



European Committee  
of the Regions



ANNUAL REPORT **HUMAN RESOURCES** 2020  
EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS



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## FOREWORD

Dear colleagues,

Dear readers,

Jean Monnet, one of the founding fathers of the European Union, said at the very beginning of the European integration process: "The common Europe will not be created in one day, it will grow in crises and it will be the sum of the solutions we will have found for these crises". Monnet's initial analysis has proven correct. I would like to believe that this is also true for Europe's institutions.



Petr Bližkovský, Secretary-General

Last year was undoubtedly a year of extreme crisis, and this also applied to the European Committee of the Regions. COVID-19 certainly put all of us to the test. Members and staff had to adapt quickly. Together and in very trying circumstances, we kept the CoR running. We ensured that the regions and local authorities continued to play their role in the European legislative process. The pandemic could not mute the voice of regions and local authorities in Europe. This is an achievement. As secretary-general of this institution, I want to stress that this was only possible because of the Committee's staff. The commitment, professionalism and readiness of our staff to go the extra mile has shown the great quality of our administration and I want to thank every single staff member.

As an administration, we reacted quickly to protect the health of our members and our staff. Meetings have been held remotely for over a year now, telework is compulsory and everybody has been equipped with the necessary IT tools to work from home. Our administration regularly provides timely information on the health situation and the related administrative measures. The CoR immediately joined the inter-institutional drive to vaccinate staff as quickly as possible and we hope to win the fight against the virus as soon as possible.

I am perfectly aware that this health crisis, the related lockdowns and the travel bans have put huge pressure on each of us. Afflicted by a frightening pandemic when we have to be socially distanced, do not see each other on a daily basis and have to hide our smile behind a mask, we need to stand together even more. This is why, together with the Directorate for Human and Financial Resources, I have put in place several measures to support staff at this difficult time. The social and medical service for staff has been active throughout the year to support those in need. Options for working from abroad have been increased and financial support for homework-related costs granted. Several projects I launched in early 2020 have been postponed to ease the workload.

However, as Jean Monnet rightly said, each crisis also offers opportunities to grow. It is up to us to see these opportunities and to be open to them. The pandemic has boosted digitalisation. Our meeting organisation technology has improved massively over the last year, and opened up new ways of working for us and for our members. We have achieved a paperless work environment in just a couple of months as all our workflows have become electronic. Telework is here to stay and can help us not only to have a better work-life balance but also to achieve our political objectives. Reaching out to citizens and linking our institution with regions and local authorities across Europe can be fields where a European institution like ours can use telework in an innovative way.

The crisis has taught us one essential lesson. If we want to keep delivering results in a fast-changing world, we have to embrace change and keep developing. This is true for the technology we use, the procedures we follow and our attitude at work. This is why I will continue to fight for more resources, particularly in the field of IT. I will pursue our goal of simplifying internal procedures and I will support a culture of cross-service work, excellence and mobility in our administration.

I want this institution to be a success and I invite every staff member to feel the same way. The European Committee of the Regions will be what we make of it. We can grow in this crisis. We can become stronger as a result of it. Together we, members and staff, can show that we are living up to the task that European citizens gave us: bridging the gap between the European legislator and the 1 million elected regional and local politicians across the Union. If, despite all the crises and difficulties facing us, we can continue to work and find solutions, we will provide further evidence that Jean Monnet was right.

**Petr Blížkovský**  
*Secretary-General*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Human Resources

The main mission of the Secretariat-General of the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) is to provide its members with all the necessary assistance to enable the institution to function properly as an assembly of local and regional representatives and thus to achieve its political mission and objectives.

Management of human resources (HR) is the key responsibility of all managers, although the Directorate for Human Resources and Finance plays a leading role in this respect. The mission of the Directorate for Human Resources and Finance is to allocate available human and budgetary resources in order to allow the institution to achieve its political and administrative objectives and ensure compliance with all applicable provisions when implementing the Staff Regulations, the Financial Regulation and internal control standards.

HR management is interconnected with other important areas such as security and safety, audit, data protection and the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS). Some staff-related matters are handled in cooperation with other institutions and parties through cooperation agreements, framework contracts, service-level agreements and memorandums of understanding.

### Highlights in 2020

**Business continuity.** The year 2020 will be remembered as a truly unprecedented year. The extraordinary situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic has put the organisational resilience of the CoR and of the Committee's members and staff to the test. Nonetheless, building on a robust IT environment and thanks to the flexibility, creativity and commitment of staff in all CoR departments, the institution managed to ensure business continuity in a satisfactory manner in almost all areas of activity.

Notwithstanding the very demanding circumstances, the collective efforts of all involved enabled the Secretariat-General to continue to support the political activities of the Committee. Whilst putting the health and safety of members and staff first, the organisation adapted to the continuously evolving situation. Statutory and non-statutory meetings as well as other core activities were kept up throughout the pandemic, thus enabling the Committee to play its role in the European decision-making process without interruption and to support the other EU institutions and the local and regional authorities during the crisis.

**HR in the time of COVID-19.** At the start of 2020, no one could have foreseen the global pandemic and its impact on all human activities. Within a few weeks, the CoR's Secretariat-General was completely reorganised so that it could continue supporting its members and implementing its new administrative and political priorities, with the aim of transforming itself swiftly into a modern, paperless and resilient administration. The HR community was on the front line since it was paramount to reassure staff, provide health and social assistance, provide timely information on relevant medical and business continuity aspects and ensure that all client services functioned properly. The HR processes did not stop working even for a single day during the pandemic. Specific initiatives in the area of HR communication were organised and served as a vector of stability, creating a sense of security and belonging.

Telework was already a widely used working tool even before the pandemic, but several directorates were not used to it and lacked the necessary IT equipment, experience and teleworking culture. The IT services worked hard to acquire, configure and deliver the relevant equipment to allow the whole institution to operate fully remotely.

With an effective policy of reallocation of human resources through the creation of synergies and staff mobility, the review of regulations and the introduction of new procedures, the administration rose to these challenges. For example, as of 16 March 2020, most of the institution's staff switched to a Committee-wide telework scheme, new paperless working methods were deployed and obviously, the CoR's digital and IT strategies were reinforced.

**New CoR term of office.** Alongside the new secretary-general who took up his duties in December 2019, the CoR began a new term of office in February 2020 with new political and administrative priorities for the period 2020-2025. As a result, a broad discussion on issues such as resource allocation was carried out to align the resources with these new priorities. A new president's private office was set up in the same timeframe.

Furthermore, at the beginning of 2020, the CoR welcomed a new political group: the Greens, which quickly required adequate resources to manage their secretariat and support their members.

**Senior management procedure.** In September 2020, a new open recruitment procedure was launched to recruit a director for the Directorate for Legislative Work 1. Chaired by the CoR president, Apostolos Tzitzikostas, the selection panel finalised the selection procedure in early 2021. With the appointment of a woman to lead the directorate, the gender balance in the CoR's senior management is approaching equilibrium.

**Enhanced talent management strategy – new mobility policy and job shadowing.** Through the integrated talent management strategy, the institution aspires to contribute to the performance of staff, their continuous development, reinforcement of commitment and, consequently, enhanced performance by the institution.

In 2020, the enhanced mobility policy came into effect. The aim of the new, reinforced mobility policy is to create the best conditions to flexibly meet the expectations of staff, the management team and the institution as regards optimised use of budgetary and human resources.

The job shadowing project ran for the second time in 2020 and attracted 22 participants. Nevertheless, the Committee-wide telework scheme in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic lowered interest and proved to be a serious obstacle to the 2020 job shadowing exercise. In any case, a new call for expressions of interest was launched in October for 2021.

**Social dialogue - appraisal and promotion.** After the first two years under the new appraisal system, a staff survey was held to analyse the functioning of the recently introduced assessment scheme and amend it if necessary. A new social dialogue was initiated by the secretary-general at the request of the staff representatives, aiming to increase the transparency, objectivity and measurability of the annual assessment procedure and facilitate the comparison of merits in the promotion procedure. Both parties reached an agreement in December 2020 on assessment and the new system, including the update of the EVA COR tool, was implemented in early 2021 for the annual assessment of the 2020 year.

**New organisational chart.** Following the “*Going for Impact*” initiative devised by the secretary-general and the results of various task forces set up on this issue, the Bureau adopted a new organisational chart on 7 December 2020. The new organisational chart, which entered into force on 1 March 2021, better reflects the CoR's priorities and the goals that the institution aims to achieve. The deputy directors in each directorate now have a specific role in strategic planning, quality control and follow-up of activities to achieve impact in addition to their daily management duties within their respective, newly created teams.

The new organisational chart has also been an opportunity for staff mobility at all levels (over 60 staff moves were organised in this context).

In addition, further steps were taken to implement the strategy for more resource-efficient multilingualism agreed with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and linguistic units were merged to create more synergies whenever possible.

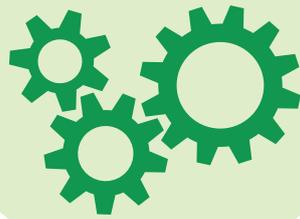
**Equal opportunities.** Overall, the equal opportunities (EO) situation at the CoR in 2020 can be considered satisfactory despite the COVID-19 pandemic, and significant improvements have been made in terms of gender balance, the accessibility of our premises and equipment and the fight against discrimination, harassment and unconscious bias. It is important to highlight the target of 40% female managers by the end of the term of office, a target set by the 2020 EO Action Plan in order to tackle the issue of gender balance in management positions. This target will nearly be met (37.5%) in 2021, following the appointment of one female director.

Various initiatives and events have been cancelled or postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but new ways of raising awareness about EO topics have been developed through HR update, the L&D newsletter and the Library Newsletter (News Harvest).

**Building policy, security and safety.** The long-term building policy was further implemented in 2020 and a series of infrastructure-related measures to strengthen the security of staff, buildings and the IT environment were adopted. The refurbishment of the VMA building began in 2020, and should be finished by the beginning of 2021.

**Adaptation of buildings due to COVID-19.** Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, the Committees' common strategic areas (such as entrance halls, elevator zones and meeting rooms) have been adapted. Signs, hydro-alcoholic gel dispensers and Plexiglas screens have been installed and the ventilation system adapted. Cleaning procedures have also been revised to comply with the new health standards.





## CORE HR PROCESSES

## LEGAL FRAMEWORK

HR activities are carried out in accordance with the Staff Regulations, the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union, the Financial Regulation and the implementing provisions for these legal acts adopted by the CoR. The Staff Regulations and the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union are interpreted and applied by the CoR in a manner consistent with the approach taken at inter-institutional level by the relevant inter-institutional working groups and committees. Furthermore, the relevant case-law and recommendations of the Court of Auditors and EU Ombudsman are also taken into account.

## ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES AND WORKFORCE PLANNING

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on all the CoR's professional activities in 2020. The CoR proved itself to be a modern and flexible organisation and managed to adapt quickly to the new circumstances. Meetings and events were held remotely at first, and then using hybrid arrangements. Procedures were transformed into paperless workflows and telework became the norm for all non-critical staff members most of the time if their presence in the buildings was not required. These rapid changes required adjustments in terms of allocation of resources and workforce planning and speeded up the modernisation of the administration. This process will likely continue in the coming years, as the institution adapts to the post COVID-19 world.

The number of posts in the establishment plan has not changed since 2018, staying steady at 491. However, COVID-19 did make certain activities in the institution obsolete or unsuited to the new situation. This produced several opportunities to create synergies and transfer resources to more relevant business areas. The need to reinforce the CoR digital strategy immediately became clear for instance. Several persons and posts were reallocated during the year and additional contract staff were recruited to support this vital project of modernisation. Ushers and drivers were also redeployed to more administrative support tasks and a number of projects geared to rethinking the activities in the printshop will continue in 2021.

The rationalisation of the translation department also continued in 2020. Part-time in-house secondments of officials from the linguistic units to the most critical core business fields continued, as well as merging of linguistic units to create more synergies and potentially free up resources for the operational services.

In the beginning of 2020, a new political group was formed at the CoR. The Greens were a completely new entity and therefore quickly required adequate resources to manage their secretariat and support their members. A contract staff member was recruited to ensure business continuity. An additional post was transferred from the General Secretariat to the political group by converting a permanent post into a temporary one. This enabled the CoR to recruit a secretary-general (head of unit) to manage the secretariat of the Greens. Additional human resources will be allocated to the group in 2021.

The effort to reorganise and reallocate resources had a positive impact on the overall share of operational jobs in the past few years. The CoR distinguishes between three categories of jobs: operational (directly linked to the institution's political and communication activities), overhead (administrative support, including HR and logistics) and neutral (linguistic jobs). The share of operational jobs steadily increased from 46% in 2013 to 55% in 2020.

### Establishment plan posts

The establishment plan refers to permanent and temporary posts available to the CoR under the EU budget.

Following the 5% staff cuts (1% per year between 2013 and 2017) imposed on all EU institutions under the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2014–2020, corresponding to 26 posts at the CoR, and the implementation of the cooperation agreement with the European Parliament, resulting in an additional net transfer of 24 posts from the CoR to the Parliament in 2016, the number of permanent and temporary posts has remained stable since 2018. No new posts were added to the establishment plan in 2020.

Important changes nevertheless occurred with regard to staff allocation and the distribution of posts. The creation of the Greens as a new political force at the CoR resulted in the need to shift resources. The continuous efforts to reinforce the institution's political priorities, as well as increased digitalisation and efficiency of working methods, have created a greater and permanent need for specific expertise in several domains.

