

## 2014 discharge

### The Committee of the Regions' answer to the questionnaire

#### General

1. Which measures were taken during 2014 to make the Institution more cost efficient and to reduce overall costs? How much savings were made in 2014 from which budget lines? Could it be indicated for which purpose these savings were used/ or transferred to other budget lines?

#### *Answer:*

- a) Savings made already when the Committee of the Regions draft 2014 budget (DB 2014) was established

#### Savings in salary-related appropriations:

- The current Staff Regulation contains statutory requirements on salary indexations, step increases and upgradings. Only as regards this latter one (upgradings) it was estimated possible to produce some savings in DB 2014 (apart of the real reduction in staff), despite the overall uncertainty, by asking for less than half of the upgradings. The DB 2014 calculation included a reduction of the appropriations for staff salaries by some €400,000 thanks to this approach.
- With regard to the budgetary impact of the Commission's proposal (at that time) for the reform of the Staff Regulations on the 2014 Draft budget, the changed calculation method for the reimbursement of the annual travel expenses and the introduction of the AST/SC (secretarial) staff category was estimated to produce possible savings of some €133,794 per year. This amount was included as a reduction in calculations.
- 1% staff reduction (1AD6, 2AD5, 1AST2 and 1AST1) with a monetary reduction of some €300,000 per year starting from 2014.
- 1% reduction in the Contractual agents' budget line (part of the line 1400) having a monetary effect of some €20,000 for 2014.
- Reduction in line 1204 "Entitlements in connection with entering the service, transfer and leaving the service" by €170,000 was estimated possible (i) due to the lower number of staff planned to be recruited during the year (partially because of the absence of new posts and reduction of posts) and (ii) due to the fact that less and less new staff is recruited directly from members states; instead most of the recruited new staff is already established in Belgium albeit still having the origins from different member states.
- All staff transfers from the CoR to the ERPS will have taken place in 2016. This implies, as compared to the situation before the signature of the Cooperation Agreement between the EP and the CoR a reduction in staff expenditure of EUR 2 280 000 per year as from 2016.

### Savings in NON salary-related appropriations

In the table below a more detailed explanation of budget changes is given for all budget lines, where the decrease exceeds either 5% of the 2013 budget appropriations of the respective budget line, or € 25,000.

Budgetary line	Reason – explanation	Amount	Change
<b>1402</b> Interpreting services	Following some improvements concerning the cancellation fees and following the previous years' budget execution results, some savings was made on this budget line while, at the same time, ensuring that the level of the CoR political activity is maintained and the interpretation cost of Summit is covered.	€1,566,700 (decrease: - €47,217)	- 1.0%
<b>1404</b> Graduate traineeships, grants and exchanges of officials	Part of this line dealing with trainees was reduced by €14,700. In addition, the thesis competition was for 2014, thus saving further €35,000.	€760,460 (decrease: - €49,700)	- 6.1%
<b>1422</b> Expert assistance related to consultative work	A 20% cut was applied to <u>guest speakers' part</u> of this budget line.	€450,000 (decrease: -€45,250)	- 9.1%
<b>162</b> Missions	A 10% cut was applied to this budget line.	€382,500 (decrease: - €42,500)	- 10.0%
<b>2024</b> Energy consumption	Savings on this budget line was estimated possible due to the energy savings effects of some previous investment projects despite the increasing energy prices.	€113,022 (decrease: - €49,179)	- 6.5%
<b>2028</b> Insurance	Reduction on this budget line was applied following the execution results of the previous years.	€77,954 (decrease: - €20,851)	- 21.1%
<b>212</b> Furniture	A 20% cut was applied to <u>own services part</u> this budget line. Joint services part (joint CoR/EESC appropriations) was reduced by some 1%.	€159,287 (decrease: - €1,164)	- 5.4%

<b>Budgetary line</b>	<b>Reason – explanation</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Change</b>
<b>236</b> Postage on correspondence and delivery charges	A 30% cut was applied to this budget line.	€86,800 (decrease: - €37,200)	- 30.0%
<b>2540</b> Internal meetings	A substantial reduction on this budget line was applied.	€10,000 (decrease: - €25,145)	- 18.6%
<b>2541</b> Observers	Savings in this line was estimated possible following the Croatia's planned EU membership in 2013.	€77,595 (decrease: - €5,205)	- 6.3%
<b>2546</b> Representation expenses	A €30,000 cut was applied to this budget line.	€50,000 (decrease: - €30,000)	- 16.7%
<b>2602</b> Edition and distribution of paper, audiovisual, electronic or web-based (Internet/Intranet) information supports	Reduction concerns the requested appropriations for publications and printing materials, support and decoration materials of events, promotion materials and protocol gifts and external editing services, leading to a cut of €140,000.  However, an additional €113, was added to this budget line for the CoR Summit of Athens in 2014.	€808,305 (decrease: - €27,000)	- 3.2%
<b>2620</b> External expertise and studies	A 10% cut was estimated possible by inter alia re-assessing the thesis competition which is proposed to take place every other year.	€449,409 (decrease: - €49,944)	- 10.0%
<b>2622</b> Documentation and library expenditure	The reduction was applied to library expenditure (less periodicals and books in 2014) and translation dictionaries. The expenditure on Press & Communication Directorate was frozen on 2013 level, as this sub line contains mainly contractual obligations that have to be respected.	€128,292 (decrease: - €22,642)	- 15.0%
<b>2624</b> Expenditure on	In 2013 budget appropriations for replacement of CLARA system were requested and obtained. As this was one-off expenditure, it does not reappear in	€26,560	- 10.9%

Budgetary line	Reason – explanation	Amount	Change
archive resources	2014 budget request. Hence the appropriations on this budget line are reduced.	(decrease: - €15,540)	

#### **b) Transfers between budget lines during the 2014 budget implementation year**

During 2014 the following transfers of appropriations submitted by the CoR were approved by the Council and Parliament (13 in total):

##### INF 1/2014 (Article 25 of the Financial Regulation)

The purpose of this transfer was to allow the CoR to pay the bills (earlier than in previous years) for the increasing number of enrolments and presences in the nurseries and other childcare facilities (managed by the other EU institutions) and compensate for the increasing cost per unit.

The amount of the transfer was €68,250:

- From budgetary item 1204 "Entitlements on entering the service, transfer and leaving the service"
- To budgetary item 1638 "Early Childhood Centre and approved day nurseries".

