

RESOLUTION (EU) 2020/1880 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

of 14 May 2020

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 2018, 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 2018, Section I – European Parliament,
 - having regard to Rule 100 and Rule 104(3) of, and Annex V to, its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A9-0021/2020),
- A. whereas, in his certification of the final accounts, the European Parliament's ('Parliament's') accounting officer stated his reasonable assurance that the accounts, in all material aspects, present fairly the financial position, the results of the operations and the cash-flow of Parliament;
- B. whereas, in accordance with the usual procedure, 126 questions were sent to Parliament's administration and written replies were received and discussed publicly by Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control, 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, scrutiny is necessary to ensure that the 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 2018 totalled EUR 1 950 687 373 or 18,9 % of heading V of the Multiannual Financial Framework ⁽¹⁾ set aside for the 2018 administrative expenditure of the Union institutions as a whole, representing a 2,2 % increase over the 2017 budget (EUR 1 909 590 000);
2. Notes that total revenue entered in the accounts as at 31 December 2018 was EUR 193 998 910 (compared to EUR 206 991 865 in 2017), including EUR 30 783 590 in assigned revenue (compared to EUR 50 052 674 in 2017);
3. Emphasises that four chapters accounted for 67,6 % 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 Parliament's expenditure;
4. Notes the figures on the basis of which Parliament's accounts for the financial year 2018 were closed, namely:

(a) Available appropriations (EUR)

appropriations for 2018:	1 950 687 373
non-automatic carry-overs from financial year 2017:	2 564 000
automatic carry-overs from financial year 2017:	289 785 291
appropriations corresponding to assigned revenue for 2018:	30 783 590
carry-overs corresponding to assigned revenue from 2017:	47 369 977
Total:	2 318 626 231

⁽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 2018 (EUR)

commitments:	2 283 150 877
payments made:	1 933 089 380
appropriations carried forward automatically including those arising from assigned revenue:	348 106 015
appropriations carried forward non-automatically:	—
appropriations cancelled:	39 994 836

(c) Budgetary receipts (EUR)

received in 2018:	193 998 910
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(d) Total balance sheet at 31 December 2018 (EUR)

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5. Points out that 99,2 % of the appropriations entered in Parliament's budget, amounting to EUR 1 934 477 627, were committed, with a cancellation rate of 0,8 %; notes with satisfaction that, as in previous years, a very high level of budget implementation was achieved; notes that the payments totalled EUR 1 636 858 018, resulting in a payment appropriations execution rate of 84,6 %;
6. Underlines the fact that the cancelled appropriations for the year 2018, amounting to EUR 16 209 746, were mainly related to remuneration and other entitlements, as well as to the expenditure related to buildings;
7. Notes that eleven transfers were approved, in accordance with Articles 31 and 49 of the Financial Regulation, in the financial year 2018, amounting to EUR 53 533 500 or 2,7 % of final appropriations; observes that the majority of funds transferred were related to Parliament's buildings policy and, in particular, were to help fund the annual payments for the Konrad Adenauer building project;

The Court of Auditor's opinions on the reliability of the 2018 accounts and on the legality and regularity of the transactions underlying those accounts

8. 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 Union institutions; points out that administrative and related expenditure comprises expenditure on human resources (salaries, allowances and pensions), accounting for 60 % of the total, and on buildings, equipment, energy, communications and information technology;
9. Notes that the overall audit evidence indicates that spending on 'administration' is not affected by a material level of error; also notes that, on the basis of the 13 quantified errors, the estimated level of error present in heading 5 of the Multiannual Financial Framework on administration is below the materiality threshold;
10. Takes note of the specific finding, concerning Parliament, contained in the Court's report on Parliament's annual accounts for the financial year 2018 (the 'Court's report'); notes that, owing to terrorist attacks in recent years, the institutions, including Parliament, have found it necessary to reinforce the protection of people and premises as a matter of urgency; observes with concern that the Court found weaknesses in the procedures organised by Parliament and the Commission; notes that, in order to procure specific security-related building works, Parliament had recourse to framework contracts that were already in place and that the design of these framework contracts allowed Parliament to order essential security works not included in the original price schedule on the basis of a single quotation from the contractor; notes that Parliament has used this method in two out of the four procedures examined by the Court;
11. Notes with concern the response given by Parliament in the contradictory procedure with the Court, in which it recognises that, given the specific context (time pressure and market-specific structure), competition may have been suboptimal; notes with satisfaction that the new framework contracts awarded in this sector, with five contractors, are based on a reopening of competition in order to ensure adequate price competition;

The internal auditor's annual report

12. Notes that, at the meeting of the committee responsible with the internal auditor held on 18 November 2019, the internal auditor presented his annual report and described the assurance audits and consulting assignments he had performed and reported on, which covered the following subjects in 2018:

- building maintenance, refurbishment and operation (Directorate-General for Infrastructure and Logistics) (DG INLO);
- preliminary review of the institution's information and communication technologies (ICT) Security;
- individual entitlements under Staff Regulations of Officials and Conditions of Employment of Other Servants;
- staff shop in Luxembourg (DG INLO);
- follow-up of open actions from internal audit reports – Phase 1 and 2 of 2018;
- establishment of a function of internal quality assurance in Directorate-General for Security and Safety (DG SAFE);
- independent advice on project 'From Desktop to Hybrid' Directorate-General for Innovation and Technological Support (DG ITEC);
- aspects of Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union's (DG EXPO) reporting sheets system;
- follow-up to the IT outage and reinforcing IT Continuity;
- procurement and contract implementation in the catering sector (DG INLO) report not yet issued, preliminary findings under discussion with management.

13. Welcomes and supports the actions that the internal auditor agreed with the directorates-general responsible as a result of the assurance assignments and the recommendations that he issued following the consulting assignments:

Agreed actions:

- with regard to the audit on building maintenance, refurbishment and operation (DG INLO), enhancing the strategic framework for maintenance and further improving Parliament's building maintenance activities through the adoption of a comprehensive policy and a structured coherent multi-annual plan; increasing confidence that Parliament's building processes and operations are efficient and cost-effective; supporting decision-making on maintenance activities by reliable information and analysis;
- with regard to the information systems audit, preliminary review of the institution's ICT Security, strengthening information systems security governance (comprising policies, standards and guidelines), notably through the adoption of an institutional information security policy; improving the identification, protection and monitoring of IT assets (hardware, related software and network); better detecting of and responding to cybersecurity incidents, and enhancing recovery capabilities;
- with regard to the audit of individual entitlements of members of staff, strengthening the overall control environment in this area and addressing specific issues relating to family allowances;
- concerning the audit of the staff shop in Luxembourg, implementing the measures required to improve the control environment and control activities and the adequacy of internal governance; ensuring compliance of the shop's operations, including its imprest account, with the Financial Regulation, accounting principles and tax legislation;

Recommendations:

- with regard to DG EXPO's reporting sheets system, implementing the six recommendations to strengthen its reporting system and better frame the cooperation between delegations, committees and other interested parties;
- concerning the establishment of a function of internal quality assurance in DG SAFE, implementing the six recommendations for that purpose, including notably setting up a quality policy;

- in relation to the pilot project 'From Desktop to Hybrid', strengthening the project business case; using the hybrid to replace multiple existing devices; improving financial management of proof-of-concept and pilot projects before rolling out new tools;
 - concerning the follow-up to the IT outage and reinforcing IT Continuity, ensuring complementary protection of ICT infrastructure; testing the disaster recovery plan; listing critical information systems and their dependencies and improving planning for housing Parliament ICT infrastructure outside its premises;
14. Notes that the 2018 follow-up process resulted in the closure of 28 of the 76 open actions, as well as the risk profile of the overdue actions, continued to be progressively reduced in 2018; notes, in particular, that the number of open actions addressing significant risks decreased from 22 to 7 and there were no open actions in the highest risk category ('critical'); notes that in addition to these validated actions, there was a total of 117 open actions, including those not yet due for implementation, of which 47 address significant risk; expects that these will be implemented in accordance with the agreed deadlines;
 15. Particularly welcomes the possibility for the internal auditor to be called by directorates-general for consultation assignments, and recommends that all directorates-general make use of this possibility, if the need arises;
 16. Notes that two audits, one on visitors' groups and the other on the parliamentary assistance allowance, are part of the 2019 activity and will be reported in early 2020; asks the internal auditor to inform Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control on both outcomes as soon as they are available;
 17. Deeply regrets that the internal auditor's report is not public; insists that this report be made public each year, and that it be sent to Members at the same time that it is sent to the Parliament's President and Secretary-General; deplores that, for the 2018 report, the decision was taken in January 2020 that Members may only view this report upon request, applying the secure reading room procedure; strongly believes that by limiting access to this document, which concerns the use of public funds, it gives the regrettable impression that there is something to hide;

Follow-up to the 2017 discharge resolution

18. Takes note of the written answers to the 2017 discharge resolution provided to Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control on 17 September 2019, and of the Secretary-General's presentation addressing the various questions and requests of Parliament's 2017 discharge resolution and the exchange of views with Members that followed;
19. Deplores the fact that no action has been taken in response to some of the recommendations in Parliament's resolution on discharge for 2017, 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 the Committee on Budgetary Control;

