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REPORT

on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2014, Section I – European Parliament (2015/2155(DEC))

Committee on Budgetary Control

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1. PROPOSAL FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DECISION

on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2014, Section I – European Parliament (2015/2155(DEC))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2014¹,
- having regard to the consolidated annual accounts of the European Union for the financial year 2014 (COM(2015)0377 – C8-0200/2015)²,
- having regard to the report on budgetary and financial management for the financial year 2014, Section I – European Parliament³,
- having regard to the Internal Auditor’s annual report for the financial year 2014,
- having regard to the Court of Auditors’ annual report on the implementation of the budget for the financial year 2014, together with the institutions’ replies⁴,
- having regard to the statement of assurance⁵ as to the reliability of the accounts and the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions provided by the Court of Auditors for the financial year 2014, pursuant to Article 287 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to Article 314(10) and Article 318 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002⁶, and in particular Articles 164, 165 and 166 thereof,
- having regard to the Bureau decision of 27 April 2005 on the Internal Rules on the implementation of the European Parliament’s budget⁷, and in particular Article 13 thereof,
- having regard to the Bureau decision of 16 June 2014 on the Internal Rules on the implementation of the European Parliament’s budget⁸, and in particular Article 22

¹ OJ L 51, 20.2.2014.

² OJ C 377, 13.11.2015, p. 1.

³ OJ C 247, 28.7.2015, p. 1.

⁴ OJ C 373, 10.11.2015, p. 1.

⁵ OJ C 377, 13.11.2015, p. 146.

⁶ OJ L 298, 26.10.2012, p. 1.

⁷ PE 349.540/Bur/ann/fin.

⁸ PE 422.541/Bur.

thereof,

- having regard to Rule 94 and Rule 98(3) of, and Annex V to, its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A8-0135/2016),
- A. whereas the President adopted Parliament's accounts for the financial year 2014 on 8 July 2015,
- B. whereas the Secretary-General, as principal authorizing officer by delegation, certified, on 18 September 2015, his reasonable assurance that the resources assigned for the Parliament's budget have been used for their intended purpose and in accordance with the principle of sound financial management,
- C. whereas Article 166(1) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 requires each Union institution to take all appropriate steps to act on the observations accompanying the Parliament's discharge decision,
1. Grants its President discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Parliament for the financial year 2014;
 2. Sets out its observations in the resolution below;
 3. Instructs its President to forward this decision and the resolution forming an integral part of it to the Council, the Commission and the Court of Auditors, and to arrange for their publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union* (L series).

2. MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

with observations forming an integral part of the decision on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2014, Section I – European Parliament (2015/2155(DEC))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its decision on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2014, Section I – European Parliament,
 - having regard to Rule 94 and Rule 98(3) of, and Annex V to, its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A8-0135/2016),
- A. whereas in his certification of the 2014 final accounts, Parliament's accounting officer stated his reasonable assurance that the accounts present a true and fair view of the financial position of Parliament in all material respects and that no issues requiring a reservation have been brought to his attention,
- B. whereas, through its audit, the Court of Auditors concluded that the audit did not identify any significant weaknesses in the selected systems and annual activity reports of the institutions and bodies,
- C. whereas, in accordance with the usual procedure, a questionnaire was sent to the Parliament's administration and replies were received and discussed by the Committee on Budgetary Control, in the presence of the Vice-President responsible for the Budget, the Secretary-General and the Internal Auditor,
- D. whereas there is permanent scope for improvement in terms of quality, efficiency and effectiveness in the management of public finances, and scrutiny is necessary to ensure that political leadership and Parliament's administration are held accountable to Union citizens,

The European Parliament's accounts

1. Notes that Parliament's final appropriations for 2014 totalled EUR 1 755 631 742, or 20,13 % of heading V of the multiannual financial framework (MFF) set aside for the 2014 administrative expenditure of the Union institutions as a whole representing a 0,3 % increase over the 2013 budget (EUR 1 750 463 939);
2. Notes that total revenue entered in the accounts as at 31 December 2014 was EUR 174 436 852 (2013: EUR 158 117 371), including EUR 26 979 032 in assigned revenue (2013: EUR 25 991 783);
3. Recalls that four chapters accounted, in 2014, for 72 % of the total of the commitments: Chapter 10 (Members of the institution), Chapter 12 (Officials and temporary staff), Chapter 20 (Buildings and associated costs) and Chapter 42 (Expenditure relating to parliamentary assistance);
4. Takes note of the figures on the basis of which Parliament's accounts for the financial year 2014 were closed, namely:

(a) Available appropriations (EUR)	
appropriations for 2014:	1 755 631 742
non-automatic carry-overs from financial year 2013:	734 000
automatic carry-overs from financial year 2013:	277 774 604
appropriations corresponding to assigned revenue for 2014:	26 979 032
carry-overs corresponding to assigned revenue from 2013:	106 934 452
Total:	2 168 053 830
(b) Utilisation of appropriations in the financial year 2014 (EUR)	
commitments:	2 138 652 789
payments made:	1 742 390 229
appropriations carried forward automatically including those arising from assigned revenue:	383 988 975
appropriations carried forward non-automatically:	0
appropriations cancelled:	39 918 558
(c) Budgetary receipts (EUR)	
received in 2014:	174 436 852
(d) Total balance sheet at 31 December 2014 (EUR)	1 476 824 398

5. Notes that a total of EUR 71 500 000 was transferred from provisional appropriation headings and from other sources, so as to help fund the annual lease payments for the Konrad Adenauer Building in Luxembourg and its extension and modernisation;

remarks that this accounts for 4 % of the final appropriations for 2014;

Court of Auditors' opinions on the reliability of the 2014 accounts and on the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions

