

RESOLUTION (EU) 2019/1407 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**of 26 March 2019**

**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 2017,
Section I — European Parliament**

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 2017, Section I — European Parliament,
 - having regard to Rule 94 and Rule 98(3) of, and Annex IV to, its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A8-0108/2019),
- A. whereas in his certification of the final accounts, the European Parliament's ('Parliament's') accounting officer stated his reasonable assurance that the accounts present fairly, in all material aspects, the financial position, the results of the operations and the cash-flow of the Parliament;
- B. whereas, in accordance with the usual procedure, 161 questions were sent to Parliament's administration and written replies were received and discussed publicly by the Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control (CONT), in the presence of the vice-president responsible for the budget, the Secretary-General and the internal auditor;
- C. whereas there is always 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;

Parliament's budgetary and financial management

1. Notes that Parliament's final appropriations for 2017 totalled EUR 1 909 590 000, or 19,25 % of heading V of the Multiannual Financial Framework ⁽¹⁾ set aside for the 2017 administrative expenditure of the Union institutions as a whole, representing a 3,9 % increase over the 2016 budget (EUR 1 838 613 983); stresses that this increase is substantially above the Belgian inflation rate in 2017, which was only 2,65 %;
2. Notes that total revenue entered in the accounts as at 31 December 2017 was EUR 206 991 865 (compared to EUR 183 381 513 in 2016), including EUR 50 052 674 in assigned revenue (compared to EUR 30 589 787 in 2016);
3. Emphasises that four chapters accounted for 69,5 % of total 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), indicating a high level of rigidity for the major part of the Parliament's expenditure; underlines that the lion's share of Parliament's budget is primarily administrative and not operative, which has to be taken into account;
4. Notes the figures on the basis of which Parliament's accounts for the financial year 2017 were closed, namely:

(a) Available appropriations (EUR)

appropriations for 2017:	1 909 590 000
non-automatic carry-overs from financial year 2016:	—
automatic carry-overs from financial year 2016:	285 312 645
appropriations corresponding to assigned revenue for 2017:	50 052 674
carry-overs corresponding to assigned revenue from 2016:	39 595 290
Total:	2 284 550 609

⁽¹⁾ Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1311/2013 of 2 December 2013 laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2014-2020 (OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 884).

(b) Utilisation of appropriations in the financial year 2017 (EUR)

commitments:	2 209 881 836
payments made:	1 904 053 540
appropriations carried forward automatically including those arising from assigned revenue:	329 655 011
appropriations carried forward non-automatically:	337 227 783
appropriations cancelled:	39 823 600

(c) Budgetary receipts (EUR)

received in 2017:	206 991 865
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(d) Total balance sheet as at 31 December 2017 (EUR)

	1 628 445 094
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5. Points out that 99 % of the appropriations entered in Parliament's budget, amounting to EUR 1 889 574 057, were committed, with a cancellation rate of 1 %; notes with satisfaction that, as in previous years, a very high level of budget implementation was achieved; notes that the payments totalled EUR 1 599 788 767, resulting in a payment appropriations execution rate of 84,7 % and representing an increase of 0,3 % compared to the previous year;
6. Underlines the fact that the cancelled appropriations for the year 2017, amounting to EUR 17 451 943, were mainly related to remuneration and other entitlements, as well as to the expenditure related to buildings;
7. Notes that seven transfers were approved in accordance with Articles 27 and 46 of the Financial Regulation in the financial year 2017, which amounted to EUR 57 402 860 or 3,01 % of final appropriations; observes that the majority of transfers were related to the Parliament's buildings policy, and in particular to help fund the annual lease payments for the Konrad Adenauer building project;
8. Stresses that 'mopping-up' is a relaxation of the principle of specification and deliberately contravenes the principle of budgetary accuracy; calls for appropriations for the financing of buildings, in particular the Konrad Adenauer Building, to be included in the draft annual budget to be adopted by the budgetary authorities; considers that the number of 'mopping-up' transfers continues to be very high; believes that better budget management should reduce such transfers to the bare minimum necessary; stresses that, as part of the budgetary strategy, Parliament's buildings policy should be laid down with sufficient clarity; strongly condemns the often last-minute-transfers aiming at financing the Parliament's building policy; asks the Secretary-General and the Bureau to provide the Committee on Budgets with all the documents, plans and contracts related to the building policy;
9. Stresses the need for carry-overs in relation to large building or infrastructure projects, despite the annual nature of the budget;

The Court of Auditors' opinions on the reliability of the 2017 accounts and on the legality and regularity of the transactions underlying those accounts

10. Recalls that the Court of Auditors (the 'Court') performs a specific assessment of administrative and other expenditure as a single policy group for all the European institutions; points out that administrative and related expenditure comprises expenditure on human resources (salaries, allowances and pensions), accounting for 60 % of total administrative expenditure, and expenditure on buildings, equipment, energy, communications and information technology;
11. Notes that the overall audit evidence indicates that the spending on 'administration' is not affected by a material level of error; also notes that, on the basis of the nine quantified errors, the estimated level of error present in heading 5 of the Multiannual Financial Framework on administration is 0,5 % (up from 0,2 % in 2016);
12. Notes the specific findings concerning Parliament contained in the Court's 2017 annual report; notes with great concern that the Court found, of the eight transactions by Parliament that it examined, weaknesses in no fewer than three transactions related to procurement procedure — namely compliance with contract selection criteria, full compliance with the framework contract, and the criterion to select a travel agency — and in one transaction related to the reimbursement of expenses of visitors groups;

13. Notes the responses given by the Parliament in the adversarial procedure with the Court; asks the Court to keep the responsible committee informed on the implementation of its recommendations;

The internal auditor's annual report

14. Notes that at the competent open committee meeting with the internal auditor held on 26 November 2018, the internal auditor presented his annual report and described that he had prepared reports on the following subjects in 2017:
 - Follow-Up of Open Actions from Internal Audit Reports — Phases I and II of 2017,
 - Revised budget nomenclature for Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM),
 - DG COMM's organisation of invitations to journalists,
 - Procurement and contract implementation in the area of external translations,
 - Purchasing policy for library subscriptions — Directorate-General for Parliamentary Research Services (DG EPRS),
 - Individual Entitlements under the Staff Regulations of Officials and the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants,
 - Decentralised Information Technology (IT) activities;
15. Recalls that the annual activity report is part of Parliament's governance structure; welcomes and supports the following actions that the internal auditor agreed with the DGs responsible:
 - with regard to the audit of DG COMM's organisation of invitations to journalists, enhancing the management and control framework by ensuring that reimbursements to journalists are aligned with the real costs incurred (e.g. verified start and end points of travel); addressing systemic deviations from the rules governing the invitations; making payments by bank transfer mandatory for reimbursements to journalists, including for travel to Strasbourg; and measures for guiding the process of selection and assessing the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the invitation process,
 - in relation to the audits of individual entitlements under the Staff Regulations, improving the control environment and methodology of controls, the specific management and control procedures covering entitlement to the expatriation and daily allowances (e.g. consistency of application of rules), and the specific procedures covering the annual flat-rate travel allowances,
 - with regard to the audit of procurement and contract implementation in the area of external translation, including in the organisation of the procurement process more timely requests for additional information and improved evaluation, enhancing the award criteria for quality in future procurement procedures, encouraging external companies to improve translation quality including through expanded *ex post* verification, and enhancing the reliability of the calculation of real full costs of external translation, particularly in light of the fact that approximately one third of translated pages are covered by external translators and this share is highly likely to increase,
 - concerning the audit of decentralised information technology activities, and to achieve its full benefits, strengthening the monitoring of the budget allocated to information and communication technology (ICT) initiatives as coordinated under the IT programmes by not only reporting on certain stages of a project but by conducting a beginning-to-end overview; increasing assurance that ICT initiatives are delivered on time, for the agreed scope and required quality and within budget; improving the decentralised units' control and validation of new software releases and their problem management processes; and moving gradually from time and means contracts for outside expertise to deliverable-based contracts;
16. Notes that the 2017 follow-up process resulted in the closure of 34 of the 71 open actions, as well as that the risk profile of the overdue actions continued to be progressively reduced in 2017; notes in particular that the number of open actions addressing significant risks fell from 26 to 11 and that there were no open actions in the highest risk category of 'critical'; underlines that the newly added open actions for the budget year 2017 should not diminish the improvements made regarding the closure of open actions;