Parliament's 2018 discharge

20. Notes the exchange of views between the vice-president responsible for the budget, the Secretary-General and Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control Members in the presence of the internal auditor, on 18 November 2019, in the context of the 2018 Parliament discharge;
21. Reiterates its call on the Bureau to follow-up all discharge decisions, as follows from Rule 25 of and Annex V to the Rules of Procedure and Articles 6 and 166 of the Financial Regulation; asks the Secretary-General to forward this resolution to the Bureau, highlighting all requests for action or decisions by the Bureau; calls on the Secretary-General to establish a plan of action and a timetable enabling the Bureau to follow up and/or to respond to the recommendations contained in Parliament's discharge resolutions and to include the results in the annual monitoring document; asks the Secretary-General to report in good time to the Parliament's Committee on Budgets and Committee on Budgetary Control on all projects with a significant budgetary impact that have been submitted to the Bureau; reiterates the need for the Bureau to substantially improve, in a proactive manner, the transparency of its decision-making procedure;
22. Deplores that, in 2018, the internal investigation identified four cases in the area of the parliamentary assistance allowance that enabled the recovery of EUR 146 814 (47 cases identified in 2017 and EUR 903 741,00 recovered) and that, for Members' travel and subsistence allowances, EUR 173 546 was recovered coming from six investigations (EUR 68 589,05 in 2017);

23. Points out that legislative activity substantially increased in 2018, as Parliament was approaching the end of its 2014-2019 legislative term;
24. Notes that two temporary committees, Special Committee on Terrorism (TERR) and Special Committee on the Union's authorisation procedure for pesticides (PEST), successfully concluded their work during the year and a third one, Special Committee on Financial Crimes, Tax Evasion and Tax Avoidance (TAX3), was established;
25. Highlights that, in view of the 2019 European elections, the communication campaign was successfully launched; points out the increased participation of citizens in the 2019 European elections, although the turnout remained too low in certain countries; considers that this type of campaign should be ongoing, with a particular focus on those countries;
26. Approves of the measures of the institution to enhance security, notably in matters of physical and building security but also cybersecurity and communication security;
27. Regrets that, despite the fact that Parliament's Committee on Budgets rejected the budget requested in order to create an observatory on artificial intelligence, this initiative still seems to be ongoing in the form of a working group; is strongly concerned by the apparent circumvention of a democratic decision taken by Members, which sets a very unfortunate precedent; recommends that the activity of this working group be immediately interrupted until the budgetary authority has decided to provide it with a budget;
28. Is aware of the importance of the building policy, in particular the Martens Building project and the reconstruction of the Montoyer 63 building in Brussels, which were completed in 2018 and the Konrad Adenauer project in Luxembourg, which is scheduled to be completed by end of June 2023; understands that, in 2018, Parliament's Committee on Budgets authorised a mopping-up transfer, amounting to EUR 29 million, for the pre-financing of the project, which resulted in estimated saved interest of EUR 4,7 million; is concerned at the delay in constructing the Konrad Adenauer building in Luxembourg, delivery of which was planned for 2018 but is now not expected before 2023;
29. Supports the use of the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS), which is a management instrument of the European Union for private and public organisations to evaluate and improve their environmental performance in accordance with Regulation (EC) No 1221/2009 ⁽²⁾; supports measures taken to reduce Parliament's carbon footprint;
30. Invites the administration to draw attention to the code of conduct for Members, which sets out that Members shall act solely in the public interest and conduct their work with disinterest, integrity, openness, diligence, honesty, accountability and respect for the Parliament's reputation; highlights that the code of conduct defines conflicts of interest and how Members should address them and it includes rules governing the professional activities of former Members;
31. Notes with concern that there were at least 24 breaches of the Code of Conduct between 2012 and 2018 which were not sanctioned; stresses that if breaches are not adequately sanctioned, Members are less likely to comply with the Code of Conduct; calls on the President to carefully assess any alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct and, if applicable, impose an adequate sanction on the respective Members;
32. Takes note of the Rules Governing Transport Arrangements for Members in the European Parliament's Places of Work ('the Rules'); considers the provisions setting out conditions for the use of official cars on a permanent basis by the President, Secretary-General, Deputy Secretary-General and each political group chair in the Rules to be too vague; calls on the Bureau to revise the Rules with a view to introducing stricter conditions on the use of such cars;

⁽²⁾ Regulation (EC) No 1221/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 November 2009 on the voluntary participation by organisations in a Community eco-management and audit scheme (EMAS), repealing Regulation (EC) No 761/2001 and Commission Decisions 2001/681/EC and 2006/193/EC (OJ L 342, 22.12.2009, p. 1).

33. Is of the opinion that the protection of whistleblowers is an integral element of democracy and it is crucial in preventing and deterring unlawful activities and wrongdoings; recalls that, among others, accredited parliamentary assistants (APAs) are in a vulnerable position due to their contract of employment; notes with concern the Secretary-General's acknowledgement that 'whistleblowing rules are applicable to accredited parliamentary assistants but that the Parliament cannot provide employment protection'; as they are dependent on their individual Member; calls on the Secretary-General to take that factor into account when APAs act as whistleblowers, and to look to extend the contract protection options granted by Parliament for APAs who are victims of harassment to APAs who act as whistleblowers;
34. Underlines the fact that current rules on the termination of contracts for APAs do not provide for the possibility of a termination by 'mutual consent', which would be a way to recognise the special relation between Members and assistants, where both parties can acknowledge that mutual trust no longer exists, and benefit from a common solution without undermining the social rights of APAs; asks the Secretary-General to find a solution for the fact that APA's salaries can only be paid to Belgian bank accounts, which runs counter to the idea of a single monetary and payments union;
35. Reiterates its concern about the alleged practice by Members of 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 out of their own pockets, they are also not covered by workplace insurance; reiterates its calls on the Secretary-General to investigate this alleged practice and to report on this by the end of the year;
36. 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 those missions;
37. Calls on Parliament to fully adapt its own internal rules in the Staff Regulations to the recently adopted Directive (EU) 2019/1937 ⁽³⁾ on the protection of persons who report breaches of Union law, including by setting up secure channels for reporting; further requests that Parliament guarantees the same level of protection to whistle-blowers as it does to victims of harassment; requests that the Secretary-General institute mandatory training for line managers to raise awareness among parliamentary staff on their whistleblower protections and their duty under the Staff Regulations to report illegal activities or maladministration;
38. Notes that the United Kingdom's decision to withdraw from the European Union had a considerable impact in the different services of Parliament, particularly on committees, research units and horizontal services;
39. Welcomes the decision of the Bureau on 2 May 2018 regarding staff with United Kingdom nationality, namely that no official will be dismissed on the grounds of their United Kingdom nationality; understands that the case-by-case assessments that had been conducted by the date initially foreseen for the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union with regard to the contractual and temporary staff of United Kingdom nationality, resulted in no contracts being terminated; acknowledges that political groups conduct their own case-by-case assessments for their staff;
40. Takes note of the successful implementation of the 5 % staff reduction target, that in 2018 required Parliament to eliminate 60 posts from its administration establishment plan; considers that it is important to ensure the high level of performance of Parliament, both in the short and long term, while also ensuring responsible budgetary management and making savings where appropriate; believes that further savings could be envisaged; strongly believes that it is essential to implement a communication strategy aimed at the Council, the Member States and the European citizens to respond to unfair, widespread criticism of the European Union civil service, which has been going on for years;

⁽³⁾ Directive (EU) 2019/1937 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2019 on the protection of persons who report breaches of Union law (OJ L 305, 26.11.2019, p. 17).

41. Is worried about the number of members of staff on long-term sick leave and the steep rise in the number of cases of burnout, and is concerned that some of those cases may relate to exhaustion and disturbed work-life balance; is particularly concerned about understaffing and, at the same time, considers that it is hard to justify the expansion in senior management positions, which is leading to an imbalanced, top-heavy management structure; calls on the administration to adopt a proactive approach towards the staff concerned, to carefully evaluate the staff workload and to ensure a balanced distribution of tasks; asks for a report on measures taken in response to long-term sick leave and burnout by 30 June 2020;
42. Within a context of increased expectations of what staff are able to do, insists on the importance of a regular and constructive dialogue with the staff committee, trade unions and in the case of political groups with their staff representatives; counts on continuing the constructive dialogue with those bodies, particularly on matters related to staff policy, as well as to working conditions such as mobility, working environment and flexitime;
43. Considers that it is essential, to this end, for staff representatives to be heard when the Bureau discusses general matters affecting staff policy: asks the Secretary-General to take the appropriate measures to implement this crucial necessity;
44. Points out that in order to maintain an excellent and independent, loyal and motivated European Union civil service, the Staff Regulations need to be fully respected and applied in letter and spirit; calls, in this context, to also put an end to the practice of 'parachuting' people into positions, which runs the risk of damaging procedures and thus the credibility of the institution, in particular, and of the Union, in general;
45. Recalls the findings and recommendations of the European Ombudsman in joint cases 488/2018/KR and 514/2018/K, as well as Parliament's resolution of 18 April 2018, notably that officials from staff representative bodies sit on Parliament's senior management selection panels, and invites the Secretary-General to further improve the procedures of appointment of high ranking official towards more transparency and equality; calls, furthermore, for consistency to be ensured when it comes to external publications of senior management posts and diligence in the publication of these posts as and when they fall vacant; calls on Parliament's administration to report annually on the appointment of high ranking officials;
46. Profoundly regrets the lack of career prospects for contract staff; invites the Secretary-General to assess the risks relating to employing growing numbers of contract staff, including the danger of creating a two-tier staffing structure within Parliament; insists that core permanent positions and tasks should be performed by permanent staff;
47. Is convinced that the attractiveness of Parliament as a workplace is a key component of its success; draws attention to the difficulties encountered in recruiting some nationalities; calls on the Secretary-General to insist on the need for real geographical balance in terms of proportional representations of all Member States at all levels, including top management levels; recognises the very positive steps taken in order to achieve gender balance; calls for urgent action to achieve better gender balance at all levels, including directors-general level;
48. Regrets the continuing under-representation of countries which joined the Union after 2004, especially in more senior posts, the problem being that, whilst citizens from the new Member States are indeed taken on, more from the old Member States are being promoted, which results in an ever-widening gulf between the old and the new Member States; calls for this situation to be rectified;
49. Points out that in internal competitions between 2014 and 2019, 30 people were appointed to the highest AD9 pay grade, of whom 16 were from two large old Member States, so that there was a striking number of appointments of staff from these two countries over the whole legislative cycle, and asks the Secretary-General to explain the reason for this disproportionate result;
50. Regrets the difficulty of recruiting staff at lower grades in Luxembourg, especially in the assistant-secretaries category; stresses that the introduction of a correction coefficient that takes account of the higher living costs in this place of work together with recruitment at higher grades is necessary to solve this structural problem; calls for European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO)-based recruitments to be reformed so that it is better able to meet the institutions' needs, including through shorter recruitment procedures;