6. Recalls that the Court of Auditors performs a specific assessment of administrative and other expenditure as a single policy group for all the Union institutions, including the European Parliament and that overall, audit evidence indicates that spending on administration is not affected by a material level of error; takes note that checks of transactions indicate that the estimated level of error present in heading 5 of the MFF on administration is 0,5 % (down from 1 % in 2013);
7. Recalls that the audit involved an examination of a sample of 129 payment transactions, including 92 payments of salaries and pensions, related allowances and other staff costs, 14 payments in respect of contracts related to buildings and 23 payments connected with other expenditure (energy, communication, information technology, etc.); stresses that out of the 129 transactions audited, 20 (or 15,5 %) were affected by error; takes note that for the 12 quantifiable errors, the estimated level of error is 0,5 %;
8. Emphasises the Court of Auditors' recommendation that Parliament reinforce its checks on the costs reimbursed by European political parties to their affiliated organisations, develop appropriate rules for European political parties on public procurement and monitor their application through appropriate checks and better guidance; insists on full transparency on the expenditure by European political parties and that in future the competent committee examine and discuss this information in detail in the context of the ordinary discharge procedure;

The internal auditor's annual report

9. Notes that at the competent committee's meeting with the internal auditor on 25 January 2016, the internal auditor presented his annual report signed 16 July 2015, stating that in 2014, he performed the following audit work on Parliament's administration:
 - a transversal follow-up of open actions from internal audit reports - phases I and II of his work in 2014;
 - a consulting assignment on internal management and control procedures in the Directorate for Democracy Support (DG EXPO);
 - a periodic review of the Konrad Adenauer building project - see "Phase 2: Estimation, reporting and control of project costs of the report";
 - an audit of Members' salaries and transitional allowances;
 - an audit of the grants process in DG Communication (DG COMM);
 - an information systems audit of IT infrastructure and operations - see "Assignment 1 - first report: Resource optimization and IT continuity";
 - an audit of implementation of the Code of Conduct on Multilingualism,

concerning interpretation services;

10. Emphasises that in his audit of the grants process the internal auditor concludes that there is significant scope for improving certain management and control procedures and thus providing more assurance that the grants programme achieves its objectives by:
 - ensuring that the multi-annual grants programme is fully aligned with and supports the objectives of the institution's long-term communication strategy;
 - ensuring that the value added by the programme is measured by appropriate performance indicators and tools;
 - concluding agreements with a more limited number of strategic partners capable of proposing an action plan that would cover the whole period of the partnership agreement;
 - improving the evaluation of proposed projects by defining a common methodology for their assessment by all evaluation committees;
 - improving the financial and operational evaluation of completed projects at the final payment stage, namely that actions have been realised in accordance with their initial objectives;

Audit of Parliament's internal control framework

11. Notes that at the end of 2014, after substantial progress, only four actions remained incomplete out of the 452 internal control framework actions initially agreed; calls on the internal auditor to keep the Committee on Budgetary Control informed on the progress achieved on those remaining actions;

Follow-up to the 2013 discharge resolution

12. Takes note of the written answers to its 2013 discharge resolution for the financial year 2013¹, provided to its Committee on Budgetary Control on 15 October 2015; welcomes the presentation by the Secretary-General on the various questions and requests made by Parliament in that resolution and the exchange of views with Members that followed;
13. Notes that there was an inconsistency between the dates of the presentation of the draft report for the Parliament discharge and the scope for tabling additional questions to the Secretary-General; urges the Secretary-General to provide answers before the vote in committee to the questions presented by the rapporteur;
14. Notes that the Secretary-General only replied to the additional questions of the Members less than 24 hours before the deadline for amendments; urges the Secretary-General to improve this situation;

¹ Resolution of the European Parliament, of 29 April 2015, with observations forming an integral part of its decision on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2013, Section I — European Parliament (OJ L 255, 30.9.2015, p. 3).

15. Notes the reply from the Secretary-General regarding the accessibility of the ePetition application to Members and to the general public; calls on the Secretary-General to inform Parliament of the outcome of the Legal Service consultation and to assess the technical and budgetary cost of expanding the application's accessibility;
16. Recalls that canteen services aim to provide quick restaurant services to Members and staff; is concerned by the limited space of the canteens in peak periods, in particular during plenary weeks in Strasbourg; welcomes the availability of the new outdoor space that will partly address this whenever weather conditions allow; calls on the administration further to improve the Strasbourg canteen by making a more efficient use of all available space;
17. Notes that Parliament started applying "fixed price contracts" for catering services; points out that the budgetary means required for catering services were quite limited, accounting for only 0,23 % of the annual budget; expects stability in the prices charged in Parliament catering outlets following the repeated and substantial increases in the prices of the menus offered;
18. Notes that the new contracts for catering activities in Brussels concluded in 2015 do not foresee exclusivity for one catering provider any longer; expects that the planned smaller catering outlets in Brussels will be operated in a manner that includes SMEs and promotes diversity among the catering providers, to ensure a quality service at an affordable price;
19. Notes with concern that, as price levels have risen, this has led to unjustified disadvantageous pricing, especially for assistants, interns and visitors; stresses that the increases mean that prices in Parliament are now practically equivalent to the ones in the surrounding restaurants and bars; moreover notes with concern that while the price has risen, the quality of the food decreased significantly;
20. Considers that the numerous constituency and plenary weeks represent periods during which the canteens and cafeteria facilities are not fully utilised; suggests that the agreements with the caterers take into account the option of employing the staff of these facilities elsewhere during weeks when not all canteens and cafeteria facilities are open;
21. Calls on the administration to evaluate and propose a price scheme that combines the new rules whilst ensuring the possibility of discounts for interns, with affordable choices for menus;
22. Is disappointed that the administration is not able to provide data on the variable number of meals served during the different parliamentary days and weeks; wonders how any control can be exerted on contract providers if basic information like this is not available; calls on the administration to make available to the committee responsible the catering contract which came into force on 26 September 2015 and to provide details of the meals served;
23. Stresses that the Court of Auditors' report adopted on 11 July 2014 states that the potential saving for the Union budget would be about EUR 114 million per year if Parliament centralised its activities; reiterates its call on Parliament and the Council to

address, in order to create long term savings, the need for a roadmap to a single seat, as stated by Parliament in several previous resolutions;