Follow-up to the 2016 discharge resolution

17. Notes the written answers to the 2016 discharge resolution provided to CONT on 17 September 2018, the presentation by the Secretary-General addressing the various questions and requests in Parliament's 2016 discharge resolution and the exchange of views with Members that followed;
18. Deplores the fact that no action has been taken in response to some of the recommendations in Parliament's resolution on discharge for 2016, and that the discharge follow-up document does not provide any justification for this; stresses the importance of having more frequent discussions with the Secretary-General on issues concerning Parliament's budget and its implementation in CONT;

Parliament's 2017 discharge

19. Notes the exchange of views between the vice-president responsible for the budget, the Secretary-General and CONT in the presence of the internal auditor, on 26 November 2018, in the context of the 2017 Parliament discharge;
20. Notes that the United Kingdom's decision to withdraw from the European Union had a considerable impact in the different services of the Parliament, particularly on committees, research units and horizontal services; notes that Parliament's services prepared analytical material based on fact-finding work to consider the impact of the withdrawal on the policy areas and legislation in their respective fields, and this material can be found in the Parliament's website;
21. Notes that six temporary agents in the General Secretariat, 41 temporary agents in the political groups and in the non-attached Members' secretariat as well as 30 contract agents are concerned by the United Kingdom's decision to withdraw from the European Union; understands that their situation is being assessed on a case-by-case basis; welcomes the Secretary-General's assurance that no extension of contract will be denied on the sole ground of nationality; invites the Secretary-General to carefully weigh the potential role of conflicts of interest during the sensitive time of the possible transition period and the possible disorderly withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union;
22. Welcomes the Parliament's legal service's support in drafting guidance for the financial actors dealing with contractual issues related to the United Kingdom's decision to withdraw from the European Union and in drafting clauses to be included in the tender and contract documents related to the United Kingdom's decision to withdraw from the European Union;
23. Draws attention to the 5 % annual staff reduction target, that in 2017 required the Parliament to eliminate 60 posts from its administration establishment plan; recalls that the political agreement reached between the Parliament and the Council on the 2016 budget, establishing a new parameter for the reduction in Parliament's staff and prolonging its application period until 2019, has maintained the exemption of political groups from this exercise; regrets, however, that the budgetary authorities imposed an additional cut of 76 posts from the Parliament's administration in 2017 as compensation for a staff increase for the political groups; is concerned that this significant reduction may have negative effects on Parliament's performance and lead to an excessive workload for serving officials and a transfer of responsibilities to Members' offices;
24. Calls on the Secretary-General and all responsible DGs to work together to draft a comprehensive overview of reductions in staff numbers implemented from 2014 onwards, including moves by staff from administration to political groups and among institutions; underlines that this practice of staff rotation raises the question of whether job descriptions are appropriate; is strongly concerned that excessive staff reduction leaves Members and Accredited Parliamentary Assistants (APAs) with an additional administrative burden, which is to the detriment of the actual legislative work that Members and APAs are supposed to fulfil;
25. Underlines that a paperless office and the proper use of digital technology such as digital signature, two-step-verification and electronic files, including for plenary-related files, would lessen the administrative burden for all parties involved and contribute to the achievement of Parliament's paper-reduction objectives; draws attention to the reality of 'paperless' parliamentary committees, which simply means that the task of printing all documentation has been passed from committee secretariats on to Members' offices;
26. Notes that reimbursement of some missions is subject to very long delays; suggests that solutions should be explored to ensure that missions are reimbursed within a reasonable time;

27. Reiterates its call on the Conference of Presidents and the Bureau to reconsider the possibility for APAs, under certain conditions to be determined, to accompany Members on official Parliament delegations and missions, as already requested by several Members; calls on the Secretary-General to investigate the budgetary consequences, and the organisation and logistics of these missions;
28. Reiterates its concern about the alleged practice of Members obliging APAs to undertake missions, particularly to Strasbourg, without mission orders, without mission costs or even without travel costs; is of opinion that such a practice leaves room for abuse: where APAs travel without a mission order they not only have to pay for the costs by their own means, they are also not covered by workplace insurance; calls on the Secretary-General to investigate this alleged practice and to report on this by the end of the year;
29. Notes that the revised rules governing the payment of financial contributions for sponsored visitors groups entered into force on 1 January 2017; calls on the Secretary-General to release the assessment of these rules without delay; is extremely worried about recent cases of misuse; is of the firm opinion that the rules governing the payment of financial contributions should be revised as soon as possible in order to avoid that any benefit can be generated by Members; calls on the Bureau to generalise the reimbursement based on bills for visitors groups; recalls its request to delete the possibility to appoint APAs as head of a group; reiterates its call to remove the possibility of appointing APAs as head of a group;
30. Calls for a review of the system for calculating the reimbursement of travel expenses for groups of visitors sponsored by Members, with a view both to ensuring equal treatment of all Union citizens and to promoting the use of more environmentally friendly means of transport, given that the current system, based on calculating mileage, fails both to take account of the isolation and geographical barriers afflicting certain areas of the Union and to cover the cost of travelling to places where faster and more environmentally friendly means of transport are available;
31. Observes that trainees employed by Members have a private-law contract with the Member, which does not entitle them to the same status in Parliament as that of other categories of Parliament staff, or to have scholarships from the Parliament itself (Schuman scholarships); regrets that there is no facility or legal framework within the Directorate-General for Finance (DG FINS) to arrange a scheme for direct advance payments to such trainees prior to missions — although such arrangements are in place for all other staff — given the fact that, for obvious reasons, they can barely afford to pay these expenses up front out of their own pockets;
32. Points out that the Bureau examined a proposal by the Secretary-General to improve the current legal framework governing trainees employed by Members that currently lacks certain safeguards, as also asked by over 140 Members supporting the Youth Intergroup 'Fair Internship' campaign; underlines that it is every Member's duty to provide trainees with suitable remuneration in line with the legal framework; supports the Bureau in its effort to draft a comprehensive and balanced proposal that guarantees Members' prerogatives as well as adequate remuneration and comprehensive legal safeguards for trainees; calls for the Bureau to swiftly adopt the new rules, which should enter into force at the beginning of the new term; hopes that a proposal will be submitted as soon as possible;
33. Points out that the IT outage in October 2017 produced considerable disruption in parliamentary activities; notes that an action plan was put in place in the meantime to ensure more robust business continuity; underlines the importance of a swift response to and resolution of disruptions, particularly when they hinder or completely stop legislative work;
34. Notes the publication of two 'Cost of Non-Europe Reports' and the completion of two 'European Added Value Assessments' in 2017;
35. Notes that, following the Secretary-General's request, all Parliament's DGs developed management tools to comply with the principle of performance-based budgeting; observes that some of the existing quantitative targets may be difficult to implement in the DGs, which work to the timeframe of the political cycle; invites the Secretary-General to take this fact into consideration when evaluating performance-based budgeting across DGs, without disregarding the focus on added value;
36. Notes with appreciation that technical solutions were created for Members who wish to use their individual page on the Parliament's website for publication of meetings with interest representatives; notes also that the Bureau is considering whether to extend this solution to ensure that information is directly available on Parliament's website;