51. Recalls that Rule 11 of the Rules of Procedure has introduced an obligation for rapporteurs, shadow rapporteurs and committee chairs to publish information on meetings held with interest representatives in the context of their reports; notes with satisfaction that, since the start of the new legislature, the necessary infrastructure is available on Parliament's website to allow Members to publish scheduled meetings with interested representatives; invites the secretariat to disseminate detailed information and organise trainings in order to make it easier for Member's offices to abide fully to this obligation; regrets that the current infrastructure does not include a process for Members and APAs to provide suggestions and their feedback for improvement based on user experience; calls on the Parliamentary services to develop a feedback questionnaire on a yearly basis and for the results to be included in a report on the use of the tool; welcomes the fact that the Secretary-General has instructed Parliament's services to connect the tool to the Transparency Register and Legislative Observatory and encourages any effort that would further improve this tool, including by providing access for processing of the data provided by Members in the Parliament website infrastructure concerning meetings with interest representatives in a machine readable format, providing an option to link the meeting to membership in a delegation, to indicate that the meeting took place at staff-level, to link the entries on Parliament's website to the Member's own website and to make this infrastructure available in all official languages of the Union; further calls on Parliament to improve its communication towards Members about the obligation for rapporteurs, shadow rapporteurs and committee chairs to publish such meetings;
52. Welcomes this positive step towards increased transparency and the possibility for all Members who wish to do so, to be able to publish this information via the infrastructure of Parliament's website, even if the Member is not a rapporteur, shadow rapporteur or committee chair; considers that this increased transparency helps European citizens to better understand the work of their Members; regrets therefore that this meeting declaration infrastructure only exists in English and not in all the official languages of the Union;
53. In addition to the joint Parliament and Commission report on the activities of the Transparency Register, requests Parliament to draft an annual detailed report on the interest representatives and other organisation that were given access to Parliament's premises.
54. Recognises the fact that the production of public data in an open, machine-readable format, easily accessible and reusable, offers great opportunities both in terms of public transparency and innovation; welcomes the current initiatives to create and convert those of its data that are of interest to the public into that format; underlines the need to have a more user-friendly, systematic and coordinated approach for such initiatives, under a well-defined Parliament open data policy;
55. Recognises the added value that free and open source software can bring to Parliament; underlines in particular their role in increasing transparency and avoiding vendor lock-in effects; recognises also their potential for improving security since they make it possible to identify and fix the weaknesses; strongly recommends any software developed for the institution to be made publicly available under free and open-source software licence;
56. Notes that the results of roll-call votes in plenary should be available in an open, machine-readable format and easily visible on Parliament's website; calls on Parliament therefore to publish the machine-readable version of the roll-call vote results next to the non-machine-readable versions, on the plenary minutes' webpage;
57. 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 of the opinion the current system disregards the fluctuating accommodation and transport costs and fails to keep pace with inflation, and strongly calls for a review of the system for calculating the financial contribution for the groups of visitors as soon as possible in order, inter alia, to avoid Members being able to derive any material benefit from the system; calls on the Bureau to generalise the system of reimbursement based on submission of bills for visitors groups; reiterates its call to remove the possibility of appointing an APA as the head of a group;

Environmentally friendly Parliament and carbon neutrality by 2030

58. Welcomes Parliament's positive contribution to sustainable development through its political role and its role in legislative procedures; underlines the need for Parliament to lead by example and contribute to sustainable development through the way it operates;

59. Commends Parliament's commitment to green public procurement; notes that Parliament's objective is to increase the value-weighted percentage of contracts among certain priority products classified as 'Green', 'Very Green' or 'Green by Nature'; notes that 44,9 % of contracts by value in priority product categories were classified as 'Green' or 'Very Green', or 'Green by Nature' in 2018; points out that, when all contracts classified as 'Green by Nature', regardless of the product category, are included in the figure, the greenness of Parliament's contracts increases to 55,8 % for 2018, which is close to the intermediate target of 60 %; underlines the need to develop further green public procurement by setting ambitious targets for greening contracts in the medium term;
60. Welcomes the adoption of the Environmental Management Review and Environmental Statement 2018, the implementation of the Action Plan 2018 and its regular monitoring;
61. Supports Parliament's objective to reduce its carbon emissions as much as possible; reiterates its concern that a geographic dispersion of the parliament results in 78 % of all missions by Parliament staff and that the environmental impact is between 11 000 and 19 000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions;
62. Is of the opinion that after the declaration of Climate Emergency, Parliament shall lead by example and commit itself to achieving a zero-carbon footprint by 2030; requests that Parliament develop a strategy to become carbon-neutral by 2030 and to present its strategy to the discharge authority; instructs its Bureau's EMAS working group to amend the key performance indicators and the current CO₂ reduction plan for reaching carbon neutrality by 2030; asks further for reporting and accounting of Parliament's CO₂ offsetting as a matter of urgency;
63. Emphasises that approximately 67 % of Parliament's carbon footprint originates from the transport of persons; recalls that, by its decision of 15 May 2017, the Bureau approved the proposal to provide an efficient and high-quality way for Members while minimising the environmental impact through a gradual transition towards electric vehicles for Parliament's fleet of cars and the promotion of all types of green transport which operate with zero-emissions in the urban environment and to have a fully-electric fleet from 2024; welcomes the various measures and instruments introduced in this respect by DG INLO; expects the Bureau to work out a travel reimbursement system which includes the cost of the CO₂ offsetting in the price of the travel and to incentivise the use of eco-friendly transport;
64. Supports Parliament's objective, which is to offset its unavoidable emissions; suggests joint offsetting of unavoidable emissions with other Union institutions and bodies;
65. Stresses that Parliament has to honour its commitments regarding the fight against climate change, and must consequently take appropriate steps in all its buildings to make bicycle parks, where bicycles are protected against theft, vandalism and the elements, available to all staff, and at the very least should offer the same arrangements currently available in staff car parks; notes that a system whereby vignettes are used as a means of identification could also be very worthwhile in this regard;
66. Welcomes Parliament's efforts to increase the number of paperless meetings; calls for more training sessions to be offered to all Members, members of staff and APAs about the paperless tools which have been created to enable less documents to be printed and for further communication campaigns;
67. Asks Parliament to improve its communication to Members informing them of the possibility to use the direct train between Parliament and Brussels airport which takes 20 minutes door to door, and which Members may use free of charge, and to use its influence to advocate for those trains to run at regular and smaller intervals to make this possibility as attractive as possible;
68. Commends staff for making full use of the charter trains to Strasbourg; encourages senior managers not to use their service cars for their missions to Strasbourg;
69. Supports the offsetting of 100 % of Parliament's CO₂ emissions, including emissions from flights by Members between their country of origin and Brussels and Strasbourg, on an annual basis through carbon credits; recalls that the offsetting contract covering Parliament's emissions from 2017 was signed on 19 July 2018 for a total amount of EUR 184 095,80;
70. Is concerned about the volatility of prices for CO₂ offsetting on the emission certificate market, which makes it impossible to estimate the exact amount necessary to offset the total amount of carbon emissions; draws attention to the fact that the financial means available in budget line 2390 (currently EUR 249 000) may not be sufficient to offset the total amount of carbon emissions in the coming years;

71. Welcomes the Quaestor and Bureau decisions, in April and June 2018 respectively, to reduce plastic waste and waste management activities; calls upon Parliament to swiftly undertake further ambitious action, towards a plastic-free Parliament;
72. Welcomes the positive outcome of the external audit carried out in May/June 2018 confirming the good condition and maturity of Parliament's environmental management system;