##### INF 2/2014 (Article 25 of the Financial Regulation)

The purpose of this transfer was to maintain the same level of the communication budget of the 4 Political Groups also after the creation of the 5th Political Group (ECR) in the CoR and to provide the adequate funding for the new Political Group according to the existing rules.

The amount of the transfer was €45,900:

- From budgetary item 1200 "Remuneration and allowances"
- To budgetary item 264 "Expenditure on publishing, information and on participation in public events: information and communication activities".

##### INF 3/2014 (Article 25 of the Financial Regulation)

The purpose of this transfer was to allow the CoR to purchase the SharePoint statistics tool "Webtrends", and to integrate CoR Common Consultative Platforms and "Dynamics" system for centralized management of contacts, and to develop the publication management system.

The amount of the transfer was €76,000:

- From budgetary item 1402 "Interpreter services"
- To budgetary items:
  - 2100 "Purchase, service and maintenance of equipment and software, and related work" (€22,000).
  - 2102 "Outside assistance in connection with the operation, development and maintenance of software systems" (€54,000).

##### INF 4/2014 (Article 25 of the Financial Regulation)

The purpose of this transfer was to allow the CoR to replace outdated video streaming equipment in the meeting rooms JDE51 and JDE52.

The amount of the transfer was €40,000:

- From budgetary item 212 "Furniture"
- To budgetary item 214 "Technical equipment and installations"

INF 5/2014 (Article 25 of the Financial Regulation)

The purpose of this transfer was to cover the increasing printing expenses for publications in the OJ in 2014 and for certain expenditures that occurred in 2013 but were invoiced in 2014 without budget left.

The amount of the transfer was €37,500:

- From budgetary item 1200 "Remuneration and allowances"
- To budgetary item 2604 "Official Journal"

INF 6/2014 (Article 25 of the Financial Regulation)

The purpose of this transfer was to allow the CoR to pay all the requests for reimbursement of public transport under the framework of the mobility policy. The overall number of reimbursements was estimated to remain at about the same level as in the previous year; however the available budget in 2014 was below the real outturn for 2013.

The amount of the transfer was €15,000:

- From budgetary item 1200 "Remuneration and allowances"
- To budgetary item 1633 "Mobility/Transport"

INF 7/2014 (Article 25 of the Financial Regulation)

The purpose of this transfer was to allow the CoR to reimburse the claims of its Members and alternate Members related to the language courses and related material.

The amount of the transfer was €5,000:

- From budgetary item 1200 "Remuneration and allowances"
- To budgetary item 105 "Courses for members of the institution"

INF 8/2014 (Article 25 of the Financial Regulation)

The purpose of this transfer was to allow the CoR to finance additional, unforeseen missions.

The amount of the transfer was €50,000:

- From budgetary item 1404 "Graduate traineeships, grants and exchanges of officials"
- To budgetary item 162 "Missions"

INF 9/2014 (Article 25 of the Financial Regulation)

The purpose of this transfer was to allow the CoR to finance two technical projects: (i) improvement of the sound in the conference rooms for the journalists (€40,000) and (ii) facilitation of the implementation of paper-less payment system for the reimbursements of the CoR Members (€5,000).

The amount of the transfer was €45,000:

- From budgetary item 2000 "Rent"
- To budgetary item 214 "Technical equipment and installations"

INF 10/2014 (Article 25 of the Financial Regulation)

The purpose of this transfer to allow the CoR to finance the replacement of the electricity based central heating system by a gas based central heating system. This is a joint CoR/EESC project to which the CoR contributes for its share.

The amount of the transfer was €45,186:

- From budgetary items:
  - 2024 "Energy consumption" (€12,604)
  - 2028 "Insurance" (€32,582)

- To budgetary item 2007 "Fitting-out of premises"

INF 11/2014 (Article 25 of the Financial Regulation)

The purpose of this transfer was to allow the CoR to finance additional needs for some IT projects in IT info systems and infrastructure. This is a joint CoR/EESC project to which the CoR contributes for its share.

The amount of the transfer was €148,680:

- From budgetary items:

- 2024 "Energy consumption" (€99,094)
- 212 "Furniture" (€10,976)
- 230 "Stationery, office supplies and miscellaneous consumables" (€10,620)
- 236 "Postage on correspondence and delivery charges" (€27,990)

- To budgetary item 2100 "Purchase, service and maintenance of equipment and software and related work"

INF 12/2014 (Article 25 of the Financial Regulation)

The purpose of this transfer was the reinforcement of two budget lines to allow the CoR

(i) to prolong a purchase order relating to the dispatching framework contract as well as to complete several other projects;

(ii) to finance the additional moves caused by the reorganisation of the Translation Directorate.

This is a joint CoR/EESC project to which the CoR contributes for its share.

The amount of the transfer for (i) was €23,172:

- From budgetary item 2024 "Energy consumption"

- To budgetary item 214 "Technical equipment and installations"

and €4,248 for (ii):

- From budgetary item 230 "Stationery, office supplies and miscellaneous consumables"

- To budgetary item 238 "Other administrative expenditure".

INF 13/2014 (Article 25 of the Financial Regulation)

The purpose of this transfer was to allow the CoR to pay a part of the 2015 lease payments (due between 1-15 Jan 2015) for the joint CoR-EESC buildings in Brussels using the 2014 budget rather than the 2015 budget.

The amount of the transfer was €925,000:

- From budgetary items:

- 1200 "Remuneration and allowances" (€450,000)
- 1400 "Other staff" (€150,000)
- 1404 "Graduate traineeships, grants and exchange of officials" (€30,000)
- 2024 "Energy consumption" (€230,000)
- 2540 "Internal meetings" (€25,000)
- 2541 "Observers" (€40,000)

- To budgetary item 2001 "Annual lease payments"

**2. Could the Committee outline the cost-effective and sustainable measures in place for the CoR's premises?**

**Answer:**

The CoR and the EESC manage and use the buildings under a cooperation agreement and they have jointly established an environmentally-friendly management system which seeks to ensure continuous improvement.

By choosing to operate as sustainably as possible, the Committees have made significant energy savings: Since 2008, gas consumption has decreased by 52% and electricity consumption by 21%. Water consumption and paper usage have decreased by 40% and 38% since 2009. Some of the measures taken to reduce consumption of gas, electricity, water and paper are outlined below:

Gas (-52% since 2008): These savings are mainly the result of a continuous monitoring of the heating system and consumption. Over 2013 and 2014, a number of measures were implemented to ensure a more efficient usage of the heating systems and savings on gas have continued to increase in 2014. With regard to the temperature of meeting rooms, for instance, engineers have established an automatic system linked to the software tool used to reserve rooms.