37. Calls on the Parliament's administration to draft a report providing a comprehensive overview on the interest representatives and other organisations that were given access to Parliament's premises in 2017; requests for this report to be drafted on an annual basis to ensure a maximum level of transparency;
38. Calls on the Parliament's administration to provide an overview of the appointments of high-ranking officials in 2017; encourages the Secretary-General to initiate additional measures to improve transparency and equality during appointment procedures at the Parliament, taking into account the findings and recommendations of the European Ombudsman in joint cases 488/2018/KR and 514/2018/KR;

Geographic dispersion of the Parliament — Single seat

39. Still strongly regrets that, despite repeated calls from the Parliament to establish a single seat, and the fact that citizens of the Union do not understand why the Parliament should divide its activities over two seats, so far the European Council has not even begun a discussion on how to meet Parliament's requests in this respect; recalls the Court's 2014 analysis which estimated annual savings of EUR 114 million were Parliament to centralise its operations; recalls the Parliament's 2013 resolution ⁽²⁾ which estimated the costs of the geographic dispersion of the Parliament to range from EUR 156 million to EUR 204 million per year; deplores the fact that over a single parliamentary term the costs generated by Parliament's geographic dispersion can amount to as much as EUR 1 billion and voices opposition to the multiannual building projects intended to increase the office space available to Members in both Strasbourg and Brussels; calls, therefore, for practical steps to be taken quickly to establish a single seat for Parliament, in order to prevent any further waste of public money;
40. Notes, furthermore, the finding from its resolution of 20 November 2013 on the location of the seats of the European Union's Institutions ⁽³⁾ that 78 % of all missions by Parliament statutory staff arise as a direct result of the Parliament's geographic dispersion; emphasises that the report also estimates the environmental impact of the geographic dispersion to be between 11 000 to 19 000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions; reiterates the negative public perception caused by that dispersion; reiterates its call on the Council to develop a comprehensive strategy in order to agree on a single seat for Parliament;
41. Strongly underlines that this additional expenditure goes against the principle of sound financial management and against the principle of budgetary discipline; acknowledges that a single seat can only be achieved by a unanimous Treaty change; calls upon Council and the Commission to initiate such a Treaty change without further delay, and takes the view that this Treaty change will benefit European taxpayers, both financially and as regards the quality of the work done by Members; calls, therefore, for practical steps to be taken quickly to establish a single seat for Parliament, in order to prevent any further waste of public money; deplores the fact that over a single parliamentary term the costs generated by Parliament's geographic dispersion can amount to as much as EUR 1 billion; voices opposition to the multiannual building projects intended to increase the office space available to Members in Strasbourg;
42. Notes the additional costs linked to Parliament's 12 journeys per year to Strasbourg, in the form of Members' travel expenses, which can be broken down as follows for 2017:

Category	TOTAL	AVERAGE/MONTH
Travel Costs	7 700 358	641 696
Daily Allowance	10 036 444	836 370
Distance Allowance	1 394 608	116 217
Time Allowance	1 994 045	166 170
Other Costs	47 594	3 966
TOTAL	21 173 049	1 764 421

43. Stresses that, additionally, the cost of the Thalys charter train was no less than EUR 3 668 532 in 2017;
44. Notes that the creation of an institute dedicated to the education of future European diplomats within the European External Action Service could be an example to repurpose the premises of the Parliament in Strasbourg to house this diplomatic institute;

⁽²⁾ OJ C 436, 24.11.2016, p. 2.

⁽³⁾ OJ C 436, 24.11.2016, p. 2.

Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM)

45. Notes that DG COMM's lead indicator in 2017 is the hours of attention that Parliament receives across all communication channels; notes with satisfaction that beyond a focus on attention levels DG COMM is developing a methodology for measuring the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of its activities across all communication channels; invites the Director-General to include the results of its first year of implementation in its annual activity report;
46. Notes that the long-term projects identified for the Strategic Execution Framework/Parliamentary Project Portfolio 2017-2019 are at different stages of progress but all striving to respect the objective to 'produce less, communicate better';
47. Notes the ongoing major technical and editorial changes made to Parliament's public website, particularly with regard to search engine optimisation of the site; congratulates DG COMM on this progress but is concerned that the pace of that progress remains slow, particularly in view of the forthcoming European elections in 2019 and increased interest in Parliament's work; stresses that further improvements are of the utmost priority and requests that the process be urgently sped up; stresses that a transparent and accessible website is key to the involvement of citizens;
48. Stresses that it is difficult to find out the result of Parliament's votes on its website and that VoteWatch, a commercial website, is much more practical since the voting results are easier to find; calls on the Secretary-General to build a more advanced system for Parliament's website, registering plenary roll-call votes with easy search options to seek voting behaviour of individual Members and to compare these with other members of their group and with members of other groups;
49. Notes that in the field of media, numerous projects were implemented in 2017 and the Parliament's web presence was further consolidated with the implementation of a multiplatform approach, a new portal and the 'news planet'; acknowledges in addition the significant improvement in the Parliament's use of social media, as well as actions related to raising awareness of Union action; notes also that significant efforts were invested in a comprehensive visitors' strategy and, with a particular focus on youth, the implementation of the Ambassador School Programme; underlines that the European Science-Media Hub should be further developed and made fully operational without further delay to allow for increased science-based media reporting;
50. Notes that in 2017, 223 press seminars were organised in the Member States with more than 3 076 journalists attending; welcomes that, additionally, 1 905 journalists were invited to take part in plenary sessions, centrally organised press seminars and conferences; commends DG COMM for using all possible media channels for dissemination of Parliament's work and achievements; encourages the DG to pay adequate attention to the importance of social media and its significant and ever-growing potential for reaching citizens;
51. Recognises the attempts of DG COMM to also reach out to those citizens who are not automatically interested in Parliament's work; encourages the Secretary-General to build a truly interactive communication strategy, going beyond target groups such as journalists and students, and including a 'listening mode' to collect and answer possible critical voices;
52. Notes the reorganisation of DG COMM, which included the creation of two new Directorates — dealing with campaigns and visitors respectively — to ensure the full accomplishment of the strategy for the 2019 European elections; invites DG COMM to continue its work on a comprehensive strategy to counter targeted disinformation campaigns set to influence the 2019 European elections; is strongly concerned that foreign influence may cause disruptions and undermine the elections by intentionally spreading wrongful information and thus influencing voting behaviour;
53. Notes that in 2017, the Citizens' Enquiries service (AskEP) treated over 9 200 individual enquiries and 42 900 enquiries from seemingly coordinated 'write-in' campaigns on topical issues; proposes that the Parliament's replies be published on its portal;

54. Welcomes the opening of the House of European History in May 2017 and the Simone Veil Parliamentarium in Strasbourg in July 2017; notes that between May and December the House of European History welcomed 99 344 visitors; regrets that its opening was delayed for more than one year; is concerned that 99 344 visitors seems few relative to EUR 4,4 million in staff costs: EUR 2,7 million for permanent staff and EUR 1,7 million for contract agents (including the cost of the security agents); invites the Bureau to undertake a cost-benefit analysis;
55. Regrets that documents relating to the tender procedure of the House of European History in January 2019 were not made available; expresses its deep concerns regarding the requirements for the new tender; calls on the Secretary-General to inform CONT of the outcome of the tender; stresses that irrespective of the outcome of the tender the EXPO crew members must be treated better in the following areas: their working hours must be predictable, there must be a decent leave arrangement, proper attire must be provided;
56. Is deeply concerned that, despite all the activities organised by DG COMM, European citizens still feel that there is a lack of information about the Union and what the Parliament accomplishes and works on; calls on DG COMM to keep pushing its effort towards generating innovative ideas to counter this distance between the Union and its citizens and notes the innovative approach proposed for the institutional communication campaign proposed for the 2019 European elections;
57. Calls on the Directorate-General for Communication to ensure that, in the run-up to the 2019 European elections, the public and private media air the views of Members and political groups in the Parliament in a way that ensures objectivity and pluralism;