### Budgeted posts

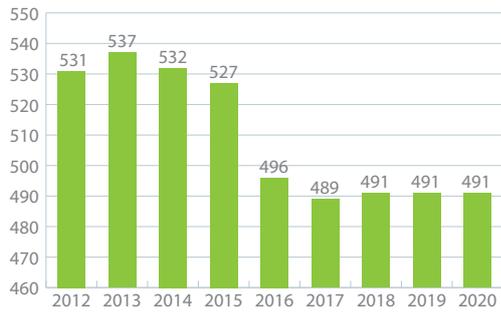


Chart no. 1: Trend in posts 2012-2020

Through the appropriate procedure under the Financial Regulation, the CoR had to adapt the share of its AST and AST/SC posts as well as the number of permanent posts versus temporary posts in order to align the structure of its establishment plan with its current staffing needs. This operation was budgetarily neutral and did not have an impact on the total number of posts available to the CoR.

The trend in permanent and temporary posts is shown in chart 2.

### Permanent posts



Chart no. 2: CoR trend in posts

### Temporary posts



Despite its increasingly important political role in the EU decision-making process and its democratic legitimacy, the CoR still suffers from structural understaffing compared to other EU institutions and bodies.

### Establishment plan posts per EU institution

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>European Committee of the Regions</b>	<b>531</b>	<b>537</b>	<b>532</b>	<b>527</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>491</b>	<b>491</b>
European Commission	25065	24944	24781	24428	24044	23756	23671	23613	23578
European Parliament	6655	6713	6786	6739	6797	6743	6683	6633	6633
Council of the European Union	3153	3153	3101	3072	3040	3027	3031	3033	3029
Court of Justice of the European Union	1952	2015	1991	1998	2073	2063	2063	2068	2073
European External Action Service	1670	1670	1661	1645	1628	1611	1595	1634	1699
European Court of Auditors	887	891	882	872	862	853	853	853	853
European Economic and Social Committee	724	734	720	713	670	665	668	668	668
European Ombudsman	66	67	67	66	66	65	65	66	69
European Data Protection Supervisor	43	45	45	46	47	56	64	71	84
	40746	40769	40566	40106	39723	39328	39184	39130	39177

Table no. 1: Establishment plan posts per EU institution\*

\* Source: Resource allocation on 1 January each year – Official Journal of the European Union

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/budget/www/index-en.htm>

### Salary appropriations

The HR-related budget has remained relatively stable in recent years. The costs for permanent staff are slowly rising due to inflation, statutory adjustments and conventional career development.

The total budget for contract staff has steadily increased in the past few years and even required an internal budgetary transfer to meet the needs of the service in 2020. Due to new political and administrative priorities related to the new presidency and the new secretary-general, the number of contract staff members increased from 49 in 2019 to 56 in 2020. Emphasis was placed on the need for further reinforcement of projects related to the CoR digital and IT strategy to ensure that the institution remains a model modern public administration, fit for the post COVID-19 world. Other resources were allocated to replacing mid- to long-term absences, so that business continuity could be ensured under difficult circumstances.

## WORKFORCE

### CoR workforce in 2020

The CoR's active workforce on 31 December 2020 comprised 601 people, of whom 538 were statutory staff and 63 non-statutory staff (seconded national experts, trainees, interim staff, external service providers, etc.). Given the CoR's general recruitment policy, based on a slightly restricted range of grades published for officials, its population is relatively young compared to the other EU institutions (see age pyramid in chart 5). The average age of a CoR statutory staff member in 2020 was 46.8, with the average female population being slightly younger (46) while the average male population was about 47 years old.

### CoR Employment on 31 December 2020 (statutory staff members)

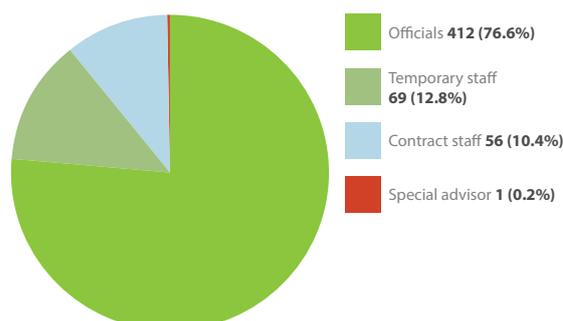


Chart no. 3: CoR statutory staff members on 31 December 2020

Since the CoR, like many other EU institutions, is located in Brussels, it is not surprising to see that Belgian nationals are the most represented nationality among staff, but in general, there are no serious geographic imbalances with respect to the other Member States. The CoR's recruitment policy strictly follows the requirements of Article 27 of the Staff Regulations, aimed at recruiting staff members of the highest standard of ability, efficiency and integrity, selected on the broadest possible geographical basis from among nationals of Member States of the European Union.

As regards gender, the ratio between male and female members of staff has almost reached parity (see Chapter 4.1 Equal opportunities), but further efforts as part of its strategy for equal opportunities are needed to facilitate access and encourage female candidates to apply for senior management positions.

### CoR statutory staff by nationality on 31 December 2020

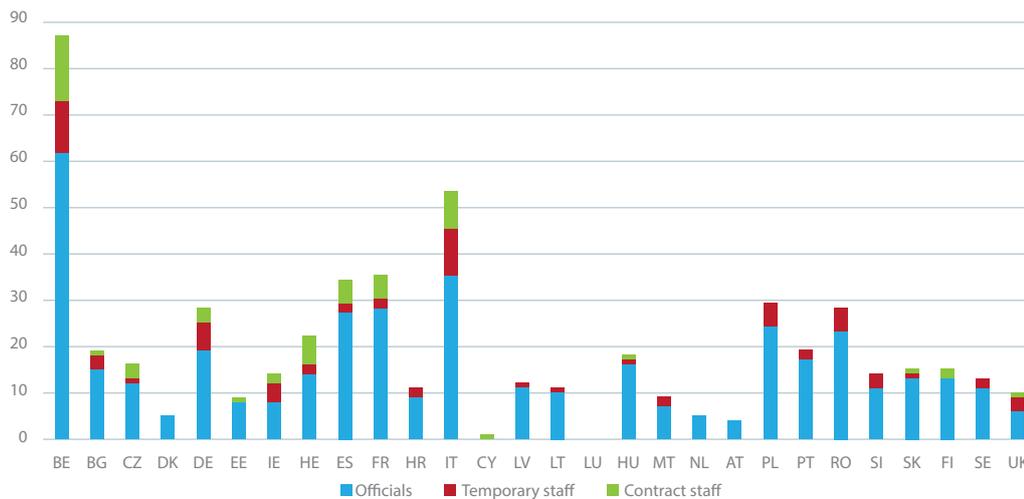


Chart no. 4: CoR statutory staff by nationality on 31 December 2020

### CoR statutory staff by age and gender

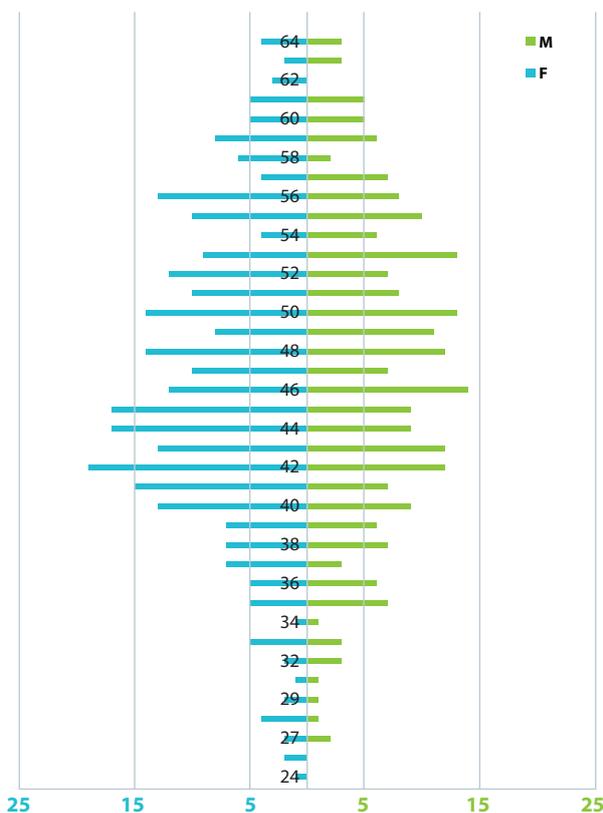


Chart no. 5: CoR statutory staff by age and gender on 31 December 2020

The active ageing of staff is an important challenge for our institution since more than 38% of staff is over 50 and the average age is over 46.8 (see table 2). It is therefore an important aspect on which we must reflect in order to make the most of all the experience and knowledge accumulated by the staff and to support them throughout their careers, in terms of motivation, the training on offer and the transmission of experience/knowledge, etc.

### CoR statutory staff by age in 2020

Statutory staff by age	%	figures
24 - 29 years	2.8%	15
30 - 39 years	14.3%	77
40 - 49 years	44.7%	240
50 - 59 years	31.7%	170
60 - 66 years	6.5%	35
Average		46.8

Table no. 2 CoR statutory staff by age in 2020

### Officials

The workforce is spread over three function groups: AD, AST and AST/SC. On 31 December 2020, the CoR employed 412 officials in active service, broken down into 251 ADs, 156 ASTs and 5 AST/SCs. The AD/AST ratio is 60.9% to 37.8%. AST/SCs make up about 1.2%, but are gradually increasing their share of the number of posts. This is shown in rounded numbers in chart 6 and varies between the directorates depending on the core business (staff members in the Directorate for Translation mainly belong to the AD function group, while AST staff members are in the majority in support-providing directorates such as Human Resources and Finance). Due to the limited size of the workforce and the need to optimise human resources given the above-mentioned staff cuts and efficiency measures, staff members are required to be more versatile and to cope with both content-oriented and administrative tasks.

Versatility is indeed becoming an increasingly important requirement for all institutions. Over the years, EPSO has also reduced the number of options and profiles published in the annual cycle of open competitions for generalists and most of the institutions have been looking for general profiles in order to ensure future vocational development and offer further career/mobility opportunities for their staff.

### Composition of officials, temporary and contract staff on 31 December 2020

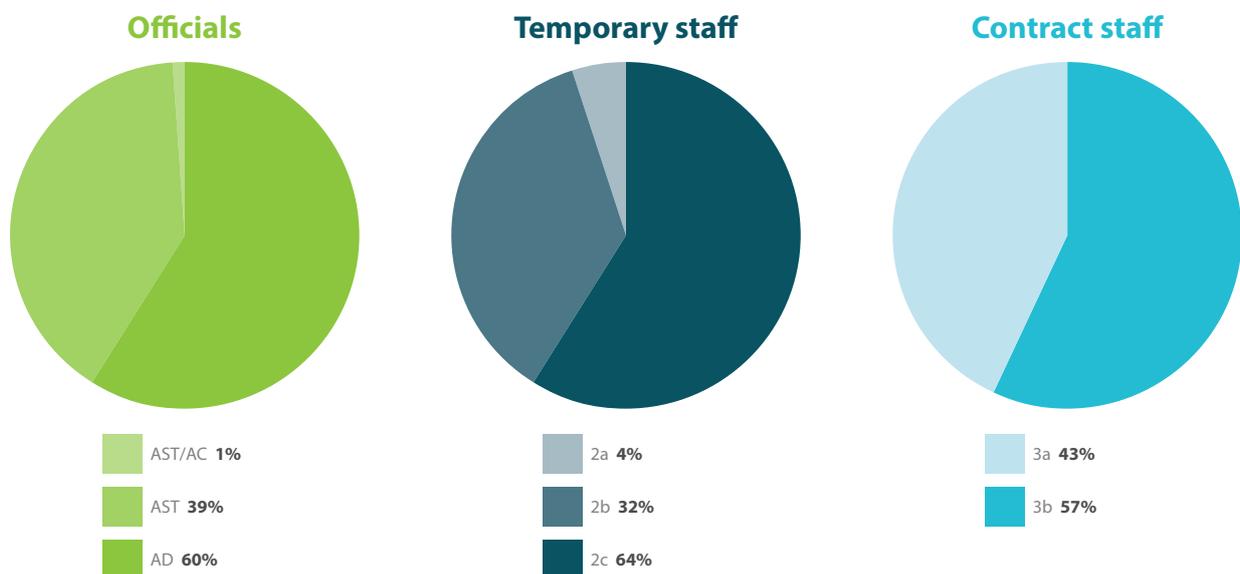


Chart no. 6: Officials, temporary staff and contract staff on 31 December 2020

Only a limited number of AST posts could, therefore, be labelled with a view to their gradual conversion to AST/SC (posts entailing mainly secretarial or clerical tasks). One additional AST post was converted to AST/SC in 2020.

### **Temporary staff**

The CoR employs three categories of temporary staff: temporary staff occupying temporary posts (2a), including the secretary-general, temporary staff in the political groups and the president's private office (2c) and temporary staff on permanent posts (2b) recruited when the publication of a vacancy notice was unsuccessful and/or the recruitment of a permanent staff member was not possible.

On 31 December 2020, 69 people were employed as temporary staff: three on 2a posts, 21 on 2b (permanent) posts and 45 in the political group secretariats and the president's private office (2c posts).

The increased number of 2c posts corresponds to the creation of the new political group at the CoR (the Greens). This was created in 2020 and is likely to grow in 2021 in terms of staffing numbers in order to reach the minimum critical mass allowing its secretariat to provide an adequate level of service to its members.