Geographic dispersion of Parliament – single seat

73. Stresses that the Union has chosen to be present through its institutions and agencies in several Member States, which guarantees a strong link with citizens and ensures the visibility of Union added value ('European visibility'), taking into consideration responsible public funds management;
74. Notes that the costs linked to Parliament's 12 journeys for Members per year to Strasbourg amount to EUR 21 266 689; notes that the annual travel costs amount to EUR 3 631 082 for Parliament staff and EUR 2 097 250 for APAs;
75. Notes that the cost of the Thalys charter train was EUR 3 741 900 in 2018 (compared to EUR 3 668 532 in 2017);
76. Stresses that moving Parliament's official vehicles to Strasbourg and back empty apart from their respective drivers further adds to the financial and environmental impact of the 12 annual missions to Strasbourg; welcomes the fact that opportunity exists for APAs to join for the trip to Strasbourg and back, but regrets that this option is not used to its full capacity; calls on Parliament to allow for all the Parliament and Political groups staff to also use this option for their trip to Strasbourg and to improve its communication concerning this possibility;
77. Notes that the additional expenditure involved in not having a single seat goes against the principle of sound financial management and against the principle of budgetary discipline; recalls that a vast majority of Parliament expressed in various resolutions support for a single seat to ensure efficient spending of Union taxpayers money; notes that the Court estimated that moving from Strasbourg to Brussels could generate annual savings of EUR 114 million plus a one-off saving of EUR 616 million if the Strasbourg buildings are successfully divested, or a one-off cost of EUR 40 million if they are not; notes that a single seat can only be achieved by a unanimous Treaty change; urges the Council to take note of Parliament's position and take its responsibility and act accordingly; stresses that it would be a more efficient use if Parliament's official vehicles to Strasbourg transported Members, (APAs and members of staff with mission orders; considers that Parliament's official vehicles should at the very least be filled before organising charter buses when the charter trains between Brussels and Strasbourg are full;
78. Underlines the fact that the Union, as one of the signatories of the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change, vowed to keep the increase in global average temperature to well below 2 °C above pre-industrial levels, and notes with concern that the 12 journeys per year to Strasbourg unnecessarily increase the carbon emissions produced by Parliament;

Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM)

79. Recalls that in 2018, Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM) had 805 members of staff; calls upon DG COMM to make use of a greater percentage of Parliament's overall budget in the years to come than the 6,1 % that it used in 2018;
80. Welcomes the full implementation of the budget in 2018 as testimony to the fact that efforts have been made to fully use all resources available to DG COMM in order to reach a maximum number of citizens, which was of particular importance in this pre-election year; notes with satisfaction that in 2018, it actively contributed to the development and setting-up of the European elections campaign strategy;
81. Notes that DG COMM's lead indicator, since 2017, is the number of 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; approves of the focus placed on Parliament's visibility;
82. Calls on DG COMM to inform the discharge authority in future discharge cycles of the targets set in the respective year so that it can assess the effectiveness of the directorate-general's activities;

83. Calls on DG COMM to continue its efforts to improve Parliament's public website, in particular with regard to the optimisation of search engines, and to increase its visibility; urges DG COMM to create an easy-to-browse website, easily accessible from all devices (i.e. smartphones, tablets and desktop computers), with a particular emphasis on a simplified mobile version of the website;
84. Notes that, in the field of media, numerous projects were implemented in 2018 and Parliament's web presence was further consolidated with the deployment of Webstreaming 3.0, which improves Parliament's streaming capacity;
85. Acknowledges, in addition, a significant improvement in Parliament's use of social media, and further encourages the use of free open-sources self-hosted social network platforms having special regard to the protection of user's data; further acknowledges efforts related to raising awareness of Union actions, and further urges Parliament to intensify its activity on social media in order disseminate the results of Parliament's work among the Union citizens; notes also that significant efforts were invested in a comprehensive visitors' strategy and, with a particular focus on youth, in the implementation of the Ambassador School Programme;
86. Notes that, in 2018, 285 press seminars were organised in the Member States with more than 3 629 journalists attending; welcomes the fact that, additionally, 1 905 journalists were invited to take part in plenary sessions, and 1 191 journalists were invited to take part in centrally organised press seminars; commends DG COMM for using all possible media channels for the dissemination of Parliament's work and achievements; invites the directorate-general to pay adequate attention to the importance of social media and to its significant and ever-growing potential for reaching citizens;
87. Supports the activities of the Parliamentarium that welcomed its 2 millionth visitor on 11 July 2018, and the success of the pilot projects of the Europa experience in Berlin, Ljubljana, Strasbourg and Helsinki; expresses its gratitude to the Visits and Seminars unit that welcomed a record number of visitors in 2018;
88. Recalls that 2018 marked the first full year of operation for the House of European History; notes that the House of European History welcomed 164 158 visitors; welcomes the co-financing agreement with the Commission, ensuring a yearly contribution to the running costs; remains deeply concerned by reports on working conditions in the European House of History under the previous contractor and urgently requests the Secretary-General to inform Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control on the situation of European House of History employees under the new contractor; also asks the Secretary-General to publish figures on the total costs of the contractor and the amount spent on the wages of the European House of History employees;

European Parliament Liaison Offices

89. Recalls that there was a reform of the European Parliament Liaison Offices (EPLO) in the Member States, where the revised mission statement aims at engaging with citizens and media through reinforced press teams and stakeholders and multipliers in order to reach out to citizens;
90. Takes note of different items of expenditure for 2018, broken down as follows:

Item of expenditure	2018 expenditure
Staff cost	EUR 22 814 372
Buildings cost	EUR 11 170 082
Security cost	EUR 1 843 339
Communication cost	EUR 11 639 088
Total	EUR 45 886 152

91. Insists on the importance of effective communication in Member States while ensuring cost-effectiveness; invites all decision-making parties involved to strive for added value, particularly with regard to running costs;

92. Appeals to Parliament and to the Member States to intensify cooperation with their respective EPLOs; demands that the EPLOs increase their visibility through events and intensive activity on social medias in order to out to citizens; calls on EPLOs to step up their cooperation and communication with individual European institutions with an aim to streamline the operation of EPLOs;
93. Notes that the EPLO office based in Athens has spent EUR 38 400 in 2018 for the rental of parking spaces; considers that these costs are disproportionately high considering that only six employees currently work in this office; calls on Parliament to investigate reasons for these costs and if necessary, take appropriate measures to remedy the situation;
94. Notes that, on 30 January 2019, the Bureau decided to maintain Parliament's office in London and that the Edinburgh antenna will remain in place at least until end of 2020; notes that a decision on Parliament's presence in Edinburgh beyond 2020 will be taken at a later stage;
95. Notes with concern the Bureau decision of 11 February 2019 regarding parliamentary support to the EU Mission to ASEAN in Jakarta, the EU delegation to the African Union in Addis Ababa and the EU Delegation to the UN in New York; considers that given the specific nature of this parliamentary support, Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control should be provided with detailed information on resources and output on an annual basis in the framework of the Parliament discharge; asks the Secretary-General to carry out a cost/benefit analysis of this parliamentary diplomacy support before the end of 2020 and prior to any envisaged extension to other regions of the world;

Directorate-General for Personnel (DG PERS)

96. Recalls that, in 2018, Directorate-General for Personnel (DG PERS) had 456 member of staff and managed 47,5 % of Parliament's overall budget;
97. Welcomes the transfer of tasks related to APAs from Directorate-General for Finance (DG FINS) to DG PERS and the significant effort necessary in order to organise the transfer of responsibilities;
98. Notes with satisfaction the creation of the Accredited Parliamentary Assistants Front Office to manage the end-to-end recruitment of APAs, as well as the modification and termination of contracts and administrative support to APAs; believes that the Front Office's capacity to answer to APAs needs should be further strengthened; welcomes the introduction of a simplified and quicker procedure to recruit APAs and the progress towards paperless file management; calls for the Parliament administration teams responsible for the recruitment of APAs to be reinforced before the beginning of each new mandate, for the time necessary to provide comprehensive training beforehand and until the high work load has been completed;
99. Reiterates its call on the administration to provide, as early as possible in the next parliamentary term, training courses or publications especially for new APAs, including as regards practical and administrative matters (mission orders, medical examinations, accreditation, parking stickers, groups of visitors, exhibitions, etc.) in order to avoid systemic errors that hinder the smooth running of administrative procedures that affect new APAs;
100. Reiterates its request that APAs receive the same subsistence allowance as statutory personnel for their missions to attend the part-sessions in Strasbourg;
101. Expresses its support for the management of the consequences of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the Union on the administration of Parliament, especially as regards the impact on human resources and the budget;
102. Notes that DG PERS's lead indicator in 2018 is time to deliver; notes with satisfaction that targets and methods of data collection were refined with a generally positive assessment of the results;

