributes to a coordinated EU strategy against foreign interference, according to the INGE-endorsed "whole of society" principle. Firstly, the internal Task Force against disinformation ensures that the different DGs coordinate their work, share analysis and look for synergies where possible. The Task Force, set up already ahead of the 2019 EU elections, is led by DG COMM and includes representatives from other relevant DGs and services.

Secondly, Parliament's administration cooperates and coordinates, when relevant, with other EU institutions and Member States, and related networks.

2. Building EU resilience through situational awareness, media and information literacy, media pluralism, independent journalism and education (§15-44)

Parliament has progressively implemented INGE recommendations on the importance of *"prevention and proactive measures including pre-bunking and a healthy information ecosystem since these are far more effective than subsequent fact-checking and debunking efforts, which show lower reach than the original disinformation"*. In charge of institutional communication, DG COMM is committed to *"engage with citizens, using their preferred languages and platforms"*. In practice, this means *easy and timely access to fact-based information*, in all EU languages, on the website, using social media platforms, and in person for visitors or at events organised outside Parliament's premises. DG COMM has a long tradition of supporting independent media and working with multipliers such as civil society organisations and ambassador schools.

DG SAFE also set up its analysis capacity to ensure the collection, consolidation and analysis of information in the area of hybrid / digital / cyber threats, disinformation and foreign interference.

3. Foreign interference using online platforms (§45-72)

Most challenges to this chapter are dealt with at political level, for instance in the Digital Services Act, the Political Ads Regulation and the AI Act. The administration plays a complementary role in a few areas. For instance, DGs ITEC and COMM monitor impersonations of Parliament's brand and Parliament's institutional accounts on several online platforms and take action in case of serious impersonations. With particular vigilance on disinformation, DG COMM introduced tools (for instance spam filters, keyword filters) to keep Parliament's social platforms safe from disinformation.

4. Foreign interference during electoral processes (§83-86)

See answer to question 4

5. Global cooperation and multilateralism (§143-155)

Parliament's administration already cooperates with partners inside and outside the EU. Staff participates in the Rapid Alert System against disinformation established by the European External Action Service (hereinafter EEAS).

Parliament's services also work with the EEAS and its delegations, to ensure that Parliament's positions are known globally.

Within the project Triangle for Democracy, DG EXPO works with a number of priority neighbourhood countries to examine and identify disinformation, exchange best practices and explore solutions. In 2023-2024, Parliament offered a series of trainings in countering disinformation for communication staff of the Moldovan Parliament. Parliament's staff are also active in the EU visitors programme, exchanging with visitors with a background or interest in the work against foreign interference.

55. With regards to the cybersecurity failure, it has been pointed out as a recurring risks in the AAR for 2023 from Directorate General for innovation and technological support (DG ITEC). The cyber-resilience of the Institution and the migration of the Parliament's data centre continue to present a significant risk; The risk for DG ITEC of failure to assure full compliance with the EU Data Protection Regulation is still present and the EP is facing certain challenges to attract qualified staff. What are the measures that the EP has taken to address this matter? What impact had the several cyberattacks in 2023 on the budgetary and financial management in the EP?

Cybersecurity risks and the risk of failure to assure full compliance with the EU Data Protection Regulation are indeed recurring risks for DG ITEC and a significant part of its risk management function. It is important to note that this is considered an effective risk management practice – as the identification, acknowledgement and reporting of the risk is the first step towards mitigating it. DG ITEC has been gradually reducing cybersecurity related risks by putting in place controls to further mitigate them.

Parliament's data centre migration has been successfully finalized and the associated IT project has been closed at the beginning of 2024.

There were no financial losses resulting from the cyberattacks in 2023.

With cybersecurity having become a higher priority, the allocated budget increased by roughly 40 % from 2023 to 2024, and it will continue to be reinforced in the coming years. From the total of 40 new posts allocated to DG ITEC for cybersecurity in the 2023 budget, 29 have already been occupied, and 9 of them are being currently filled, i.e. only two posts have not been published yet.

56. Parliament has drawn attention to the fact that DiSP cannot be used to sign plenary amendments. What progress has been made in this regard?