European Parliament Liaison Offices

58. Notes the reform of the Parliament liaison offices approved by the Bureau in November 2017, whereby the revised mission statement aims at engaging with citizens, media and stakeholders in order to reach out to citizens; calls on the liaison offices to ensure that citizens are aware of the work undertaken by the European institutions and to ensure that they are aware of the existence of the liaison offices;
59. Notes different items of expenditure for 2017, broken down as follows:

Item of expenditure	2017 expenditure
General communication activities	EUR 5 945 229
Expenditure linked to specific activities	EUR 5 320 867
Total building costs	EUR 8 874 530
Security equipment maintenance	EUR 1 733 071,32

60. Total building costs broken down as follows:

Rent	EUR 5 898 724
Works	EUR 148 573
Specific building management costs	EUR 266 977
Cleaning and maintenance	EUR 1 126 853
Utilities and service charge	EUR 1 433 403

61. Notes the increased communication activities realised by the liaison offices in 2017 involving daily relations with regional and local media, targeted social media presence and local community management, realisation of local events, relations with local authorities, school and stakeholders; regrets that expenditure items such as salaries and mission costs were not communicated in response to the questionnaire; draws on the information provided during the 2016 discharge procedure, where salaries paid for Parliament liaison office staff amounted to EUR 23 058 210 and mission costs amounted to EUR 1 383 843; assumes that these amounts have not changed significantly for the budgetary year 2017;

62. Acknowledges the importance of effective communication in Member States but stresses the need for cost-efficiency and it is confident that the revised mission statement will contribute to this aim, invites all decision-making parties involved to strive for more added value particularly with regards to running costs;
63. Underlines the need to modernise the mission of the liaison offices of Parliament by optimising the use of new communication technologies as their task is to better inform citizens;

Directorate-General for Personnel (DG PERS)

64. Notes that DG PERS's lead indicator in 2017 is time to deliver; notes with satisfaction that targets and methods of data collection were refined with a general positive assessment of the results; notes with concern that objectives to improve the procedures for recruiting APAs and for admitting children to the Parliament's kindergarten were not met, but that the difficulties that had been encountered were resolved in 2018;
65. Stresses that the recruitment procedure for APAs may thus prove problematic at the beginning of the next parliamentary term; calls, therefore, on the Secretary-General, in the interest of Members and APAs, to put in place all the technical and staffing arrangements necessary for avoiding problems and delays, with particular emphasis on avoiding the problems that arose in 2009 and 2014;
66. Notes that the number of staff in the Parliament in December 2017 totalled 9 682 agents in activity, which includes permanent and temporary staff, contract staff and APAs (compared to 9 643 in 2016); recalls that following the conciliation agreement on the 2017 budget, a total of 136 posts were abolished;
67. Acknowledges the sensitive situation of APAs who have worked for two parliamentary legislative terms without interruption — but without completing the ten years' service needed due to the early elections in 2014 — and the delays in the first wave of recruitments in 2009 with the entry into force of the statute, meaning that these APAs will be between one and two months away from eligibility for the European pension rights scheme; notes with appreciation that the Bureau has discussed the issue and is working together with DG PERS and the APAs' representatives to find solutions; asks that these solutions avoid, in as much as is possible, changes to their contractual arrangements that would cause them to lose entitlements accrued upon their recruitment in 2009;
68. Notes that members of staff who work in the institutions for less than 10 years cannot claim an EU pension, they must transfer their contributions to another fund which meets the Parliament's rules regarding the type of fund and the age at which funds can be drawn; notes that many UK APAs have not been able to transfer to UK pension funds which the Parliament says do not meet requirements; asks the Secretary-General to urgently look into this matter to ensure all members of staff can access their contributions;
69. Calls on the administration to provide, as early as possible in the next parliamentary term, training courses or publications especially for new APAs, including in practical and administrative matters (mission orders, medical examinations, accreditation, parking stickers, groups of visitors, exhibitions, etc.) in order to avoid systemic errors hindering the smooth running of administrative procedures that affect them;
70. Recognises that, for certain activities such as running the canteens and cleaning, outsourcing has been Parliament's preferred option and that, as a consequence, for certain DG's, the number of external staff on Parliament's premises may exceed the number of officials;
71. Notes, however, that such outsourcing decisions cannot provide an explanation for the use of all external staff;

72. Expresses concern at the impact of diversification in the catering sector on the continued employment of Parliament's current catering staff; calls for appropriate measures to be taken to ensure that Parliament's current catering staff keep their jobs;
73. Notes that the drivers' service was brought in-house in 2017 with the main objective of improving the security of Members; observes that this permitted Parliament to conduct security screenings of drivers before employment and to provide continuous training and monitoring of its staff; notes with appreciation that the recruitment of 116 drivers and dispatchers was completed in 2017; requests details of the costs incurred by bringing the drivers' service in-house;
74. Supports the effort to bring the drivers' service in-house and the progress achieved so far; notes that the procedure for bringing the drivers' service in-house allowed for a qualitative and quantitative increase of the services provided to Members, as well as for an effective and efficient response to unforeseeable emergency situations or sudden increases in demand; acknowledges the implementation of the 'E-mobility' Road Map with a view to the diversification, greening and electrification of the fleet; recalls that a direct train link now exists between the European Parliament in Brussels and the main airport and railway stations, which Members may use free of charge;
75. Welcomes the implementation of an occasional teleworking scheme for the Secretariat-General of the Parliament; supports the conduct of a survey on the first year of teleworking and asks for the evaluation results to be shared with the Members and all the Parliamentary services; is of the opinion that if the evaluation is positive, the scheme should be opened up to all staff including the APAs and the staff working for political groups;
76. Welcomes the fact that promoting equal opportunities remains a key component of Parliament's human resource management policy; strongly regrets that the gender equality roadmap continues not to be fully implemented, especially concerning the representation of women in middle and senior management positions (40 %) by 2020;
77. Strongly regrets that the number of women holding posts at the level of Director-General fell from 25 % (3 posts) in 2016 to 17 % (2 posts) in 2017; points out that the overall situation has not changed compared to 2006 when the number of women holding posts at the level of Director-General was 11,1 %; highlights that the overall target for 2019 was set at 30 % of women holding posts at the level of Director-General; regrets, furthermore, the number of women at Director level remained steady from 2006 (29,6 %) to 2017 (30 % and 14 posts);
78. Points out that the overall target for 2019 was set at 35 % of women holding posts at the level of Director; highlights that those figures deviate largely from roadmap on gender equality and diversity; considers that this trend runs counter to Parliament's roadmap for gender equality; demands to the Secretary-General to report immediately to the BUDG, CONT and FEMM committees the reasons for not respecting the roadmap; calls on the Bureau to implement a higher number of women in senior posts as consistently demanded by the Parliament, from within its own ranks;
79. Welcomes that the Secretary-General has given priority to appointing women as Heads of Unit, which resulted in nearly doubling the numbers from 21 % in 2006 to nearly 40 % in 2018;
80. Welcomes the Parliament's zero tolerance policy towards sexual harassment, adopted in 2017; urges also the Parliament to fully implement the following initiatives to deal with harassment practices, in particular an updated roadmap for the adaptation of preventive and early support measures to deal with conflict and harassment between Members and APAs, trainees or other staff as well as between peers, including an external audit of the Parliament's internal practices and procedures, the creation of a network of expert confidential counsellors, the introduction of mandatory trainings among Members, APAs, trainees or other staff, the recomposition of the anti-harassment committees by merging them into one sole committee with a variable composition depending on the case under examination and including experts on preventing harassment from the legal or health sectors as standing members of the committee; and the regular organisation of a public follow-ups by the FEMM Committee (reports, hearings, workshops, etc.); notes that the results of the external audit were expected by early November 2018 and requests them to be communicated without delay, once available; further expects the full and transparent implementation of the roadmap in accordance with adopted parliamentary resolution, starting or advancing as much as possible already before the end of this legislature;

Directorate-General for Infrastructure and Logistics (DG INLO)

