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RESOLUTION (EU) 2026/1591 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

of 29 April 2026

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 2024, Section VII – Committee of the Regions

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 2024, Section VII – Committee of the Regions,

— having regard to Rule 102 of and Annex V to its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A10-0056/2026),

A. whereas in the context of the discharge procedure, the discharge authority, while stressing the particular importance of further strengthening the democratic legitimacy of the Union institutions, not only assesses the legality and regularity of expenditure but also evaluates Union spending on improving transparency and accountability and implementing the concept of performance-based budgeting and good governance of human resources, for measurable results for citizens, particularly at local and regional level;

B. whereas the Committee of the Regions (the 'Committee') is a political assembly of 329 members (and 329 alternates) elected in the regions, cities, villages and municipalities of the 27 Member States of the Union that plays a key institutional role in relation to the Union's cohesion policy by representing regional and local authorities, operating as a consultative body for the Union institutions, with the mission of contributing to Union policy shaping and decision making process from the point of view of the local and regional authorities and at the same time contributing to making the Union more effective and closer to its citizens;

C. whereas the consultation of the Committee by the Commission or the Council is mandatory in certain cases, while the Committee may also adopt opinions on its own initiative and enjoys a wide area for referral, as set out in the Treaties, allowing it to be consulted by Parliament;

D. whereas the Committee's activities are defined on the basis of its overall political strategy as set out in its resolution of 2 July 2020 on its priorities for 2020-2025 ([1]), and whereas the Committee adopted three political priorities for the 2020-2025 mandate, accompanied by three communication campaigns: Bringing Europe closer to people, Building resilient regional and local communities, and Promoting cohesion as a fundamental value of the EU;

E. whereas the local and regional administrations account for one third of public spending, half of public investment and one fourth of tax revenues and, in many Member States, hold competencies in key areas such as education, economic development and cohesion, environment, social protection, health and services of general interest, hence the coordination of local, regional, national and Union levels increases the legitimacy of the legislation, improves ownership and pursues more effectively the benefit of citizens, and contributes to the monitoring and implementation of Union spending with a territorial impact while ensuring that nobody is left behind;

F. whereas the Committee pursues its political goal to strengthen its involvement in the entire Union political and legislative cycle while making more tangible the connection with Union citizens using the Committee's members as powerful multipliers in their communities and in their national associations of local and regional authorities;

([1]) Resolution of the European Committee of the Regions – The European Committee of the Regions' priorities for 2020-2025 – Europe closer to the people through its villages, cities and regions (OJ C 324, 1.10.2020, p. 8).

G. whereas the Committee identified nine key priority areas to make its action more strategic and impactful in 2024: Enlargement of the Union and support to Ukraine; Democracy and better regulation; Resilience; Green Deal going local; Competitiveness, industry, SMEs, regulatory relief & business taxation; Optimising delivery and communication of Union cohesion policy; Facing the triple planetary crises; Employment, equality and social policies; Promotion of Union support to regional innovation ecosystems;

H. whereas Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council (2), governing Union cohesion policy and funding between 2021 and 2027, that entered into force in July 2021, encompasses references to the partnership and multilevel governance principle, supported by the Committee and Parliament and entailing the involvement of regions of the Union and their local and regional authorities;

I. whereas the over 400 national and regional programmes in place for the delivery of Union cohesion policy in the 2021-2027 programming period have made available around EUR 380 billion, under different funds, to tackle the economic, social and environmental challenges that Union regions, cities, villages and municipalities are facing;

J. whereas, on 19 February 2021, Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council (3), establishing the Union's Recovery and Resilience Facility, entered into force, providing the legal basis for distributing funds and loans of up to EUR 672,5 billion (in 2018 prices) to the Member States between 2021 and 2026 and also aiming to support economic, social and territorial cohesion and to address disparities between the regions of the Union;

K. whereas, as a Union institution within the meaning of the Financial Regulation, the Committee is required to adopt its own annual accounts, prepared in accordance with the accounting rules adopted by the Commission's accounting officer (European Union Accounting Rules) and based on the International Public Sector Accounting Standards, which are ultimately consolidated into those of the Union;

1. Notes that the budget of the Committee falls under Multiannual Financial Framework ('MFF') Heading 7 'European public administration' ('Heading 7'), which amounted to a total of EUR 13,3 billion, i.e. 6,9 % of Union budget spending, in 2024; notes that the budget of the Committee represented 0,92 % of MFF Heading 7 appropriations in 2024;

2. Notes that the Court of Auditors (the 'Court'), in its Annual Report for the financial year 2024 (the 'Court's report') examined a sample of 70 transactions under the heading 'Administration', the same number as in 2023; whereas the Court states that administrative expenditure comprises expenditure on human resources, including expenditure on pensions, which in 2024 accounted for approximately 69 % of the total administrative expenditure, and expenditure on buildings, equipment, energy, communications and information technology (IT), and that its work over many years indicates that, overall, administrative spending is low risk;

3. Notes that 16 (23 %) of the 70 transactions contained errors but that the Court, based on the three errors which were quantified, estimates the level of error to be below the materiality threshold; notes that the Court's report did not identify any specific issues concerning the Committee;

4. Notes that cohesion policy contributes significantly to citizens' trust in the Union by delivering concrete and visible results through regional and local projects, thereby reinforcing the legitimacy of Union action on the ground; underlines that in this context the Committee plays a key role in bringing Union citizens closer to Union decision-making;

(2) Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy (OJ L 231, 30.6.2021, p. 159, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/1060/oj).

(3) Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2021 establishing the Recovery and Resilience Facility (OJ L 57, 18.2.2021, p. 17, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/241/oj).