Since March 2020, Political Groups, Members or their staff can send signed documents to the plenary services by email or via the EP Transfer portal, along with the possibility of bringing physical signatures on paper.

The Digital Signature Portal (DiSP) is designed to work with the legislative workflow chain. DiSP is functionally and technically ready to support implementation of the workflow chain, pending a Bureau decision on the appropriateness of allowing digital signature of plenary amendments.

However, before the Bureau can consider the appropriateness of allowing digital signature of plenary amendments and resolutions, several considerations must be taken into account and several conditions must be fulfilled:

- Define workflows: Develop detailed workflows for various use cases, including possible combinations of manual and electronic signatures, handling signature refusals, and options for withdrawing an electronic signature;
- Define how different types of procedures are integrated with electronic signature at varying levels in order to avoid confusion when drafting or submitting amendments, as well as during split or separate votes;

- Fine-tune the IT systems involved to ensure that communication between the digital signature application and the amendment drafting application is flawless;
- Compared to the tabling of amendments in committee, where individual Members may table amendments, tabling amendments in plenary have a higher requirement: only political groups or a given number of Members (36 or 72) may table amendments. Therefore, a greater degree of monitoring and control is required.

57. Which innovations tested in the IDEA Lab have been procured by the Parliament on a large scale? Where can a list of innovations tested in 2023 and their cost be consulted?

During 2022 and early 2023 and in line with innovations tested in the IDEA Lab, DG INLO repurposed five individual work booths and nine meeting pods near conference rooms. These former phone booths offer excellent acoustics, lighting options, and a quiet workspace, providing a calm environment in busy areas of the SPINELLI building. In similar areas, DG INLO set up photo and video recording areas with corporate backdrops and professional lighting in key SPINELLI building locations, offering appropriate settings for interviews and official photos.

The cost of the projects mentioned was as follows:

- five individual work booths and nine meeting pods: EUR 425 000 (between 2021 and 2023);
- seven photo and video recording areas: EUR 231 000 (in 2021);

Regarding the services projects emanating from the IDEA Lab, the status is the following:

- the immersive videoconferencing tool has been stopped due to a security issue that the vendor was unable to fix;
- the Self-recording studio (formerly known as "Studio in a box") has been taken over by DG ITEC and the service is under evaluation for a potential scale-up;
- the EP Dictaphone has been provided to DG TRAD for evaluation for an eventual take-over of the ownership.

Concerning the costs of the projects in 2023, Parliament has committed 15.840 euros for a licence for the Self-recording studio. No investment has been made for the other projects.

58. In the DG IPOL, 2023 report, page 4, it is indicated: "DG IPOL also continued to support committees in their scrutiny role in key policy areas, such as the monitoring of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), and engaged in structured dialogues with key figures in the European Commission, the European Central Bank and others." Could you please explain what all this represents for monitoring and controlling the RRF at EP level?

Over the course of 2023, the BUDG and ECON secretariats organised five joint committee meetings (Recovery and Resilience Dialogues) to discuss the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) implementation with the Executive Vice-President of the European Commission, Valdis Dombrovskis, and Commissioner Paolo Gentiloni, pursuant to Article 26 of the RRF Regulation. In addition, DG IPOL supported the work of the RRF working group, namely by providing its secretariat and by organising its five meetings, in which Members held the Commission accountable at technical level. The European Court of Auditors was invited to one of the meetings. BUDG-ECON secretariats continued to manage and keep updated the Sharepoint platform dedicated to the RRF (a "library" where BUDG-ECON Members and staff have access to public and non-public documents, including those from the European Commission and Member States on the implementation of the RRF). DG IPOL also attended seven meetings of the Commission expert group on the RRF, which focused on practical RRF implementation issues of the Member States.

The CONT secretariat was also closely involved in RRF scrutiny and control in three different ways. First, three ECA Special Reports on RRF, respectively on the design of the Commission's control system, Next Generation EU (NGEU) debt management, and RRF performance monitoring framework, were presented and debated in CONT committee meetings in 2023. Second, the Commission Discharge for 2022 included a specific and detailed chapter on RRF implementation, control and transparency with 23 recommendations for action to the Commission. Third, CONT held a public hearing on Cohesion policy investments and NGEU recovery fund in January 2023.