Electricity (-21% since 2008): Measures in this area include: improvement of lighting systems (renovation, energy-efficient light bulbs, dimming), programming of lighting throughout the day, gradual modernisation of lifts, ensuring the best possible use of technical and office equipment (by means of both technical solutions and staff awareness-raising), optimisation of cooling (and heating) systems and better programming of the cooling system in the summer.

Water (-40% compared to 2009): Between 2009 and 2014, the amount of water consumed per person decreased by 40%. There has been a steady decrease in the use of water per person over the last years, with a further reduction of 5% in 2014. A proactive approach has been adopted to reduce the risks of water leaks; thanks to awareness-raising measures, technical services are now very quickly made aware of leaks spotted by staff.

Paper for office use (-38% compared to 2009): Thanks to awareness-raising campaigns fewer pages are printed and double-sided printing etc. have become more common choices among staff. In addition, double-sided printing has been set as the default option on all network printers.

A detailed analysis of these data is published every year in the CoR's Environmental Statement, which is published on the CoR Internet site (<http://cor.europa.eu/en/Pages/environmental-statement.aspx>). For details on electricity consumption see also the answers to question 17.

### **3. How did the Institution meet the principle of green public procurement in 2014?**

**Answer:**

All calls for tender by the Logistics Directorate managed jointly by the CoR and the EESC are checked by its EMAS service to ensure that they include environmental criteria. This procedure has now been extended to all Directorates of the CoR.

### **4. What were the expenditures in 2014 for the management/ Court sentences of harassment cases?**

**Answer:**

In the context of the whistle-blowing case referred to in question 8, where the former staff member concerned claimed indemnification for alleged harassment, the CoR was required to pay a compensation for the prejudice incurred for not having demonstrated the reinforced duty of care which is expected from an institution in the event a staff member's health appears to be weakened, determined by the Civil Service Tribunal at 4,5% of the initial claim (CST ruling of 18/11/2014, case.F-156/12 – see relevant extracts hereunder). It follows that payment of EUR 20.000 was made by the CoR to the former Internal Auditor in late 2014.

Extracts of the CST ruling in case F-156/12:

*"106 (...) il convient de souligner que les obligations découlant pour l'administration du devoir de sollicitude sont substantiellement renforcées lorsqu'est en cause la situation d'un fonctionnaire dont il est avéré que la santé, physique ou mentale, est affectée. En pareille hypothèse, l'administration doit examiner les demandes de celui-ci dans un esprit d'ouverture particulier"*

*"117 (...) le Comité des régions a manqué à son devoir de sollicitude à l'égard du requérant, a fortiori s'agissant d'un fonctionnaire dont l'état de santé était fortement dégradé"*

*"129 (...) il y a lieu de condamner le Comité des régions à verser au requérant, en réparation du préjudice subi, la somme, évaluée ex aequo et bono, de 20 000 euros"*

### **5. What is the rate of compliance by the Committee with regard to the Ombudsman's recommendations?**

**Answer:**

The CoR was concerned by two files handled by the Ombudsman in 2014, and these have been or will soon be fully implemented.

One complaint to the Ombudsman regarding access to documents (case 122/2014/PMC) concerned the handling, by the CoR, of a request for access to documents. The Ombudsman considered it likely that more documents falling within the scope of the request existed. It therefore proposed to the CoR to check whether further internal documents could be disclosed. As CoR gave a favourable follow-up to this proposal, the Ombudsman closed the case whilst welcoming the Committee's constructive approach.

Following the Ombudsman's own-initiative inquiry (OI/1/2014/PMC) concerning whistleblowing, the Ombudsman encouraged 7 institutions, including CoR, represented in the Preparatory Committee for



Matters relating to the Staff regulations (CPQS) to finalise their discussions aimed at implementing Article 22(c) of the Staff Regulations as soon as possible. A new decision laying down rules on whistleblowing has now been adopted (also referred to under question 10) and the CoR has complied with the Ombudsman recommendation.

**6. Could the Committee of Regions provide a list of activities in support of EU policies (no. of consultations, opinions, etc.) in 2004 and their practical outcome?**

**Answer:**

In 2014, the CoR adopted 57 opinions of which 34 on referrals from the European Parliament, the Commission, the Council and the Council Presidencies. 4 opinions were adopted on obligatory referrals, 30 on optional referrals and 23 upon the CoR's own initiative. Furthermore, the CoR adopted 7 Resolutions.

The opinions covered a wide range of policy areas of particular importance for Local and Regional Authorities. In 2014 the following opinions can be singled out in each CoR thematic commission in terms of impact on the final legislation or importance of contribution to the inter-institutional debate.

Highlighted opinions:

- **BUDG commission:** Opinion on the *Execution of the EU Budget* (CDR 8129/2013, Rapporteur: Adam Struzik (PL/EPP)) has enabled LRAs to underline the local and regional dimension in inter-institutional debates on budgetary issues and enabled the CoR to become a recognised partner of EU institutions also in EU Budget issues
- **CIVEX commission:** Opinion on *Reconnecting Europe with its citizens: more and better communication at local level* (COR-2014-04460, rapporteur: Christophe Rouillon (FR/PES)) contributed to the public debate on rebuilding citizens' trust in the European integration project. The opinion received a lot of direct interest from the EU institutions and managed to influence their reflection process on the new communication strategies.
- **COTER commission:** **COTER commission:** Own-initiative opinion on *Towards an integrated urban agenda for the EU* (CDR 6942/2013, rapporteur: Bas Verkerk (NL/ALDE)) achieved high visibility, both at the EU Urban Forum on 17-18 February 2014 and at the intergovernmental debate on the Urban Agenda, during which the value of the CoR input was recognised by several Member States as well as by the Italian presidency of the Council. A major achievement for the CoR was the publication of the European Commission's communication on the urban dimension of EU policies on 18 July 2014, in line with the CoR opinion's call for a move towards a more ambitious EU urban agenda under the new Commission mandate. Also in line with the CoR opinion, the General Affairs Council of 19 November 2014 recognised the need for an EU urban agenda and requested the European Commission to develop this, factoring in the territorial dimension and the Territorial Agenda 2020 (as had also been requested by the CoR).
- **NAT commission:** Opinion on *Information provision and promotion measures for agricultural products on the internal market and in third countries* (CDR 8096/2013, rapporteur: Pedro Sanz Alonso (ES/EPP)). Several points, which were amongst the main proposals in the opinion, were taken on board in the final legislation, such as a reference to geographical origin of a product, involvement of Member States in the evaluation and

selection of programmes, and the increase of European co-financing, especially for information and promotion measures during agricultural crises and where multi-programmes in third countries are concerned.