Budgetary and financial management

5. Notes from the Committee's annual activity report for 2024 (the 'Annual report') that the final adopted budget of the Committee was EUR 123 178 345 in 2024, including the Amending Budget 5/2024 (salary related), representing an increase of EUR 6 502 953 (i.e. + 5,60 %) compared to 2023; notes with satisfaction that the rate of the Committee's budget implementation of current year commitment appropriations was 99,9 % in 2024 (the same as in 2023), and the current year payment appropriations execution rate increased from 91,20 % in 2023 to 91,90 % in 2024; welcomes further an increase in the execution rate of C8 appropriations (carried over from 2023 to 2024) from 85 % in 2023 to 92,20 % in 2024, whereas the appropriations carried over from 2023 to 2024 were EUR 12 578 853 compared to EUR 10 540 464 in the previous year; commends the Committee for its consistently high budget implementation rate over the years due to optimisation in budget planning and execution in light of persistent budgetary pressures; acknowledges, in this context, the Committee's structural underfinancing, particularly in light of its role as an innovative frontrunner and testing ground for practices that could benefit the wider Union administration, and recognises its need for additional resources to effectively achieve its objectives, while respecting budgetary discipline;

6. Underlines that the Committee's high budgetary execution rates and low error levels demonstrate that decentralised implementation, close to regional and local authorities, can ensure both sound financial management and tangible results for citizens, while recognising the need for additional resources; calls on the Commission to fully involve the Committee, within its institutional mandate, in the monitoring and evaluation of Union spending, including in decisions that concern the post-2027 Union budget, in order to strengthen further the accountability, transparency and performance of cohesion projects that aim to reduce economic, social and territorial disparities;

7. Notes that the implementation rate of C1 appropriations of budgetary item 1 0 0 0 'Office expenses of Members' decreased from 76,20 % in 2023 to only 13,90 % in 2024; notes the Committee's explanation whereby allowances for office expenses for 2024 were executed at the beginning of 2025 with C8 appropriations; notes that the Committee has addressed the low implementation rate in 2023 of C8 appropriations of budgetary item 2 0 0 7 'Fitting-out of premises' by avoiding initiation of large building projects at the end of year and by making intermediate payments for long-term project to prevent late invoices; notes however a decrease in the execution rate of that item's C1 appropriations from 99,20 % in 2023 to 51,90 % in 2024 due to the timing of renovation of some of the Committee's elevators;

8. Notes from the Annual report that in the course of 2024, the Committee implemented 42 transfers for a total of EUR 2,7 million, of which 37 internal transfers for a total of EUR 1,1 million and five external transfers for a total of EUR 1,6 million, of which approximately EUR 1 million transferred to budget lines covering or reinforcing items such as annual lease payments, organisation of an internal competition, IT expenditure and the fitting-out of premises for a media space for the use by both the Committee and the European Economic and Social Committee ('EESC');

9. Notes in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, that the Committee continued to be affected in 2024 by rising costs of energy, transportation, accommodation and by indexation mechanisms linked to inflation rate, which have had an impact directly or indirectly, on expenditure for raw materials, external contractors, energy, travel, rents, lease and maintenance of buildings, among other; notes that from 2022 to 2025, the cumulative costs increase linked to indexation was + 21,50 % for rent and building lease payments and + 15 % for maintenance and security contracts, and from 2022 to 2024 the average cost for a Member traveling to and from Brussels increased from EUR 1 200 to EUR 1 620; notes in this context an increase in the number of Committee's budgetary transfers from 31 in 2023 to 42 in 2024, in part to cover contracts impacted by high inflation and indexation; commends the common actions of the Committee and the EESC to secure better interinstitutional collaborations through digitalisation and joint procurement efforts; welcomes the Committee's renewed energy saving-measures in 2024 which are key in mitigating effects of rising costs of energy; acknowledges, however, the need of all Union institutions to improve their budget management by also taking into account price volatility, especially in the energy sector, when concluding contracts with service providers;

10. Calls on the Committee's administration to actively identify and implement cost-saving measures, including through the increased use of hybrid meeting technologies, the optimization of building usage, the consolidation of administrative activities and the reduction of unnecessary logistical expenses; requests regular progress reports on the measures implemented and savings achieved;

11. Notes an increase in payments made for the members of the Committee, from budgetary item 1 0 0 4, from EUR 7 955 968 in 2023 to EUR 8 036 613 in 2024, which represents an increase of 1 % (down from + 20 % the previous year); notes that 8 231 payments were made for travel expenses, 4 188 payments for travel allowances, 7 303 payments for meeting allowances for in-person participation and 164 payments for remote participation in 2024; notes from the Committee's follow-up to the observations in the resolution of Parliament concerning the 2023 discharge ('the Follow-up report') that the Committee adopted a revised set of rules on travel reimbursement and payment of allowance to Committee members in 2024 with several measures aimed at reducing unnecessary costs and carbon emissions, as recommend by Parliament in previous discharge resolutions;

12. Notes that the mission's budget (current year appropriations) increased by 13,60 % from EUR 420 833 in 2023 to EUR 478 050 in 2024 and an execution rate of that budget of approximately 80 % in 2024 (similar to 2023); notes that this increase was due to an increase in the number of missions from 574 in 2023 to 810 in 2024, of which 268 missions were linked to the organisation by the Committee of a summit in Mons marking the Committee's 30th anniversary in 2024;

13. Observes a decrease in the current year appropriations for interpreting services of approximately 10 %, from EUR 4,167 million in 2023 to EUR 3,737 million in 2024 and an implementation rate of 64,80 % in 2024, down from 67,30 % in 2023;