81. Notes that in 2017 DG INLO had committed appropriations of EUR 267 588 704, corresponding to 6 % increase in relation to 2016 (EUR 251 599 697); is aware that in Brussels the Martens building was concluded and went through fitting and adaptation works, the House of European History was opened, the Trèves I building was purchased and two other sites are being reconstructed and extended; observes that in Luxembourg the KAD project progresses, and that in Strasbourg the Havel building was brought into use in April 2017, followed by the Simone Veil Parliamentarium in July of the same year;
82. Notes that the creation of Europe House in several Liaison Offices has been approved by the Bureau and is being implemented throughout the coming years; calls on the Secretary-General, to see to it that new locations for the Liaison Offices are selected on a careful cost-benefit analysis; calls for detailed information on the progress of works be included in the DG's annual activity report; calls on the Secretary-General to submit the various projects adopted by the Bureau, justifications for them and the budgets allocated to them to the BUDG and CONT before the forthcoming European elections;
83. Notes Parliament's significant infrastructure, which can be broken down as follows:

Brussels buildings	Luxembourg buildings	Strasbourg buildings
13 owned	1 owned	5 owned
6 rented	6 rented	
659 960 m ²	197 873 m ²	343 930 m ²
Parliament's Liaison Offices		
Total	35	
owned	11	
rented	24	
surface	27 737 m ²	

84. Recalls that most of Parliament's buildings were not designed and constructed taking into account the Eurocodes requirements for structural integrity, as those norms did not exist at the time of their construction; acknowledges that this means that building policy will gradually move away from acquisition and towards renovations and maintenance;
85. Recalls the statement by the European Parliament on the exemplary role of buildings in the context of Directive 2012/27/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on energy efficiency, amending Directives 2009/125/EC and 2010/30/EU and repealing Directives 2004/8/EC and 2006/32/EC ⁽⁴⁾ (the 'Energy Efficiency Directive') to bring its buildings to the highest energy efficiency standard; calls for the development of a coherent, long-term deep renovation strategy for all Parliament buildings, and for including standard specifications on the extraction of reusable building materials in building renovation contracts;
86. Acknowledges that the Bureau instructed the Secretary-General to mandate DG INLO to launch an architectural competition for the refurbishment of the Paul-Henri Spaak building considering only the selected options B — technical update and C — redesign of the building; notes that outcome of the process is foreseen for 2019; calls on the Secretary-General to develop a comprehensive plan concerning the guarantees that will be built in against costs rising beyond the estimations and to ensure that the contracts foresee that the Parliament will not take the risk of any such setbacks; furthermore, calls on the Secretary-General to provide the Parliament with a clear plan, including the indirect costs related to each of the scenarios, in particular when parts of the activities will have to take place elsewhere during the renovation and building activities, and to specify the options for dealing with the security risks without having to create an entirely new building;
87. Stresses how important it is for any change in the furniture of Members' offices to be duly justified and explained to Members, who must be free to accept or refuse such changes;

⁽⁴⁾ OJ L 315, 14.11.2012, p. 1.

88. Acknowledges the Court's findings regarding building management of the Union institutions and notes that Parliament uses 55 % for office space and 45 % for meetings rooms and other uses; notes that Parliament owns 84 % of its buildings and underlines that this percentage will increase when the KAD building in Luxemburg is completed;
89. Is strongly concerned by the fact that the KAD II building delivery date was initially due to be 2013 but the current estimate for the East construction site is end of 2019 and for the West construction site it is 2022; stresses that the lack of experience of the developer and an unsuccessful first tender for construction works lead to this significant delay; is dismayed that the subsequent increased renting necessity lead to additional costs of EUR 14,4 million per year or EUR 86 million over the six-year period;
90. Notes that the original estimated budget of EUR 317,5 million was revised in 2009 to EUR 363 million (2005 prices) due to conceptual changes; is highly concerned that the project is not yet finished, although foreseen to be ready by the end of 2019, and the final price therefore unknown, even though Parliament intends to keep the costs within the current budget of EUR 432 million (in 2012 prices); requests to obtain the progress report on the completion of KAD II building by 30 June 2019;
91. Expresses concern over the 8 % increase in the price index for construction work between 2012 and 2017, which could lead to further increasing construction costs;
92. Acknowledges the implementation of the 'E-mobility' Road Map with a view to the diversification, greening and electrification of the fleet; recalls the 2016 discharge resolution voted in April 2018, which states that the Bureau should not limit itself to electric cars as a more environmentally-friendly solution since there are concerns regarding their production (including the sufficient availability of the necessary resources) and the disposal of batteries at the end of their life-cycle; still regrets that Members were not informed of an analysis regarding alternative fuels such as bio fuels, synthetic fuels or hydrogen fuel cells; underlines that diversification of an environmentally friendly car-fleet would lessen dependence on one supplier and could counteract possible future supply shortages;
93. Is concerned by the high quantity of single-use plastics and plastic waste generated by Parliament canteens and cafeterias and urges the administration to explicitly remove the possibility to offer plastic-wrapped and single-use plastic products for the upcoming call for tenders on catering;
94. Notes the difference in quality between canteens serviced by one and the same service provider; is of the opinion that this aspect needs closer monitoring and therefore calls for a user satisfaction survey to be launched; welcomes the fact that the catering services in Strasbourg have already started to provide food suitable for gluten-intolerant staff, calls for the range of such options to be expanded and adopted as soon as possible by the caterers in the other places of work;
95. Notes that trainees are entitled to a discount of EUR 0,50 on main dishes in all the self-service restaurants in Brussels and Luxembourg and EUR 0,90 in Strasbourg; considers, however, that, taking into account their average pay levels and the high prices charged over the last three years, these discounts are not sufficient to have even a minimal impact on their finances; reiterates once more its call on the Secretary-General to grant price reductions in line with their earnings;
96. Welcomes the creation of a 'Ex-Ante Control and Public Procurement Coordination Unit' in 2017, and of a procurement service in each Directorate; asks for a specific section in the annual activity report to be dedicated the new unit's activities;

Directorate-General for Interpretation and Conferences turned into Directorate-General for Logistics and Interpretation for Conferences

97. Notes that the overall average number of hours per week that staff interpreters spent delivering interpretation services in their booth increased to 14 in 2017; takes note of this increase when compared to 13 hours and 25 minutes spent delivering interpretation services in the booth in 2016; understands the fact that the change in working patterns, that started with the new Staff Regulation, culminated in a strike that provoked disturbances in the provision of interpretation to Members; commends the work to maintain core interpretation services in order to keep legislative work running;

98. Strongly condemns the escalation of tensions, which culminated in a 45-minute interruption of plenary work in Strasbourg and no noticeable efforts for de-escalation; welcomes the agreement that was initiated by the Secretary-General and which lead to the re-establishment of regular interpretation activity;
99. Notes that the implementation of the 'Strategy for the Modernisation of Conference Management' in the Parliament lead to the transfer of the Conference Ushers Unit and the creation of a new Directorate for Conference Organisation in the DG; asks for a specific section in the annual activity report to be dedicated the new unit, including an activity assessment with conclusive performance indicators, in addition to the DG's regular activities;