- **ENVE commission:** Four CoR opinions contributed to the European Commission's Circular Economy Package published on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2014: *The review of the European Union's key waste targets* (CdR 1617/2013, rapporteur: Michel Lebrun (BE/EPP)), *Green Paper on a European strategy on plastic waste in the environment* (CdR 3751/2013, rapporteur: Linda Gillham (UK/EA)), *Proposal for a Regulation amending the Waste Shipments Regulation* (CdR 5880/2013, rapporteur: Paula Baker (UK/ALDE)) and *Proposal for a Directive on Lightweight Plastic Carrier Bags* (CdR 8067/2013, rapporteur: Linda Gillham (UK/EA)). The CoR's recommendations will need to be maintained and further updated in view of the withdrawal of the legislative proposal by the Commission in autumn 2015.
- **ECOS commission:** Two CoR opinions contributed to the discussion on the modernisation of state aid policies (Opinion on *EU guidelines on state aid for rescuing and restructuring firms in difficulty* in April 2013 and the linked revised opinion in January 2014 (rapporteur: Christophe Rouillon (FR/PES)). Important concerns voiced therein have been acknowledged by the Competition Commissioner and a significant number of recommendations were taken on board in the revised guidelines adopted by the European Commission in July 2014, in particular the highly important issue of raising the thresholds for determining when state aid needs to be approved by the European Commission.

Further information on the impact of the political/consultative work of the CoR can be found in the CoR's 2014 Impact Report and in the CoR's 2014 Annual Activity Report. Both reports are attached to this document.

In addition to the consultative activity related to its opinions, the CoR's **Charter for Multilevel Governance in Europe** was adopted by the CoR in the course of 2014 and had been signed by as many as 179 LRAs and 21 associations or networks by the end of 2014 and received political support from major European public figures.

Following an adoption of a report **on Multilevel Governance and Partnership**, the principle of multilevel governance was then introduced to the legal provisions of the European Structural and Investment Funds for the first time.

**7. How has the EP-CoR-EESC cooperation agreement impacted in the committee daily functioning? Please provide examples.**

**Answer:**

The cooperation agreement was concluded on 5 February 2014, stepping up cooperation both in political and administrative areas.

The enhanced political cooperation between the EP and the CoR started immediately upon signature and has significantly reinforced the Committee's' participation and input in the legislative process, including through direct contacts between rapporteurs and/or chairs from the respective institutions'

bodies. Each CoR commission has established intensified cooperation with the corresponding EP commissions in a series of pilot files of strategic relevance to regional and local authorities. A first assessment of this enhanced cooperation from the CoR's point of view was provided to the chair of the EP conference of committee chairs in December 2015.

In addition, the Committee has generated further inter-institutional synergies in contributing to the creation of the EP's Research Service – EPRS by way of staff transfers in exchange for access, for Committee Members, to EPRS' services. Furthermore, stronger links have been established for cooperation with the EP in communication towards citizens (see also question 12).

During the first two years of implementation, administrative cooperation has focused on the organisation of staff transfers from the translation services managed jointly by the CoR and the EESC to the EPRS and on internal redeployments to strengthen the departments working in immediate support of the political workings of the CoR while keeping the translation services required for members and for institutional purposes fully functional

As a result of these extraordinary operations, the CoR will gradually have transferred 24 posts to the EPRS throughout 2014 and 2015 in line with the provisions of the cooperation agreement and as requested by the Budget Authority (a total of 60 posts together with EESC). In addition, 9 colleagues from the translation services (6 AD and 3 AST) were internally redeployed to CoR's own services.

The European Parliament has gradually opened up its EPRS' products and services to the Members of the two Committees. The EPRS offers so far regular electronic newsletters providing hyperlinks to latest EPRS publications, availability of paper copies of EPRS publications upon requests and access to Library reading rooms and invitations to EPRS events therein.

The canteens of the European Parliament and the CoR and EESC are now opened to all their staff on the same basis. Moreover, the three Institutions have jointly organized a joint call for tender for a new catering contract.

A direct access between on the one hand the buildings managed jointly by the CoR and the EESC and the other the buildings managed by the European Parliament has been created facilitating access to the respective institutions' meeting rooms and facilities.

**8. The report of the 2013 discharge procedure which was adopted at the April Plenary of the European Parliament earlier this year says:**

**“(r)ecalls that the Committee has been dealing with the same whistle-blowing case since 2003; emphasises the considerable cost to Union taxpayers and the harm done to the whistle-blower; demands that the Committee of the Regions urgently comply with the conclusions of the Civil Service Tribunal's judgment of 7 May 2013 and recognise the plaintiff's action as legitimate and finally close the case”. However, recent correspondence between the Committee and its former Internal Auditor appears to indicate that little or no progress has been made with regard to the CoR's necessary implementation of Parliament's demand in this regard.**

**a) Which are the actions that the CoR has taken regarding this issue?**

**Answer:**

This point covers the former Financial Controller and Internal Auditor of the CoR who was put on invalidity in July 2007 following a long term sick leave. On the basis of the conclusions of a (first) Invalidity Commission, the invalidity was deemed not to be of professional origin. The former Internal Auditor went on retirement in July 2010.

The former Internal Auditor challenged the decision not to recognise the professional origin of his invalidity and by ruling of 07/05/2013, the Civil Service Tribunal (CST) annuls the decision of the Committee of the Regions' Bureau of 10/09/2010 refusing to recognise that the invalidity arose from an occupational disease on purely formal grounds, in that the confidential medical report of the first Invalidity Commission underpinning the Bureau decision was deemed flawed by a lack of motivation.

As a follow-up to this ruling, a new (second) invalidity commission was conveyed, composed in majority by different doctors, and came to the same conclusion that the invalidity was not of professional origin. This decision was ratified by the CoR's Bureau on 02/12/2014.

During the first semester 2015, the highest political and administrative authorities of the Committee have met with the former official but this has not provided any new factual information.

It follows that during its meeting of 7 July 2015, the CoR Bureau unanimously rejected the complaint in that it considered not to have any political leeway to handle this case: the invalidity commission is independent in its medical appreciation and it is the CoR's legal understanding that the administrative or political authorities of the institution are not in a position to overrule this judgement.