14. Notes that the Committee's current rules set the flat-rate remote meeting allowance at 50 % of the regular meeting allowance, with the latter being EUR 367 and the former EUR 186,50 after indexation; notes that the total amount paid for remote meeting allowances remained low compared to previous years, after a significant return to in-person meetings was registered in 2023; notes nevertheless a slight increase in the amount paid from EUR 32 632 in 2023 to EUR 38 104 in 2024; notes from the Committee's replies to the questionnaire submitted by the Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control for the 2024 budgetary discharge (the 'Questionnaire') that only meetings of non-statutory Committee bodies can be conducted online or in hybrid format, whereas remote participation is monitored through the Interactio platform and the extraction of.csv files therefrom; calls on the Committee to strengthen the transparency and proportionality of the system of remote participation allowance in order to reinforce public trust and stresses that financial compensation for remote attendance must be strictly justified; considers that, although remote attendance is an important instrument for modern institutions, since it reduces meeting costs and enables broader participation, the allocation of a reduced allowance for Committee bodies participating remotely in meetings, limited to certain types of events, can be a proportionate and fair measure for members' responsibility and preparation requirements; notes, however, the importance of ensuring transparency and proportionality regarding the level of such allowances, mainly where differences exist between Union bodies for remote attendance; considers that the current level of the remote meeting allowance requires further justification in terms of cost effectiveness, proportionality and public acceptability; calls for a wider and more systematic use of online and hybrid meeting formats, where appropriate, in order to reduce travel-related expenditure, enhance cost efficiency, limit environmental impact and improve public trust in the prudent use of Union funds and to assess the possibility of harmonising the Committee's rules with those applied by the EESC, or to provide a clear and transparent rationale for maintaining a differentiated system;

15. Observes with satisfaction from the Questionnaire and the Follow-up report that the average payment time decreased from 21,88 days in 2023 to 18,46 days in 2024, despite a further increase in the number of processed invoices; commends the Committee for reaching a high percentage level (83 %) of invoices received electronically in 2024;

Internal management, performance and internal control

16. Acknowledges that the Committee plays a fundamental role in contributing to the Union's policy development and decision-making processes by representing the interests of local and regional authorities within the Union, thus bringing Europe closer to its citizens and increasing the democratic legitimacy of Union legislation; notes from the Annual report that for 2024, as part of its annual operational plan, the reporting of the performance of the Committee was based on 26 objectives, the achievement of which was assessed through 87 quantitative indicators; calls on the Committee to further strengthen the outcome and impact-oriented indicators to better demonstrate the impact and the added value of the Committee's activities on Union policies; whereas the targets of the majority of those indicators (approximately 74 %) was achieved with a level of 90 % or more, six were partially achieved with a level of less than 90 % and six were not achieved; notes from the Questionnaire that it implemented a comprehensive planning and reporting cycle, which included the creation of a central risk register and a risk assessment exercise for all objectives in the annual operational plan in 2024; encourages the Committee to continue to work on performance improvement as well as effectiveness improvement; welcomes the Committee's efforts to introduce reformative and innovative solutions, streamline the administration and avoid overlapping roles with other bodies;

17. Underlines the relevance and strategic value of performance indicators and invites the Committee to further consolidate its indicator framework, ensuring the reporting of outcomes and impact rather than administrative activity alone;

18. Notes that the Committee pursues its mission through opinions, which refer to legislative proposals made by the Commission (referrals), own-initiative opinions, which call on the Union institutions to take action, and through resolutions, which highlight the Committee's positions on specific topics; notes that, in 2024, the Committee adopted 53 opinions (the same as in 2023) and four resolutions (six in 2023); recognises the Committee's political achievements in 2024 and its role in integrating local and regional perspectives into Union policymaking, thereby enhancing citizen involvement;

19. Notes with satisfaction from the Committee's 2024 annual impact report (the 'Impact report') the Committee's political achievements in 2024 with respect to its three political priorities for 2020-2025, thereby reinforcing the Committee's role in shaping Union policy at regional and local level; notes that the Committee's input from declarations and recommendations from opinions have had an impact on key Union policy areas such as climate change, nature, energy and green economy (via, e.g. the report 'Green deal 2.0' which influenced Council conclusions and the Committee's opinion on Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council ([4])), transport (via, e.g. the Committee's opinion on the Greening Freight Transport package which influenced relevant draft reports of Parliament), and health (via, e.g. the Committee's opinion on Regulation (EU) 2025/327 of the European Parliament and of the Council ([5]) which influenced the final compromise text); notes with satisfaction that proposals made by the Committee influenced the Commission's decisions to launch a pilot project of EUR 23 million for cofinancing regions and cities for the reintegration of the long term unemployed into the labour market and to launch the ambitious, first-ever European Affordable Housing Plan addressing energy, poverty and sustainable housing and reaffirming that access to housing is a fundamental right; further notes that the declaration adopted at the European Summit of Regions and Cities held in March 2024 in Mons provided input to the European Council's Strategic Agenda and the Commission's Political Guidelines;

20. Considering the important role of the Committee in increasing the democratic legitimacy of Union legislation by providing active coordination of regional and local authorities, supports the Committee in its effort to provide targeted, proportionate and evidence-based territorial impact assessments where they add clear value to legislative process; notes with satisfaction that the Committee has created a fully-fledged mechanism for stakeholder consultation to collect views before issuing its opinions, thanks to the involvement of various local and regional networks, alliances and hubs; appreciates that the voices of non-Union partners are also taken into consideration through, e.g. the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Reconstruction of Ukraine and the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly;

([4]) Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration and amending Regulation (EU) 2022/869 (OJ L, 2024/1991, 29.7.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1991/oj).

([5]) Regulation (EU) 2025/327 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 February 2025 on the European Health Data Space and amending Directive 2011/24/EU and Regulation (EU) 2024/2847 (OJ L, 2025/327, 5.3.2025, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2025/327/oj).