103. Notes that the total number of staff in Parliament in December 2018 was 9 883 agents in activity, which includes permanent and temporary staff, contract staff and APAs (compared to 9 682 in 2017);
104. Draws attention to the Court of Auditors' Special Report No 15/2019: Implementation of the 2014 staff reform package at the Commission – Big savings but not without consequences for staff; notes with concern the observations of the Court that are applicable to other Union institutions, including Parliament, and thus welcomes the Commission's readiness to accept the recommendations of the Court; supports the position expressed by Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control⁽⁴⁾ on the matter; underlines the importance of the Union providing competitive salaries compared to the private sector in the country of residence and is concerned that less favourable conditions of employment may have reduced the attractiveness of working for the Union particularly when there are difficulties in attracting sufficient staff from a number of Member States; warns of the serious consequences that any cut to the administrative budget or any staff reduction may have in the future of the European Union civil service and the implementation of the Union's policies; expresses also its great concern about the increased proportion of contract staff as a result of the 2014 staff reform resulting in an increasingly precarious employment conditions in the Union institutions and the establishment of an EU parallel low-cost staff; calls on the Union's institutions to carry out a comprehensive assessment of the impact on the human resources management and staff well-being of any future reform or revision of the Staff Regulations;
105. Recalls the fact that promoting equal opportunities is a key component of the Parliament's human resource management policy; takes note of the fact that the gender equality roadmap continues to be implemented through concrete actions: targets for women heads of unit was set at 40 %, women directors at 35 % and women directors-general at 30 % by the end of 2019; regrets however that the gender equality roadmap has not been fully implemented, especially as regards reaching the target for the representation of women in senior management positions of 40 % by 2020; calls for more ambitious targets to be urgently set and for them to be achieved over a short time frame;
106. Proposes, in addition, that a greater focus be placed on equal opportunities for all, notably for example increasing the number of people with disabilities working in the Parliament administration; notes that within the Bureau a High-Level Group on Gender and Diversity already exists and requests that it conduct a study of measures taken in Member States and internationally that have been effective in increasing the participation of people with disabilities in the work place, including legislative measures; requests that the High-Level Group reports back to the Bureau with concrete suggestions once the study has been undertaken and the results analysed; calls for ambitious targets to be urgently set, including those that reflect the need for geographical balance, and for them to be achieved over a short time frame;
107. Notes with satisfaction that the High Level Group on Equality and Diversity tasked DG PERS in 2018 to elaborate a report with a roadmap containing the list of measures to eliminate discrimination based on any ground such as ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity in the Parliament Secretariat; takes note that the Bureau adopted the report in April 2019 and it is already being implemented; asks the High Level Group to continue reinforcing and improving this kind of measures and initiatives in order to foster an inclusive working environment in Parliament;
108. Deplores the fact that no system exists for Members who are on maternity leave to be temporarily replaced by substitutes; is of the opinion that this impossibility is fundamentally at odds with core values of the Union because it sends the signal that a vote on a female candidate may entail temporary non-representation; is of the opinion that the fact that no system exists for Members on parental absence and also for Members on long-term sick leave to be temporarily replaced by substitutes is an unresolved problem, since the fact that they cannot send a proxy to vote on their behalf creates a temporary imbalance in the representation of Union citizens; calls on the Council to amend Article 6 of the Act concerning the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage⁽⁵⁾ in order to remedy the situation;
109. Regrets that, during the period 2017 to 2018, the number of women holding posts at the level of director-general remained stable in absolute numbers, at two, far below the target; notes with satisfaction that the number of women at director level reached 34 % at the end of 2018 and 37 % in the course of 2019 and that the number of women at head of unit level increased to 38 % at the end of 2018 and 39 % at the end of 2019; recognises the need for a step-by-step approach, but underlines that the situation will only be satisfactory once the gender balance at management level reflects the gender balance of the eligible population for those posts;

⁽⁴⁾ Working Document on Implementation of the 2014 staff reform package at the Commission – Big savings but not without consequences for staff.

⁽⁵⁾ Act concerning the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, annexed to Council Decision 76/787/ECSC, EEC, Euratom of 20 September 1976 (European Electoral Act) (OJ L 278, 8.10.1976, p. 5).

110. Notes that there are Member States that do not hold any director or general-director position, and that, despite many years having passed since the 2004, 2007 and 2013 enlargements, there has been no corresponding increase in representation for the new Member States at management level, where some nationalities continue to be heavily overrepresented; recommends addressing this situation; recalls the importance of all recruitment being based on competency, while respecting the importance of achieving a geographical balance among the Parliament's staff; to this end, calls on Parliament to ensure that staff at all levels, including at director and director-general level, is hired and promoted without discrimination based on nationality and to ensure that employment at Parliament is equally attractive to all nationalities;
111. Takes note of the solutions found for APAs who had worked for two consecutive parliamentary terms without interruption but who were lacking up to 2 months to complete the 10 years of service needed to be entitled to a pension under the pension rights scheme of the Union institutions; criticises the fact that a solution was put forward too late, despite the numerous and continuous warnings during the previous parliamentary term; criticises, further, the fact that only one solution was found and that it depended solely on the goodwill of certain Members who were aware of the situation and wished to show solidarity with their APAs in this situation; criticises, also, the fact that the Administration did not inform Members elected for the new parliamentary term of this matter and of the fact that they could issue contracts of less than six months in these instances, as a result of which many of these APAs had great difficulty finding a Member willing to employ them on a contract without interruption for a short period of time, something which some APAs did not manage to do (according to the Administration, this was the case for at least three of the 170 APAs concerned);
112. Welcomes the extension and streamlining of teleworking possibilities for the Secretariat-General of Parliament but calls for the extension of the possibility of teleworking with a fixed schedule, as at the Commission and other institutions; supports conducting a survey on the experience of teleworking and asks for the evaluation results to be shared with the Members and all the Parliamentary services;
113. Reiterates its call for a greater use of videoconferences and other technologies in order to protect the environment and to save resources, in particular to reduce travel by staff between the three places of work in order to carry out their duties;
114. Recognises Parliament's zero tolerance policy towards harassment at any and all levels including Members, staff and APAs and the actions put in place to discourage harassment in the workplace, in particular the adoption, by the Bureau, on 12 March 2018, of 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, an external audit of Parliament's internal practices and procedures, the creation of a network of confidential counsellors and of a mediator function, and the organisation of a public hearing with experts in harassment in the workplace; notes that the results of the external audit were expected by early November 2018, and requests that they be communicated without delay, once available; calls for an explanation for such a delay; welcomes the fact that some groups have strongly encouraged their Members to participate in training sessions on dignity and respect at work, in order to lead by example, and calls for training sessions for Members and members of staff; expects the full and transparent implementation of the roadmap; takes note that the Advisory Committee on Harassment and its Prevention in the Workplace received some 20 complaints regarding psychological or sexual harassment at work each year from 2014 to 2017 and 7 complaints in 2018, which can not be ignored in a context where every case is one too many;
115. Asks for the full implementation of the measures recommended in Parliament's resolution of 26 October 2017 on combating sexual harassment and abuse in the European Union, namely the implementation of the anti-harassment training for all staff and Members on a compulsory basis, as well as the restructuring of the two existing committees into one independent committee; requests that the judicial and medical expenses of victims of harassment be covered in accordance with Article 24 of the Staff Regulations;
116. Welcomes the fact that there were no waiting lists for the first three categories of staff (i.e. single parent working at Parliament and Members; two parents working full time at Parliament; two parents working at Parliament, one of which works full time and the other at least half time) used to prioritise the allocation of places at Parliament's nursery and the private nurseries in Brussels with which Parliament has a contract; notes that, in 2018, 197 places were offered and 116 places were accepted by members of staff; notes with satisfaction that the Wayenberg nursery is being extended and will have capacity for 320 children (there are currently 230 places);

117. Notes that, from 1 February 2020, the company 'Esedra' has taken over as the new service provider of Parliament's crèches and nursery sections; notes with anxiety the limited information given by the relevant Parliament services (DG PERS) about the changes that this new contract will entail before the change of service provider took place; underlines the need for Parliament always to place the well-being of the children in its nursery at the top of its criteria when evaluating a call for tender, as well as to give high importance to the working conditions of the staff employed by the service provider;
118. Underlines the importance of clear rules governing crèches and nursery; requires Parliament's Crèches and Nursery Sections Management Committee to adopt sufficient specifications to make its rules clear, transparent and broad enough to cover any unusual and specific situations, such as individual family situations or children with special needs; suggests to keep updated information about crèches and nursery services on the websites including the contributions and the current capacity; recommends, in addition, amending Article 4 of the rules governing the crèches and nursery sections run under the supervision of the European Parliament in order to clearly state the maximum parental contribution in order to ensure sufficient transparency is provided and to prevent any potential discrepancies;
119. Recalls the need for all service providers to fully respect Belgian law and to ensure that the subcontractor is aligned with Parliament's policy of respect and dignity at work; calls on the responsible Parliament services to ensure a smooth transition and that none of the possible changes to how the crèches and nursery sections operate, introduced by the new management, results in a reduction in the quality of service and in working conditions, as compared to the previous service provider;
120. Notes that, due to the high workload of staff in DG PERS, there is a lack of flexibility in modifying APAs salaries, when requested by a Member and justified by an increase of the APA responsibilities;

Directorate-General for Infrastructure and Logistics (DG INLO)

121. Recalls that, in 2018, DG INLO had 607 members of staff and managed 12,6 % of Parliament's overall budget;
122. Notes that committed appropriations amounted to EUR 239 547 603, corresponding to an 11 % decrease in comparison to 2017 (EUR 265 839 576);
123. Stresses that, with regard to Parliament's building policy, the principle of cost-effectiveness must be observed to the maximum extent possible, both in terms of costs related to existing buildings and of new projects; emphasises that Parliament's primary concern must be effective financial management, with the objective of completing work at the lowest possible cost;
124. Notes that the new medium and long-term buildings strategy was adopted by the Bureau in April 2018; notes that the Bureau's buildings strategy focuses on measures designed to meet future needs beyond 2019, including the renovation of buildings, which remains one of the main challenges to be addressed; recalls that Parliament has focused on buying properties, meaning that it now owns 80 % of the buildings it occupies;
125. Acknowledges that in Brussels the Martens building was completed and the Montoyer 63 building was rebuilt;
126. Notes that the largest building project of Parliament – the enlargement of the Konrad Adenauer building in Luxembourg – is at the point of the finalisation of its first phase, the East site, which represents approximately 70 % of the entire project; recalls that currently, Parliament staff in Luxembourg are located in four buildings; acknowledges that the Konrad Adenauer building will bring all services under one roof and, as such, allow for economies of scale in the fields of energy, water, security and facilities management of the building; points out with concern that certain costs relating to construction delays have been higher than originally foreseen but thanks to the considerably lower expenses for the financial costs of the loans, Parliament has been able to partially offset the additional costs; takes note that, at this stage, the total cost of Adenauer project remains EUR 32,5 million under the approved overall budget which excludes project management costs, financial costs, certified bodies, etc.; regrets the increased costs due to the construction delays and notes that transactions with the construction companies (linked to the delay with the project) have been necessary to avoid further delays and costs (between 5 % and 15 % of the contract amount);