Discharge for 2014

24. Acknowledges the quality of the exchange of views between the Vice President responsible for the budget, the Secretary-General and the Committee on Budgetary Control in the presence of the Member of the Court of Auditors and the Internal Auditor on 4 February 2016; welcomes the Secretary-General for his availability and calls for more frequent opportunities to debate with him in the Committee on Budgetary Control on matters with an impact on Parliament's budget;
25. Notes the signature of the cooperation agreement with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Committee of the Regions on 5 February 2014; calls for specific detailed provisions to be laid down concerning the functioning of the services shared by the three institutions; stresses that the implementation of the agreement must be balanced and benefit the three institutions equally; asks that the mid-term review of the agreement should include an assessment by each institution of the impact that the agreement is having in terms of human resources, synergies, added value, and substance, and to provide a detailed breakdown of the savings and/or increased budgetary expenditure resulting from the agreement, paying particular attention to staff chapters; asks to continue to be informed of the agreement follow-up;
26. Recalls that a maximum of 80 officials from the EESC and the Committee of the Regions (from the translation service and assistants) will be transferred to Parliament under this agreement, who will work for the new European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS); takes the view that this transfer should make it possible for Parliament's in-house productivity to increase with fewer budgetary means devoted to outsourcing studies, assessments or evaluations; notes with concern that, up to now, 25 officials from the EESC and 24 officials from the Committee of the Regions have been transferred to the EPRS, for the most part very near to retirement age, whereby the EESC and the Committee of the Regions will make significant savings in staff chapters while Parliament's budget will increase considerably in the short term (salaries) and in the medium and long term (pensions);
27. Welcomes the publication of the names of service providers on each Member's home page, alongside details of the accredited parliamentary assistants and local assistants employed by the Member;
28. Deplores the transfer of responsibilities from the administration to the offices of Members; calls for a review by and about the administration to check which obligations (e.g. responsibility for insuring trainees) can be returned to the administration;
29. Stresses the need to make the work of Parliament's internal decision-making bodies, in particular the Bureau, more transparent and accessible; calls for meeting agendas and minutes to be published on the internet and forwarded to members systematically and in good time;
30. Points out that the administrative burden for the offices of Members have also increased

more generally and requests a rationalisation of the forms that have to be used for internal parliamentary procedures, such as recruitment of new assistants;

31. Notes that after considerable delay, internal whistleblowing rules have been adopted and are in force since January 2016; expresses concern at the lack of protection granted to whistleblowers and calls on Parliament to ensure that their rights are fully respected; calls on the Bureau to extend internal whistleblowing rules to accredited parliamentary assistants and calls for equivalent national legislation to be applied to local assistants;
32. Calls for clarification about what form official and unofficial cooperation with OLAF about Members' accounts takes; points to the information passed on to third parties in at least one case; sees this as a breach of independence of Members' mandates;
33. Notes that it was difficult to differentiate fully the President's political activities from his preparation as "Spitzenkandidat" to head the Party of European Socialists in the 2014 European elections; considers that an unequivocal distinction has not been made between the two roles; calls for a clear segregation of office holders' functions and candidacies for European election campaigns; regrets the at least indirect use of Parliament staff to help prepare the campaign and calls for action to ensure that it does not happen again in future; regrets in this regard that the President transformed the Twitter profile of the European Parliament Presidency into his personal profile and used it during the campaign;
34. Mandates EPRS to conduct a comparative analysis of the legal framework governing the compatibilities of candidates who run for election campaigns in other international organisations and in the Member States (election of Prime minister, Secretary General, Chancellor, etc.);
35. Welcomes the delivered list of the missions undertaken by the President in the first six months of the election year in answer to the questionnaire concerning the 2014 discharge; would like to request additional information on the transportation used by the President from Brussels to these meetings and whether private flights were also chartered;
36. Notes that in the period from 22 January to 18 April, the official international missions undertaken by the President were mostly with government and official representations attached to socialist parties and organisations; calls for further information in this regard;
37. Requests further information on the campaigns of all "Spitzenkandidaten", in particular whether they were accompanied by officials and other statutory staff not on leave during the election campaign; welcomes the complementary information given by the President and requests the same level of transparency from the other candidates;
38. Recalls its discharge resolution for the financial year 2012¹, in which detailed

¹ Resolution of the European Parliament, of 16 April 2014, with observations forming an integral part of its Decision on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2012, Section I — European Parliament (OJ L 266, 5.9.2014, p. 3).

information was called for "on how the President, as a politically neutral figure, has kept his duties in office separate from his preparations to head the Socialists and Democrats' list in the European elections, in particular with regard to the staff in his cabinet and in Parliament's information offices and to travel expenses"(par. 51);

General expenditure allowance (GEA)

39. Recalls that the GEA is intended to cover expenditure in the Member State of election, such as a Members' office rent, equipment, supplies, documentation or logistical organisation of events; takes note that a comprehensive system of control of the Member's parliamentary mandate allowance would represent 40 to 75 new administrative posts, which would go against the staff reduction scheme;
40. Supports the need for more transparency as regards the GEA; urges the Bureau to revise the list of expenses which may be defrayed from the GEA;
41. Reiterates the appeal for greater transparency regarding the GEA for the Members; calls on the Bureau to work on a definition of more precise rules regarding the accountability of the expenditure authorised under this allowance, without generating additional costs and administrative burden for Members;

Management of the subsidy scheme for visitors' groups

42. Welcomes a better alignment of Parliament's subsidies to visitors' groups with the real costs incurred in this regard; is deeply worried, however, that this is the single critical action identified by the Parliament's internal auditor;
43. Is concerned that funding for visitor's groups in 2014 is still being paid mostly in cash: expenditure of EUR 24 593 928,16 in 2013 was paid 73,14 % in cash and 26,86 % by bank transfer, while expenditure of EUR 22 281 749,46 in 2014 was paid 71,15 % in cash and 28,85 % by bank transfer;
44. Notes the Court of Auditors' finding in its landscape review of the financial management of the Union budget that the practice of making cash payments for the reimbursement of costs to visitor groups was a "high risk concern"; demands therefore that cash payments be limited as far as possible when reimbursing costs to visitor groups; points out the high reputational risk for Parliament and the significant security risk entailed in making cash payments to visitor groups; acknowledges the practical concerns and calls for an evaluation of alternative and efficient methods to making payments before adopting new rules governing the reception of visitors' groups;