21. Notes the Committee's broader engagement across the Union's political and legislative cycle, enabled by its cooperation frameworks with the Commission, Parliament and the European Investment Bank; underlines the importance of inviting members of the Committee and of the EESC to parliamentary meetings falling within their areas of competence;

22. Notes that in 2024 the Committee conducted five Regional Hub consultations, two Subsidiarity Expert Group consultations and completed two assessments as well as two 'Fit for future' opinions; invites the Committee to continue on the path of providing useful and relevant input, such as data from the ground and analysis, to Union institutions and other beneficiaries of Union policies;

23. Notes with appreciation that in 2024 the Committee continued implementing measures to improve its internal management and modernise its administration, streamline its processes and enhance cost effectiveness; welcomes the improved use of digital tools, in particular the efforts aimed at simplification, administrative efficiency and the reduction of unnecessary internal procedures; notes from the Questionnaire and the Annual report the progress made in 2024 with regard to digitalisation and workflow optimisation (e.g. machine translation for routine tasks and the expansion of Microsoft 365 tools and SharePoint), cost savings in operations and facilities (e.g. remote interpretation, energy-saving measures and a hybrid working regime), the improvement of efficiencies (e.g. through contract renegotiations), the simplification of rules and procedures with 63 out of 73 projects completed and a reduction of 20 % in the number of procedures, as well as several other actions in the context of the 'Going for IMPact!' plan for the modernisation of the Committee's administration;

24. Stresses that modernisation efforts must be accompanied by a systematic assessment of the tangible benefits achieved, including measurable gains in efficiency, cost savings and processing times; calls therefore on the Committee to establish a methodology to quantify these improvements and to report on them regularly;

25. Notes from the Questionnaire and Annual report the actions and measures that the Committee has been taking for a simplified yet strong internal control environment; notes that the 2024 internal control-self assessment exercise focused on financial management and the most relevant internal control aspects for those implementing the Committee budget; notes with satisfaction that the Committee finalised the screening of more than 500 sensitive posts, an exercise which was followed up with mitigating measures, control mechanisms and the adoption of mobility rules in 2024; notes that the Committee's multi-annual action plan for the revision and simplification of its internal control environment continued through 'Project Convergence' entailing a series of processes that focus on monitoring and reporting on the Committee's performance and impact in real-time; whereas the last two of those processes regarding the Committee's annual activity report and business continuity have been fully implemented in 2024; notes with regard to the Committee's new internal control framework that other milestones were also achieved, including the creation of actionable tools for rapid implementation in the event of a crisis, covering various areas such as IT, communication, financial circuits and data protection, among others;

26. Notes that in 2024 the Committee implemented a partially digitalised and simplified procedure for financial workflows and the appointment of financial actors; notes that in 2024, 5,60 % of transactions verified *ex ante* were refused for correction or were subject to negative opinions and that *ex post* controls focused on financial transactions (as per the new methodology) and revealed no major issues; notes further that the number of financial exception reports decreased compared to 2023, two administrative exception reports were registered for non-compliance with internal procedures and there was no ongoing litigation related to procurement decisions;

27. Notes that in 2024, three new audits were initiated: on the performance of the logistics services delivered to Committee members, on the optimisation of human resources allocation in the directorate for translation, and on the adequacy of procurement and contract management; notes from the Questionnaire the progress made with regard to ongoing audits on management of vacant posts, personal data protection and performance of the IT organisation in joint services; calls on the Committee to keep the discharge authority updated on the progress made in these matters;

Human resources, equality and staff well-being

28. Notes that, at the end of 2024, the Committee had a total of 561 members of staff (seconded national experts, interim, *intra muros* and trainees not included), compared to 559 in 2023; notes that 73 contract agents, compared to 74 contract agents in 2023 and 102 temporary agents, compared to 96 temporary agents in 2023, were employed by the Committee at the end of 2024, out of which 22 contract agents had an open-ended contract, 51 contract agents had a time-limited contract, 49 temporary agents were on permanent posts with time-limited contract, 50 temporary agents had an open-ended contract and 3 temporary agents held a temporary position; notes, in addition, that the Committee employed 39 external service providers working *intra muros*; stresses the importance of providing permanent contracts, where appropriate, in order to maintain skills, continuity and a productive and stable working environment, while preserving flexibility and merit-based recruitment in line with operational needs; warns against an excessive reliance on external service providers; notes that in 2024 the occupation rate of posts in the establishment plan was 96,40 % (a decrease from 98 % in 2023) and the turnover rate was 7,30 % (an increase from 6,60 % in 2023), respectively;

29. Notes that in 2024 the Committee hired 51 trainees under the Cicero scheme, whereas the Committee's trainees are paid a monthly grant and enjoy the same working conditions as staff, including the option to telework; renews its emphasis that traineeships should be remunerated in compliance with the European Parliament resolution of 14 June 2023 with recommendations to the Commission on Quality Traineeships in the Union (2020/2005(INL)), which calls for all internships in the Union to be paid;

30. Notes with regret that the Committee has not yet achieved gender parity in leadership positions, but acknowledges the significant progress made under the Committee's five-year diversity and inclusion strategy and action plan for 2022-2026; welcomes the election in 2025 of a female President of the Committee, reaffirming the institution's commitment to advancing gender equality at the highest political level and encourages the Committee to continue its efforts to increase female representations in leadership positions, while emphasising that merit and professional qualifications remain the primary criteria for appointment; notes that, at the end of 2024, the Committee employed 57,2 % women and 42,8 % men, almost the same proportions as in 2023; notes that the proportion of women in senior management positions decreased from 44,4 % in 2023 to 33,3 % in 2024 (it increased back to 44,4 % in 2025) and the proportion of women in middle management decreased from 32,50 % in 2023 to 29,7 % in 2024; notes from the Questionnaire the measures to encourage greater female participation in management roles, including through targeted training and coaching opportunities for female staff aspiring to managerial positions, and the promotion of more flexible working arrangements; reiterates that achieving long-term gender balance in management positions is a core institutional objective and expects the Committee to adopt a concrete, time-bound action plan with measurable targets, intermediate milestones and annual reporting; calls on the Committee to ensure that progress towards parity is both monitored and publicly communicated;