Directorate-General for Finance

100. Notes that the Secretary-General decided to transfer several functions related to services provided to APAs and the Members' Professional Training Service from DG FINS to DG PERS; regrets that these transfers were not sufficient to overcome the negative impact on DG FINS of the 2017 reduction in staff; calls for a simplification of reimbursements of travel costs for Members, staff and APAs, that takes advantage of systems such as the electronic signature function (DISP) and two-step-verification; acknowledges that verifications are necessary but underlines that this can be done in a more efficient and paperless way;
101. Recommends a thorough revision of the Internal Rules governing missions and duty travel by officials and other servants of the European Parliament and of the implementing measures for Title VII of the Conditions of employment of other servants of the European Union, in particular as to align the treatment of APAs with that of officials;
102. Notes that Parliament's new travel service, which had already worked with the Parliament, started operating again on 1 January 2019; welcomes the fact that the new contract contains strengthened conditions, in particular with regard to ticket pricing and the availability of the travel service's call centre at all times, including at weekends; stresses again the importance of a simple and user-friendly complaints mechanism to quickly highlight shortfalls, to allow for speedy resolution of any problems; emphasises that attention needs to be paid to the specific requirements of Members and their need for tailor-made services;
103. Encourages the new travel agency to strive to achieve the most competitive prices for the Parliament's work-related travel;
104. Calls for the simplification of recruitment procedures and reimbursements for missions and travel costs for local assistants; regrets that these processes are often complex and lengthy and result in significant delays; calls on DG FINS to address this issue as a priority;
105. Notes that the paying agents with whom Members are required to work in their countries of election are not sufficiently aware of Parliament's internal procedures; points out that the complexity of these rules often leads them to make mistakes which are detrimental to Members; considers that paying agents should be provided with training or a handbook;

General Expenditure Allowance (GEA)

106. Recalls that in the past, Parliament has voted in favour of the position that Members should keep the receipts for their expenses, should annually publish an overview of their expenses, and should reimburse the unspent amount of money at the termination of their mandate or the end of their terms; recalls the decision of the Bureau to establish an ad-hoc Working Group for defining and publishing the rules concerning the use of the General Expenditure Allowance (GEA) following previous discharge recommendations; regrets the decision of the Bureau to disregard the proposal of the Working Group to introduce checks of the separate GEA accounts by an external auditor, thus preventing a meaningful reform of the GEA; calls on the Bureau to immediately resume discussions about the GEA and to come up with an agreement as soon as possible; believes that such agreement should include common rules for greater transparency and financial accountability, requiring:

- Members to keep all receipts pertaining to the GEA,
- the admission of an independent auditor in charge of the annual check of the accounts and the publication of an auditor's opinion,
- Members to return the unspent share of the GEA at the end of their mandate;

107. Urges the Bureau to implement the democratic will of the plenary concerning the GEA as soon as possible; furthermore, urges the Bureau to immediately reconvene the working group in order to reform the GEA by developing new rules for greater transparency and financial accountability;
108. Calls in addition on the Bureau to make the following, additional changes concerning the GEA on top of those already adopted by the plenary:
 - a 5 % sample checks of the GEA spending by the European Parliament's internal auditing; the final results and the findings should be part of the annual internal audit report published by the European Parliament,
 - the need for Members to publish, on an annual basis, an overview of their expenditures by category (communication costs, office rental, office supplies, etc.),
 - the admission of an independent auditor in charge of the annual check of the accounts and the publication of an auditor's opinion;
109. Recalls Article 62 of the Decision of the Bureau of 19 May and 9 July 2008 and the Decision of the Bureau of 5 July and 18 October concerning implementing measures for the Statute for Members of the European Parliament, which stipulates that 'the sums paid', including the General Expenditure Allowance, 'shall be reserved exclusively for the funding of activities linked to the exercise of a Member's mandate and may not be used to cover personal expenses or to fund grants or donations of a political nature' and that 'Members shall pay back any unused amounts to Parliament'; calls upon the Secretary-General and the Bureau of the European Parliament to ensure that those provisions are fully implemented and complied with;
110. Calls in addition to introduce a requirement for Members to have their accounts in relation to the GEA checked by an external accountant at least at the end of a Member's mandate; calls furthermore for the publication of the expenditure by placing a link to these data on the personal pages of the Members on the website of the European Parliament;

Voluntary Pension Fund

111. Recalls that on 23 October 1997, Parliament called upon its Bureau to request the Court to investigate Parliament's voluntary pension scheme, which led to the issuance of the Court's opinion No 5/99 on the 'Pension Fund and Scheme for Members of the European Parliament'; calls on the Bureau to request the Court to produce another such opinion on the pension scheme and fund in 2019;
112. Recalls that, in a note to the Bureau dated 8 March 2018, the Parliament's Secretary-General accepted that the pension fund linked to the Members' voluntary pension scheme 'will exhaust its capital well before the end of the pension obligations and possibly already by 2024'; calls therefore upon the Secretary-General and the Bureau, while fully respecting the Statute for Members, to urgently establish a clear plan for the Parliament assuming and taking over its obligations and responsibilities for its Member's voluntary pension scheme immediately after the 2019 elections;
113. Notes that the voluntary pension scheme has an estimated actuarial deficit of EUR 305,4 million at the end of 2017; further notes that at the end of 2017, the amount of net assets to be taken into account and the actuarial commitment amount to EUR 137 million and EUR 442,4 million respectively; as such notes that the assets barely cover 30 % of the commitments of the voluntary pension scheme;
114. Recalls that these projected future liabilities are spread over several decades but exceed the assets currently available and notes that the total amount paid in 2017 by the voluntary pension fund amounts to EUR 17,2 million; notes that at the end of 2017 the Fund had 661 pensioners and 99 dependants;
115. Points out that this raises concerns about the likely early exhaustion of the fund as the fund has been selling fixed assets for several years in order to meet its payment obligations to pensioners because the fund's income is not sufficient to cover the increased pension payments; recalls that the provision for pensions and similar obligations has been calculated based on a return of investment of 6,5 % per year, which was from the beginning not sustainable;
116. Welcomes the proposals of the Secretary-General and the agreement that the Secretary-General will re-examine the situation in 2020 to see whether the measures have sufficiently brought back the actuarial deficit; welcomes the fact that the Secretary-General has consulted the Legal Service;

117. Notes that, following a proposal by the Secretary-General on 10 December 2018, the Bureau adopted two modifications to the rules governing the voluntary pension scheme endorsing the increase of the retirement age from 63 to 65 years and the introduction of a levy of 5 % to pension payments for future pensioners; calls on the Secretary-General to ensure that all legally possible measures are taken by the Bureau without delay in order to improve the sustainability of the fund and to prevent the fund's early insolvency; calls on the Secretary-General to ensure that a decision is taken by the Bureau before the end of the current mandate;
118. Calls on the Secretary-General to investigate the legal foundations and potential ramifications of the Voluntary Pension Fund and in particular, whether the European Parliament as guarantor is legally and financially sustainable, as the Voluntary Pension Fund is a Luxembourg investment fund, rather than a regular pension fund; underlines that this investigation should be carried out by an independent party;
119. Calls on the Secretary-General, as well as the Bureau, to exhaust all possible avenues to keep Parliament's liability to a minimum, as taxpayers' money is involved; recalls that the fund was set up in 1990 to provide Members with an additional pension scheme on a voluntary basis; recalls that before the Members statute, which was introduced in 2009, Members were already eligible for a pension equivalent to those of their colleagues in the national parliaments, with the exception of Italian, French and Luxembourgish Members, who could therefore contribute to a special pension scheme of the European Parliament, which was created in 1981 solely for the needs of the aforementioned three nationalities; recalls therefore that the Voluntary Pension Fund has always constituted a purely supplementary pension;
120. Points out that two thirds of the Members' monthly contribution to the voluntary pension fund, which corresponded to EUR 2 236 in 2006, were already paid from the Parliament's budget for each member of the Fund; recalls that only two years of contribution to the Fund generates a lifetime pension claim when having reached the retirement age; notes that the highest pension paid in 2018 from the voluntary pension fund amounted to EUR 6 262, and that the average pension amounted to EUR 1 934; notes that currently (October 2018) 71 active Members are members of the Voluntary Pension Fund; appeals on the ethical and economic conscience and the common sense of the board of directors, the Bureau and the members of the Fund to support all measures aiming at limiting the deficit of the Fund;

Directorate-General for Innovation and Technological Support (DG ITEC)