Transparency register and conflicts of interest

45. Welcomes the fact that the Commission has started a public consultation procedure in respect of the revision of the current transparency register of the Commission and Parliament and its extension to the Council; requests that immediately after the public consultation an inter-institutional working group be set up for preparing proposals concerning the revision of the register, the accompanying code of conduct, and the functioning thereto;

46. Calls additionally for a report by Parliament's administration on which former managers, CEOs, directors and board members in relevant European NGOs are now Members of the Parliament;
47. Calls for a report by Parliament's administration on the use of the Parliament's premises by interest groups and other external organisations; calls on the Bureau to examine the compatibility of these events with parliamentary work whilst ensuring that Parliament remains an institution open to exchange with civil society and to public debate;
48. Recalls the obligation on Members to inform the administration immediately of any change in their declarations of interests; regrets that the CVs and declarations of interests of the Members elected in 2014 were uploaded to Parliament's website very late;
49. Strongly believes that Article 3 of the Code of Conduct for Members should be rephrased to include a clear ban on Members holding additional jobs or other paid work;

Directorate-General for Internal Policies and Directorate-General for External Policies

50. Notes that the costs of delegations, joint parliamentary assemblies, ad hoc delegations and election observation missions outside the Union in 2014 were curbed from EUR 5 794 360 (2013) to 1 351 212 (2014) following the remarks made by Parliament in its above-mentioned discharge resolution for the financial year 2013 and as a result of a reduction in duty travel during the changeover from one parliamentary term to the next, when there were no delegation visits for several months; criticises the fact, nonetheless, that some of Parliament's missions were excessively expensive, especially where distant destinations were concerned; expects those costs to be further explained and reduced in the near future and calls for details of the cost of each mission to be published in the annual activity report;
51. Believes that thought should be given to how IT tools such as videoconferencing might be used to reduce the number of delegation visits;
52. Calls for the websites of the interparliamentary delegations to be developed and supplied with content as a matter of urgency; also considers it vital that, budget permitting, public meetings of the delegations should be broadcast live via webstreaming, as parliamentary committee meetings are;

Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services

53. Recalls that the new Members' research service began to provide a dedicated research capability for individual Members through briefing publications across all major policy fields; points out that in its first full year of activity the research service generated over 450 publications, responded to 1 675 requests for research from Members and dealt with 745 similar requests from Parliament's other clients; notes that this facility grants access to a large amount of pertinent information that should significantly reduce recourse to external expertise, representing a considerable saving; calls for all briefings on topics in key areas to be translated into the official languages of the Member States;

54. Requests clearer definition of the tasks of the various service areas (research service, impact assessment) and that these areas of responsibility be made known to Members;
55. Requests that the Ex-Ante Impact Assessment Unit improve its visibility with respect to the excellent services the unit is able to provide to committee members and rapporteurs and to their rules of engagement via email; encourages the pursuit of training sessions for advisors and assistants to Members; demands a substantial improvement in the staff resources available in this area, as this will contribute significantly to enabling the Parliament to participate as an equal partner in the decision-making process;
56. Welcomes the fact that there have so far been no complaints regarding one-sided impact assessments and calls on the unit to continue to ensure neutrality in this connection;
57. Urges DG EPRS to further differentiate its publications from the official positions of Parliament to avoid confusion in the public and media; welcomes the introduction of the disclaimer in all publications; calls on DG EPRS to make it more visible and not only on the back page, and to introduce additional features for an easy distinction with the official adopted positions of Parliament;

Directorate-General for Communication

58. Notes that VoteWatch received two grants (EUR 149 172 in 2012 and EUR 350 000 in 2013) for the co-financing of specific projects related to the European elections; requests an added value assessment of those projects;
59. Is concerned at the lack of actual results from Parliament's communication activities, considering the ever decreasing turn-out during European elections, as well as the general lack of knowledge in society about the role of Parliament and its activities;
60. Criticises the presentation of statistical data on explanations of vote, speeches in plenary, parliamentary questions, amendments, motions for resolutions, written questions to the President of the European Council, the Council, the Commission or the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the Parliament website, which appear designed to prove which Members of the Parliament are supposedly "active" on platforms such as MEPRanking; calls on Parliament to stop providing the raw numbers in a statistical form and to take into account more suitable criteria to identify a Member as "active";
61. Notes that DG COMM is extremely vocal in calling for a reduction in expenditure and a greater stress on efficiency; calls for greater emphasis on the effective rather than costly deployment of information and communication technologies (ICT); notes that despite the large sums spent on the Parliament website, it remains complex, difficult to navigate and fails to generate the desired visibility; advises a review of the marketing strategy; stresses that a transparent and accessible website is key to the involvement of citizens;
62. Calls for a new and efficient Parliament website search engine, which provides both strong search engine optimisation and a fully comprehensive search engine results page alongside a dedicated effort to enhance access to the site by means of improved keyword recognition; recommends intense inter-institutional cooperation to connect all

the website databases of Union institutions; notes that this will ensure greater transparency of Union activities for all citizens;

House of European History

63. Is disappointed to learn that the works on the Eastman Building, which will provide the premises for the House of European History, has continued to accumulate delays; calls for a communications plan/ promotion and website projects/ marketing plan that will detail how the House of European History is to achieve the desired level of impact;
64. Recalls that the works should have been completed by the end of 2014; expects the initially agreed global budget for the construction of the project to be respected, despite the delays, and the first exhibition to open at the end of 2016;
65. Calls for a strict separation with the contents of information provided in the already-existing Parliamentarium; warns again of the risk of overly high subsequent costs, which are by no means proportionate to the commission of the facility;