31. Commends the Committee for its actions to also promote gender balance among its members, specifically by sending letters to the Council concerning vacancies and by advocating with the permanent representations and national associations of local and regional authorities involved in the nomination process; notes from the Follow-up report that meanwhile the percentage of female members increased from 23,40 % in 2020 to 28,7 % in 2025; appreciates that the Committee's new rules of procedure, which came into force in August 2024, include explicit goals to enhance gender balance, particularly in the Committee's Bureau composition; encourages the Committee to continue promoting gender balance, while ensuring that appointments are based on merit, professional experience and qualifications;

32. Commends the Committee for the organisation of an internal competition in 2024 to address current and future recruitment needs, ensure business continuity and retain experienced staff, thus filling the gap created by the absence of reserve lists from the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO); notes from the Questionnaire that 72 candidates were placed on the Committee's reserve list, of which 46 candidates were already recruited in various grades, both AST and AD, as at 1 September 2025; expects as a result a decrease in the number of temporary agents and contract agents employed by the Committee as from 2025;

33. Notes that, as a result of a pilot project on a hybrid working regime and a staff satisfaction survey launched in 2022, the Committee adopted on 1 January 2024 a decision applicable as of 1 February 2024 which provides for a hybrid working regime and a personalised weekly working schedule for each member of staff, as well as the possibility to work from home for up to 60 % of the member of staff's working time (except for staff categories incompatible with teleworking) and to work from outside the city of employment for up to 15 days per year; recognises that these measures aim to enhance work-life balance while maintaining operational efficiency and staff satisfaction;

34. Notes with satisfaction that 89 % of those that responded to the 2025 staff survey indicated their satisfaction with the Committee's flexible work arrangements; whereas the latter may also have an impact on the number of sick leave days taken by Committee's staff; notes from the Follow-up report that the decreasing trend of the total number of sick leave days is maintained, with 7 303 days in 2024 compared to 7 544 days in 2023, whereas: — the number of staff without sick leave decreased from 211 (or 36 % of all staff) in 2023 to 196 (or 34 %) in 2024; — the number of staff on sick leave for less than seven days increased 201 (or 35 % of all staff) in 2023 to 211 (or 36 % in 2024) and; — the number of staff on sick leave for a duration between 7,5 and 21 days increased from 92 (or 16 % of all staff) in 2023 to 96 (or 16 % of all staff) in 2024;

35. Notes from the Questionnaire that the number of burnout cases decreased from 18 in 2023 to 6 in 2024; commends the Committee for its proactive approach to preventing burnout, by closely monitoring staff on long-term sick leave through tailored measures which entail regular contact with the respective staff and input from medical experts; notes further that the Committee successfully managed to reintegrate three members of staff in 2024 after long-term absence as a result of burnout, thanks to a personalised follow-up of long-term sickness leave; welcomes the Committee's preventive actions taken in 2024 to enhance health and well-being at work, such as offering staff on-site sessions with paramedical specialists (physiotherapist, osteopaths, trainers hired under a framework contract) and organising awareness-raising conferences on health;

36. Notes that in 2024 the Committee continued to raise awareness of the measures put in place to prevent and combat harassment in the workplace, in accordance with its Decision of 26 April 2021 on protecting dignity at work, managing conflict and combatting harassment, notably through dedicated guidance, internal communication (bi-weekly HR newsletter) and the organisation of several information sessions for staff and managers, including mandatory training on ethics and integrity; notes that the Committee registered four new cases of alleged harassment in 2024, whereas one case involved sexual harassment and one case was brought before the Belgian police through a formal complaint; notes that established procedures (preliminary assessment, administrative inquiry, precautionary measures, etc.) were applied and invites the Committee to keep the discharge authority updated on the outcome of those cases;

37. Commends the Committee for ensuring that persons with disabilities can access or use any of the Committee's digital products by applying the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines; notes in this context that in 2024 the Committee's HReForms platform was upgraded with accessibility as a core requirement, with features that include improved colour contrast, keyboard navigation and alternative text, among others; notes with satisfaction that the Committee disburses accommodation to candidates with disabilities, thus ensuring fair selection procedures;

38. Notes that, in 2024, the Committee was employing staff representing all Union nationalities (and one member of staff of Ukrainian nationality), with some of them being overrepresented; welcomes the efforts of the Committee aiming at balancing the geographical distribution among its staff in 2024, through targeted outreach initiatives that attract candidates from underrepresented countries; notes that such initiatives included the increased use of digital platforms and social media to boost visibility of vacancies, direct engagement with the permanent representations of Member States, presentations to targeted audiences to encourage participation in the Committee's selection procedures and analysis of application trends; notes that these measures already led to a positive outcome in 2024, such as an increased number of job applications received, including from underrepresented countries; welcomes in addition the collaboration of the Committee with EPSO and other Union institutions to diversify the candidate pool, share best practices and coordinate efforts to address representation gaps across the Union's administration; invites the Committee to continue taking measures that seek a more balanced geographical distribution, including at management level, and to keep the discharge authority informed of the trends of the job applications received by the Committee from one period to another;

39. Welcomes the strong and structured social dialogue in organisational change processes throughout 2024; encourages the Committee to maintain and further strengthen the systematic involvement of staff representatives in reforms related, inter alia, to digitalisation, internal reorganisation and new working methods;