The Bureau decision of July 2015 was once again challenged by the former Internal Auditor who lodged a new case before the CST seeking annulment of the Bureau decision to refuse to recognise that his invalidity arose from an occupational disease and asking for compensation for the non-material damage he considers having suffered. In view of the introduction of this new action before the CST, the CoR Bureau in December 2015 gave mandate to the President to follow the complainant's action and keep the Bureau informed on the state of affairs.

**b) Has the CoR observed the Civil Service Tribunal's judgment?**

**Answer:**

The CoR considers that adequate follow-up was given to the CST rulings with regard to the former Internal Auditor, in particular the CST ruling of 07/05/2013 by launching a new invalidity commission.

In the CoR's view, this case is of a prominently medical nature and the invalidity commission is independent in its medical appreciation. The administrative or political authorities of the institution are not in a position to overrule this medical judgement. The CoR's two Bureau decisions taken in this respect (in 2010 and 2014) merely ratified the medical conclusions of two independent Invalidity Commissions. Only the CST could possibly verify whether procedures have been followed in good order.

**9. Currently the follow-up provided by the CoR in its annual report only concerns the discharge draft report. Could the CoR give a detailed follow-up to the requests made by the EP in its final discharge report to the financial year 2013 (T8-0127/2015 )?**

***Answer:***

The CoR records and follow-up on discharge reports in structural and timely manner. The reason for why the Secretary General's 2014 Annual Activity Report (AAR) includes points from the 2013 draft discharge report and not from the final 2013 discharge report adopted by the EP on 24 April 2015 is that the CoR's internal procedures required the 2014 AAR to be finalized already at the end of March 2015. The points that are included in the final discharge report and not in the draft report including the related answers are as follows:

- a) "20.Requests detailed information on the results of the mid-term review and expects that this evaluation will also include a joint assessment of the budgetary savings resulting from the cooperation agreement; "

***Answer:***

A midterm review for the 2007-2015 administrative cooperation agreement was conducted in 2011 and came to the conclusion that the agreement was in general considered partially satisfactory but that there was also room for improvements. These findings were supported by additional information gathered in 2014 from the services in preparation of the negotiations for a new administrative cooperation agreement. Room for improvement was especially identified in the areas of Budget of the Joint services - planning and implementation; IT services: functioning, governance structure and budgetary aspects; HR allocation to joint services: redeployment of staff into own services; translation workflow; security services and meeting room management; overall governance of the agreement. These findings were taken into account for the new administrative cooperation agreement 2016-2020 that was signed in July 2015.

- b) "28.Recalls that the Committee has been dealing with the same whistle-blowing case since 2003; emphasises the considerable cost to Union taxpayers and the harm done to the whistle-blower; demands that the Committee of the Regions urgently comply with the conclusions of the Civil Service Tribunal's judgment of 7 May 2013 and recognise the plaintiff's action as legitimate and finally close the case;"

***Answer:***

See the answer to point 8.

- c) "29.Stresses that Parliament will not tolerate any mistreatment of whistle-blowers in its own ranks or in any other Union Institution and reiterates its total commitment to the spirit and the letter of the legislation on whistle-blower protection."

***Answer:***

The CoR agrees fully with the EP. See also the answer to point 10.

**10. Did the Committee lay down any internal rules covering the protection of whistle-blowers and the provision of information to them, as well as the procedure for handling complaints made by whistle-blowers concerning the way they were treated as a result of reporting serious irregularities? If not, why not? When is the Committee envisaging adopting internal rules for the protection of whistle-blowers?**

**Answer:**

The CoR has always had whistleblowing rules in place. A new decision laying down rules on whistleblowing has been elaborated jointly with the EESC (given the significant pooling of resources in the framework of the Committees' Joint Services) and has been adopted, upon receipt of the recommendations, if any, of the European Data Protection Supervisor on the handling of personal data in this context (in response to the prior checking notification made on 15/10/2015) and after completion of social dialogue (the Staff Committee was invited to deliver its opinion on the draft decision on 24/11/2015).

**11. Could the Committee of Regions provide specific information regarding the closed OLAF cases? Why was no such information included in its annual activity report?**

**Answer:**

No OLAF cases regarding CoR's staff members were closed in 2014. The 2014 annual activity report states, at its point 3.7, that "*no indications of fraud were detected and/or signalled to OLAF to the knowledge of the Administration*".

**12. Considering that the main mandate of the committee is to "engage participation" from citizens, what specific initiatives or tools have been developed in order to do so? How much money has been spent in engaging participation from EU citizens?**

**Answer:**

As elected local and regional representatives, the 350 members of the CoR (and the 350 alternate members) are in daily contact with citizens in all EU Member States, which naturally includes communication on EU affairs. The CoR and its political groups support members through a number of communication services and tools including:

- Printed and online information in all EU languages including audiovisual material;
- Media relations, namely with media representatives at local and regional level (300 journalists welcomed at the CoR annually);
- Events including at local level such as external meetings of the CoR Bureau and Commissions, which are often combined with citizens dialogues (100 conferences held on CoR premises per year, eight external meetings);
- Initiation of 250 local events between September and November every year in the context of the European Week of Regions and Cities;
- Receiving 600 visitors groups including 16.000 visitors in 2014.

In 2014, a total staff of 50 and a budget of about 2 million were allocated to CoR communication activities. Though much of the activities are more focused on corporate communications, citizens are at least indirectly a target group in so far as CoR members can make use of the service and products for their proper local activities.

Towards the background of an own initiative opinion on "reconnecting Europe to its citizens" adopted in December 2014 and in view of the CoR's priorities for the 6<sup>th</sup> term of office 2015-2020, the CoR has adopted a five-years communication strategy which also includes an approach to better coordination of communication activities and their local reach-out between the EU institutions. As one activity, a pilot series of citizens-oriented local events has been implemented on the basis of which guidelines and tools are currently developed for implementation as of 2016.

## **Staff**

**13. The new staff regulations entered into force on the 1st of January 2014. Could you explain how the 5% staff reduction is being implemented in the Court?**

### ***Answer:***

In 2014 the CoR started its contribution to the 5% staff reduction plan by 2017. It is planning to return in total 27 posts (5% of 537 posts). So far 18 posts have already been given back to the Budget Authority. 5 posts have been reduced in 2014, 5 more in 2015, followed by 8 posts in 2016 (7 posts from the CoR's establishment plan + 1 post from the EP's establishment plan as 5% tax on 24 posts transferred to the EPRS in 2014-2015). The remaining 9 posts are to be reduced in the 2017 budget process (i.e. as of 1 January 2017).