European Parliament Visitors' Centre

66. Welcomes the fact that the Parliamentarium is one of the most visited tourist attractions in Brussels and received 340 500 visitors in 2014 (in 2013 it was 337 000 visitors); stresses the importance of informing the Belgian authorities of those figures and the benefits therein;
67. Is concerned that the budget line for the European Parliament Visitors' Centre increased by 24 % over the previous year in comparison with the visitors increase which was only 1 %;
68. Recommends that the Member State in which the Parliamentarium facilities are established partly finance their establishment and running costs;

Lux Prize

69. Criticises the total cost of the LUX Prize, which reached EUR 585 311 in 2014 (2013: EUR 448 000; 2012: EUR 434 421); deeply regrets the fact that the results of a survey on awareness and impact of the LUX-Prize, requested in the 2013 discharge report, is not yet available; calls for the results of this study to be available to the public by mid-May 2016 and an official presentation of the results to be made to its Committee on Budgetary Control;
70. Calls for a careful consideration, based on the study of the impact of the LUX Prize, if the continuation of the LUX Prize is worth the expenditure;

Directorate-General for Personnel

71. Takes note that in 2014, 309 officials and other temporary staff were recruited to the Secretariat and 8 temporary staff to the political groups; takes note that, as at 31 December 2014, a total of 6 040 officials and temporary staff were employed within Parliament (5 295 in the Secretariat and 745 in the political groups); stresses that, for

2013, those figures were, respectively: 6 105 (total), 5 308 (Secretariat) and 797 (political groups);

72. Asks for clearer qualification requirements for staff particularly in sensitive functions such as, for instance, in the committee secretariats or the department for *ex ante* impact assessments; requests the review of specific requirements with respect to staff's ideological and political neutrality; requests that Parliament be presented with criteria for staff selection;
73. Points out that 114 former interim staff members for the Strasbourg plenary sessions were recruited in 2014 by Parliament as contract agents; underlines that the judgement by a French court on these "intérimaires" in itself cannot justify the decision to recruit them under the staff regulations;
74. Stresses that in the context of the 2014 revision of the staff regulations and the current MFF as at 1st January 2014, 67 posts (66 permanent and 1 temporary) had been deleted from the establishment plan in order to achieve the reduction of 5 % of the number of posts over the period from 2013 to 2017, excluding political groups;
75. Points out that the increase in working hours from 37,5 to 40 hours a week under the revision of the staff regulations is the equivalent of over 350 extra posts and that this virtually offsets the staff cuts of 5 % over several years agreed as part of the reform of the staff regulations; calls on Parliament to present a transparent report with annual indications of planned reductions in posts and to take account of the increase in working time in so doing;
76. Notes that the proportion of female officials remains very high and had risen to 59,2 % at the end of 2014, compared to 58,8 % at the end of 2013; is concerned at the lack of parity in the administration, where only 30 % of heads of unit, 34 % of directors and 18,2 % of directors-general are women; calls for an equal opportunities programme to be introduced, in particular for managerial posts, with a view to redressing this imbalance as quickly as possible; recalls that 1 out of 8 directors and 9 out of 31 heads of unit who were recruited in 2014 were women; is of the opinion that the recruitment procedure should be balanced; reiterates its call for the need of a more balanced representation of women in senior managerial positions;
77. Regrets the fact that Parliament has not yet published information on an annual basis about senior officials who have left Parliament's administration, as well as a list of the cases of potential conflicts of interest that have been addressed, as required by Article 16, paragraph 4 of the Staff Regulations;
78. Takes note that at the end of 2014 there were 1 686 (2013: 1763) accredited parliamentary assistants (APAs) working at Parliament and 4 453 local assistants had an employment contract with a Member;
79. Voices its concern at the fact that the number of local assistants employed varies widely from Member to Member, ranging from 0 to 46 in 2014 as against 0 to 43 in 2013; draws attention to the fact that 91 Members employed more than 10 assistants in 2014 as against 84 in 2013;

80. Welcomes the fact that the Bureau adopted on 26 October 2015 a new set of rules for the management of the parliamentary assistance allowances, reinforcing the requirements for the reimbursement of local assistant contracts, namely by earmarking at least 25 % of the parliamentary assistance allowance to cover expenditure on accredited assistants;
81. Notes that APAs made up 26,7 % of Parliament staff at the end of 2014; recalls that the contracts of some 1 700 APAs employed during the seventh parliamentary term came to an end in July 2014 and a major operation undertaken by the Directorate-General for Personnel for the recruitment of 1 686 APAs was drawn up before the end of 2014 to work with Members during the eighth parliamentary term;
82. Emphasises that subsistence allowances received by APAs travelling to Strasbourg are at least 21 % lower than those of other staff; deplors the fact that the Bureau has not responded to the request made by Parliament in paragraph 74 of its resolution of 29 April 2015; calls once again on the Bureau to take the necessary measures to remedy this inequality and bring APAs' allowances into line with those of other staff;
83. Deplors the fact that the Bureau has failed to take any action at all in response to paragraph 71 of Parliament's resolution of 29 April 2015; calls on the Bureau to take the necessary measures as a matter of urgency to ensure that the composition of the advisory committee on harassment and its prevention at the workplace responsible for APAs is balanced and that it includes at least two representatives of the APAs;
84. Notes with satisfaction the measures taken to organise the management of APAs' contracts in view of the start of the new parliamentary term, and in particular the smooth operation of the APA People application; considers, however, that more administrative staff should have been assigned to APAs' recruitment in certain areas to ensure greater speed and efficiency; points out that staffing and technical resources were insufficient to avoid delays in the signing of contracts for some assistants, interruption of contracts, and delays in the calculation of expenses and other allowances, and hence in the payment of salaries; acknowledges nevertheless that the process has improved significantly compared to 2009, while also noting that Parliament must persevere in its efforts to increase the speed and efficiency of its recruitment procedures;
85. Calls on the Secretary-General and the Bureau to look into and resolve problems arising from possible maladministration by the institution in relation to APAs, for example delays in signing contracts at the beginning of the parliamentary term, interruption of contracts, the implications of early European Parliament elections for minimum contribution periods, etc., and for APAs' representatives to be involved in the search for solutions;
86. Notes the progress made in adapting training courses to the specific needs of APAs; nevertheless considers it vital to make further progress in this direction, in particular as regards specific training, tailored timetables and intensive language courses, which are organised only during periods when most APAs have to take their annual leave; calls for account to be taken of the specific circumstances of APAs with regard to the timing of activities organised to increase well-being at work (mindfulness), lunchtime conferences, etc.;