127. Notes with concern that, as in previous years, new mopping-up transfer for the pre-financing of the Konrad Adenauer building project – EUR 29 million – was authorised; stresses that ‘mopping-up’ is a relaxation of the principle of specification and deliberately contravenes the principle of budgetary accuracy; disagrees with the ongoing practice of the year-end ‘mopping up transfer’ to contribute to current building projects; calls for a better budget management in order to reduce such transfers to the bare minimum possible and to improve the clarity and transparency of the related budgetary lines;
128. Commends the improvement of the working environment for Members in Brussels (1 personal office + 2 offices for their staff) and Strasbourg (1 + 1 offices); further supports improving of working conditions of Members in keeping with paragraph 147 below;
129. Supports the efforts of DG INLO to tighten its security arrangements by making structural and organisational improvements, including the securing of all physical sites; insists on the need to reconcile openness for citizens with security requirements;
130. Notes with regret that a number of crucial service-providers have recently decided not to extend long-term contracts signed with Parliament (banks and food shops) and asks the service to investigate the reasons for the decline in services available at Parliament;
131. Acknowledges the start of the works to extend the Wayenberg nursery in 2018; is concerned however by the unsafe access given to these sites during the works and suggests that DG INLO and DG SAFE should pay closer attention to ensuring the safety of users during such building works in the future;
132. Takes note of Parliament’s significant infrastructure, which can be broken down as follows:

Brussels buildings	Luxembourg buildings	Strasbourg buildings
13 owned	1 owned	5 owned
7 rented	6 rented	1 parking rented
671 285 m ²	176 283 m ²	344 283 m ²
EP Liaison Offices and antenna		
Total	37	
owned	12	
rented	25	
surface	28 383 m ²	

133. Acknowledges that the Bureau instructed the Secretary-General to authorise DG INLO to launch an architectural competition for the refurbishment of the Paul-Henri Spaak building considering only two options: renovation or redesign of the building; presses for the building to be prepared for a further evolution of Parliament’s activities in the decades ahead, in line with the Treaties; recalls that an architectural competition was launched in order to elicit concrete architectural proposals and that a final decision on the project should be taken by the political and budgetary authorities; stresses that such a decision should take place following the publication of an assessment of the safety of the building and that the Secretary-General should draw up a budgetisation of the plan before the decision is taken;
134. Notes that the creation of a ‘Europa Experience’ in several Liaison Offices has been approved by the Bureau and is being implemented throughout the coming years;

135. Supports the internalisation of the drivers' service and notes the very high satisfaction rate (99,9 %) for the official car service in 2018; suggests that official cars should not travel empty and that, when driving from Brussels to Strasbourg and back, they should be used to transport Members, staff and APAs with mission orders; takes note of the new rule requiring drivers to wait for a maximum of five minutes at the pick-up location and understands the need for such a rule but is, however, concerned that this time limit is too tight; notes the long waiting time for Members at the airport before cars depart to the Parliament and suggests finding a more efficient way of managing these delays;
136. Expresses strong concern for the working conditions of the staff of two of the external concessions contracted by Parliament, namely the cleaning staff and the restauration staff, and strongly recommends that DG INLO organises an independent survey of their satisfaction with the working conditions, in order to ensure respect and dignity at work; calls for an evaluation of Parliament's public procurement policy with a view to improving transparent and predictable working conditions for all contracted services; calls on Parliament to report to the discharge authority on the results of such evaluation; acknowledges that Parliament respects the relevant legislation;
137. Is concerned that the service has still not been able to solve the problem with Parliament's hot water system and asks the committee responsible in future to provide information on action taken to combat legionella in Parliament;
138. Welcomes the increase in the variety of the food on offer in Parliament's self-service canteen; is, however, concerned that, despite holding a public call for the cost/benefit assessment of the price/quality balance, the food on offer has been found to be unsatisfactory; calls for a reassessment of the evaluation of quality and price of potential service providers on the market; calls for necessary amendments to be made regarding the unbalanced quality-price ratio stemming from the results of the survey; expresses serious concern about the price and quality of the food and beverages;
139. Expresses solidarity with workers of COMPASS Group who are facing staff cuts and a worsening of their working conditions; is concerned about the growing use by the external catering company of temporary and interim staff, which has consequences for the quality of the services and for the benefits and quality of the working conditions for permanent staff;
140. Welcomes the creation of an *ex-ante* control and public procurement coordination unit in 2017 in order to strengthen the central role of the *ex-ante* verification unit and to provide support to ensure the uniform application and monitoring of procurement procedures in DG INLO;
141. Notes with satisfaction that an audit on the accessibility of buildings for persons with disabilities was carried out throughout 2018 as part of the 'Design for all' policy and the launch of DG INLO's accessibility network;
142. Approves of the role of DG INLO in Parliament's environmental policy, in particular the objective to make buildings more energy efficient and to reduce water consumption;

Directorate-General for Logistics and Interpretation for Conferences (DG LINC)

143. Recalls that, in 2018, Directorate-General for Logistics and Interpretation for Conferences (DG LINC) had 534 members of staff and managed 3,1 % of Parliament's overall budget;
144. Insists on the application of the code of conduct on multilingualism, allowing every Member to express themselves in their own language; stresses that the more detailed language profiles introduced by the revision of the code of conduct on multilingualism are only to be used in exceptional circumstances; their purpose is not to limit language provision but to provide a more targeted service to Members in the case of market limitations and logistical constraints;
145. Approves of the 2018 transformation of the directorate-general to enhance Parliament's capacities in conference organisation and by the completion of the process of establishing new working conditions for interpreters;
146. Acknowledges the strategy for the modernisation of conference management, largely focused on enhancing and adapting service provision in Parliament, based on user needs, and developing a single interface for organisers;

147. Notes with satisfaction the agreement on interpreter working conditions of 8 September 2018; encourages the joint follow-up group, which consists of representatives of the administration and of the interpreters, to continue offering a forum for fruitful cooperation in order to smoothly solve issues that may arise;
148. Notes that the overall average number of hours per week that interpreters spent delivering interpretation services in their booths increased from 11 hours 54 minutes in 2014 to 13 hours 47 minutes in 2018 due to, inter alia, increase in parliamentary activity;
149. Calls attention to the fact that there are large differences in the cost of translation from particular languages and asks the service to investigate the reasons for these major discrepancies;

Directorate-General for Translation (DG TRAD)

150. Recalls that in 2018, Directorate-General for Translation (DG TRAD) had 1 145 members of staff and managed 0,9 % of Parliament's overall budget;
151. Acknowledges that, in 2018, DG TRAD saw a 10 % increase in production compared with the previous year, owing to the cyclical nature of translation demand, which is closely linked to parliamentary activity; notes with concern that in-house translation output in relation to capacity reached 119,4 % (benchmark: 100 %) and the outsourcing rate was 32,8 % (31,4 % in 2017); appeals to DG TRAD for it to consider increasing the amount of outsourcing, respecting the 100 % benchmark and focusing on the quality and translational flawlessness of the documents; calls on DG TRAD to continue its work to increase the checking of outsourced translations for compliance and quality;
152. Notes the progressive migration to eTranslation, providing machine translation output for all language combinations; insists on the irreplaceable role and added value of human translators;
153. Observes that new tasks for translators were introduced in 2018, transforming translation into intercultural linguistic mediation, for instance, via the establishment of the Audio Capacity Service, which involves some of the translators translating the flash news (daily news bulletins) into 24 languages and podcasts into 6 languages; notes that DG TRAD hired a voice coach who trained almost 180 members of staff; is concerned that DG TRAD staff were faced not only with an exceptionally high workload due to the end of the legislative term but also with uncertainties related to upcoming new and unfamiliar tasks; calls on DG TRAD's high-level management and staff to continue discussions on the impact of the cyclical workload on the well-being of staff; encourages the establishment of a joint follow-up group, which would consist of representatives of the administration and of translators, similar to the one established by DG LINC;

Directorate-General for Finance (DG FINS)

154. Recalls that in 2018, DG FINS had 222 members of staff and managed 20,8 % of Parliament's overall budget;
155. Is aware that the regulatory framework of DG FINS has greatly evolved since the entry into force of the Statute for Members in 2009; notes, in addition, the entry into force of the new Financial Regulation on 2 August 2018 and the consequent modifications of the internal rules on the implementation of Parliament's budget, which affects the work of DG FINS;
156. Is concerned about human resource scarcity and mobility, meaning that priority has had to be given to core services for Members and for Parliament, leading to problems with the extent of checks made, with deadlines, with the speed with which payments have been made, and with balancing expenditure operations; is worried about this trend and its adverse impact, in particular, about deteriorating well-being at work and more long-term sickness, which have become more marked during the year;
157. Expresses great concern about the obsolescence of the directorate-general's IT applications and the risk of IT failure, which are both considered as high; calls on DG FINS and DG ITEC to step up their constructive cooperation in order to implement appropriate mitigating measures, including the smooth deployment of the new financial management and accounting system;