Ethical framework and transparency

40. Welcomes the work done by the Committee in 2023 to consolidate ethical rules and practices into a single ethical legal framework (Decision No 157/2023) covering disciplinary procedure, dignity at work, conflict management, combatting harassment, outside activities and whistleblowing among others; notes that 2024 was the first year of implementation of this new framework; notes that the Committee offered mandatory training courses on a frequent basis on ethics and integrity, whistleblowing and conflicts of interest prevention to different groups of staff ranging from newcomers, managers and staff overall in 2024;

41. Notes that that the Committee did not report any cases to, and was not the subject of any investigation by, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) or the European Ombudsman in 2024;

42. Recalls that the Committee adopted Regulation No 6/2023 of 4 July 2023 laying down transparency measures that focus on office-holding members and rapporteurs; whereas such measures refer to the invitation for office-holding members and rapporteur to meet only with interest representatives who have registered in the Transparency Register and to publicly disclose any meetings with interest representatives that they hold in their capacity as Committee members; notes that in 2024 one Committee member reported a meeting with an interest representative; commends in this context the Committee for having formally joined the EU Transparency Register on 1 January 2024;

43. Notes from the Questionnaire the principles and mechanisms implemented by the Committee in 2024 to promote transparency across different areas, such as budgetary and financial management, reporting, audit cooperation, HR, public procurement, public access to documents and records management;

44. Welcomes the Committee's renewed efforts in the area of detection and prevention of conflicts of interest in 2024; notes that thanks to its Decision No 157/2023, the Committee defined the concept of conflicts of interest and has put in place a mechanism to detect and prevent such conflicts whereby staff are required to declare whether they might have a conflict of interest (potential or possible), by filling in a form at various key moments of their career or professional activities; notes with satisfaction from the Questionnaire that the annual information regarding the occupation activities of former senior officials is published in a transparent way on the Committee's website and that they are prohibited from engaging in any lobbying or advocacy towards the Committee for the first 12 months after they leave their positions in the Committee;

45. Notes from the Questionnaire that no conflicts of interest were detected within the Committee in 2024; further notes nevertheless that a Committee member raised a concern about a potential conflict of interest arising from receiving payment for drafting a technical support study for a Member of Parliament or a Parliament political group; welcomes the confirmation received during the discharge procedure whereby the Committee member in question did not in fact accept the job in question;

46. Notes that no cases of whistleblowing were reported to the Committee in 2024; notes that the Committee did not adopt any new measures concerning whistleblowing in 2024 and continued to rely on the measures in place since 2015 and to promote them through ethics training and awareness raising; supports regular mandatory ethic trainings both for staff as well as for management level;

47. Notes that the Committee has a range of anti-fraud measures and actions applicable to its members and its staff which have been implemented by different services; regrets that in 2024 no anti-fraud strategy was in place; notes nevertheless from the Questionnaire that the Committee adopted in 2025 a consolidated anti-fraud framework which represents an intermediate step in developing a comprehensive anti-fraud strategy, whereas the methodology used for this objective will be provided by OLAF; urges the Committee to prioritize the full development and implementation of this strategy, including risk assessment, prevention, detection and follow-up measures; asks the Committee to keep the discharge authority informed on this matter;

Digitalisation, cybersecurity and data protection

48. Notes that the combined IT budget of the Committee and the EESC was EUR 13,70 million in 2024, compared to EUR 12,70 million in 2023, i.e., a decrease of approximately 7,90 %, whereas EUR 760 000 of that budget (or approximately 6 %) was paid for cybersecurity in 2024;

49. Notes from the Questionnaire that in 2024, the Directorate for Innovation and Information Technology implemented a new multiannual digital strategy for 2024-2026 which prioritises digital records management, electronic workflows, e-signatures and cloud-based solutions and focuses on four flagship programmes – M365 Digital Workplace, ARES, EdiT, and Cybersecurity – to enhance collaboration, automation, and institutional resilience; highlights the progress of the M365 programme, including migration planning to SharePoint Online, the deployment of Windows 11 and M365 Apps, and the development of an AI strategy with a roadmap for the M365 Copilot pilot in 2025; notes that the Committee began deploying the HAN document management system and advanced towards adopting the EdiT XML editor for legislative drafting; welcomes the shift towards cybersecurity as a shared responsibility, with new training initiatives and a multiannual plan aligned with Union standards; acknowledges improvements in records management, infrastructure, and secure communication tools, including SECABC email, SACHA data transfer, and endpoint management systems; notes with appreciation the Committee's continued progress in digital innovation, including the transition to a fully paperless and cyber-secured working environment; commends the 2025-2027 'House of the Regions' Working Plan for prioritising digital transformation to build a modern, agile, and digitally driven institution;

50. Notes that the Committee gradually introduced an artificial intelligence pilot project called 'Panoramic AI' that creates a central hub which streamlines access to complex content as of 2024; notes further that the Committee has been actively using the Commission's AI tools for translation, summaries etc. and has participated as a pilot user to test the GPT@JRC AI pilot solution; notes from the Questionnaire that the Committee's AI guidelines adopted in 2023 established a baseline for how staff could experiment with AI, for implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council ([6]) which came into effect in August 2024 and for developing corporate alternatives that align with data protection and ethical standards; welcomes in this context the organisation of information sessions for staff to explain the AI guidelines, the publication of a note on AI literacy for staff and the organisation of workshops to raise awareness about AI in 2024 and encourages the continuation of this practice, including the organisation of regular trainings on safe, ethical and efficient use of artificial intelligence and regular trainings on cybersecurity; acknowledges the added-value of AI tools that boost personal productivity, such as M365 Copilot, and of integrating AI capabilities into IT support tools; stresses that the use of artificial intelligence must be carried out by guaranteeing strict principles of ethical use, transparency, data protection, human oversight, and protection against algorithmic bias or misuse;