87. Asks that, in the interests of transparency, Parliament's annual report cover activities organised and financed by the Staff Committee from the institution's budget, detailing the types of activity, the expenses incurred and compliance with sound financial management;
88. Asks to be given the findings of the assessment of the APA People application for recruiting APAs that was introduced at the beginning of the present parliamentary term;

Directorate-General for Infrastructure and Logistics

89. Emphasises that the new medium-term buildings strategy will involve efforts to find new premises to meet Parliament's needs within a set perimeter close to the main buildings; stresses that the multiannual planning for renovation works should be based on realistic and detailed forecasts both with respect to their financial parameters and timescales; recalls that Parliament owns 81 % of all surface area it occupies and that the budget needs to be protected against the renovation costs for ageing buildings in what will be a major challenge facing Parliament in the coming years;
90. Points out that at its three places of work Parliament occupies premises with a total floor area of 1,1 million m²; considers it of the utmost importance to establish measures to ensure that Parliament's buildings remain sustainable in the face of increasing maintenance costs;
91. Insists on absolute prudence before committing to new acquisitions or rentals and the need for regular monitoring and adjustment of the strategic accommodation plan, considers that concepts in the strategic execution framework should also provide the opportunity for the Parliament to reduce the need for new buildings as it drives the organisation to a greater focus on results and staff work-life balance; points out that commonly available technologies and practices such as teleworking could also contribute to a more efficient use of time and a more environmentally-friendly Parliament;
92. Notes that since June 2014, some 1000 staff from DGs IPOL, EXPO and EPRS moved in to the Square de Meeûs building; recalls that this move was the first key stage in the process of making additional space available to Members in Parliament's main buildings; wishes to be informed of Parliament's next steps, with a concrete timeline for when additional offices will be made available;
93. Calls on the administration to arrange facilities in the main Parliament buildings for the staff working in the Square de Meeûs, including a room to consult restricted access documents for Members;
94. Regrets that a cooperation agreement between Parliament and the Commission on joint management of Europe Houses was still not possible; urges the two institutions to find a mutually acceptable agreement setting out a framework for purchasing or leasing property and to simplify the administrative and financial procedures for the Europe Houses' day-to-day management; calls for the political hierarchy to intervene, if necessary;
95. Deems overdue a renovation of the Paul-Henri Spaak building, including an extension

of the building and an expansion of the seminar rooms for visitors and offices spaces for Members of the Parliament; supports the administration's planning, but stresses that it must be conducted on the basis of the current number of Members and not on the numbers in a possible - and unrealistic - enlargement of the Union;

96. Demands concrete planning and cost projections for the renovation works; urges greater transparency and the participation of individual Members in decisions that have a decisive bearing on administrative and financial aspects of the institution; deems insufficient the information given and prior agreements concluded at the level of the Conference of Presidents and the Bureau; requests that all strategic documents on the organisation and future development of Parliament be distributed to all its Members;
97. Is concerned about the proposal to bring the drivers' service in-house and the resulting additional costs, which will mean an increase of more than 50 % in 2017 compared to 2016;

Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences and Directorate-General for Translation

98. Notes that the calculation done by the Parliament shows that the average number of hours per week that staff interpreters spent in their booths in 2014 delivering interpretation services was 10,7 hours/week; notes however that the hours in the booth represent only a part of the interpreters' work, which also consists of meeting preparation, language learning and maintenance, on-call duty, subject-based and other specialised training; calls on the Secretary-General to provide indicators that measure all activities performed by the interpreters; deplores the spread in the delivery of interpretation assignments by individual interpreters between 6 and 16 hours per week on an annual average, leading to an unequal workload for interpreters; acknowledges that due to the elections, 2014 was not a typical year as concerns the volume of parliamentary activity;
99. Notes with concern that in 2014 75 % of the staff of the Portuguese interpreting service, 59 % of the French interpreting service and 57 % of the staff of the Spanish interpreting service were in salary grades AD /11/12/13 and that this on average leads to very high hourly wages for interpretation compared to the work done by freelancers;
100. Notes with concern that the calculation method with regard to statistics has not been clarified and calls on the administration to better communicate its processes on the relevant representatives of the interpreters;
101. Calls on the administration to exclude leave and sick leave when calculating the average number of hours spent by interpreters in the booth;
102. Reiterates the importance of multilingualism for the democratic legitimacy of the institution; welcomes the fact that as a result of the resource-efficient multilingualism policy adopted by the Bureau in 2011 and of subsequent organisational reforms, savings in expenditure on the budget lines dedicated to interpretation have been achieved; requests that the working conditions should contain safeguards designed to protect both quality of interpretation and interpreters' health; while also addressing the needs

resulting from the changed patterns of Parliamentary work and an efficient use of resources; calls on the Secretary-General to continue his efforts in working closely with the interpreters;

103. Insists that efficiency gains are still possible in the supply of interpretation, notably by enhancing the efficiency of a service currently hampered by rules dating from 2005 that are no longer compatible with the current meeting patterns of the institution; requests an examination of whether efficiency gains can also be achieved in the administrative support units of DG INTE;
104. Requests a review to evaluate whether an appropriate number of internal interpreters is also guaranteed during the core business days of Parliament;
105. Calls on the Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences to take all the necessary management measures to improve the IT tools and technical support for interpreters to match those of the Commission, to increase productivity in terms of interpretation assignments, to realign interpretation workloads of individual interpreters, to ensure that staff interpreters are present and available during Parliament's core business days, whilst fully respecting their social rights; finally requests the Secretary-General to present a new concept with the aim of an efficient and cost effective use of staff, the concept should also be based on an agreement with the interpreters;
106. Takes the view that improving the provision of interpreting services, in particular together with the Commission within the framework of institutional cooperation, would help ensure that these services are used more efficiently;