158. Approves of significant efforts for ongoing investment in the digitisation of financial processes, such as Members' electronic signatures, with a view to enhancing client service, administrative efficiency and the level of checks, in particular, the introduction of online reimbursement of Members' medical expenses and automation of the central attendance register, with a view to speeding up payments of related entitlements and extension of the functions of the e-Portal, as the single entry point for Members to manage their financial and social entitlements; deplores time-consuming inefficiencies in entering and checking the data, notably that data on Members' travel costs is entered into the system twice, first by Members and in a second step again by the administration;
159. Notes that Parliament's new travel agency started operating on 1 January 2019, following a public call for tenders; notes the limited use of the travel service's call centre, available at weekends but which does not cover all the companies used by the travel agency; deplores the fact that Members have experienced difficulties reaching the travel service's call centre during and outside working hours; deplores the limited opening hours of the agency, notably the fact that it is shut on Friday afternoons, except for Friday afternoons before a Strasbourg session, which seriously limits Members' staff's ability to work efficiently; calls for an improvement of availability; insists on the mandatory implementation of a simple and user-friendly complaints mechanism, which would allow for quick resolution of any problems; deplores the slow reaction time of the agency when dealing with requests for tickets; finds it absolutely unacceptable that tickets proposed by the agency are not always the most cost effective ones (often above online prices) and that Members experience considerable delays in the reimbursement of their travel costs; calls on DG FINS to launch a satisfaction survey on the services of the travel agency, and, with the aim of presenting the results by 30 June 2020 at the latest, to inform customers of the organisation and responsibilities of DG FINS and Parliament's travel agency; urges the new travel agency to reflect on the results provided by the satisfaction survey and implement improvements accordingly;

General Expenditure Allowance

160. Welcomes the measures taken by the Bureau to develop greater transparency and financial accountability;
161. Recalls that a separate bank account for the reception of the general expenditure allowance is mandatory; calls on Parliament to regularly inform the discharge authority of how many Members comply with this obligation;
162. Draws attention to the fact that, at its meeting of 2 July 2018, the Bureau adopted a new non-exhaustive list of expenses which may be defrayed from the general expenditure allowance that contains the most common examples of eligible expenditure; notes that for Members who so wish, the costs relating to a voluntary verification audit of the use of general expenditure allowance can be covered from general expenditure allowance; recalls that all Members are free to document their use of general expenditure allowance, and to have this information published in their personal websites; calls on Parliament to regularly inform the discharge authority of how many Members follow these recommendations;
163. Acknowledges the improvements made in the last years in the efficient and transparent verification and control of expenditure reimbursements, such as Members' travel cost reimbursements and Parliamentary Assistant's allowances, in respect of which documentation for costs incurred must be provided; calls for a strict handling of cases where misconduct has been uncovered; urges the Bureau to draw conclusions from past incidents of fraud and issue severe punitive measures in cases of fraud; strongly urges Members to use their General Expenditure Allowance strictly for the purposes laid out in the Implementing Measures for the Statute for Members of the European Parliament; urges the Bureau to proceed with the evaluation of the guidelines as it is foreseen in the last bureau decision; seeks, in the interest of the citizens and the reputation of the House and its Members, a well adjusted balance between the Freedom of the mandate and the combat against risks of misuse and fraud; considers a regular evaluation of the relevant provisions every five years towards the mid-point of a parliamentary term to be appropriate;
164. Recalls Articles 62(1) and 62(2) of the Decision of the Bureau of 19 May and 9 July 2008, as amended (last modification on 1 July 2019), 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 except where they are defrayed in the form of a lump sum'; calls upon the Secretary-General and the Bureau to ensure that those provisions are fully implemented and complied with and to regularly inform the discharge authority of how many Members have paid back their unused amounts;

165. Recalls that the ad-hoc Working Group for defining and publishing the rules concerning the use of the general expenditure allowance in the past legislative term recommended that the Bureau resume discussions about the general expenditure allowance and come up with an agreement that requires Members to: keep all receipts pertaining to the general expenditure allowance, to admit an independent auditor in charge of the annual check of the accounts and the publication of an auditor's opinion, and to return the unspent share of the general expenditure allowance at the end of their mandate;
166. Further recalls that the plenary has adopted the following additional changes concerning the general expenditure allowance on top of those already issued by the ad-hoc Working Group, requiring: a 5 % sample check of general expenditure allowance spending by Parliament's internal auditing, the final results and the findings of which should be part of the annual internal audit report published by Parliament, Members to publish, on an annual basis, an overview of their expenditures by category (communication costs, office rental, office supplies, etc.);
167. Urges the Bureau to implement the democratic will of the plenary concerning the general expenditure allowance as soon as possible;
168. Welcomes the fact that the Bureau of the past legislative term created the necessary infrastructure on Members' online page on Parliament's website for those Members who wish to publish a voluntary audit or confirmation of their expenditure that their use of the general expenditure allowance complies with the applicable rules of the Statute for Members and its implementing measures; calls on Parliament to improve its communication towards Members about this possibility and how to make use of it in practice;

Voluntary Pension Fund

169. Notes that the voluntary pension scheme has an estimated actuarial deficit of EUR 286,1 million at the end of 2018; further notes that at the end of 2018, the amount of net assets to be taken into account and the actuarial commitment amount to EUR 112,3 million and EUR 398,4 million respectively;
170. Recalls that these projected future liabilities are spread over several decades but notes that the total amount paid by the voluntary pension fund in 2018 amounts to EUR 17,8 million;
171. Points out that this raises concerns about the possible exhaustion of the fund and that Parliament is guaranteeing the payment of pension rights if, and when, this fund is not able to meet its obligations;
172. Strongly supports the results of a meeting of 10 December 2018, where the Bureau decided to modify the rules applicable to the pension scheme by increasing the retirement age from 63 to 65 years and introducing a levy of 5 % to pension payments for future pensioners with a view to improve its sustainability; endorses the Bureau's decision as a positive step; notes however that Parliament will remain liable for a very significant amount in the future; recalls that Article 27(2) of the Statute for Members of the European Parliament provides that ' [a]cquired rights and future entitlements shall be maintained in full';
173. Calls on the Secretary-General, as well as the Bureau, to exhaust – in full accordance with the provisions of the Statute for Members, namely Article 27(1) and (2) – all possible avenues to find a fair solution to the problem while keeping Parliament's liability to a minimum, as taxpayers' money is involved and to inform the discharge authority of the measures taken in this regard;

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

174. Recalls that, in 2018, DG ITEC had 484 members of staff and managed 6,4 % of Parliament's overall budget;
175. Notes that DG ITEC's lead indicator in 2018 is its responsiveness to the demands of users and partners in all fields of activity in a timely and efficient manner; insists that DG ITEC should continue to invest in the delivery of a modern, seamless, efficient and user-oriented IT interfaces;
176. Supports the on-going development of e-Parliament applications, a reinforcement of IT innovation activities and the strengthening of Parliament's cybersecurity capacity; welcomes the decision to double the resources allocated to the Computer Emergency Response Team for the EU Institutions, bodies and agencies (CERT-EU); commends the strengthening of the Union institutions' capacity to ensure an optimal protection against cyberattack;

177. Acknowledges the fact that it is very difficult for DG ITEC to recruit enough highly qualified experts with very specific profiles, knowledge and experience; calls on Parliament to ensure that this request is properly transmitted to the European Personnel Selection Office to better respond to such specific needs of Union institutions;
178. Insists that DG ITEC make stronger efforts to guarantee continuity and resilience of Parliament ICT infrastructures achieved since the IT outage of October 2017; calls for increasing the efforts and capacity to provide assurance on Parliament ICT robustness; calls for continuing the work and progress made in the areas of business continuity, risk management, incident management and recovery capability; stresses the existence of deficiencies in the functioning of the internet network in Parliament;
179. Highlights the increasing risks related to data and privacy; points with concern to recent reporting on storing and processing user's data when logging in to Parliament's wi-fi; strongly questions the need to retain data for up to six months⁽⁶⁾; calls on Parliament to develop an information security policy and strategy; stresses that close cooperation between DG ITEC and DG SAFE is of utmost importance; encourages the directorate-general's to plan common activities over the medium and long term;

Directorate-General for Security and Safety (DG SAFE)