### **Contract staff**

Contract staff cover both permanent needs (category 3a, function group I – ushers, drivers, manual workers, etc. on open-ended contracts after two initial fixed-term contracts) and temporary needs in order to deliver specific projects and/or provide support over a limited period of time in the event of absence, high workload, etc. (category 3b, function groups II, III and IV).

On 31 December 2020, the CoR employed 56 contract staff members, including 21 on an open-ended basis.

The contract staff market in Brussels is fairly dynamic and competitive due to the presence of large institutions able to attract staff and offer long-term assignments. In order to attract the most competent contract staff members, the AECCE decided to award longer-term contracts (one to two years, potentially renewable) in order to allow the newly recruited staff members responsible for new projects/activities to acquire the necessary knowledge and ensure stability and business continuity until the full completion of the projects for which they were recruited. The number of short-term assignments, typically limited to six months and mainly intended to cover maternity leave or long-term absences, has proportionally decreased in parallel. Such replacements were, as a matter of priority, covered by temporary internal reassignment of existing staff between units/directorates.

During the pandemic, the number of maternity leaves and requests to replace colleagues was lower.

The pandemic revealed that some technical profiles included among GFI contract staff might become obsolete in the coming years and a discussion has been initiated on the best way to ensure an appropriate level of business continuity in some technical support functions while using the EU budget in an optimised way.

### **Special Advisor**

The CoR employs one special advisor (medical officer) on a daily basis, recruited under the provisions of Article 123 of the CEOS. The medical officer's contract was renewed for a period of two years on 1 January 2020 and since she was so busy due to the pandemic, her working hours were extended to reach the normal number of working hours for all staff (40 hours a week).

### **Interim staff**

The CoR can also turn to interim agencies to meet temporary needs in terms of secretaries/assistants, conference technicians, nurses, etc. Twenty people performed interim missions for the CoR in 2020. In 2020, the CoR also joined a new framework contract with interim agencies organised by the European Commission.

### **Seconded national experts**

In order to benefit from their specific competencies, regional expertise and networks, the CoR also encourages the exchange of best practice by hosting experts from national, regional and local public bodies in its core business services.

No new national experts were recruited in 2020 and the secondments of five such experts were extended. As of 31 December 2020, the CoR employed ten seconded national experts for a total budget of EUR 572 202, two of them at no cost to the institution. A new promotion campaign is planned for 2021 in order to encourage public authorities at all levels of the European Union to consider seconding their staff to the CoR in order to contribute to the EU decision-making process by involving the national, regional and local authorities and encourage the exchange of ideas and best practices.

### Service providers

Due to the specific nature of some functions and profiles, expertise is provided by external service providers made available to the institution by framework contracts (IT helpdesk, security, communication services, etc.). In total, 21 service providers supported the work of the CoR in 2020.

### Trainees

The CoR organises three types of traineeships:

#### *Standard traineeships*

Like the other European institutions, the CoR organises two annual sessions for paid Blue Book trainees (February and September). Since spring 2020, the number of paid trainees has increased from 23 to 24 per session due to the new political group, the Greens, being set up at the CoR. During the spring period (February to July 2020), no trainee was allocated to the secretary-general's private office due to the new appointment. Therefore, in 2020, 47 trainees were hosted at the CoR.

#### *Short-term study visits*

In addition, in a bid to offer EU graduates the opportunity to gain professional experience and insight into the institution, non-remunerated internships are offered at the CoR. During 2020, eight trainees were hosted at the CoR under this type of internship (plus three short-term study visits which started in 2019 and continued into 2020). A new framework for short-term study visit trainees at the CoR was adopted by the secretary-general in September.

#### *Internship for government officials*

This programme is primarily intended for government officials from the Member States or from a state which is an official candidate for accession. The government trainees may come from national, regional or local authorities. The CoR did not host any government interns in 2020.

**In addition,** Irish trainees have been taken on to help translate the *acquis* and to gain experience working at an EU institution in connection with the end of the Irish language derogation, under the agreement reached with the office of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. One short-term study visit started in the English and Irish Translation Unit on 1 October 2020. Thus, 58 young people were hosted at the CoR as part of the internship programme offered in 2020.

Year	Standard Blue Book traineeships	Short-term study visits	Internships for governmental officials
<b>2020</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>
2019	46	34	1
2018	46	26	1
2017	46	23	0
2016	43	17	1
2015	40	14	1
2014	40	21	2
2013	40	14	1

Table no. 3 Overall number of internships offered at the CoR

In 2020, a new version of the online application form for standard traineeships was released and equal opportunities priorities taken into account by adding the following features:

- Candidates can indicate their gender via a non-specified open space
- Disabled candidates can contact the social assistant for support during the application process.

Gender data were collected comparing the breakdown of applications by gender with the number of selected trainees by gender.

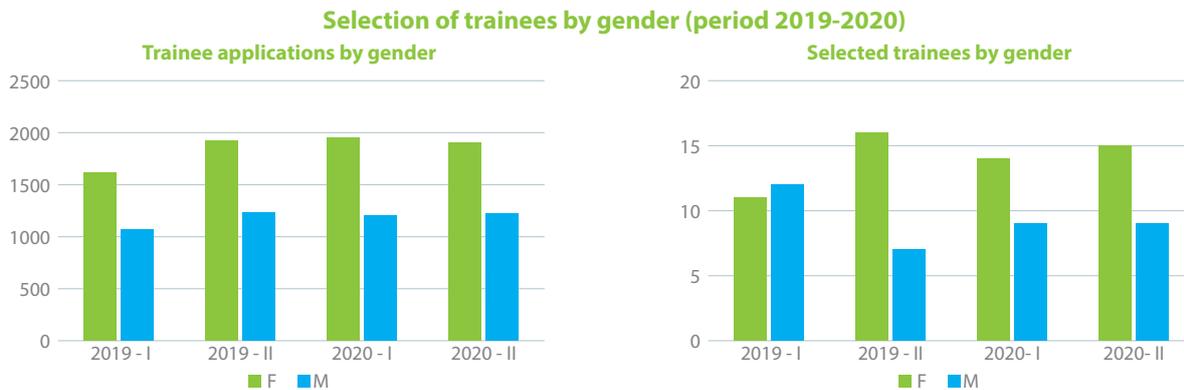


Chart no. 7: Trainee applications by gender

Chart no. 8: Selected trainees by gender

### Traineeship experience during the COVID-19 outbreak

Both 2020 traineeship periods were affected by the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the circumstances, trainees who started their first traineeship in February 2020 were given the option of returning for a second term.

Throughout the lockdown, the same rules applied to trainees as to staff:

- telework was strongly recommended, despite not being stipulated by Decision 7/2020 on traineeship programmes at the CoR.
- teleworking from their home country was not allowed. Exceptional cases were approved by the social assistant and medical officer.
- In the first term, a flat-rate sum of EUR 100 was paid to cover the cost of using personal IT equipment and in the autumn period (September 2020 to February 2021) OnePCs were distributed to all trainees.

Trainees arriving from red zones in September were given the option of being reimbursed up to EUR 100 for the PCR test.

### The Y-Factor

The Y-Factor project is a biannual initiative, designed and carried out by the CoR's trainees. During each traineeship, the trainees have the opportunity to develop a project from a youth perspective according to their political interests and preferences. Previous events include a conference on European cultural heritage, a photo competition and workshops on youth deradicalisation.



In the context of the COVID-19 crisis, the Y-Factor project "MIND THE DIGITAL GAP", hosted on 11 and 12 June 2020, comprised a two-day event consisting of a series of webinars and interactive workshops on the theme of inclusive digital access to education, culture and civic participation, geared towards public administrators, individuals, practitioners, civil society groups and other stakeholders. After the event, a handbook was drafted setting out extensive information obtained through research, stakeholder contributions and the valuable discussions which made the Y-Factor event a real success.

## Joint Services

In order to reach the necessary critical mass and benefit from economies of scale, the CoR shares two directorates with the EESC through an administrative cooperation agreement which is subject to regular revision. The latest agreement entered into force on 1 January 2016 and was extended until 31 June 2021.

The Joint Services (JS) comprise translation services and logistics, including security/safety, IT and telecommunications, infrastructure, EMAS (Eco-Management and Audit Scheme), catering and the printshop. While staff management and staff assignments are handled by each Committee independently, staff members working in the Joint Services serve the two Committees and their members irrespective of where they are themselves assigned.

The Joint Services account for around 34% of the overall workforce (see chart 9).

### Ratio of joint to own services (posts)

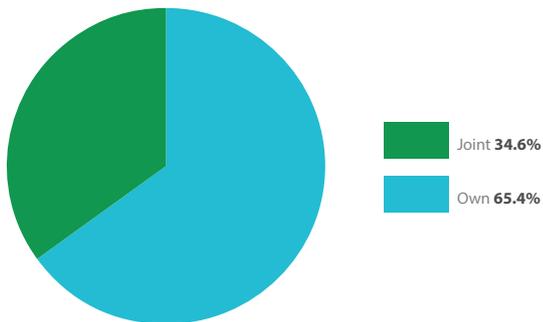


Chart no. 9 Ratio of joint to own services (posts)

## Linguistic families – merging of certain translation units

The merging of translation units continued in 2020 on a case-by-case basis.

The French and Greek units were formally merged on 1 July. The next mergers planned for early 2021 are the Dutch and German, the Latvian and Lithuanian and the Spanish and Romanian units.

Each language section placed under the responsibility of a head of unit is supervised by a language coordinator (head of sector) according to the needs of the service.

## RECRUITMENT

### Officials

Whilst the Lisbon Treaty strengthened the CoR's political role and enlarged the scope of its consultation remit, the CoR was confronted with total staff cuts of around 9% between 2013 and 2017. Although the number of posts for officials has remained mostly stable since 2018, it is still a challenge to provide the resources needed to further strengthen the CoR and its consultative and political role. In order to attract more experienced staff members from the other European institutions, the CoR has gradually extended the range of grades published (from AST1-AST3 to AST1-AST7 and from AD5-AD7 to AD5-AD11).

The CoR is one of the few institutions to publish nearly all its vacancy notices on its internet website, thus opening them up and bringing them to the attention of successful EPSO candidates. The Committee's recruitment policy is based on competence in accordance with Article 27 of the Staff Regulations. The selection panel does not receive the candidates' personal information (age, nationality or contact details) to ensure that it analyses the applications solely on the basis of professional profile and the needs of the recruiting service.

2020 saw a decrease of around 30% in the number of published vacancy and recruitment notices, with 33 notices published compared to 48 in 2019. This decrease can be partially explained by the COVID-19 pandemic which caused a

decrease in the number of recruitment procedures in the first half of the year. However, it needs to be underlined that the number of procedures picked up in the second half of the year to reach the historical average for the CoR. It also bears highlighting that 2019 was a record year in terms of notices published following the results of the internal competitions. Ten new officials were recruited from both EPSO and CoR internal competition reserve lists. Twelve officials left the CoR for another EU institution, while five colleagues transferred in from another institution in 2020.

	2018	2019	2020	variation between 2019 and 2020
Vacancy notices	41	48	33	- 31.3%
Newly recruited officials	21	23	10	- 56.5%
Transfers in	8	9	5	-44.4%
Transfers out	17	13	12	- 7.7%

Table no. 4: Permanent staff changes in 2018-2020

The CoR has seen a sharp decrease in the number of eligible candidates and interviews organised, despite the aforementioned measures to attract as many candidates as possible. The 31 vacancy notices published for permanent officials in 2020 attracted only 63 eligible candidates with 57 candidates who were invited for interview (an average of around two candidates per vacancy compared to three in previous years). This is due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the absence of new reserve lists for certain staff categories, specifically following delays at EPSO because of the COVID-19 pandemic and due to Court judgments stipulating that new approaches must be identified to correct some legally weak practices.

In this context, the CoR actively participated in several task forces organised by EPSO to improve cooperation at inter-institutional level, to increase the diversity of the candidate pool and to improve the speed, efficiency and effectiveness of EPSO selection boards. The CoR is also actively involved in inter-institutional open competitions via its presence on the EPSO Management Board, the EPSO Working Group, selection boards and several topical working groups (CAST permanent, management of reserve lists, etc.).

With a view to promoting and enhancing the CoR's attractiveness as an employer, the Directorate for Human Resources and Finance is also involved in the inter-institutional working group on employer branding initiated by EPSO in 2019 (see chapter 4.3.2) and is continuously working to raise its profile on the EU job market.

#### *Recruitment of a new director for the Directorate for Legislative Work 1*

In September 2020, a new recruitment procedure was launched to recruit a director for the Directorate for Legislative Work 1. The procedure was open to internal, inter-institutional and external candidates. The vacancy notice was published in the 24 official languages in the Official Journal of the European Union and a social media and media campaign was organised to reach as many potential candidates as possible. The selection panel comprised representatives of the six political groups and was chaired by the CoR president, Apostolos Tzitzikostas. The recruitment process was finalised at the beginning of 2021. The re-publication resulted in an official being appointed on 1 April 2021.

#### **Other staff**

With the number of posts decreasing from 537 in 2013 to 491 in 2020, the recruitment of non-permanent staff members is still important as a means of providing flexible and temporary support, in particular to meet the overall goal of strengthening the Committee's political activities and delivering the deep-rooted changes in its structure. As for the recruitment of officials, there was a slight decrease in the number of recruitments of non-permanent staff members in the first half of the year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the second half, the rate of recruitment picked up and ultimately increased compared to 2019.