Directorate-General for Finance

Travel agency

107. Welcomes that DG FINS's instructions to the travel agency to look for best prices are being implemented effectively; further encourages the travel agency to intensify comparison and try to reach agreements with major airlines for more flexibility and more economical prices while ensuring the possibility to have modifications and cancellations to travel arrangements; calls on the travel agency to actively seek less expensive tickets and offers when booking and, in general, to offer more competitive prices taking all airlines into consideration; calls DG FINS to elaborate a survey among users on the level of service satisfaction with the travel agency in order to identify further areas of improvement;
108. Takes note of the difficulties of dealing with requests of travel arrangements for an institution of the size and duties of Parliament and with the particularities (flexibility, last minute cancellations) inherent to the nature of its work;
109. Calls DG FINS in close cooperation with DG SAFE and DG COMM to re-evaluate contingency plans for emergency situations to better address new security threats, in particular for missions between the different sites of the institution;

Voluntary pension fund

110. Notes that the voluntary pension fund increased its estimated actuarial deficit, calculated on the basis of the assets of the fund, to EUR 270,3 million at the end of 2014 (in 2013: EUR 207,9 million); stresses that this raises concerns about the premature dissipation of the fund's capital;
111. Points out that the fund's projected future liabilities are spread over several decades; calls on the Bureau to consider options to improve the liquidity of the fund;
112. Calls for the results of the external assessment requested by Parliament in its above-mentioned discharge resolution for the financial year 2013 to be delivered without further delay; identifies the board of the voluntary pension fund as primarily responsible for the extent of the fund's deficit; calls for a sole concept for the private pension fund, to decrease the liabilities of this fund; calls on the Bureau to make a proposal for a comprehensive action plan to address Parliament's responsibilities immediately after the reception of the external assessment; estimates it necessary to decrease the retirement benefits for the participant members of the fund;
113. Calls on the Bureau to make an assessment of the current situation of the pension fund as soon as possible;

Parliamentary assistance

114. Welcomes the new, stricter rules applying to local assistants and service providers; notes that some of the points of the new rules remain vague and are a source of misinterpretation; calls on further clarification of these points, especially with regard to side activities of local assistants and service providers; stresses that both groups should be under very strict scrutiny;
115. Welcomes the creation of the Members' e-Portal; considers this to be a cost-efficient and effective tool for review of finances in line with the paperless policy pursued by Parliament; calls on the DG FINS to actively promote its usage amongst all MEPs;

Directorate-General for Innovation and Technological Support

116. Notes that Parliament's information security policy requires a coordinated and harmonised corporate security strategy;
117. Calls for stronger information security systems for protecting information from unauthorised access whilst ensuring disclosure, as well as from disruption, modification or destruction, in order to provide integrity, confidentiality and availability;
118. Takes note that an external ICT audit was carried out by an independent third party as requested during the 2013 discharge; further notes that the objective of this audit was to assess Parliament's ICT security capabilities and its systems' potential exposure to cyber threats, with a view to developing an ICT security improvement plan including a suggested roadmap to enhance Parliament's global security level; calls for a cybersecurity regulation to guarantee that Parliament be able to protect its information systems effectively and ensure the safety and security of Members in the face of cyberattacks;

119. Is concerned that the assessment of Parliament's ICT security organisation, maturity and capabilities carried out according to the ISO 27002:2013 standards and international best practices showed a relatively weak level of maturity of organisational security;
120. Calls for regular stress-testing of the Parliament's security systems in the domain of ICT;
121. Notes that the Bureau adopted an ICT systems security policy in its meeting on 7 September 2015; stresses the urgency of implementing a considerably more robust ICT security policy in line with Parliament's roadmap for a global information security strategy;
122. Criticises the conversion of the Twitter official account of the "President of the European Parliament" into a personal campaign vehicle leading to a party website;

Directorate-General for Security and Safety

123. Takes note that the internalisation of security services was completed in Brussels on December 2014 and in Strasbourg on 1 July 2015 following the adoption of a global security concept; stresses that further security measures and an urgent revision of the global security concept as adopted by the Bureau in 2011 should take place in view of the recent security context;
124. Expresses concern with regard to the different approaches taken by the Brussels and Strasbourg authorities concerning the security of parliamentary premises; considers it indispensable to work closely with the Belgian, French and Luxembourg authorities to enhance the security perimeter around the Parliament's buildings;
125. Calls for effective screening of all security staff with a view to ensuring their aptitude for the completion of their tasks in terms both of reliability and levels of professional competence;
126. Insists that reinforcing the security of the Parliament's buildings and their immediate surroundings be given the highest priority; considers it necessary to ensure appropriate equipment and working conditions for security staff in view of the current security situation;
127. Calls for a revision of building security measures and for greater control at the entrance to the Parliament's carparks by means of automatic number plate recognition; demands the implementation of a central external control point to check all outside providers entering the Parliament's buildings;
128. Recalls the incidents regarding thefts occurring in MEP's offices; calls on DG INLO and DG SAFE to ensure greater security and transparency in regard to contractors and maintenance staff having access to offices;
129. Considers it fundamental to have robust pre-employment screening, binding procedures regulating the departure of staff, appropriate security management structures and adequate crisis management training;

130. Recalls the incident on 7 of October 2014 involving Kurdish protesters; calls for a comprehensive and confidential assessment of the Parliament's security services to be performed; welcomes, as a first step, that a high-level group comprising representatives of the Parliament, the Commission, the Council and the Belgian state has been established to enhance cooperation in the security domain; calls for further cooperation with national and international security services;
131. Insists on the need for greater levels of cooperation between DG SAFE and DG ITEC, with a view to ensuring the appropriate level of protection of information and communication in the Parliament;

