

Discharge 2014 – European Parliament

Questions from GUE/NGL to the Secretary-General

General staff matters

1. How many contracts have been concluded with external specialists, which amounts were involved? Please specify for each DG. Which measures have been taken to reduce the number of external specialists and to make the necessary expertise available within the DGs themselves?
2. What are the costs involved in the participation of members of the Secretariat in expert groups, committees, etc. of the European Commission and other European institutions? Are there any plans for the reduction of these costs, for example by relying on MEPs or their assistants for this type of representation? Similarly, are there reductions possible in the number of staff attending committee meetings of the EP itself?
3. Article 16, paragraph 4 of the EU staff regulations, in force since January 2014, obliges each EU-institution to publish information on an annual basis about senior officials who left the EU administration, as well as a list of the cases of potential conflict of interest that have been assessed. In a letter to the ITCO (transparency) intergroup, the SG states that these provisions 'are still being discussed at inter-institutional level in order to define the format, scope and content to be given to this annual information. For these reasons, the institutions have not proceeded with any publications for the time being'. Has any progress been made in this respect? When will this information be made available on the EP's website?
4. Article 22c of the Staff Regulations requires EU-institutions to lay down their own internal rules on whistleblowing. Apparently, a Committee for Matters relating to the Staff Regulations is working on this. Who is sitting in this Committee and who has provided its mandate? Are the minutes of its meetings to be found on the EP's website? When will the EP have implemented this provision and how will the internal rules be made available to EP-staff?

Performance based budgeting

5. Performance based budgeting, key performance indicators and measurement tools are recognised as important instruments for enhancing budget control. What measures has the SG already taken in this respect? What are his experiences with any such instruments so far? What further measures will be taken to measure the performance of the EP-Secretariat?
6. How does the SG measure the performance of communication activities, taking into account that the EP is not a company and that traditional measurements such as 'branding' do not work for an institution like a parliament? What is, in particular, the added value of communication activities for the EP as a whole, as opposed to communication activities relating to individual MEPs, their political parties and their political groups in the EP?
7. How does the SG measure the performance of the various prizes of the EP?
8. What is the expected added value of the House of European History? Which performance indicators will be used in this respect?

The Bureau

9. The agenda and the short minutes of the meetings of the Bureau can be found on the website of the EP. However, the underlying documents, in particular the notes of the SG to the Bureau, are not. Since it is impossible to fully grasp the meeting of the agenda and the decisions taken without the underlying documents, can these be made available through the website as well? Can documents relating to budgetary control measures be automatically shared with the CONT committee?

Integrity

10. When and how will the effectiveness of the current Code of Conduct for MEPs be evaluated? Is it possible to give priority to the evaluation in light of the recent upheavals concerning the paid side jobs of some MEPs in the car manufacturing industry?
11. Has the SG received any complaints about the functioning of the current Code of Conduct? If so, how did he deal with these? Did they give rise to ideas about strengthening the Code of Conduct?
12. The reports of the Advisory Committee relating to the Code of Conduct are these days confined to a factual account of its activities. Does the Advisory Committee still have the right to make recommendations for improved practices concerning the Code of Conduct? If so, how does the SG explain that any such recommendations seem to be lacking, and the reports of the Committee are normally just dealt with by the Bureau without debate?
13. The Code of Conduct foresees sanctions in the case of breaches by MEPs. In its latest report, the Advisory Committee did mention some breaches, but no sanctions were taken. How can this be explained?
14. Last year, Transparency International launched the EU Integrity Index, listing, inter alia, the declarations of interest of MEPs. Why does not the EP itself put such a list on its website? Why is this information not available in the main working languages of the EU?
15. Many NGOs complain that the income categories in the declarations of financial interests are too broad. Recently, the SG proposed to the Bureau to include the possibility of a zero category (i.e. for MEPs who receive no income through side activities or side jobs). Why did not he use that opportunity to also discuss with the Bureau the possibility of narrowing down the various income categories? Can he provide a cost-benefit analysis in this respect?
16. The declarations of financial interests need to be kept up-to-date by MEPs on a regular basis. What measures has the SG taken to monitor more closely the factual correctness of such declarations? How are MEPs reminded of their obligation to regularly update these declarations?
17. According to the Code of Conduct, MEPs should notify a possible conflict of interest before they vote, speak in plenary or write a report. How many declarations of this nature have been made so far? How many MEPs did not vote because of a possible conflict of interest? Does the Secretariat compare the declarations with the voting sessions, and if so, does it warn MEPs against potential conflicts of interest? Similarly, are the declarations checked before an MEP becomes Rapporteur or shadow Rapporteur?
18. ITEC replied to a question from an MEP who wished to use his personal webpage on the official EP-website to register all his contacts with lobbyists that this was a matter for the Bureau to decide. Has the SG the intention of submitting this request through a Note to the Bureau?
19. Similarly, former EP/president Buzek promised in his letter presenting the Code of Conduct that for Rapporteurs who wished to report which lobbyists had had a substantial impact on his/her report, a special template would be developed that could be used as an annex (so that the list would not be subject to the maximum number of characters for reports). Has the SG the intention of submitting a proposal for such a template through a Note to the Bureau?
20. Industry Forums are places where MEPs and business representatives come together on a regular basis. What privileges do these Forums receive inside the EP? Are there any specific guidelines covering them, in particular to avoid any potential conflicts of interest?
21. What follow-up will be given to the recommendation of TAXE to refuse entry to the EP to lobbyists of companies who have refused to meet this committee?

Other

22. In the context of the 2013 discharge, questions were raised with regard to the need for two cars who should be permanently available for the President of the EP. Yet, it did not become clear why in case of a breakdown or other problem relating to the official car, the President cannot use

one of the other cars which are available for all MEPs. Could the SG explain which specific obstacles there are to use this option? Moreover, are there any other savings envisaged concerning the number of staff attributed to the President's office or other costs involved?

23. Have checks against the use of cars for private purposes been intensified, as discussed in the context of the 2013 discharge?