### *Political groups and presidency (2c temporary staff)*

Three posts for 2c temporary staff were published for the political group secretariats in 2020, including one middle management post. Two procedures launched in 2019 were finalised. This entailed the organisation of written and oral tests before a selection panel comprising representatives of the administration, of the respective political group and of the Staff Committee in order to guarantee conditions similar to EPSO open competitions, with due regard for COVID-19 safety measures. Two of the procedures launched in 2020 will be continued in 2021.

The CoR presidency also changed on 12 February 2020 with the start of the new CoR term of office. Four officials were seconded from the General Secretariat to the private office of the CoR president, Apostolos Tzitzikostas, for the duration of his term, along with five temporary staff members and two contract staff members who were recruited for this purpose or whose contract was extended.

### *Other non-permanent staff (3a and 3b contract staff and 2a and 2b temporary staff)*

Thirty-one selection procedures for contract/temporary (2a and 2b) staff members were organised in 2020. For that purpose, recruitment officers contacted more than 567 potential candidates in order to verify their interest and availability, using an internal database for unsolicited applications or relevant inter-institutional tools such as the EPSO Recruiter portal. The reply rate was usually around 50% – in total, approximately 253 candidates replied positively and their CV was forwarded to the selection boards. The candidates with the most relevant profiles (137) were invited for an interview (almost four candidates per job opportunity).

As a result, 37 new contract and temporary staff members were recruited in 2020 (this includes procedures started in 2019). Furthermore, 21 non-permanent staff members were granted extensions to their existing contracts. In parallel, 15 non-permanent staff members resigned from the institution in 2020.

The relative increase in 2b temporary staff recruited on permanent posts is mainly due to the difficulties EPSO has been experiencing during the ongoing pandemic and following several legal cases stipulating that its working methods, selection procedures and proceedings must be adjusted to comply with the new requirements set by the legislator. The switch to fully remote tests and competitions required an important effort in terms of selection board members, correctors and source persons and the competitions have been heavily delayed which has an impact on EPSO's capacity to deliver new reserve lists in good time. Due to some internal changes within several large institutions, no competitions for permanent linguistic staff are currently being organised. The institutions there do not have a sufficient pool of available candidates to appoint new officials in the translation services. Many specialised profiles are also in short supply (finance, public procurement, etc.) resulting in an increased number of temporary staff recruited on permanent posts.

	2018	2019	2020	variation
Newly recruited non-permanent staff members	31	23	37	+ 25.8%
Extensions of existing contracts	30	18	21	+ 16 %
Resignations	15	20	15	+ 25 %

Table no. 5: Changes regarding temporary and contract staff in 2018-2020

### **Follow-up of internal competitions**

After more than 20 years, in 2018-2019 the CoR organised two internal competitions open to all categories of staff to provide competent and loyal CoR statutory staff with new career opportunities and to retain its most talented non-permanent staff members and prevent brain drain. Since the publication of the results in 2019, the CoR was able to recruit all successful AST/SC and AST candidates and 21 out of 26 AD successful candidates (100 and 84% absorption rate respectively).

### **Organisational aspects relating to recruitment**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on every organisational aspect of the selection and recruitment process. As previously mentioned, there was a slight decrease in the number of procedures during the first lockdown in the spring of 2020. Since then, the number of procedures is as before or even higher - in the case of temporary and contract staff

members. The Recruitment sector managed to adapt quickly to the changing circumstances and no selection procedure was cancelled due to the health crisis. All files and procedures were completely paperless and organised efficiently and correctly. Candidates were exclusively invited for videoconference interviews, often making the selection process speedier and less burdensome for both candidates and selection panel members.

HR representatives participate in every selection interview organised by the institution, as do representatives of the secretary-general's private office for the recruitment of AD officials, ensuring equal treatment of candidates and contributing their knowledge and experience to improve the quality of the selection process. HR contact points were also trained and appointed in each directorate to that end.

### **SysPer and assistance to staff**

The HR tool SysPer and its integration into the CoR's broader IT landscape ensure that all staff members, old and new, can perform almost all HR-related tasks in a completely paperless manner. The SysPer Helpdesk (with only one staff member working on the development of the tool, its daily maintenance and the follow-up of queries and questions from staff and management) ensures that this vital functionality is available to all staff members. In 2020, 439 requests for assistance, or about 39 requests per month, were handled. This was a significant increase compared to 2019 (350 requests), most likely related to the increased telework and paperless procedures at the CoR.

### **HR-related statistics**

Digitalisation also allows the CoR to use highly accurate and up-to-date HR data to ensure the proper management of the institution and its available resources, while responding quickly to regular requests for information from the Permanent Representations and other official bodies. In 2020, the CoR received 50 external requests for staff data, as well as about two to three internal requests for information to assist management in directing its HR policy. The HR statistician manages the establishment plan, updates the operational organisation chart twice a month, assists all internal services with their requests for HR-related statistics and contributes to all HR reporting (annual HR report, summary HR leaflets, CoR budget booklets for the annual budgetary procedure, etc.).

### **Reimbursements of travel expenses**

Only five candidates coming from abroad asked for their travel and subsistence costs to be reimbursed in 2020, compared to 31 in 2019. Though the number of reimbursements had been steadily decreasing, this major drop is of course due to the fact that no on-site interviews were held in 2020 because of the COVID-19 measures. Expenses were reimbursed following the obligatory medical visit for new colleagues.

## **CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

### **Talent management strategy**

The integrated talent management strategy is based on a three-strand approach, which includes the following main focus areas:

- building competencies;
- supporting professional development and encouraging mobility; and
- promoting diversity.

By means of these three main clusters of focus areas, the institution aspires to create the opportunities needed for staff to stay motivated and develop their competencies and skills whilst at the same time giving managers more flexible tools to perform their management tasks. All initiatives included in the talent management strategy should ultimately contribute to staff performance, staff engagement and, as a result, the performance of our institution.

## Competency framework

The CoR competency framework sets out the institution's fundamental values, core competencies and management competencies. The tool is used as an objective basis for a growing number of HR processes (recruitment, appraisal, career development, internal mobility, etc.).

The competency framework is a **useful and efficient tool**, which contributes to a **coherent HR environment**.

The competency framework continues to be a basic assessment tool during the yearly appraisal interviews. Staff's performance is based on competency, efficiency and conduct in the service. Each staff member is assessed based on nine competencies (12 for managers).



Chart no. 10: CoR competency framework

## Career guidance (staff and trainees)

Career guidance aims to provide individual counselling for staff by identifying and recognising skills and interests in order to develop staff members' careers in the interest of both staff and the institution: individual career counselling, interview simulations, workshops and training courses are among the services provided. During 2020, the career guidance service met 24 clients (same number as in 2019). In total, 44 individual sessions were scheduled. The extended telework regime due to the COVID-19 pandemic has hampered the requests for career guidance, partly due to the general uncertainty, partly due to the intense workload.

## Enhanced internal mobility policy

The Mobility service, part of the Learning and Development team, is systematically given prior notice of forthcoming CoR vacancy notices and helps link supply and demand for career moves within the institution for staff who have actively sought its assistance.

In 2020, the enhanced mobility policy came into effect. The aim of the new, reinforced mobility policy is to create the best conditions for flexibly meeting the expectations of staff, the management team and the institution as regards optimised use of budgetary and human resources.

The management team of each directorate has been encouraged to consider internal transfers within the directorate strategically and to be in regular contact with their staff (AD, AST and AST/SC) for possible transfers within or between the units of the directorate. This may relate for instance – but not exclusively – to colleagues who have been performing a sensitive function for a considerable period.

In the same vein, once a year the mobility cell contacts staff who have worked in the same post for seven or more years. This exercise is called "7+ year talks" and was run for the first time in 2019.

In December 2020, the Mobility service contacted 42 staff members (69 in 2019) who had spent seven years or more in the same position. Through this targeted communication, the mobility team invites these colleagues to contact the career guidance officers, who can help them to consider career prospects on a voluntary basis and career development options in the mid and long term (develop new skills, reorient their career, etc.).

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Internal reassignments	13	14	11	18	21	11	6	33

Table no. 6 Number of internal reassignments per year

### Job shadowing

The job shadowing project is part of the “supporting professional development and encouraging mobility” cluster of the talent management strategy.

The job shadowing project ran for the second time in 2020. Twenty-two staff members (21 in 2019) expressed an interest in being paired up for a four-month period with colleagues from other services on a voluntary basis. The goals are to become familiar with a new working environment, expand knowledge and awareness of the institution and all its departments, explore and share best practices and at the same time have the opportunity to meet new people and network.

In June 2020, a new event closed the second exercise: a closing fair, which allowed people to give oral feedback, share best practices and provide suggestions for the next exercise.

The Committee-wide telework scheme in place in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic lowered interest in the job shadowing exercise. In the evaluation round from July to September 2020, it became clear that most people tried to continue the exercise virtually, but telework turned out to be a serious obstacle.

In October 2020, the Mobility service launched a new virtual job shadowing exercise for 2021.

### Exit interviews

One important component of the institution’s goal of retaining experienced, competent and valuable staff members is the exit interviews conducted by the Mobility service with all colleagues leaving the institution to take up employment elsewhere. This enables the institution to gain valuable insight into its strengths and areas for development as a workplace. During 2020, the service conducted four exit interviews with staff leaving or who had already left the institution to take up employment elsewhere.

### The specific DT competency framework

The Directorate for Translation (DT) has invested considerable effort in applying the competency frameworks of the two Committees. The directorate has created a specific DT competency framework by merging the frameworks of the two Committees and integrating the DT-specific competencies into it. Several branches have grown out of this DT competency “trunk”.

One of them is related to recruitment interviews. The competencies were broken down into behaviours that can be observed and evaluated during an interview. Examples of questions were developed that would allow the candidates to prove, mostly with specific examples, that they possessed the competencies. An evaluation grid was also developed based on the same competencies and behaviours and reflecting the DT’s priorities.

Another branch grown from the competency framework is the DT appraisal guidelines, the objective of which is twofold. First, to bring more transparency to the staff assessments and dialogues at the DT. Each staff member can see what the expected performance is in the different competency areas and know on what basis they are being assessed. Second, to bring more coherence to the assessments across translation units. Staff members were involved in developing the guidelines via a focus group run by an external facilitator.

## DT knowledge base

The DT has created an online knowledge base, which is designed as a repository for specific technical and procedural information relating to the tools and business processes in use at the DT. The knowledge base is divided into three sections:

**Procedures:** the main business processes used in the work of the DT and which apply to all staff and all units. The procedures are adopted formally, in a paperless approval process.

**Instructions:** step-by-step instructions on how a task should be performed, technical troubleshooting and various background technical information. The instructions complement the procedures.

**Manuals:** detailed operations to be carried out using specific tools or applications, often needing to be updated more frequently as a result of, for example, software updates. Over time, all DT-authored manuals will be centralised within the knowledge base, converting them from PDF documents to structured web pages, which are more easily searched and updated.

The knowledge base also stores training materials, video tutorials, etc

## LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT DURING THE PANDEMIC

The CoR Training service swiftly transformed all face-to-face training courses to online format within weeks of the start of the extended telework scheme in place since the outbreak of the pandemic.

This required a massive amount of work throughout the year and prepared the ground for a new way of organising and delivering the training courses available.

Several courses on new topics (like 'how to improve teleworking', 'managing your team at a distance', 'managing remote teams in times of crises', 'survival kits for teleworkers', lunchtime conferences, etc., including on health and well-being issues) have been offered to staff and managers since April 2020.

On average, staff spent 3.99 days on training. The number has decreased substantially compared to 2019 mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the organisation of online training sessions where typically courses are shorter. This means that the decreasing trend, which started in previous years, has continued as even before the pandemic, training courses were designed to be shorter modules as experience shows that in reality staff do not have time to spend full days training. In addition, considerable learning and development takes place in the form of informal training, e-learning, MOOCs (massive online courses) and other platform-based activities, which is not reflected in the figures, as they are not recorded in EU Learn and therefore not part of the statistics.

year	Total number of training days	Average (all staff)
<b>2020</b>	<b>2138.41</b>	<b>3.99</b>
2019	2823.46	5.33
2018	2507.94	4.73
2017	2906.04	5.5
2016	3156.97	5.93
2015	3717.01	6.96
2014	4035.18	7.54
2013	4208.50	7.34

Table no. 6 Trend in number of training days (1 training day = 8 hours)

### Training session for newcomers

Newcomers to the CoR are welcomed by the HR services and given a presentation of the institution on their first day at work. An e-learning course (two modules) for newly recruited staff allows for a speedy integration into the institution and team. The course covers a range of topics, related both to HR (working rights and obligations, procedures, working

conditions, ethics, etc.) and to the institution as a political body (remits, organisational chart, areas of responsibility, the opinion process, etc.).

In 2020, the CoR welcomed 34 new colleagues. About one to two months after their entry into service, all newly recruited staff were invited to a newcomers' session where additional information is provided on a number of HR-related topics. This also provides new staff with an ideal opportunity to meet with the HR departments in an informal setting and raise any questions they may have regarding their new place of employment.

In 2020, all newcomers' sessions were organised digitally and complemented in early 2021 by one additional session where all new recruits in 2020 were formally welcomed by the secretary-general.