Environment-friendly Parliament

132. Welcomes the encouraging findings of the audit carried out in 2013 and 2014 by the Court of Auditors, which stated that, of the 14 European institutions audited, Parliament had the most ambitious strategy for cutting carbon emissions;
133. Draws attention to the fact that video conferencing and teleworking can help to ensure more efficient use of time in a more environment-friendly Parliament, and at the same time to reduce administrative and travel costs;

Green public procurement and EMAS

134. Calls on the Secretary-General to design a plan to reduce the number of trunks available for parliamentary travels; suggests that a "canteen on demand system" or a "canteen sharing system" be introduced, thus reducing the costs in financial and carbon footprint terms;
135. Welcomes additional measures to offset unavoidable emissions; calls on Parliament to develop further CO₂ offsetting policies, such as the possibility of offsetting for accredited parliamentary assistants;

Political groups (budget item 4 0 0)

136. Notes that in 2014, the appropriations entered under budget item 4 0 0, attributed to the political groups and non-attached Members, were used as follows:

Group	2014 first half-year					2014 second half-year				
	Annual appropriations	Own resources and carried-over appropriations*	Expenditure	Rate of use of annual appropriations	Amounts carried over to next period	Annual appropriations	Own resources and carried-over appropriations	Expenditure	Rate of use of annual appropriations	Amounts carried over to next period (2015)
EPP	11 147	7 813	11 311	101 %	7 649	8 772	7 744	6 485	74 %	9 960
S&D	7 956	4 619	8 415	106 %	4 160	7 663	4 194	6 435	84 %	5422
ECR	2 128	1 053	2 731	128 %	450	2 886	457	1 745	60 %	1598
ALDE	3 401	1 759	3 644	107 %	1 516	2 813	1 531	1 847	66 %	2498
GUE/NGL	1 374	417	1 519	111 %	272	2 153	272	1 170	54 %	1255
Greens/EFA	2 211	1 388	2 689	122 %	911	2 081	912	1 707	82 %	2 146
EFDD	1 229	1 137	1 544	126 %	822	2 002	827	1 164	58 %	1287
Non-attached Members	753	441	715	95 %	92	1 238	92	566	46 %	533
Total	30 200	18 626	32 567		15 872	29 608	16 030	21 118		29 442
* <i>all amounts in thousands EUR</i>										

European political parties and European political foundations

137. Notes that in 2014 the appropriations entered under budget item 4 0 2 were used as follows¹:

Party	Abbreviation	Own resources*	EP grant	Total revenue ²	EP grant as % of eligible expenditure (max. 85 %)	Revenue surplus (transfer to reserves) or loss
European People's Party	EPP	2.126	9.327	13.605	85%	345
Party of European Socialists	PES	1.083	5.297	7.864	85%	78
Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party	ALDE	759	2.813	3.582	85%	173
European Green Party	EGP	575	1.918	2.493	84%	50
Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists	AECR	373	1.943	2.376	85%	0
Party of the European Left	EL	282	1.219	1.501	85%	54
European Democratic Party	EDP/PDE	123	565	730	85%	13
EUDemocrats	EUD	49	274	340	85%	0
European Free Alliance	EFA	126	526	708	85%	0
European Christian Political Movement	ECPM	73	388	475	85%	4
European Alliance for Freedom	EAF	93	521	614	84%	-3
European Alliance of National Movements	AEMN	117	363	480	85%	37
Movement for a Europe of Liberties and Democracy	MELD	124	635	941	85%	5
Total		5.903	25.789	35.709	85%	756
(*) all amounts in thousands EUR						

¹ Source: PV BUR. 20.10.2014 (PE 538.295/BUR) and PV BUR. 20.10.2014 (PE 538.297/BUR) point 12.

138. Notes that in 2014 the appropriations entered under budget item 4 0 3 were used as follows¹:

Foundation	Abbreviation	Affiliated to party	Own resources*	EP grant	Total revenue	EP grant as % of eligible expenditure (max. 85 %)
Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies	WMCES	EPP	831	4.203	5.034	85%
Foundation for European Progressive Studies	FEPS	PES	636	3.087	3.723	85%
European Liberal Forum	ELF	ALDE	169	941	1.110	85%
Green European Foundation	GEF	EGP	174	914	1.088	85%
Transform Europe	TE	EL	111	587	698	85%
Institute of European Democrats	IED	PDE	43	265	308	85%
Centre Maurits Coppieters	CMC	EFA	48	216	264	85%
New Direction - Foundation for European Reform	ND	AECR	195	915	1.110	85%
European Foundation for Freedom	EFF	EAF	45	244	289	85%
Organisation For European Interstate Cooperation	OEIC	EUD	21	135	156	85%
Christian Political Foundation for Europe	CPFE	ECPM	37	187	224	85%
Foundation for a Europe of Liberties and Democracy	FELD	MELD	62	271	333	85%
Identités & Traditions européennes	ITE	AEMN	42	174	216	85%
Total			2.414	12.139	14.553	85%
(*) all amounts in thousands EUR.						

¹ Source: PV BUR. 20.10.2014 (PE 538.295/BUR) and PV BUR. 20.10.2014 (PE 538.297/BUR) point 12.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE RESPONSIBLE

Date adopted	7.4.2016
Result of final vote	+: 21 -: 6 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Louis Aliot, Jonathan Arnott, Inés Ayala Sender, Dennis de Jong, Martina Dlabajová, Ingeborg Gräßle, Bogusław Liberadzki, Monica Macovei, Gilles Pargneaux, Georgi Pirinski, Petri Sarvamaa, Claudia Schmidt, Bart Staes, Michael Theurer, Marco Valli, Anders Primdahl Vistisen, Joachim Zeller
Substitutes present for the final vote	Richard Ashworth, Benedek Jávor, Andrey Novakov, Markus Pieper, Julia Pitera, Miroslav Poche, Patricija Šulin
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Reimer Böge, Luke Ming Flanagan, Arne Gericke, Siôn Simon, Ró a Gräfin von Thun und Hohenstein, Claudiu Ciprian T n sescu