Furthermore, the CoR's 2016 establishment plan will be reduced by 24 posts following the same number of staff being transferred to the EPRS.

Between 2014 and 2017, the CoR will thus reduce its establishment plan by a total of 50 posts (from 537 to 487 posts), i.e. by 9.3 %.

**14. The new career structure was a new element after the reform of the EU Staff Regulation. Promotion for normal AD staff should only be possible until AD 12. As of AD 13, promotion should be linked to a management position. Supposedly there will be a new category of senior experts and senior assistants who have access to AD 13 - AD 14 and AST 10 - AST 11, respectively.**

**a) How many senior experts and senior assistants in which grades do you employ or plan to appoint?**

### ***Answer:***

The CoR currently employs one adviser in a grade higher than AD12 who had been appointed before the entry into force of the new Staff Regulations. The CoR decided not to use the possibility offered by Art. 30 § 3 of Annex XIII to Staff Regulations to assign officials in grades AD9 to AD14 to the type of post "Head of unit or equivalent" or "Adviser or equivalent". However, the CoR plans to

appoint a very limited number of Advisers during the coming years, subject to the availability of posts.

**b) Will you inform the Parliament on a regular basis about new appointments?**

**Answer:**

If appointments of a senior expert or a senior assistant would occur in the future the CoR will inform the Parliament.

**15. How many officials worked in the CoR in 2014? Could the CoR provide the Parliament with the table of all human resources broken down by nationality, gender and grade? Please specify the positions of the Heads of Unit, Directors and Director-Generals.**

**Answer:**

442 officials worked in the CoR on 31/12/2014.

The break-down of CoR human resources (officials and temporary agents) by nationality, function group and gender on 31/12/2014 is as follows:

Nationality	AD		AST		Total
	F	M	F	M	
Germany	7	21	5	1	34
Austria	1	1	1		3
Belgium	4	17	36	15	72
Bulgaria	7	3	5		15
Cyprus			1	1	2
Croatia	6	1			7
Denmark	1	2	4		7
Spain	5	8	6	2	21
Estonia	7		4		11
Finland	4	3	2	1	10
France	11	11	11	3	36
Greece	5	5	6	5	21
Hungary	6	5	3	2	16
Ireland	1	3	5	1	10
Italy	9	13	11	6	39
Latvia	8	4	1		13
Lithuania	8		4	1	13
Malta	5	1	4		10
The Netherlands	4	3		1	8
Poland	15	5	6	4	30
Portugal	4	4	5	3	16
Czech Republic	7	6	3	3	19
Romania	9	6	9	2	26
United Kingdom	6	4	4		14
Slovakia	7	6	1	1	15
Slovenia	9	1		5	15
Sweden	6	5	2	2	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>498</b>

Information about temporary staff follows by point 17 d) and point 18.

The break-down of CoR management (officials and temporary agents) by nationality, gender and function on 31/12/2014 is as follows:



Nationality	Secretary General		Director		Head of Unit (*)		Total
	F	M	F	M	F	M	
Germany				1	1	5	7
Belgium				1	2	4	7
Bulgaria					1		1
Croatia					1		1
Spain				1		3	4
France				1	2	2	5
Greece					1	2	3
Hungary						1	1
Ireland						2	2
Italy					1	2	3
Latvia			1				1
Malta						1	1
The Netherlands						1	1
Poland			1		1		2
Czech Republic		1			1		2
United Kingdom					1		1
Slovakia					1		1
Slovenia					1		1
Sweden						2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>46</b>

(\*) Including Head of Units, Deputy Directors, Head of Cabinets and Secretary Generals of the Political Groups

Information about temporary staff follows by point 17 d) and point 18.

**16. What geographical balance has been achieved in the CoR proper services when it comes to the middle management (Heads of Units) and top management posts for the CoR staff coming from the Member States that have acceded to the Union since 2004? What is the exact current statistics?**

**Answer:**

The following geographical balance has been achieved in the CoR proper services when it comes to the middle management (Heads of Units) and top management posts for the CoR staff coming from the Member States that have acceded to the Union since 2004 (the ratio is 2 out of 34).

Function	Nationality	Female	Male	Total
Secretary General (*)	<i>Czech Republic</i>		<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
Director	Belgium		1	1
	France		1	1
	Germany		1	1
	<i>Poland</i>	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>
	Spain		1	1
Head of Unit (**)	Belgium	2	2	4

	France	2	2	4
	Germany	1	5	6
	Greece	1	2	3
	Ireland		2	2
	Italy	1	2	3
	Spain		3	3
	Sweden		1	1
	The Netherlands		1	1
	United Kingdom	1		1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>34</b>

(\*) Temporary agent recruited under article 2a of the CEOS

(\*\*) Including 5 deputy directors and 2 Heads of Cabinet.

Please note that the number comprises officials and temporary agents recruited under article 2c of CEOS (The Secretary Generals of the Political Groups).

Note the CoR interprets the words CoR proper services as the CoR own services, i.e. excluding those deployed in the services managed jointly by the CoR and the EESC.

#### **17. Can the institution provide the details on how it recruits its staff?**

##### **a) How many staff members were recruited following an EPSO competition in 2014?**

**Answer:**

12 officials were recruited following an EPSO competition in 2014.

##### **b) How many staff members have been recruited without passing any competition in 2014?**

**Answer:**

A total of 32 staff members have been recruited without passing any competition in 2014;

- 12 temporary agents, including 1 Secretary General, and;
- 20 contract agents.

These staff members passed a selection procedure in order to be recruited.

In addition, 8 officials were transferred from other institutions (having thus passed a general competition to be recruited as official in their institution of origin).

**c) How many staff members have been recruited by tempo working agencies in 2014?**

**Answer:**

21 interimaires were recruited by tempo working agencies and put at the disposal of the Committee in 2014.

**d) Could the institution provide detailed information on the different systems in place to recruit staff?**

**Answer:**

The CoR recruits its officials through open competitions or selections organised at inter-institutional level by EPSO. Vacancies are published both internally and at inter-institutional level. They are open for (i) permanent officials who are already working at the CoR or in the other institutions and for (ii) successful candidates from an open competition.