59. With regards to the AAR from DG IPOL : The unavailability or failure of key IT system(s), but also cybersecurity issues and cyberattacks pose the risk of a disruption of the operational environment necessary for the implementation of committees' activities. The possible negative effects of the disruption could put at risk the achievement of critical DG IPOL objectives. The risk of an IT disruption is permanent. After existing controls in place and the successful execution of the User Acceptance Test (UAT) done in July 2023, the likelihood that some IT systems are not adapted to the 2digits legislative term by the end of 2023 is reduced to a very low level. Which specific measure the EP intends to take more than a close monitoring of related IT project?

The Corporate Business Continuity Plan (BCP), for which the Risk, Crisis and Business Continuity Unit has the lead, contains business continuity arrangements with regards to EP IT systems (list of critical IT applications for EP core activities and Recovery Time Objectives). DG ITEC supports the corporate BCP in providing the relevant IT controls as well as testing of the plan.

On the systems being fit-for-purpose, changes to IT systems are supported by a project management methodology (ENGAGE) and a Project Support Management Office- in which business requirements are a key deliverable, together with non-functional deliverables that pertain to IT (architecture, security etc.).

On the risks relating to systems in production, Parliament has a Security Operations Centre (SOC) in place, part of which is the Computer Emergency Response Team (EP-CERT) dealing with incident responses. Specific measures differ between systems and are linked to the context of the system (technology stack in use, data or business criticality, etc.).

60. The EP has radio studios. How many programmes/interviews are recorded/broadcast each month? What different types of broadcast are used? Is there an audience measurement system, and what are its results? How many EP staff are working in these services and at which sites?

Parliament does not have any radio studios, it manages two digital platforms, the Europarl Radio website and the Europarl Radio mobile app in which they supply multilingual content.

In 2023, DG TRAD produced 343 audio programmes (for a total of 6 667 language versions). Many programmes are available in the 24 official EU languages and Ukrainian, whereas some are available in a limited number of languages. This amounts to a monthly average of 555 linguistic versions of the audio programmes.

The programmes can be found through the following link:
<https://en.audio.europarl.europa.eu/main/pub/home>

All audio programmes are broadcast on the Europarl Radio website and app. In addition, some audio programmes are shared with partner radios in the EU and published on commercial audio platforms.

In 2023, these platforms reached the following audience:

- a) Europarl Radio website and app: 9 394 plays;
- b) the cooperation with EU radio stations in 2023 involved 25 radio stations in Austria, Cyprus, Finland, France, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden;
- c) commercial audio platforms (e.g. Apple Podcasts, Spotify and Google Podcasts): 28 096 plays.

DG TRAD, with almost 1 300 staff members (officials, temporary and contractual agents combined), is divided into four Directorates. One of the Directorates, with 127 staff members, is dedicated to linguistic services in clear language. Its core task is translation of text, audio and video content in the 24 official EU languages. Other tasks include editing of written parliamentary texts in English and French, video subtitling, and audio programmes. Proportionally, the audio-related tasks represent around 25 % of the work of the Directorate. The core team for audio programmes comprises four sound engineers and five producers in Luxembourg (all temporary and contractual agents).

61. What was the cost of translation and interpretation into Ukrainian of documents or meetings in 2023 as for the 24 official EU languages in the absence of an official Ukrainian stakeholder?

In 2023, DG TRAD translated 830.75 pages of text into Ukrainian. All translations were made internally. The average price for internal translations in 2023 across the DG and across all 24 official EU languages was EUR 122.09 per page. Both staff and non-staff overhead costs are included in this average. By analogy, the same method is used to calculate the translation cost for Ukrainian. As a result, the total cost of translation into Ukrainian amounts to approximately EUR 101 000. This represents 0.05 % of the overall translation costs (including both internal and external translation).

Interpretation into Ukrainian has been provided at committee or delegation meetings when directly requested by the meeting organiser, due to the presence of Ukrainian participants. This is standard procedure for non-EU languages, which are provided upon request subject to availability of resources.

Ukrainian has also been provided in plenary sessions of the Parliament where subjects related to the war in Ukraine have been discussed. The cost of interpretation in Ukrainian in 2023 represented 0,44 %, or EUR 232 000, of the budget for external interpretation.