## **Management training**

The continuous development and training of managers is a strong component of the CoR's strategic HR policy. Management training courses are organised regularly on specific topics, delivered by both in-house trainers and external experts in the field. In addition to the training courses organised at the CoR, managers can attend inter-institutional management training provided mainly by the European School of Administration.

### *Management training for middle management*

Since 2015, the CoR has organised structured management programmes for its middle and/or senior managers. These sessions create a valuable platform for aligning policies with practice and contributing to coherent leadership. In 2020, five management workshops were held for CoR middle managers focusing on the new appraisal procedure, managing change, respect and dignity for a high-performing team, HR session on equal opportunities, gender balance network, the newly adopted decision on assistance for colleagues dealing with disabilities, the decision to be adopted on dignity at work and a lunchtime session on the benefits of self-organising teams.

In total, 19 managers participated in one or more workshops throughout the year.

### *Management training programme for managers below head of unit level*

Deputy heads of unit, heads of sector and team leaders were officially recognised as a new functional management level in 2017. Since 2018, the CoR put in place an in-house training programme to give specific support to this level, with the objective of both improving management skills and enhancing coherence at this level. In other words, aside from the purely pedagogical and awareness-raising benefits, the programme aims to contribute to the creation of a stronger management team below head of unit level.

In 2020, the programme covered topics such as the new appraisal procedure, managing change, respect and dignity for a high-performing team, HR session on equal opportunities, gender balance network, the newly adopted decision on assistance for colleagues dealing with disabilities, the decision to be adopted on dignity at work and a lunchtime session on the benefits of self-organising teams.

33 colleagues took part in the sessions.

### *Management coaching*

In addition to training, CoR managers can also request assistance in the form of (individual, peer, duo or group) coaching provided by external HR experts in order to tackle specific situations at work, manage change and further develop their potential and management skills. Eight managers benefited from assistance delivered by an external coach in 2020, compared to four in 2019, eight in 2018, four in 2017, three in 2016 and five in 2015.

### *360-degree feedback exercise for senior managers*

As a means of assisting managers in their professional development and supporting the development of a feedback culture based on trust across the institution, the CoR regularly organises 360° feedback exercises for its middle managers. In 2020, the CoR Training service adopted a new policy making the feedback exercise compulsory for middle managers and asking them to participate at least once every five years. In the 2020 exercise, nine middle managers took part.

## **General training**

### *Service request-based training*

During the consultation procedure launched by the CoR Training service each autumn, managers have the opportunity to identify and define training needs to be addressed during the following year. These training needs are usually collective

needs for the unit (or a sector within the unit), including teambuilding or away-day type events, but can also be specific training courses for individuals. As a follow-up to the annual consultation process, during 2020 the CoR Training service organised 12 service request-based, tailor-made training courses on various topics for targeted populations among staff. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 situation only one away-day could be held in 2020 although 17 had been planned and were finally postponed until 2021.

#### *Tailored training courses for all staff*

The CoR Training service organises in-house training courses for its staff on a variety of topics covering service-related, individual, financial and political areas, as well as those relating to internal procedures and practices. In total, 171 training courses (38 pre COVID-19, 133 during COVID-19, both tailor-made and more standardised courses) were organised by the CoR Training service throughout the year. All training courses from March onwards were swiftly transformed into digital format to give staff the opportunity to attend training very early on in the pandemic.

Furthermore, pursuant to a service-level agreement, CoR staff members also have access to a wide range of general training courses provided by the European Commission and the European School of Administration. Moreover, in 2020 an agreement was reached with the European Parliament, giving CoR staff access to some of their training courses, especially on disability awareness and skills for security staff.

#### *Own initiative training*

In addition to the courses organised centrally, all staff members may request own-initiative courses, provided they are in line with service needs and operation. In 2020, 13 staff members were authorised to attend such external own-initiative training courses, covering both language and non-language training.

### **Language training**

#### *Classroom training*

The CoR Training service organises internal language training for its staff, generally provided by the European Commission. In addition, staff have the option of attending external language courses, either in Brussels when an appropriate course is not available in the institutions, or abroad, after completing the basic in-house training cycles. For translators, a special scheme has been set up to ensure appropriate language coverage within each unit and to maximise take-up of language skills. Due to the pandemic, the special scheme was put on hold in 2020.

As a significant proportion of CoR staff are allocated to the Directorate for Translation, and in view of the fact that languages are a working tool for the translation services, a major part of the investment in language training is for translation staff.

In 2016, a new language training policy was introduced to focus language training more strictly on those language skills which are essential for the service, evidence of which can be seen in table 10. The continued effects of this policy - as well as the influence of the pandemic - can be seen in the decrease in participation in 2020.

All staff	Number of days	Number of enrolments	Training days Directorate for Translation	%	Training days all other services	%
<b>2020</b>	<b>1051</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>68%</b>
2019	1176.75	163	444.75	37.80%	732	62.20%
2018	1277.44	207	492.25	38.53%	785.19	61.46%
2017	1441.50	219	544.50	37.77%	897	62.22%
2016	1640.48	238	732.28	44.64%	908.20	55.36%
2015	2008.71	306				
2014	2134.30	316				
2013	2139.58	314				

Table no. 7 Participation in classroom language training 2020 (1 training day = 8 hours)

## IT training

The CoR Training service organises end-user IT training for its staff to keep up-to-date with the latest developments in the IT tools in use at the CoR, either as full day training or, since 2018, also as short mini sessions of 1.5 hours each on specific topics. Furthermore, to give participants the opportunity to solve IT-related problems and learn new IT skills from a specialised IT consultant at an individual pace and at a suitable time, individual one-hour IT coaching sessions are offered and widely used.

In 2020, the Training service organised 32 IT training sessions with an external IT trainer, with a total of 96 participants, of which 14 sessions of individual IT coaching were held with 41 participants. In addition, a total of 14 participants attended a specific, targeted IT training session provided by other institutions (EESC, European Commission).

## Training at the Directorate for Translation

The Directorate for Translation, which has its own dedicated training centre in EU Learn, designs, organises and delivers training courses for its staff on the IT tools used specifically by translators and translation assistants. In 2020, the directorate delivered one session for newcomers (Newcomers' Infosession – Introduction to DT tools/Welcome to the DT), as well as one hands-on introduction to DT tools, three technical workshops on Managing the Quality of Language Assets, and six modules on Preparing documents for outsourcing.

Furthermore, it organised six modules on Introduction to Terminology and IATE, including four hands-on courses.

The Directorate for Translation also organised an Introduction to Clear Writing at the Committees and an online Kick-off Workshop for Clear Writing Trainers.

## Thematic training for translation staff

The Directorate for Translation had to cancel the thematic seminar organised as part of the "Translators' Masterclass" on the Lifecycle of an Opinion.

In September 2020, it held a successful online conference for translation staff entitled Translation and the Politics of Discourse, featuring speakers from international organisations, academia and the private sector, and attended by 300 participants from several EU institutions and external participants.

With the cancellation of several planned in-house training courses due to the health situation, the Directorate for Translation developed several video tutorials for DT staff on specific subjects: New Evaluation Workflow; Studio User Settings; Studio Plug-Ins; Alignments; Euramis Retrieval; Downloads Tabs; TPT; Pivot; EESC Info; as well as a few modules specifically designed for new colleagues.

## Internal training with internal trainers

In 2020, 50 internal (regular or one-off) trainers delivered 64 training sessions on financial matters, CoR internal procedures and IT tools, with a total of 15.9 training days (127 hours) and 440 individual enrolments. Because of the pandemic and the switch to online courses, in order to guarantee the teaching quality of the courses, the number of participants per session had to be considerably reduced (sometimes less than half). As a consequence, the number of sessions has more than doubled compared to 2019.

## Training session on LinkedIn Learning

In 2020, the Training service purchased 100 licenses to access the LinkedIn Learning platform, which comprises more than 16 400 online courses (with roughly 300 added each month), in seven languages and on multiple topics, providing gradual progression from beginner to advanced levels of learning.

100 licenses valid until 31 March 2021 were distributed; 92 are actively used, with 1 704 courses viewed and 361 completed.

## CAREER

### Annual appraisal

The annual appraisal enables both the staff member being assessed and the assessor to periodically review the ability, efficiency and conduct in the service, achievements and areas of improvement of the staff member, to review the job description, to identify possible relevant training needs, to define objectives for the following year or to discuss further professional objectives and possible internal mobility. The staff report is a key feature of objective-based management, and one of the instruments enabling the Appointing Authority to compare the merits and aptitudes of staff members who are qualified to carry out duties and responsibilities at a higher level.

With the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the new electronic workflow and paperless treatment of appraisal reports in EVA COR proved its worth and most interviews took place online. For the appraisal exercise for the 2019 reference period, the assessors drew up 466 staff reports for officials, contract and temporary staff. Only one appeal was registered (as in 2019).

After the first two years under the new appraisal system, the Staff Committee organised a staff survey which revealed that colleagues wanted more transparency, objectivity and measurability of the annual assessment and a more understandable comparison of merits under the promotion procedure. The secretary-general agreed to open up a social dialogue in order to improve the assessment and promotion schemes. Following this joint social dialogue with the Staff Committee and staff unions, an agreement was reached in December 2020 with regard to the annual assessment procedure. Some of the most important changes are: reintroduction of the role of director as coordinator in order to ensure consistency of the reports across units; use of drop down menus to assess each individual competency in the relevant IT tool (called EVA COR); a summary assessment for each of the three main sections of the report (ability, efficiency and conduct in the service) and a final general assessment accompanied by a numerical value (points). In the event of disagreement on the general assessment or the content of the report, each staff member may address the coordinator first and/or lodge an appeal; the formal appeals are first examined by the joint appraisals committee and then by an appeals assessor. In order to allow each staff member to assess their performance level compared to other staff members in the directorate, a transparency list will also be distributed for each directorate setting out the breakdown of assessments per function group.

The new system, including the update of the EVA COR tool, entered into force in 2021 for the 2020 reference period.

### Promotion

The annual promotion procedure allows for the career progression of officials, based on a comparative assessment of the merits of those eligible for promotion.

In the 2020 promotion procedure, 113 officials (69 ADs, 43 ASTs and 1 AST/SC) were promoted out of a total of 420 officials employed as of 1 January 2020. The overall promotion rate was 26.9% (compared with 25.8% in 2019).

In addition, three contract staff members were reclassified in a higher grade and seven temporary staff members in the political groups were assigned to a post with a higher grade.

Given the health situation, the promotion procedure had to be reorganised. A Sharepoint-based team site was successfully implemented to make all relevant documents available online to the college of directors and the joint promotions committee members.

In parallel with the staff assessment, a joint social dialogue on promotion was carried out in 2020 to improve the promotion scheme. The dialogue continued until March 2021 and the promotion procedure will be adapted based on the findings.

### Certification

In accordance with Article 45a of the Staff Regulations, the certification procedure is designed to enable a limited number of officials in the AST function group, from grade AST5 upwards, to be appointed to a vacant post in the AD function group, with no change in grade, provided that they have been selected to take part in a compulsory training programme, have followed this programme assiduously and have passed the relevant written and oral examinations; each official must also have been selected for the administrator post in question following the publication of a vacancy notice.

In 2020, new general implementing provisions were adopted by the CoR in order to improve the selection procedure for candidates for certification. During the 2020 certification exercise, launched in October 2020, the Appointing Authority decided to admit two CoR officials to participate in the training programme. Because of the pandemic, the European School of Administration conducted certification training courses and exams remotely.

Since the introduction of certification procedures in 2005, 23 eligible AST officials have been selected to take part in the training programme and 22 of them successfully completed the programme. Sixteen certified officials have since been appointed to an AD post either in the CoR or in the other EU institutions; the appointment rate is thus 73%.

### **Other activities of the Career sector**

Apart from these yearly procedures, the Career sector also manages personal files for the whole institution. In 2020, 84 new personal files were processed for probationary officials, new temporary or contract staff members, incoming transfers, reinstatements, SNEs.

Moreover, in connection with the requirements of Article 45(2) of the Staff Regulations (ability to work in a third language before the first promotion), 10 files were followed up and 16 new files opened.

Furthermore, 28 files implementing decisions concerning leave on personal grounds for officials, unpaid leave for agents and reinstatements were processed.

The Career sector manages five mailboxes processing a yearly volume of more than 3800 requests for assistance or questions.

## **WORKING CONDITIONS**

The CoR has a comprehensive and solid framework in place to ensure a proper work-life balance for staff and managers. It provides an adequate level of flexibility whenever needed, in order to respond in the best possible way to the diversity of situations and expectations encountered by staff, managers and the institution. During the COVID-19 pandemic, every effort has been made to maximise the use of the possibilities offered by the existing CoR decisions and to apply them with the necessary flexibility in order to adapt to a changing environment, new needs and emerging challenges for staff and managers alike.

### **WORKING TIME**

#### *Telework*

Telework has been in place at the CoR since 2012. A new decision on telework was applied as from 1 January 2020, with a flexible system providing for an improved work-life balance for all and better monitoring mechanisms for managers. The previous single formula of a yearly exercise starting on 1 January was replaced by the option of starting a structural telework regime at any point of the year and with formulae lasting between three and 12 months. New patterns were included, such as one half day a week (if the other half day was not worked) and one day a week. The objective was to allow staff and managers to work together to identify the best formulae to suit everyone and to provide for sufficient flexibility to adapt the patterns wherever necessary. As a result, the number of structural teleworkers registered at the start of March 2020 was 78 (in 2019, there were only 60 structural teleworkers).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, from 17 March 2020 telework became the principal working mode for all staff whose job so allowed. It was initially mandatory during the first lockdown (March-May), then the default mode, and then mandatory again during the second lockdown (October onwards). During all these periods, all staff had to encode occasional "force majeure" telework whereby working hours were not registered, even during the May-October period when working in the office was possible, in order to grant staff greater flexibility.