Sometimes the CoR employs non-permanent staff, under the contract or temporary agent scheme. This is particularly the case when a staff member is absent due to long-term illness or leave on personal grounds or maternity leave, when a department has to carry out a specific task in addition to its usual work or when a post is waiting to be filled. In any event, such contracts are for a limited period.

As far as temporary agents are concerned, a local on-line application database is available for any person wishing to register their CV and application, whether or not they have passed an EPSO selection. This database is a tool consulted by Human Resource services to identify potential candidates with adequate profiles meeting the job requirements that are available and interested to work for the CoR. When a need arises, a selection procedure is carried out (preselection in the database, possible written tests, interview by a panel). Temporary staff under Art 2b of the Conditions of employment of other servants of the EU(CEOS) are recruited on a non-permanent basis and only following unsuccessful publication of the post. Temporary staff under art 2c of the CEOS who are working for the President's private office and the secretariats-generals of the CoR political groups are employed for an indefinite duration, in accordance with Art. 8 of the CEOS.

As a rule, contract staff are selected from the database managed by EPSO, containing CVs of applicants who have passed an EPSO organized selection and adequate competency tests. Applications from persons who have not participated in an EPSO selection are also possible as stop-gap measures, especially since the current EPSO database is no longer up to date.. In that case an internal competition (preselection, written tests, interview by a panel) is organized among profiles preselected in our local on-line database. Contract staff is, as explained above, recruited on a non-permanent basis, with the exception of contract staff under art 3a of the Conditions of employment of other servants of the EU(CEOS) whose contracts are for an indefinite duration from the second renewal on.

In conformity with CoR Decision 61/2013 taking effect on 1/4/2013, employees of local, regional and national bodies as well as from intergovernmental organizations may also apply for positions as Seconded National Experts. They can do so by registering in the CoR's on-line database for Seconded National experts. When such a position becomes available, a preselection is made among the registered profiles, the preselected candidates then go through an interview by a selection panel.

The successful candidate is seconded after an exchange of letters between the Permanent Representation of his/her State of origin and the CoR.

The CoR also employs a medical doctor under the special adviser scheme, selected after the position has been advertised. The procedure includes a preselection and an interview by a panel.

**e) Please specify how many recruitments of Heads of Unit, Directors and Directors' General have the Committee organised in 2014 and how many women and men were selected as Heads of Unit, Directors and Director-General in that year.**

**Answer:**

One selection procedure for Secretary General was organized in 2014 resulting in the recruitment of a man. Three selection procedures for Heads of Units were organized in 2014 (one Head of Unit post was published twice) and 2 women were selected and nominated in 2015.

**18. What is the total number of temporary staff hired in 2014 and what are the total costs for temporary staff broken down by the type of service they provide?**

**Answer:**

The costs and services were as follows in 2014 for budget lines in Chapter 14 *Other staff and outside services* (information about temporary agents is included under point 15 and under point 17 d):

Contract agents (€ 1.525.578): 44 contract agents were carrying out tasks such as ushers, receptionists, support agents in the copy shop and others were working on projects limited in time such as migration towards a new internet/intranet system, to support the consultative work, monitor consultative platforms, networks, legal advices, etc. or were dedicated to short and medium term replacements of staff in situations such as maternity, parental or long term sick leave as well as translators coping with exceptional workload.

Interim staff (€ 131.059): 21 interim agents were recruited to ensure some temporary relief for instance in case of absence of a staff member due to a sudden illness, or to cope with exceptional workload.

Medical staff (€ 89.900): A CoR's doctor is providing the CoR staff with medical services. The Doctor is also available to Members in case of real emergency.

Seconded national experts (€389.820): 7 experts were at the service of the CoR in order to support the Cabinet of the President, services dealing with consultative work, member services and registry as well as with horizontal policies and networks, press and communication and budget and administration services.

**19. What is the procedure to select temporary staff? Do applicants have an appeal right with what regards the rejection of their application? If no, are you envisaging putting into place an appeal procedure?**

**Answer:**

The procedures for section of temporary staff are described under point 17 d) above. Appeals are possible through the ways foreseen in the staff regulations (Art. 90).

### **Buildings**

**20. Has the institution established a CO2 offsetting budget line? How much did the institution spend in 2014 for the CO2 emission? And how much would have been needed to have a fully offset funding covering all direct and indirect emissions?**

**Answer:**

The EESC and the CoR (with a joint Directorate for Logistics) have no budget line for offsetting. In 2014, the Committees calculated their emissions due to energy consumption to be 313 tons CO<sub>2</sub>. An estimation of the budget needed to offset emissions has not been made at this stage.

In its special report "How do the EU institutions and bodies calculate, reduce and offset their greenhouse gas emissions?" the Court of Auditors calls on all EU institutions to "(a) introduce a harmonized approach for reporting their emissions, also including all relevant indirect emissions; (b) develop a common approach to compensate on a voluntary basis for those greenhouse gas emissions which they cannot avoid".

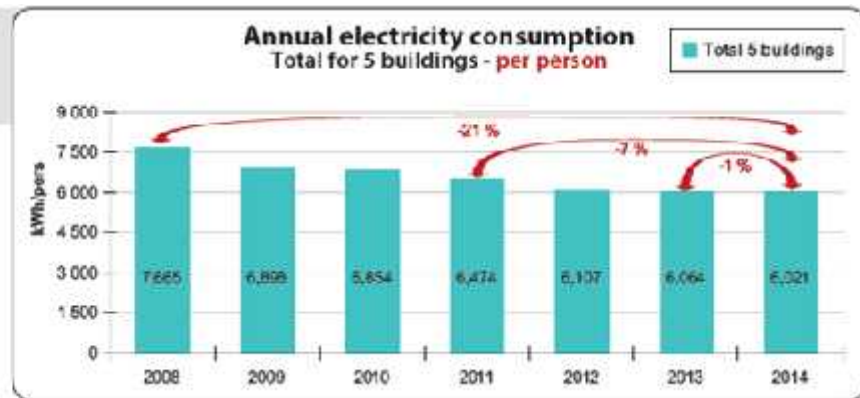
The Committees, having achieved EMAS and ISO14001 certification in 2011, fully supports the EU institutions' intentions to introduce a harmonised approach for reporting and offsetting their emissions. In 2015, the Committees started to evaluate to what extent it is possible to enrich the environmental management system by calculating their carbon footprint.