121. Notes that DG ITEC's lead indicator in 2017 is its responsiveness to the demands of users and partners in all fields of activity in a timely and efficient manner; notes that the overall results concerning the proximity of support, the IT welcome desk and desk telephone support are satisfying but that an extra effort remains to be made for the secure remote access service that is the second most important for users; stresses that responsiveness does not equate to a timely resolution of problems; points out that problems with IT systems such as at 4 am should be categorised as 'priority 1' if this is not the case already;
122. Recalls that a key strategic pillar for Parliament in a world of open communication is strengthening ICT security, without hindering parliamentary work of Members, staff and APAs with seemingly arbitrary rules and requirements; underlines that security measures need to be tailor-made to encompass all operating systems — iOS as well as Windows — without hindering work on one operating system or the other; stresses that DG ITEC needs to take into account the increased use of iOS and that all remote services for Windows devices need to be adapted to iOS without further delay; welcomes in this regard the establishment of the ICT Security Unit in January 2017; regrets the scarcity of top cyber-security experts who would be interested in applying for jobs in Parliament's administration, mainly due to the competitiveness of the market;
123. Welcomes the two new projects started in 2017 — 'From tablet to hybrid' and 'Mainstreaming innovation' that will reinforce the innovative and digital working environment of the Parliament; asks for IT security training for Members, APAs and staff to be planned and provided soon and to focus on their respective needs;
124. Calls on all relevant DGs to work towards and achieve paperless office by having recourse to all digital services such as e-signature and two-step verifications; underlines that e-forms only save time and resources when they don't have to be printed, signed and sent to another office or even country, as is the case with mission reimbursement forms;

125. Underlines the costs, emissions and health and safety issues created by Strasbourg transport boxes ('canteens') and suggests their immediate removal in view of available IT solutions such as print-on-demand, system approaches such as paperless offices and IT equipment such as tablets and laptops;
126. Stresses the Bureau conclusion that an integrated approach on security matters is required to ensure optimal coordination of all relevant services in responding to emergencies, which makes the close cooperation between DG ITEC and the Directorate-General for Security and Safety (DG SAFE) of utmost importance; encourages the DGs to plan common activities over the medium and long term;
127. Calls on the Bureau to come up, in cooperation with DG ITEC, with risk-mitigating measures to ensure the smooth running of parliamentary work in the case of system damages or blackouts; underlines the importance of a list of priority services to determine the order in which services must be restored as quickly as possible so that a skeleton service is still functioning in the case of a cyber-attack; calls on the Bureau to draw up a contingency plan for lengthy system blackouts; recommends that data centres diversify the sites on which their servers are located to enhance the security and continuity of Parliament's IT systems;
128. Reiterates the call for the creation of an emergency rapid alert system which allows DG ITEC, in collaboration with DG SAFE, to send swift communications by SMS to Members and staff that agree to their contact details being included on a communication list for use in specific emergency situations;

Directorate-General for Security and Safety

129. Welcomes the significant progress made in 2017 to strengthen the Parliament's security and safety; notes that perimeters around Strasbourg and Brussels buildings were set up, that security vetting by the Belgian authorities of all employees of outside firms working at the Parliament is in place, and that an interinstitutional project for a common warehouse has been launched with the Council and the Commission; welcomes the initiative of a common warehouse to allow for adequate security scans and screenings of items before they reach Parliament's premises;
130. Recalls that openness to the public is a hallmark of the Parliament and an adequate balance with the necessary improvements to security must remain;
131. Acknowledges that security drills, such as the evacuation of the hemicycle in Strasbourg in 2018, are necessary to properly prepare for emergencies; underlines the need for a clear lessons-learned approach to avoid potentially dangerous situations, such as having Members, staff and APAs swipe their badges during an evacuation;
132. Calls on DG SAFE's security staff, in the case of evacuations, to carefully check the entire building for which they are responsible, to ensure that it has been evacuated and provide assistance to persons who are hearing-impaired or who have any other form of disability, when people have to be evacuated; underlines that when it comes to security and emergencies, no privileged treatment should be given to Members, nor should any distinction be made between any type of staff of the Parliament;
133. Notes the lack of communication in emergency situations such as that which took place in the Strasbourg Chamber in December 2018; concludes that the procedures can and must be improved; calls for the existing safety rules to be applied to the letter in emergency situations in order to prevent such uncertainty in the event of future emergencies;
134. Asks for clarification that all staff with a management position in the Directorate-General for Security and Safety have passed a security clearance procedure;

Protection of whistleblowers

135. Recognises that whistleblowing is crucial in deterring unlawful activities and wrongdoing; notes there were no parliamentary whistleblowing cases in 2017 and of the three in 2016, all were APAs and were dismissed by their respective Members; believes that the Parliament may not be inspiring confidence in their staff generally, nor granting requisite legal protection to APAs specifically, to those who wish to report wrongdoing; calls on the Secretary-General to remedy this situation as a matter of urgency;

136. Emphasises the vulnerable position APAs and interns employed by Members hold in respect to internal whistleblower protection rules; notes with great concern the Secretary-General's acknowledgement that 'whistleblowing rules are applicable to APAs but the Parliament cannot provide employment protection'; urges the Secretary-General to apply comparable remedies to APA whistleblowers to those APAs who are victims of harassment, such as post transfer and salary payment until the end of their contract; urges the Secretary-General to address this situation immediately and fulfil the Parliament's legal obligations under the Staff Regulations to protect whistleblowers for all Union staff classifications;
137. Highlights that transparency and freedom of information are enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which establishes the right to access documents held by the European institutions, and calls for an external review of the Parliament's transparency levels, using key open government indicators, with a view to increasing the already high standards of transparency; recalls that the reform of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 is long overdue; and calls on the European Parliament administration to regularly publish — in an open source, machine-readable format — the results of committee and plenary votes;

Environmentally-friendly Parliament

138. Welcomes the Parliament's positive contribution to sustainable development through its political role and its role in legislative procedures; is aware of its own environmental impact, which the institution tracks and continuously ameliorates through the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) Certification and its environmental policy;
139. Welcomes, in the context of the energy and climate policy of the Union for 2030 and beyond, additional measures to offset unavoidable emissions; calls on Parliament to develop additional carbon offsetting policies;
140. Commends the Parliament's commitment to green public procurement; notes that in 2017, 40,71 % of the contracts were classified as green, 10,96 % as light green and 48,33 % did not have any environmental dimension; encourages the Parliament to further increase the proportion of green public procurement commitments;
141. Welcomes the pilot-project of electric scooters for work-related journeys between the Union institutions' buildings but also for commuting between home and work; notes, however, that the vehicles' performance is lower than expected; encourages the Parliament to make sure the contractor will improve the vehicles' capabilities, particularly the battery;
142. Welcomes, in the context of the energy and climate policy of the Union for 2030 and beyond, additional measures to decrease the emissions and offset unavoidable emissions in order to become a 100 % carbon neutral institution; calls on the Parliament to lead by example and develop further CO₂ offsetting policies for the Parliament's premises;

Annual report on contracts awarded

143. Recalls that the Financial Regulation and its Rules of Application ⁽³⁾ lay down the information to be provided to the budgetary authority, and to the public, concerning the award of contracts by the institution; notes that the Financial Regulation requires publication of the contracts awarded with a value of more than EUR 15 000, a value that corresponds to the threshold above which a competitive tendering becomes compulsory;
144. Notes that of a total of 224 contracts awarded in 2017, 79 were based on open or restricted procedures, with a value of EUR 517 million, and 145 on negotiated procedures, with a total value of EUR 70 million; notes that the total number of contracts awarded by negotiated procedures slightly decreased in terms of value as a percentage of the total value of contracts awarded, from 14 % in 2016 to 12 % in 2017, though in terms of volume, there was an increase of almost 10 % between 2016 and 2017 (EUR 70,5 million in 2017, compared to EUR 64,28 million in 2016);

⁽³⁾ Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1268/2012 of 29 October 2012 on the rules of application of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (OJ L 362, 31.12.2012, p. 1).