In order to support staff as much as possible during this difficult year, a general derogation allowing staff to telework from abroad was adopted in the summer and before Christmas in order to allow staff to meet their families and cope more easily with the difficulties. In addition to that, staff who suffered particular social or medical problems due to the pandemic were able to benefit from a flexible application of the derogation for telework from abroad, based on an advance opinion of the social assistant or medical officer, depending on their individual situation. The assessment criteria used by the medical officer and/or the social worker in the period leading up to the summer holidays were rather strict but further loosened in

the summer in order to allow the maximum number of staff possible to visit close family and friends. In total, 121 adapted teleworking decisions were adopted on this basis (some being renewals).

Apart from that, a general teleworking derogation to work from abroad was adopted by the secretary-general for the period immediately before Christmas, which was used by 74 people. In total, over 2020, 110 staff members were allowed to telework from abroad on an exceptional basis. The CoR therefore showed flexibility and humanity with its staff members while, as a general rule, enforcing the Staff Regulations provision whereby staff members must live at their place of employment.

#### *Flexitime*

In the first quarter of 2020, flexitime was a well-established feature of the CoR's policy on working time, meeting both the expectations of staff in terms of work-life balance and the interest of the service. The flexitime scheme was smoothly implemented and political groups EA and ECR announced their intention to join the scheme (the political groups were originally excluded and only PES participated from 2018).

From 17 March 2020, working time was managed based on a common understanding between staff member and manager, while respecting core working hours. Encoding of working hours was suspended because of the pandemic: all days were encoded as telework days and were therefore neutralised. However, the scheme continued to function. In particular, staff could use up their credit to take time in lieu, and as a supporting measure managers could also add credit every month in the event of high workload.

With the continuation of the pandemic and generalised telework, a broad discussion began in the second half of 2020 on how to best design working time in a pandemic setting. This discussion will be closely linked with the decisions on telework and will feed into HR decisions in 2021 for the post COVID-19 setting.

#### *Overtime*

Officials in grades AST1–AST4, AST/SC1–AST/SC6 and contract staff in grades FGI–FGII are entitled to compensatory leave or, if the workload and the interest of the service do not allow for compensation, to remuneration for the overtime worked.

The Staff Regulations provide for financial compensation if the needs of the service do not allow hours worked to be taken within two months. With regard to overtime, 2020 was unusual. A dramatic decrease in the amount of overtime worked was registered compared to previous years, probably due to the shift to Committee-wide telework which changed the way working time was organised.

Unlike previous years, when overtime was managed by a specific CoR application and the payments could only be organised twice a year, since 1 January 2020 overtime has been managed in Sysper with overtime paid automatically the second month after the generated overtime, as is the case in other institutions. With the combination of the introduction of this new, very different system in terms of deadlines for taking time in lieu on the one hand, and the pandemic situation generating a very specific and unexpected organisation of time management most of the year on the other hand, very limited overtime was compensated in hours in 2020. A new overtime decision, which includes the new features, was drafted in 2020, for adoption and communication in 2021.

Calendar year	Overtime declared (number of hours)	Average per month on 12 months	Overtime worked in working days	Remunerated hours
<b>2020</b>	<b>295.46</b>	<b>24.36</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>283.46</b>
2019	1088.23	90.69	137.63	190.3
2018	1112.35	92.7	139.04	283.6
2017	702.54	58.55	87.81	465.55

Table no. 9 Overtime 2017-2020

### *Shift work and stand-by duties*

The joint security service of the CoR and the EESC works under particular conditions and schedules – and under significant pressure. In particular, security staff need to be available during the Committees’ operating hours and reachable at all times. The work structure of that service, with a working scheme combining shift work (during the Committees’ operating hours) and stand-by duties (for the rest of the time), ensures far greater availability and improved responsiveness. Four CoR staff members allocated to the security department participate in these work schemes. 2020 was the fourth year with this work structure and the third with a new online declaration form for stand-bys enabling more flexibility and greater reliability. Experience throughout the year has shown that the scheme is working to the satisfaction of all stakeholders.

### *Working patterns*

The Staff Regulations provide for a number of working arrangements, including part-time, parental leave and family leave. Under certain conditions, these flexible work arrangements constitute a right for staff.

In 2020, those working patterns were used by a relatively limited number of staff, mostly women. Take-up of these options decreased significantly compared to previous years, with a big decrease in the number of requests for parental and family leave. In particular, the number of staff members granted parental leave in 2020 was nearly half the 2019 figure.

The travel restrictions due to the pandemic may be the principal explanation for this reduction. In previous years, staff typically used some types of working pattern as a form of additional free-time, especially in the case of short-term parental leave and special part-time (time credits with half-time).

However, developments in terms of the number of working patterns in future will need to be monitored in order to identify any new trends.

	Part time	Parental leave	Family leave
Number of decisions	118 (2019: 156)	70 (2019: 106)	4 (2019: 15)
Number of staff members concerned	62 (2019: 78)	47 (2019: 81)	4 (2019: 8)
<i>Women</i>	48	37	2
<i>Men</i>	14	10	2
<i>AST</i>	22	15	2
<i>AD</i>	40	32	2

Table no. 10 Working patterns in 2020

### *Absence management*

Consolidating the institution’s policy on absences was a priority in 2020. A wide range of measures were taken in order to underline the importance of tackling this issue, with the focus on understanding the reasons behind absences and ways of supporting colleagues who have been absent as they return to work.

Follow-up of long-term absences and repeated short-term absences continued to be closely monitored, for example by requesting medical reports and/or organising medical checks, whenever necessary.

In addition, staff members with frequent short-term absences were systematically called for a conversation with the medical officer.

In terms of sick leave, 2020 was an unusual year. In particular, some colleagues were COVID-19 suspect or COVID-19 positive during the year, and a relative increase in the number of instances of long-term sick leave was noted at the end of the year, perhaps due to the peculiar and difficult circumstances. However, overall, sick leave decreased in 2020. Whereas in 2019, 455 staff members were sick for at least half a day (or more) during the year, in 2020 this figure dropped to 369

staff members in a reference population of 546. Moreover, roughly two thirds of CoR staff had between 0 and 7 days of sick leave in the year (one third had no sick leave at all).

The new method for calculating the absenteeism rate includes medical part-time. Using this calculation method, the absence rate evolved as follows: for 2018 it was 4.59%, for 2019 it was 4.53%, and for 2020 it was 4.23%. Sick leave therefore overall continued to decrease in the CoR, but that decrease was offset by some instances of long-term sick leave.

The administration and the Medical service continued to take an approach combining prevention with a proactive, individualised return-to-work policy in partnership with the medical officer, the working conditions service and the line manager.

In 2020, tailored measures put in place to foster a smooth return to work after a long-term absence due to illness resulted in the successful reintegration of 17 staff members after long-term sickness.

## SOCIAL POLICIES

### WELL-BEING AND HEALTHCARE

#### Well-being at work

The social worker intervenes at the request of a staff member or upon referral by the Medical service or the administration.

Advice is mainly provided in the fields of hospitalisation, reimbursement of medical costs, administrative questions related to the Staff Regulations and/or the Belgian administration.

Individual assistance and assessment of financial or other needs (such as household help) is provided when a staff member and/or family member has a handicap, in the event of financial problems, difficult family situations and long-term illnesses, and the coordination of the administrative files.

Coaching and mediation are provided in the event of personal problems, stress and conflicts at work.

The social worker is also the contact point for colleagues and family members of deceased colleagues for grief counselling and administrative procedures.

From 16 March 2020, the following initiatives were set up to support staff members during the lockdown:

- HR update: general information on psycho-social and JSIS-related topics;
- Stand-by and easy accessibility by phone, Skype or WebEx;
- Assessment of the family situation in order to give an opinion for a special telework derogation for telework abroad. Administrative follow-up with the administration;
- Creation of a group of volunteer staff members to help staff during quarantine and illness during the lockdown period.

In 2020, 246 appointments were registered (excluding requests directly handled by telephone or email). This increase of one third compared to the previous year was mainly due to the assessment talks in the telework derogation files due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Appointments related to stress, conflicts at work and personal/family problems continued to be high. The related coaching for coping mechanisms is usually very labour intensive but effective and helpful.

The social worker also provided a theoretical conflict resolution model for drafting the new decision on conflict and harassment at work.

The social worker represented the Committee of the Regions during the six management board meetings of the Joint Sickness Insurance Scheme.

## Healthcare

During 2020, the Medical service and its medical officer in particular focused on the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a special focus on defining the institution's health procedures, following up on suspected cases of COVID-19 and applying the health procedure, including contact tracing, when such cases were identified.

The Medical service was also on the front line when it came to purchasing protective equipment and other COVID-19 related equipment for staff. Notably, 10 000 surgical masks were purchased in April for staff and external contractors who did not have a mask and for medical service staff. Later, in May, 1200 community masks were purchased and distributed to staff and trainees (two masks per person). In order to equip staff with individual bottles of hand gel, 1200 bottles of 250 ml of hydro-alcoholic gel were purchased and distributed to staff and trainees (two bottles per person).

The institution's testing capacity increased in line with developments throughout the year. Therefore, 300 quick serological tests, which determine whether or not a person has COVID-19 antibodies, were purchased in May allowing for quick serological testing of staff who had been sick. Moreover, from October onwards, a contract with a laboratory provided PCR testing capacity for up to 320 tests, with tests performed at the CoR and analysed in a laboratory. It ought however to be underlined that this PCR capacity is accessible only when essential professional travel is involved, or for medical or critical staff, and under no circumstances may it be used for private travel or for other reasons.

In parallel, the Medical service continued to fulfil its mission of designing and implementing the institution's preventive health policy, including pre-recruitment medical examinations, annual medical check-ups, various medical consultations and interventions, delivering opinions on working time-related matters (notably, in 2020, on requests to telework from abroad), endorsement of medical checks requested by the administration, organisation of invalidity committees, etc.

Due to the lockdown, activity decreased in comparison with previous years, but the Medical service used the non-lockdown months, particularly the summer, to organise as many annual visits as possible, because it appeared paramount to ensure appropriate follow-up of staff health in all its aspects, particularly during these challenging times. In parallel, due to the WHO recommendation to encourage flu vaccinations in 2020 in view of the pandemic, more staff members were vaccinated against flu in 2020 than in previous years.

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Annual medical check ups	396	412	442	426	437	<b>206</b>
Pre-recruitment medical examination	23	19	25	31	30	<b>24</b>
Medical consultations	300	261	383	412	374	<b>163</b>
Invalidity committee – completed	4	9	1	4	4	<b>1</b>
– ongoing	3	-	2	1	0	<b>2</b>
– periodic review of previous committees			5	2	6	<b>2</b>
Controls-specialist examinations	11	12	4	19	20	<b>11</b>
Arbitrations	2	-	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
Laboratory samples	469	497	514	474	467	<b>207</b>
Medical attention via nurse	1212	1345	1294	1240	1272	<b>508</b>
Vaccinations	63	108	86	82	84	<b>142</b>

Table no. 11 Activities of the Medical service 2015–2020

The scope of the examinations organised by the CoR Medical service includes, where appropriate – in addition to the standard features of the preventive examination – personalised services such as:

- body mass composition test, measuring the muscle/fat/water ratio;
- eye test (Visiotest);
- individual stress measurement by means of Firstbeat heart rate monitoring;
- colon cancer tests for staff members aged 40 and over and/or with relatives who have had colon cancer;
- personalised nutritional advice.

Particularly during the pandemic, the CoR resolutely concentrates on primary prevention so as to reduce psycho-social risks and burn-out. That is to say: a personalised approach of optimising action on as many factors as possible that determine the health and well-being of the individual staff member (including in the private sphere), going well beyond the traditional, more conventional policy of secondary and tertiary prevention (detecting and remedying pathologies in a timely manner). This includes:

- a holistic, multi-disciplinary approach designed to inform, follow up and assist the person, and build awareness of the importance of developing a healthy lifestyle: possible action on psycho-social aspects, ergonomics, nutrition etc.;
- personalised advice and follow-up: the person is actively invited to follow up interviews with the CoR Medical service.

### **Social initiatives**

The CoR supports collective social initiatives for the benefit of staff members (and their families) and encourages and provides financial backing for schemes to promote social interaction between staff members, for instance for new parents, colleagues with 20, 30 or 40 years of service or retired staff.

Logistical support has also been offered for several activities under the equal opportunities policy, EMAS and the Health and Well-being at Work programme at the CoR.

## **CHILDCARE AND EUROPEAN SCHOOLS**

Via the European Commission's application "Kiddyweb", CoR staff directly manage all files relating to nursery and (after-school and outdoor) childcare facilities. In practical terms, this application enables them to enrol directly, enter required financial and personal data, make changes to the attendance schedule, request reimbursements, etc.

The Rights and Obligations sector, the service responsible for social actions, manages a service-level agreement with the European Commission in this area. Since September 2019, the sector no longer intervenes in the payment process. This is managed directly by the OIB and the PMO.