51. Notes from the Questionnaire that following a procedural oversight in changing its data protection officer without the prior consent of the European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS), the Committee acknowledged the error and took corrective action; acknowledges that the transfer of the function of data protection officer to the Legal Service was based on an internal auditor's recommendation; notes that the Committee reinstated the former data protection officer and formally requested EDPS consent for the new appointment to ensure full compliance;

52. Notes from the Questionnaire that the Committee did not experience any successful cyberattacks in 2024, as existing detection and prevention measures effectively contained all attempted threats; notes that the Committee took several actions to strengthen its cybersecurity and data protection framework by keeping up to date with the latest developments and best practices in these areas in 2024; notes that some of those actions included the participation of relevant staff in the 'Personal Data Breach Awareness in Cybersecurity Incident Handling' exercise organised by the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA) and EDPS, participation in the 2024 European Cybersecurity

([6]) Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence and amending Regulations (EC) No 300/2008, (EU) No 167/2013, (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1139 and (EU) 2019/2144 and Directives 2014/90/EU, (EU) 2016/797 and (EU) 2020/1828 (Artificial Intelligence Act) (OJ L, 2024/1689, 12.7.2024, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1689/oj).

Month and the awareness sessions and in person induction training sessions for staff, especially for newcomers; encourages continuation of this practice, including organisation of regular trainings on cybersecurity; welcomes moreover the introduction of two-factor authentication to enhance access security, the migration of the Committee's website content management system to a new platform (Drupal) that ensures improved resilience and adaptability, and the continued close cooperation with CERT-EU for real-time threat monitoring and protection against distributed DDoS attacks; notes that the Directorate for Innovation and Information Technology initiated a digital and cybersecurity transformation programme in line with Union and international standards, including Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2023/2841 of the European Parliament and of the Council [7], the NIST Cybersecurity Framework, and Open Worldwide Application Security Project (OWASP), aiming to reinforce resilience, risk management, data protection and other facets of governance across the Committee;

Buildings

53. Notes that the Committee's budget for buildings and associated costs (current year appropriations) in 2024 was EUR 18,963 million (compared to EUR 18,594 million in 2023) with a payment execution rate of 92 % (compared to 93,70 % in 2023); notes with satisfaction that the Committee made savings of EUR 108 000 in cleaning services during periods when fewer people were present in Committee buildings;

54. Notes from the Annual report the Committee's conclusion that one of its major priorities set in 2017, i.e., 'geographical concentration of the buildings' has been achieved; notes the Committee's view that the successful implementation of the new hybrid working regime lays the ground for further cost savings through space reduction; notes in this context that at the end of 2024 the Committee launched the SPaCES project to transform both working practices and workspaces within the Committee, including by modifying the outfit of the premises, whereas the first step of this project is the relocation of staff based in the B100 building; notes that following joint decision of the Committee with the EESC, the lease of that building will terminate in August 2026; invites the Committee to keep the discharge authority informed of the progress made in this matter;

55. Notes that renovation works of the VMA building continued in 2024; notes from the Follow-up report that investments in smart technologies installed in the VMA will ensure future-proof flexible office space and optimal user comfort at various levels which will contribute to further reductions in energy consumption of approximately EUR 13 000 per year (based on 2023 average electricity and gas prices);

56. Welcomes the commitment of the Committee and the EESC to apply systematically the 'design for all' principle to their infrastructure, ensuring accessibility of their building by design; notes that the Committees took a range of different measures to ensure accessibility of their buildings, including the elevators, to people with various kinds of disabilities (wheelchair users, blind and visually impaired people, deaf persons, elderly people with muscular or vascular problems);

Environment and sustainability

57. Notes that the Committee continued to implement a variety of green practices in 2024, such as investments in innovative energy-efficient lighting systems, energy meters, sensors installed in critical facilities to monitor CO_2 levels, the regulation of building temperatures (air conditioning, heating) depending on the period of the year and the purchase of 100 % green electricity, among others; notes that the Committee applies environmental criteria in all tender procedures and sustainability clauses for tenders above EUR 25 000, as well as customised clauses for tenders with a high environmental impact or when above EUR 60 000; notes with satisfaction that the Committee is integrating environmental aspects into its risk management system and core business processes and has designated Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) contact points;

[7] Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2023/2841 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2023 laying down measures for a high common level of cybersecurity at the institutions, bodies, offices and agencies of the Union (OJ L, 2023/2841, 18.12.2023, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2023/2841/oj).

58. Appreciates the Committee's commitment to promoting a sustainable mobility policy for its staff; notes in this context that in 2024 the Committee introduced a flat-rate bicycle allowance of EUR 100 for employees who use a bicycle as their primary means of commuting, extended its bicycle parking capacity and organised breakfast and mobility-themes quizzes; notes from the Questionnaire that, as of 2024, staff can request disbursement of 50 % of the subscription cost for second class train travel (up to a maximum distance of 60 km);

59. Notes with satisfaction from the Questionnaire that, thanks to its energy saving measures, the Committee's energy consumption was reduced by an estimated 3-4 % in 2024 compared to 2022; notes that the Committee has exceeded the EMAS objectives for 2024 in all areas (electricity, gas, water, waste, waste sorting, paper for office use, CO_2 emissions), with as a baseline the year of 2019; notes that compared to 2023, the consumption of water and paper increased slightly by 14 % and 1 %, respectively, while carbon emissions from the Committee's administrative activities decreased by 4,3 %, and the use of electricity and gas decreased by 5 % and 1 %, respectively, with waste production also decreasing by 12 % in 2024;