145. Notes the following breakdown of contracts by type awarded in 2017 and 2016, including building contracts:

Type of contract	2017		2016	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
Services	177	79	170	77
Supply	36	16	36	16
Works	11	5	13	6
Building	0	0	1	1
Total	224	100	220	100

Type of contract	2017		2016	
	Value (EUR)	Percentage (%)	Value (EUR)	Percentage (%)
Services	446 313 270	76	246 512 789	49
Supply	133 863 942	23	155 805 940	31
Works	6 892 972	1	97 640 851	19
Building	0	0	1 583 213	1
Total	587 070 184	100	501 542 793	100

(Annual report on the contracts awarded by the European Parliament, 2017, p. 6)

146. Notes the following breakdown of contracts awarded in 2017 and 2016 by type of procedure used, in terms of number and value:

Type of procedure	2017		2016	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
Open	78	35	71	32
Restricted	1	1	7	3
Negotiated	145	64	141 ⁽¹⁾	64
Competition	—	—	—	—
Exceptional	—	—	1	1
Total	224	100	220	100

⁽¹⁾ This includes concessions awarded in 2016 in the absence of legal framework.

Type of procedure	2017		2016	
	Value (EUR)	Percentage (%)	Value (EUR)	Percentage (%)
Open	488 368 460	83	408 040 332	81,6
Restricted	28 200 000	5	29 190 756	13
Negotiated	70 501 724	12	64 284 705 ⁽¹⁾	—
Competition	—	—	—	—
Exception	—	—	27 000	—
Total	587 070 184	100	501 542 793	100

⁽¹⁾ This includes concessions awarded in 2016 in the absence of legal framework.

(Annual report on the contracts awarded by the European Parliament, 2017, p. 8)

Political groups (budget item 4 0 0)

147. Notes that, in 2017, the appropriations entered under budget item 4 0 0, attributed to the political groups and non-attached Members were used as follows:

Group	2017					2016				
	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
European People's Party (EPP)	17 790	8 150	19 330	108,66	6 610	17 440	8 907	18 303	105,19	8 005
Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D)	15 610	5 469	15 268	97,81	5 812	15 327	5 802	15 713	102,51	5 417
European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)	6 200	2 810	6 051	97,60	2 959	6 125	2 518	5 835	95,25	2 809
Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)	5 711	1 694	5 596	98	1 809	5 759	2 366	6 448	111,98	1 676
The Greens/The European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA)	4 333	1 826	4 583	105,76	1 578	4 180	1 557	3 921	93,82	1 815
European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL)	4 421	1 407	4 571	103,39	1 257	4 340	1 729	4 662	107,43	1 407
Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD)	3 654	1 917	3 523	96,41	1 827	3 820	1 873	2 945	77,10	1 910
Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF)	2 719	846	2 474	91	1 091	3 273	765	827	25,27	846
Non-attached Members	929	257	494	53,18	318	772	216	616	79,90	257
Total	61 367	24 394	61 890	100,85	23 261	60 996	25 733	59 059	96,82	24 142

* All amounts in thousands of EUR.

148. Welcomes the fact that the independent external auditor for the political groups issued only unqualified opinions; highlights that this is a positive development in contrast to the Parliament discharge procedure for the budget year 2016, where the independent external auditor issued a qualified audit opinion in the case of one political group;
149. Calls for stricter controls and a clear ban on the funding and sponsoring of European political parties by private companies;

European political parties and European political foundations

150. Notes that the Authority for European Political Parties and European Political Foundations (APPF) was created in 2016 with the task of assessing registration requests, registering new Union parties and foundations, monitoring their funding and imposing sanctions in cases of failure to respect their obligations; acknowledges that it became fully operational in 2017;
151. Notes that, in 2017, APPF lacked resources, particularly human resources, to carry out the tasks it was created to deliver; acknowledges that the Commission, Council and Parliament agreed to provide additional resources for the APPF in the budget of 2019; underlines that adequate human resources should have been provided from the start, due to the importance of APPF's work;
152. Expresses its concerns about the fact that in seven cases, the Bureau needed to decide to introduce risk mitigation measures in order to safeguard the financial interests of the Union due to either financial and administrative instability or suspicion of serious irregularities or an ongoing procedure concerning the non-respect of the principles on which the Union is founded;
153. Notes that, in 2017, the appropriations entered under budget item 4 0 2 were used as follows ⁽⁶⁾:

Party	Abbr.	Own resources	Parliament grant	Total revenue ⁽¹⁾	EP grant as % of eligible expenditure (max. 85 %)	Revenue surplus (transfer to reserves) or loss
European People's Party	EPP	1 548 409	8 018 034	12 118 607	85	—
Party of European Socialists	PES	1 335 161	6 901 688	8 518 219	85	– 84 178
Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party	ALDE	693 618	2 449 108	3 586 785	85	159 481
European Green Party	EGP	1 006 971	1 865 999	3 064 646	73	150 000
Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists	AECR	316 291	1 439 310	1 755 601	85	– 565 789
Party of the European Left	EL	297 363	1 342 594	1 705 284	85	1 374
European Democratic Party	PDE	106 162	532 072	638 234	85	1
EUDemocrats	EUD	—	—	—	—	—
European Free Alliance	EFA	153 856	779 408	1 045 014	85	808
European Christian Political Movement	ECPM	107 018	499 993	627 808	84	2 143
European Alliance for Freedom	EAF	—	—	—	—	—
European Alliance of National Movements	AEMN	74 076	342 788	445 568	85	6 344

⁽⁶⁾ All amounts in thousands of EUR

Party	Abbr.	Own resources	Parliament grant	Total revenue ⁽¹⁾	EP grant as % of eligible expenditure (max. 85 %)	Revenue surplus (transfer to reserves) or loss
Movement for a Europe of Liberties and Democracy	MENL	127 900	525 296	775 467	85	– 20 184
Alliance for Peace and Freedom	APF	29 775	27 055	56 830	85	22 471
Coalition for Life and Family	CLF	—	—	—	—	—
Total		5 796 602	24 723 344	34 338 065		– 327 530

⁽¹⁾ Total revenue includes previous year's carry-over in accordance with Article 125(6) of the Financial Regulation.

154. Notes that, in 2017, the appropriations entered under budget item 4 0 3 were used as follows ⁽⁷⁾:

Foundation	Abbr.	Affiliated to party	Own resources	EP final grant	Total revenue	EP grant as % of eligible expenditure (max. 85 %)
Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies	WMCES	EPP	1 020 598	5 042 165	6 062 764	85
Foundation for European Progressive Studies	FEPS	PES	915 754	4 221 134	5 136 888	85
European Liberal Forum	ELF	ALDE	254 994	1 164 869	1 419 863	85
Green European Foundation	GEF	EGP	201 899	1 090 052	1 291 951	85
Transform Europe	TE	EL	229 957	929 481	1 159 438	85
Institute of European Democrats	IED	PDE	50 768	264 390	315 158	85
Centre Maurits Coppieters	CMC	EFA	90 867	365 038	455 905	85
New Direction — Foundation for European Reform	ND	AECR	278 837	1 412 218	1 691 055	85
European Foundation for Freedom	EFF	EAF	—	—	—	—
Christian Political Foundation for Europe	SALLUX	ECPM	69 056	310 164	379 220	83
Identités & Traditions européennes	ITE	AEMN	43 963	212 402	256 365	85
Foundation for a Europe of Nations and Freedom	FENL	MENL	77 400	447 972	525 372	85
Europa Terra Nostra	ETN	APF	37 791	41 428	79 219	85
Fondation Pegasus	FP	CLF	—	—	—	—
Total			3 271 884	15 501 313	18 773 197	

⁽⁷⁾ All amounts in thousands of EUR.

155. Expresses its concerns regarding Associations that are subsidised by the European Parliament and about the fact that European Parliament Association (EPA) provides Members with discounts in certain shops, while the EPA was created for 'social and information activities'; calls on the Secretary-General to make their financial accounts and activity reports available.
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