The average number of children attending after-school care facilities per month in 2020 was 20 (decrease due to the COVID-19 situation compared to the 34 average/month in 2019) while the average number of children attending pre-school facilities (crèches) per month in 2020 was 16 (decrease due to the COVID-19 situation compared to the 25 average/month in 2019).

The same decrease due to the COVID-19 situation affected the number of children attending outdoor activities during school holidays: 20 in 2020 compared to the 53 children in 2019.

## **ETHICS AND INTEGRITY**

### **Non-discrimination, preventing and dealing with harassment**

To ensure a gender balance within the panel of confidential counsellors, a call for male candidates was launched when the mandate of the confidential counsellors was renewed in May 2019. As a result of this call, two male confidential counsellors were appointed in December 2020 and attended six days of mandatory training. Consequently, the panel of confidential counsellors will be made up of three male colleagues out of eight members, which considerably improves the gender balance and enhances the diversity of panellists' profiles.

No staff members contacted the confidential counsellors in 2020.

During 2020, a reform of the current CoR decision on preventing psychological and sexual harassment at work was extensively discussed with all stakeholders, including the confidential counsellors and the CoR Staff Committee to widen the scope and set up an improved informal conflict resolution mechanism. A proposal for a decision on protecting the dignity of staff, managing conflict and combating psychological and sexual harassment is being finalised, for adoption in 2021.

### Whistleblowing and disciplinary matters

During 2020, the CoR opened one disciplinary procedure after a long-lasting enquiry run by OLAF, triggered by a whistleblowing procedure at the CoR. Based on the opinion of the president of the disciplinary board, in January 2021 the Appointing Authority adopted a reprimand as disciplinary sanction.

### Outside activities

Officials in active employment or on secondment wishing to engage in an assignment or outside activity must request permission from the Appointing Authority in line with Article 12b of the Staff Regulations.

In total, 25 external activities (or equivalent) requests were handled during 2020: five of these concerned a speech or publication, nine concerned educational activities, three were requests to stand as candidate or take on a public mandate, two for volunteering, three to be a member of an association or participate in the organisation of elections, and three requests concerned activity after retirement (Article 16). Of those 25 requests, 11 required no formal authorisation.

The number of requests decreased significantly in 2020 from 41 requests in 2019 to 25 in 2020, probably due to the COVID-19 situation. At the end of 2020, a reform of the CoR external activities decision was launched, to be adopted in 2021 with the main objectives of simplifying the process and reducing the number of cases where an official decision is required.

## INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

The Individual rights sector establishes the allowances for staff members upon entry into service and adjusts them throughout their career in the light of changes, notably in their family situation (marriage, birth, education of a child, divorce, change of place of origin, etc.).

The service is in charge of welcoming newcomers on their first day at the Committee and coordinates the regular update of the CoR Newcomers' Guide and the intranet pages of the service, which provide a comprehensive overview of rules, procedures and contacts at the CoR.

Matters related to the privileges and immunities of staff members (special identity cards, VAT exemption and tax issues) are subject to a service-level agreement with the European Commission (DG HR), with CoR staff files being handled by the Welcome Office of the European Commission. Nevertheless, the service manages non-standard requests for certificates and provides staff with complementary services and information.

Throughout the year, in addition to regular and continuous checks and controls (such as conducting annual checks on household allowances, family allowances received from another source, school allowances and annual travel expenses, and the monthly verification of the proper encoding of individual decisions in Sysper), the Individual rights sector prepared and adopted the following individual decisions:

**Entry into service and end of service:** 46 notifications of new recruitments were handled in 2020, as well as 15 decisions on installation or resettlement allowances, 14 decisions on travel expenses, 10 decisions on removals, four decisions on daily allowances and four decisions on revision of the place of origin.

**Family allowances:** 184 decisions on household allowances, dependent child allowances and school allowances, 160 decisions on allowances of a similar nature received from other sources, eight decisions on transfers of school allowances and two decisions concerning the recognition of persons to be considered as dependent children (plus several calculations for similar requests, which were ultimately not granted).

**Seconded national experts:** no notification of secondment and related entitlements.

### Annual verifications of rights

- School allowance concerning 492 children
- Household allowance concerning 42 officials/other staff members
- Annual travel expenses concerning 412 officials/other staff members

### Retirement and pension rights

The handling of CoR colleagues' pension entitlements is outsourced by means of a service-level agreement to the European Commission's Paymaster's Office (PMO). In 2020, the PMO drew up a new service-level agreement replacing the agreements currently in place with the aim of standardising the SLAs at inter-institutional level in order to rationalise the legal framework for the various services it provides to the other institutions. This new agreement also aims to introduce a new costing and payment method in application of the guidelines issued by the Commission's DG BUDG for services provided to the other EU institutions, agencies and bodies. The ultimate aim is to arrive at a system in which the budget is paid directly to the PMO for baseline services (i.e. pension and post-activity files), except for the IT applications NAP and SYSPER which will continue to be paid via annual invoices.

During 2020, nine CoR staff members retired. One staff member was placed on leave in the interests of the service pursuant to Article 42c of the Staff Regulations and one staff member opted to work half time in order to prepare for retirement.

The CoR also has a service-level agreement in place with the PMO for handling a series of files related to the transfer of pension rights. Under this agreement, 11 requests for transfers in of pension rights were transmitted to the PMO during 2020.

Despite the service-level agreement in place, it has proven necessary to provide a front office function in order to prepare the files to be sent to the PMO, manage statistics and provisions for retirement, meet staff to give information and prepare simulations of pension rights for staff.

### Request to remain in service beyond pensionable age

No request to remain beyond pensionable age was submitted in 2020.

**End of service:** 53 staff members left the CoR in 2020 (end of contract, transfer, invalidity, retirement), six files concerning eligibility for national unemployment benefits were handled, as well as ten resignations and twelve files for transfer to another institution. One national expert ended their secondment.

The CoR has a service-level agreement in place with the PMO for handling a series of files related to the termination of service. Under this agreement, the following types of file were prepared and forwarded to the PMO during 2020:

- transfers out of pension rights: two files;
- severance grant: three files.

Agents send applications for unemployment benefits directly to the PMO.



HORIZONTAL HR-RELATED ISSUES

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The CoR equal opportunities (EO) policy focuses on three main areas: gender, disability and diversity.

Under the CoR's second five-year Strategy for equal opportunities (2017-2021), significant improvements were made in terms of gender balance, accessibility of our premises and equipment and the fight against discrimination, harassment and unconscious bias.

In 2020, various actions and events were cancelled or postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic but new ways of raising awareness about EO topics were developed through HR update, the L&D newsletter and the Library Newsletter (News harvest).

The unprecedented situation of a pandemic that turned staff's personal and professional lives upside down imposed Committee-wide telework for all staff, male and female, staff and managers, breaking longstanding patterns in this field.

As a consequence, even more flexible working conditions in terms of telework are expected to be adopted for the post COVID-19 period. Traditionally, telework and flexitime were intended to promote a good work-life balance, making it easier for all staff, including managers, male and female, to combine their responsibilities at work with those at home. However, the extended near 100% telework situation as we have known it during the pandemic has also caused a considerable number of difficulties, such as disconnection from the team/unit, isolation and hyper-connection.

Before new working conditions are established, staff and managers will be asked for their views in order to draw sound lessons from the unprecedented period of telework. This survey will also allow for a proper analysis of data on how telework has affected women as opposed to men, and people with and without children.

Overall, the equal opportunities situation at the CoR in 2020 can be considered satisfactory despite the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly as regards the effort to raise awareness and early signs of positive development in the gender balance in management from 2021 due to the measures taken throughout the last four years and especially in 2020.

Indeed, the **40% target set by the 2020 EO Action Plan for management to tackle the issue of gender balance in management positions** will nearly be met (37.5 %) in 2021, following the appointment of one female director (the target was originally set for the end of the term of office).

However, sustained attention and work are required if the Committee's equal opportunities status is to be further improved, by tackling the remaining imbalances and contributing to the institution's image as a diverse, attractive and motivating workplace.

### Gender

Overall, 49% of all CoR staff members are women. Over the last five years, this ratio has been quite stable, although there has been a consistent shift towards a more balanced ratio over the past five years.

However, the gender balance is not spread evenly over all services and function groups. While the CoR is relatively close to gender parity in the AD function group in general (55% women against 45% men), the proportion of female ADs (66.13%) in linguistic units is still higher than in non-linguistic units (52.13%). However, this difference has been decreasing slightly since 2016 and the number of female ADs has increased significantly since 2016 (see table 11)

As for the AST function group, women are generally over-represented (64.52%) compared to men. Nevertheless, table 11 shows an encouraging increase in men in the AD function group in linguistic units and in the AST function group. In the contract staff population, the CoR is close to gender parity (44.64 %).

Despite the very good results in senior management (37.5%) expected in 2021, sustained attention and work are needed, especially in terms of gender balance in non-linguistic middle management functions (26.67%).

The CoR is committed to achieving a better gender balance in management through a range of incentives, laid down in the annual action plans since 2017. The HR toolkit for managers is also being revised and the new version will include a section on the CoR's EO strategy in order to raise awareness and highlight how managers can commit to and engage in EO matters.

Furthermore, the Network for gender balance in management initiative emanated from staff and is driven by experienced colleagues in the Committee management team. It resonates with the CoR's Equal Opportunities policies and is a good

example of bottom-up engagement. The network began by creating and managing a network of internal mentors to support women in their careers by providing guidance and advice. Mentors, both female and male, were identified via a call for volunteers which resulted in 15 mentors being paired up with 15 mentees. In order to create the best conditions for success, tailored training was provided to the mentors on mentoring and coaching techniques. The first mentoring exercise was launched in October 2019 and ended in March 2020. Unfortunately, with the onset of the first COVID-19 wave, the exercise was not completed. The closure of this exercise and a second call for volunteers will be launched in September 2021 if the health situation allows.

In 2020, a social media campaign for the vacant director post in Directorate B was carried out in order to encourage women to apply for senior management positions and the vacancy notice specifically encouraged applications by women in line with Article 1d of the Staff Regulations.

Overall, targeted measures have been implemented to ensure maximum participation of women in pre-management training, increase women's interest in management functions, make management functions more attractive for female colleagues in particular and strive for suitably balanced representation of men and women in selection boards. In addition, since 2017 the CoR has been committed to publishing middle management positions in its own services internally first. Of course, it will take time for many of these measures to yield tangible results in terms of women in management functions.

In another field where the imbalance is on the side of male representation, three confidential counsellors out of eight are men following the appointment of two new male confidential counsellors in December 2020. This significantly corrected the gender balance and enhanced the diversity of the panel.

**Gender balance at the CoR – overall and management posts (31 December 2020)**

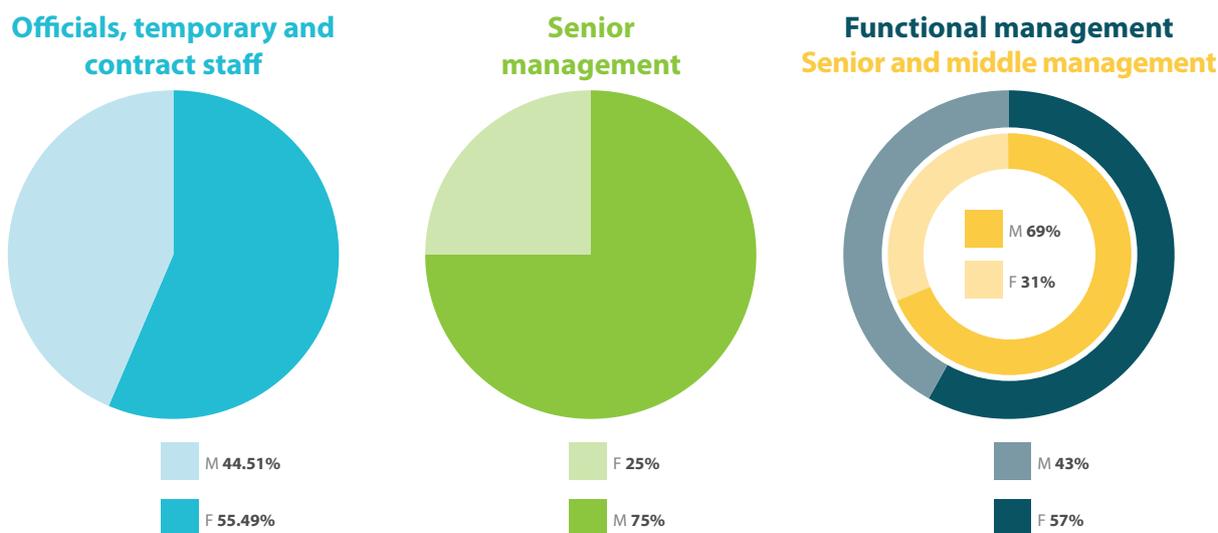


Chart no. 11 Gender balance at the CoR – overall and management posts (31 December 2020)

The majority of colleagues appointed since 2017 to functional management functions (deputy head of unit, head of sector and team leader) are women. This opens up prospects for future appointments to management positions and further improvement of the gender balance in middle management.