Interinstitutional cooperation

60. Welcomes the renewal in 2024 of the Committee's cooperation agreements with Parliament and the Commission laying the foundation for the Committee's stronger institutional involvement throughout all stages of the Union's legislative process on various policies (such as regional development, climate policy and social cohesion) that go beyond policies on which there is a longstanding history of collaboration; notes that those agreements also include stronger provisions on cooperation on territorial impact assessments; notes with satisfaction from the Questionnaire that on 13 October 2024, the Committee's Conference of Presidents met with Parliament's Vice-President in charge of relations with the Committee to discuss strengthening cooperation by, among others, encouraging the practice of joint meetings, especially at committee and rapporteur levels, involvement of the Committee in trilogue discussions and logistical cooperation during works in Parliament's SPAAK building; notes that, in 2024, Committee members also met the Council and Permanent Representations and participated in events organised by the Council's Presidency, in order to ensure that the Committee's positions are reflected in Union legislation;

61. Welcomes the budgetary and administrative savings achieved through interinstitutional cooperation, and in particular the close cooperation established at administrative level with the EESC, with which the Committee shares premises and joint services in the areas of translation, infrastructure, medical services, catering, logistics and IT, as well as a joint data protection register, with 470 members of staff and more than EUR 68 million (EUR 140 million if salary-related costs are included) pooled together by both institutions in 2024; welcomes the fact that these savings were reoriented towards the Committee's political activities, thereby strengthening its capacity to fulfil its mandate; acknowledges that efficiency gains and budgetary savings from the collaboration of the two institutions are significant, to the tune of an estimated tens of millions of euros annually compared to if each committee operated those services independently; reiterates its call to expand as much as possible this cooperation, to the extent of setting up a single administration for the joint services, and keeping separate the services and unit in charge of their core independent mandates; encourages the Committee and the EESC to continue their efforts to develop further cooperation and synergies;

62. Welcomes the Committee's search for synergies by purchasing services from other institutions through service-level agreements and by participating in interinstitutional coordination bodies and interinstitutional procurement procedures; notes that the Committee achieved significant synergies in the field of events and communication by organising jointly with the Commission the European Week of Regions and Cities and with Parliament, Council and Commission, among others, the annual conference for public communicators called 'EuroPCom' in 2024; welcomes the merger in 2024 of the Committee's European Network of Local and Regional Councillors and the Commission's 'Building Europe with Local Councillors' network into a single, jointly managed 'EU Local Councillors' network;

63. Notes that the Committee cooperates with the Commission (for an annual fee) for the handling of HR matters and the use of various IT platforms for financial management and HR and that in 2024 the Commission included the Committee's IT system called LORDIMAS as a key IT tool to measure digital transformation by cities; notes further that the Committee holds its plenary sessions in the premises of Parliament and the Commission to compensate for the lack of capacity in its own conference rooms and buys interpreting services from those two institutions;

Communication

64. Notes that the Committee's communication activities focus on relationship with press, organisation of events and digital content and social media with a total budget (current year appropriations) of approximately EUR 2,3 million in 2024, i.e., approximately EUR 500 000 less than in 2023; notes from the Follow-up report that underfunding of communication operations makes the Committee dependent on year-end transfers and C8 appropriations, which explains the low budgetary execution rate (48,20 %) of C1 appropriations and high execution rate (98,90 %) of C8 appropriations in 2024 with regard to budgetary item 2 6 'Expertise and […] distribution';

65. Notes with satisfaction the Committee's achievements in promoting Union policies and programs at local and regional level, improving the outreach of its consultative works and enhancing its visibility and impact; notes that in 2024 the Committee organised, hosted or supported 33 EU Local Dialogues, 53 EURegionsWeek sessions and 47 events; notes in particular the 10th European Summit of Regions and Cities to shape the agenda for the Union's future, with more than 7 000 participants; — the European Week of Regions and Cities to address cohesion funds in the next MFF, with more than 2 500 participants; — the 11th Subsidiarity Conference to address better regulation and subsidiarity in the context of the next MFF; — the 2024 Young Elected Politicians (YEP) programme, with more than 150 participants from all Member States and eight candidate countries and; — the 15th edition of the European Public Communication Conference (EuroPCom) to address AI and new trends in public communication, with 3 200 participants and viewers from 55 countries; notes that the Committee also promoted its work and views 74 times at meetings or events involving other Union institutions;

66. Commends the Committee for its actions in enhancing accessibility and historical preservation of its information by: — making all of its documents and publications available in one centralised location through the Publications Office widgets implemented on the Committee's external website in 2024; — introducing the AI-powered platform Panoramic-AI that offered enhanced user-friendly access to institutional content (relevant documents, presentations, discussions) in 2024; — migrating the Committee's complete archive of external press releases and news to the Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology newsroom and; — transferring for the first time the Committee's historical archives to the historical archives of the Union in Florence;

67. Acknowledges from the Impact report and the Annual report the Committee's contribution to Parliament's communication campaign for the 2024 European elections, by engaging a network of 750 YEPs, promoting Parliament materials, producing go-to-vote videos with Committee members, dedicating a web page on the Committee's website and producing other visual content promoted on social media which reached almost 5 million accounts; welcomes these efforts to engage a broad and diverse audience across the Union and to raise awareness of the 2024 European elections; underlines that such interinstitutional cooperation on Union policies, in particular on the work of Parliament, is essential for reaching citizens in all regions of the Union, strengthening democratic participation and enhancing the democratic legitimacy of the Union;

68. Notes from the Annual report the Committee's success with regard to media outreach as shown by the overall metrics for 2024, such as: 28 % increase on web visitors, 11,60 % increase on followers and 16 % increase in organic digital engagement;

69. Notes that the Committee did not participate in the Roma Week event in 2024;

70. Highlights that all in all the Committee's communication strategy aims to reinforce its institutional visibility and political standing as the representative body of the Union's regions, cities, towns and municipalities, and to showcase the role of its members in connecting Union policies with citizens at local and regional level.