180. Recalls that, in 2018, DG SAFE had 756 members of staff and managed 1,5 % of Parliament's overall budget;
181. Is concerned by the results of the recent DG SAFE staff survey, and hopes that a solution can be found in the near future that responds to staff concerns;
182. Recalls that openness to the public is a hallmark of Parliament and an adequate balance with the necessary level of security must remain;
183. Welcomes the major security-related decisions taken by the Bureau over the 8th parliamentary term, in particular (a) measures concerning relations with the national authorities of the host countries and with the other institutions, notably measures to secure the Brussels European district, security screening of external service providers' personnel, threat assessment and changes to alert levels, (b) measures to upgrade Parliament's buildings and (c) internal measures; recalls that those decisions implied infrastructure investment;
184. Welcomes the agreement, concluded by Parliament in 2018, on reciprocal exemption from security checks with the Commission, the European External Action Service, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions; regrets however that no such agreement has been signed with the Council yet, and hopes that a solution can soon be found in that respect;
185. Approves of the replacement of the access badges for Members and their staff; looks forward to the forthcoming replacement of those used by Parliament's staff;
186. Commends the good cooperation between DG SAFE and DG INLO in enhancing security of all Parliament's buildings in upgrading access, including to car parks, as requested by the Bureau;
187. Acknowledges the creation of the Protection Unit, in particular the close protection of the President of Parliament and the reinforcement of the security of Parliament's strategic locations;
188. Supports the extension of the SMS security alert system to all users of service telephones which will, in future, be used for all Members and staff;

⁽⁶⁾ <https://euobserver.com/institutional/146270>

Legal Service

189. Approves of the Legal Service strategy of making lawyers more readily available to the parliamentary committees; calls on a reinforcement of staff dealing with parliamentary activities;
190. Notes with satisfaction that the Legal Service respects gender balance at the level of administrators, heads of unit and directors;
191. Highlights that the Legal Service has won 95 % of the cases taken to court during the 8th legislative term; expresses its conviction that the Legal Service plays its role in safeguarding the financial interests of Parliament and of the Union citizens by retrieving public money through court cases;
192. Is concerned by the difficulties of finding qualified individuals from certain countries to fill some posts, as it is an obligation to cover all legal systems and all the languages of the Member States;

Annual report on contracts awarded

193. Recalls that the successive two Financial Regulations ⁽⁷⁾ and the Rules of Application of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 ⁽⁸⁾ 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 Regulations require publication of the contracts awarded with a value greater than EUR 15 000, a value that corresponds to the threshold above which a competitive tendering procedure becomes compulsory;
194. Notes that, of a total of 251 contracts awarded in 2018, 94 were based on open or restricted procedures, with a value of EUR 569,5 million, and 155 on negotiated procedures, with a total value of EUR 35,9 million; notes that the total number of contracts awarded by negotiated procedures decreased in terms of value as a percentage of the total value of contracts awarded, from 12 % in 2017 to 6 % in 2018, as well as in terms of volume, from EUR 70,5 million in 2017 to EUR 35,86 million in 2018;
195. Notes the following breakdown of contracts by type awarded in 2018 and 2017, including building contracts:

Type of contract	2018		2017	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
Services	199	79	177	79
Supply	37	15	36	16
Works	12	5	11	5
Building	3	1	0	0
Total	251	100	224	100

Type of contract	2018		2017	
	Value (EUR)	Percentage (%)	Value (EUR)	Percentage (%)
Services	256 374 627	42	446 313 270	76
Supply	210 526 209	35	133 863 942	23
Works	133 431 628	22	6 892 972	1
Building	5 039 824	1	0	0
Total	605 372 288	100	587 070 184	100

(Annual report on the contracts awarded by the European Parliament, 2018, p. 6)

⁽⁷⁾ Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations Regulation (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014 and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 (OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p. 1).

⁽⁸⁾ 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).

196. Notes the following breakdown of contracts awarded in 2018 and 2017 by type of procedure used, in terms of number and value:

Type of procedure	2018		2017	
	Number	Percentage (%)	Number	Percentage (%)
Open	89	35,46	78	35
Restricted	5	1,99	1	1
Negotiated	155	61,75	145	64
Competition	1	0,40	—	—
Exceptional	1	0,40	—	—
Total	251	100	224	100

Type of procedure	2018		2017	
	Value (EUR)	Percentage (%)	Value (EUR)	Percentage (%)
Open	486 039 380	80	488 368 460	83
Restricted	83 433 046	14	28 200 000	5
Negotiated	35 859 040	6	70 501 724	12
Competition	24 221	—	—	—
Exception	16 600	—	—	—
Total	605 372 288	100	587 070 184	100

(Annual report on the contracts awarded by the European Parliament, 2018, p. 8)

Political groups (budget item 4 0 0)

197. Notes that, in 2018, the appropriations entered under budget item 4 0 0, attributed to the political groups and non-attached Members were used as follows ^(?):

^(?) All amounts in thousands of EUR.

Group	2018					2017				
	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)	18 282	6 690	20 820	113,88	4 152	17 790	8 150	19 330	108,66	6 610
Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D)	15 792	5 863	16 888	106,94	4 767	15 610	5 469	15 268	97,81	5 812
European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)	6 182	2 962	7 200	116,47	1 944	6 200	2 810	6 051	97,60	2 959
Alliance of Liberal and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)	5 823	1 824	6 033	103,61	1 614	5 711	1 694	5 596	97,99	1 809
The Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA)	4 478	1 579	4 669	104,27	1 388	4 333	1 826	4 583	105,77	1 578
European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL)	4 443	1 257	4 590	103,31	1 110	4 421	1 407	4 571	103,39	1 257
Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD)	3 829	1 828	2 725	71,17	1 915	3 654	1 917	3 523	96,41	1 827
Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF)	3 238	1 094	3 612	111,55	720	2 719	846	2 474	90,99	1 091
Non-attached Members	1 153	314	537	46,57	442	929	257	494	53,18	318
Total	63 220	23 412	67 073	106,09	18 052	61 365	24 377	61 889	100,85	23 258

198. Welcomes the fact that independent external auditors for the political groups issued only unqualified opinions for the financial year 2018;

European political parties and European political foundations

199. 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;

200. Notes that the Commission, Council and Parliament agreed to provide additional financial and human resources for the APPF in the budget for the financial year 2019;

201. Points out that, pursuant to Article 6(10) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014 ⁽¹⁰⁾, the director of the APPF shall submit annually a report to Parliament, the Council and the Commission on the activities of the Authority; notes that the annual report was sent to Parliament's President and Secretary-General on 21 November 2019; deplores the fact that the 2018 report was submitted to Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control in January 2020 only; expresses concerns about the decision to consider the report as confidential, following an express request from the APPF making it available only to a limited number of persons under restricted conditions; considers that by limiting access to this document, which concerns the use of public funds, it gives the regrettable impression that there is something to hide; insists that the APPF report be made public each year, and that it is sent to Members at the same time as it is sent to Parliament's President and Secretary-General;

202. Calls on Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control to invite the director of the APPF to the annual hearing for the Parliament discharge, as is the case for the other heads of agencies and institutions;

203. Underlines the importance of the APPF's public reporting about its activities as an element of its accountability, which is essential for the continued construction of trust and assurance, as well as to assess whether the APPF is adequately equipped with staff, resources and competences to effectively prevent a misuse of funds by political parties and foundations;

⁽¹⁰⁾ Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2014 on the statute and funding of European political parties and European political foundations (OJ L 317, 4.11.2014, p. 1).

204. Notes that, in 2018, the appropriations entered under budget item 4 0 2 were used as follows:

Party	Abbreviation	Own resources	EP final contribution – first part	Total revenue ⁽¹⁾	EP contribution as % of reimbursable expenditure (max. 85 %)	Revenue surplus (transfer to reserve or loss)
European People's Party	EPP	1 427 466	7 356 802	11 340 157	85 %	64 271
Party of European Socialists	PES	1 153 831	6 309 079	7 462 911	85 %	—
Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party	ALDE	759 642	2 674 543	3 935 648	85 %	157 524
European Green Party	EGP	544 072	2 244 342	2 961 972	85 %	– 26 538
Party of the European Left	EL	301 456	1 513 876	1 875 332	85 %	– 6 798
European Democratic Party	PDE	125 374	532 075	754 587	85 %	18 913
European Free Alliance	EFA	156 351	628 696	910 047	85 %	32 110
Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe	ACRE	– 286 814	1 253 918	1 245 829	71 %	– 729 991
European Christian Political Movement	ECPM	125 110	624 532	749 641	85 %	5 995
Movement for a Europe of Nations and Freedom	MENL	211 768	1 045 592	1 257 360	85 %	– 28 579
TOTAL		4 518 257	24 183 454	32 493 485		– 513 092

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

205. Notes that, in 2018, the appropriations entered under budget item 4 0 3 were used as follows:

Foundation	Abbreviation	Affiliated to party	Own resources	EP final grant	Total revenue	EP grant as % of eligible costs (max. 85 %)	Revenue surplus (transfer to reserve or loss)
Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies	WMCES	EPP	1 097 171	5 816 345	6 913 516	85 %	31 397
Foundation for European Progressive Studies	FEPS	PES	1 050 548	4 895 825	5 946 373	85 %	—
European Liberal Forum	ELF	ALDE	292 141	1 650 538	1 942 680	85 %	—
Green European Foundation	GEF	EGP	185 182	1 038 822	1 224 004	85 %	1 368
Transform Europe	TE	EL	244 655	1 193 712	1 438 367	85 %	16 375
Institute of European Democrats	IED	PDE	45 755	255 000	300 755	85 %	—
Coppieters Foundation	CF	EFA	115 193	388 702	503 895	85 %	38 617
New Direction – Foundation for European Reform	ND	ACRE	279 636	1 215 011	1 494 647	85 %	– 156 378
Sallux	SALLUX	ECPM	77 416	418 444	495 860	85 %	2 159
Foundation for a Europe of Nations and Freedom	FENL	MENL	53 600	329 251	382 851	85 %	– 4 503
TOTAL			3 441 296	17 201 651	20 642 947		– 70 965