**21. How much electricity did the Institution use in 2014? How does it correlate to the usage of the previous years? How many percent of the total usage was coming from renewable energy resources? How much did the Institution pay for the electricity? Did the Institution invest into solar or wind energy to support its energy needs? How much did the Institution invest in energy efficiency in 2014?**

**Answer:**

The chart below shows electricity consumption since 2008 in buildings occupied by the EESC and the CoR:

**Indicator:**  
*kWh/person for the  
five buildings*



Per capita electricity consumption is based on the number of occupants recorded once a year.

These data do not include the Van Maerlant building (VMA) as this building is shared by the Committees and the European Commission. However, from 2009 to 2014, annual electricity consumption in the VMA building also went down very significantly – by 44%, from 9 503 to 5 295 kWh/person. As of 2015, the VMA building comes under the environmental management system which means that data on its electricity consumption will be included in the calculation of the Committees, on a pro rata basis.

As to production of renewable energy, the Committees did not invest in any new solar or wind energy project in 2014. Solar panels (150 m<sup>2</sup>) were installed on the roofs of two buildings (JDE and B68) in 2010. Annual production during the first five full years of operation was around 13 000 kWh or some 0.15% of the Committees' total electricity consumption. 2014 was the best year for electricity production since the solar panels were installed, with a production of 13 556 kWh or 0.16% of the total electricity consumption.

Since 2009, the Committees have exclusively used green electricity. In 2014, the Committees spent EUR 739 876 on electricity supply and invested EUR 1 279 231 in energy efficiency projects.

### **Translation and interpretation**

#### **22. What were the costs for translation and interpretation ordered by the CoR in 2014?**

**Answer:**

The CoR ordered interpretation for €3.683.154 and outsourcing of translation for €188.928 in 2014.

### **Missions and travels + Away days, conferences and other events**

#### **23. Could the Committee of the Regions provide a detailed analysis of travel expenses (missions/ordinary travel expenses, etc.) of Members?**

**Answer:**

The CoR's members receive travel and meeting allowances when they participate in the activities. They do not receive salaries. A total amount of €8.277.556 has been spent on travel and meeting

allowances for members and alternate members of the Committee. This expenditure is composed by €213.008 in train expenses, €3.981.271 in air fees, €205.596 in car expenses, €1.406.171 in flat rate travel allowances and €2.471.510 €flat rate meeting allowances.

**24. Which were the costs in 2014 respectively for away days, closed conferences or similar events for staff? How many staff members participated in the respective events? Where did these events take place?**

**Answer:**

The total cost for 14 events including team building events and away day type events in 2014 was € 40.268. Overall, 304 staff members participated in these events, which all took place in Belgium at the locations outlined below.

Number of participants	Location/Events	Cost (€)
16	Ardennes	0
30	Gent	3.546 (1.450 for trainer)
23	Bruxelles	6.751 (5.000 for trainer)
53	Leuven	2.972
24	Bruxelles	1.942
12	Bruxelles	3.779 (2.900 for trainer)
7	Bruxelles	587
15	Bruxelles	1.080
15	Bruxelles	5.418 (4.334 for trainer)
12	Bruxelles	780
15	Antwerpen	730
35	Bruxelles	5.090 (2.873 for trainer)
25	Bruxelles	5.935 (4.334 for trainer)
22	Bruxelles	1.658
<b>Total: 304</b>	<b>Total: 14</b>	<b>Total: 40.268</b>

As shown below team buildings generate the highest cost per participant due to the cost of trainers and moderators:

	N° of events	N° of participants	Total cost (€)	Average cost per participant including trainers and moderators (€)
Team buildings	7	162	32.176	199
Away days	7	142	8.092	57
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>40.268</b>	

If the costs for trainers and moderators are excluded from the total cost calculation, the average cost per event for team buildings and away days is €64 per participant.

**25. Mission and travel costs:**

**a. What were the mission and travel costs of staff in 2014?**

**Answer:**

The total mission and travel costs related to 2014 were €392,084.

**b. What were the highest and lowest amounts paid?**

**Answer:**

The highest amount paid in 2014 was €4.941 and the lowest amount paid in 2014 was €6.

**Pensions**

**26. What was the amount of the highest pension paid to officials of the institution in 2014? What was the average pension paid in 2014? What is the average pension paid to officials who retired in 2014?**

**Answer:**

The amount of the highest pension paid to officials of the institution in 2014 was €9.755. The average pension paid in 2014 was €4.110. The average pension paid to officials who retired in 2014 was €6.302.

**Vehicles**

**27. How many official cars, including drivers, does the Committee of the Regions provide for personal use only? Which were the costs in 2014 for each of these official cars, including the driver?**

**Answer:**

The CoR leased 4 cars in 2014. One car was used for the CoR's President and one for the CoR's Secretary General. The two other cars are pool cars inter alia used for transporting mail, documents or small material for CoR events. The CoR employs 4 drivers.



All service cars are leased and the costs in 2014 were:

- BMW 7 (President): €24.833
- Citroën DS 5 (Secretary General): €10.501
- Nissan Leaf (Pool car): €9110
- Mercedes Viano (Pool car): €13.541

The total cost for the 4 drivers and 1 replacement due to sickness was some €232.000.

**28. How many of these cars are allocated respectively to Members of the Institution and officials?**

**Answer:**

With the exception of the car allocated to the President, none of the cars are allocated to Members. For information about cars allocated to Officials see the answer to question 27.

**29. Which rules are in place for the private use of these cars?**

**Answer:**

It is not allowed to use service cars for private purposes.

**30. Are there any rules for the drivers when they are off duty? Please specify.**

**Answer:**

In case of very early or late transport jobs drivers are allowed to park the service cars in a safe place close to their home.

**31. How many personally assigned drivers run private errands for their VIP or for the family of their VIP?**

**Answer:**

VIPs and their families cannot use service cars with drivers for private errands.

**32. What were the highest and lowest kilometre readings of the official cars at the Committee?**

**Answer:**

The highest kilometre reading in 2014 is 17.430 km and the lowest kilometre reading is 3.110 km.

**Technology**

**33. Has the CoR increased its utilisation of videoconferencing tools?**

**Answer:**

As videoconferencing cannot be used for multilingual meetings because remote interpretation is not accepted by the European Commission services SCIC and DG INTE, the Committee of the Regions standard interpretation providers, it is only used in monolingual mostly administrative meetings.

The use of videoconferencing has increased between 2012 and 2014:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of sessions</u>	<u>Number of participants</u>
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2012	9	54
2013	10	60
2014	25	206