## Gender balance at the CoR – per staff category (2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020)

Staff category (Proportion of women compared to men)	2020	2019	2018	2017
<b>Overall</b>	<b>55.49%</b>	55.66%	56.24%	56.39%
<b>AD– general</b>	<b>55.60%</b>	55.73%	55.02%	55.14%
<i>AD – linguistic units</i>	<b>66.13%</b>	68.81%	72.84%	68.75%
<i>AD – non-linguistic units</i>	<b>52.13%</b>	45.83%	46.43%	43.51%
<b>AST – general</b>	<b>64.52%</b>	63.21%	64.95%	66.32%
<i>AST – linguistic units</i>	<b>70.00%</b>	72.22%	77.78%	79.17%
<i>AST – non-linguistic units</i>	<b>63.86%</b>	62.29%	63.64%	64.46%
<b>Contract staff</b>	<b>44.64%</b>	46.94%	46.94%	46.30%
<b>Management – overall</b>	<b>31.11%</b>	31.82%	35.56%	33.33%
<b>Middle management</b>	<b>32.43%</b>	33.33%	37.84%	35.14%
<i>Middle management – linguistic units</i>	<b>57.14%</b>	57.14%	57.14%	57.14%
<i>Middle management – non-linguistic units</i>	<b>26.67%</b>	27.59%	33.33%	30.00%
<b>Senior management</b>	<b>25.00%</b>	25.00%	25.00%	25.00%
<i>Senior management – linguistic units</i>	<b>100.00%</b>	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
<i>Senior management – non-linguistic units</i>	<b>14.29%</b>	14.29%	14.29%	14.29%

Table no. 12 Gender balance at the CoR – per staff category (2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020)

## Gender balance in all institutions – overall and management posts (31 December 2020)

(Numbers rounded up to closest whole number)

Institution	♀ Staff (%)	♀ Managers (%)	♀ Middle managers (%)	♀ Senior managers (%)
European Parliament	59.5	39	38	44
Council of the European Union	57	36	38	32
European Commission	56	43	43	41
Court of Justice of the European Union	61	41	41	40
European Central Bank	45	30	30	30
European Court of Auditors	52	33	34	27
European External Action Service	49	32	33	27
European Economic and Social Committee	65	46	47	40
<b>European Committee of the Regions</b>	<b>55.5</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>32.5</b>	<b>25</b>
European Investment Bank	52	40.5	32	33

Table no. 13 Gender balance in all institutions – overall and management posts (31 December 2020)

Following a service instruction which entered into force in early 2019 with regard to recruitment practices, gender-balanced selection panels are compulsory. In 2020, all 28 selection panels for recruitment of officials, contract agents and seconded national experts met this requirement and were composed of both women and men.

Concerning trainees, gender data have been collected comparing the breakdown of applications by gender with the number of selected trainees by gender.

In 2020, a new decision and a new version of the online application form for standard traineeships were released, which took equal opportunities into account.

## Disability

The CoR, together with the other EU institutions, is committed to implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities of 26 November 2009 (the only international human rights convention to which the EU is a party in its own right, underlining the importance of the issue).

The UN Convention sets out to ensure that people with disabilities receive the specific support they need to fully enjoy their rights in a barrier-free environment. This “social model” and the obligations for employers deriving from it relate in particular to the principles of accessibility and reasonable accommodation (adaptation of the working environment for individuals) and are also defined in Article 1d of the Staff Regulations.

It follows that the CoR’s equal opportunities policy includes a number of practical steps aimed at providing a suitable working environment within the meaning of the UN Convention and the Staff Regulations, namely for staff members having “long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”. Consequently, the CoR has taken several measures to overcome these barriers for the staff concerned, including reasonable accommodation initiated by the Welfare service in cooperation with the Medical service.

In this field, the Buildings Strategy of the two Committees, adopted by the CoR Bureau on 29 November 2017, takes disability fully into account; the principle of “design for all” ensures that buildings are accessible. In 2020, the renovation of the Bertha von Suttner building entrance which began in 2020 installed a revolving door for people with reduced mobility and a worktop adapted for wheelchair users. A study is also being carried out on how to improve the way that information is provided for visually impaired people in the building. The entrance hall of the Van Maerlant (VMA) building will also be renovated in line with “design for all” in 2021.

In the Inter-institutional Working Group on Social Affairs, the legal advisor of the Human Resources Directorate and the CoR’s social assistant were involved in drafting the new guidelines on aid for people with a disability. The new decision replaces the provisional guidelines for the implementation of the budget heading on “supplementary aid for the disabled” which has been in place since 1 May 2014. The main purpose of this scheme is to grant financial support to colleagues or one of their dependents for non-medical costs directly linked to the recognised disability.

## Diversity

Diversity encompasses a wide range of issues related to non-discrimination and equal treatment. Building on efforts made in previous years, the scope of the CoR’s work to promote a respectful and inclusive workplace has been gradually stepped up in the annual action plans. Given the COVID-19 measures, many of the events on diversity topics had to be cancelled in 2020. Nevertheless, via COPEC, the new HR Update and the Harvest Library Newsletter, the institution has continuously raised awareness of this important topic and shared online conferences on important dates related to equal opportunities such as Women’s Day, IDAHOBIT and the International Day of Disability.

Additionally, from October 2020, the CoR Training service has organised specific training courses on unconscious bias for staff and some specific target groups.

Particular attention is also paid to geographical balance among CoR staff. The situation at the CoR can be regarded as relatively satisfactory in this respect compared to that in other institutions. The geographical balance of the management team is largely in line with the general geographical balance within the overall CoR workforce (nationalities which are more represented among the staff in general are also more represented among management).

## SOCIAL DIALOGUE

The CoR actively promotes constructive social dialogue, as this allows for direct and representative staff participation in the drafting and implementation of decisions and policies with an immediate impact on the working environment.

One aspect of social dialogue is the systematic and regular involvement of staff representatives in various bodies established under the Staff Regulations or set up by the institution (Staff Committee and joint committees), as well as in the consultation of staff unions and associations (OSPs) referred to in Article 24b of the Staff Regulations.

In 2020, the Staff Committee was consulted formally on six draft decisions. In addition, intensive dialogue was held with the Staff Committee and other stakeholders on three other decisions; this entailed several series of meetings in an effort to involve staff representatives in the drafting of the decisions as early as possible.

In challenging times such as 2020, cooperation with staff representatives on key topics was even more important than usual. In the context of structured social dialogue, seven meetings were held with the secretary-general in 2020, four of which were part of regular social dialogue. Besides the six regular social dialogue meetings with the Director of Human Resources and Finance, many other ad hoc meetings took place during the year, be it on COVID-19 matters, telework, buildings policy or 360° evaluation.

Finally, two regular meetings were held with the CFAA chairman and the partnership with CFAA members was pursued via CFAA meetings.

In addition to the cooperation with the Staff Committee, two “concertations” took place with the staff unions.

In order to draw valuable lessons from the extended and extraordinary telework regime in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the CoR administration worked closely with the Staff Committee to prepare a telework survey to be sent to all staff and managers in early 2021.

The CoR is looking forward to continuing this policy of intensified cooperation with the Staff Committee on topical issues in the future.

## COMMUNICATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES

### Internal communication

Internal communication is a very important cross-cutting responsibility for the entire political and management team and staff of the European Committee of the Regions.

It goes hand in hand with organisational strategy, corporate culture and “how things get done around here”.

In 2020, as part of the improved outreach requested by the secretary-general, the Directorate for Human Resources and Finance streamlined communication to all staff with a series of weekly newsletters:

- on training opportunities on Mondays;
- on human resources on Wednesdays from the start of the pandemic.

### Learning and Development weekly newsletter

The L&D weekly newsletter started in 2017 with the aim of announcing the CoR training sessions that month. From 2018, the newsletter included relevant training courses at the other institutions, selected by the Training service.

In March 2020, following the new working conditions and environment put in place to adapt to the health measures required by the pandemic (lockdown, telework and subsequent new needs in terms of knowledge, skills, people management and health), the newsletter was adapted to include new formats of learning (online learning platforms, webinars, online sessions, etc.) and new topics linked to new needs such as managing people at a distance, establishing a good balance between professional and private life, teleworking tips, etc.

In 2020, 45 newsletters were sent to CoR and EESC staff on Monday mornings and published on the intranet.

## HR update

On 1 April 2020, the HR update editorial team published the first newsletter of the COVID-19 era with the aim of reassuring staff and providing them with relevant medical and operational information in a timely manner while most staff were working remotely. Published weekly, alternately in English and French for the first few months, it has been published every fortnight since September 2020. The HR update is emailed to staff on Wednesdays and displayed on MYCOR. The editorial team is made up of volunteers from the HR units and in total, published almost 21 newsletters in 2020.

Topics include working conditions, health and well-being, social service support, learning and development sector information, the latest important HR information on the talent management strategy and recruitment, and information on business continuity. It is also used to introduce new colleagues and announce departures and retirements.

## MYCOR

In June 2020, the coordination of the intranet (MYCOR) became part of the remit of the Directorate for Communication so as to increase efficiency and collaboration with other digital teams, and harmonise content across all channels. With the prolonged period of telework, MYCOR played a pivotal role in keeping all staff informed about the institution's latest news and successes:

- more systematic information about CoR key events was published on MYCOR, such as Europcom, CoR plenaries, etc.
- dedicated pages were created to promote the objectives and achievements of the nine taskforces: videos were created for all taskforce leaders to communicate their work;
- a special news item and video from the secretary-general informed staff about the changes in the organisation chart announced at the end of 2020;
- content was revamped on several occasions: for instance on the unit D3 and E3 working conditions, health and well-being sector;
- there were various technical upgrades, such as the new responsive modal popup for the links and applications section;
- video tutorials for different types of users were created and statistics displayed using a new design of infographic.

New internal communication activities will begin in 2021 to build on these new synergies and foster a feeling of belonging and togetherness.

## Group of Communicators meetings

The head of the Learning and Development sector takes part in the monthly Group of Communicators meeting. The first point on the meeting agenda, "Learning zone", includes information on forthcoming training sessions targeting communication topics. In addition, it is an ideal occasion for the institution's communicators to give feedback, put forward suggestions and discuss learning needs:

### CoR employer branding

The CoR participates in the inter-institutional working group on Employer branding initiated by EPSO in 2019. The Directorate for Human Resources and Finance is committed to enhancing the attractiveness of the CoR as an employer, and to strengthening staff motivation and engagement partly by improving its HR communication channels.

### Publication of the CoR's vacancy notices

Currently, to cover its recruitment needs, the CoR publishes vacancy notices for officials and recruitment notices for temporary staff in the political groups (2c) on its internet pages and on the inter-institutional vacancy notices portal. For other non-permanent positions, candidates need either to fill in an application form available on the CoR internet page (temporary staff) or to create an EPSO account and take some tests first (contract staff profiles). The CoR webpages on recruitment and traineeships are the most frequently visited pages.

Its success is most likely due to the fact that the CoR is one of the few institutions to publish its vacancy notices on its internet page (enabling successful candidates of EPSO general competitions to see the vacancy notices and apply as well). The significant interest of the CoR website audience in the traineeship and job pages is an opportunity to further engage with this audience and communicate on the EU/CoR values as an employer.

Therefore, in 2020 the Directorates for Communication and for Human Resources launched a pilot project to redesign the current job and traineeship pages. The project, which will be rolled out in 2021, aims to improve the CoR's reputation as an employer and to contribute to the overall promotion of EU careers.

### **New vacancy notice layout**

The structure and general layout of vacancy notices have changed since May 2020. More emphasis is placed on the attractiveness of each position and the achievements and challenges ahead for each directorate or unit are now highlighted. The job description and job requirements now logically follow the description of the challenges, where the client service describes the talent they are looking for. More straightforward language is used ("you" instead of "the official") and the general layout has improved.

### **Other focus areas?**

Communicating on the CoR working environment by creating stories and videos, promoting CoR values thanks to a pool of staff ambassadors and increasing the CoR's presence on social media are among the initiatives planned for 2021.

## **LEGAL ADVICE AND DATA PROTECTION**

### **HR legal advisor**

The HR legal advisor provides legal analysis, advice and assistance for the various services of the Directorate for Human Resources and Finance on a daily basis. It also draws up draft internal decisions in coordination with the relevant services and the Directorate for Human Resources, drafts replies to requests made under Article 90(1) of the Staff Regulations and exceptionally to claims made under Article 90(2), monitors more complex HR cases, including responding to the EP, Ombudsman and EDPS, and prepares reports to and letters for the CoR hierarchy.

In 2020, the focus was on monitoring the audit on ethics and revamping CoR Decision No 362/2010 concerning psychological and sexual harassment at work. A proposal for a decision on protecting the dignity of staff, managing conflict and combating psychological and sexual harassment, accompanied by a practical guide, was prepared by the HR legal advisor and thoroughly discussed with the confidential counsellors, the Staff Committee and other interested staff members, and should be adopted in 2021.

In 2020, the HR legal advisor assisted the hierarchy with a mediation process with the EP on a long-lasting individual case; in cooperation with the EESC, the legal advisor handled a whistleblowing procedure triggered by an EESC staff member against a CoR staff member. The HR legal advisor was also responsible for a legal action brought by a staff member before the General Court under Article 91 of the Staff Regulations raising questions about the interpretation of the transitional rule on the multiplication factor (Article 7(7) of Annex XIII to the Staff Regulations); this action was dismissed by the General Court in 2020.

With responsibility for disciplinary procedures in the CoR secretariat, the HR legal advisor followed up on an OLAF report requesting the opening of a disciplinary procedure concerning a CoR official. The legal advisor also organised the disciplinary procedure as secretary of the disciplinary board, and helped the Appointing Authority to handle all other related aspects of the case.

As a CoR representative on various inter-institutional networks (i.e. Staff Regulations Committee and CPQS), the HR legal advisor helped improve inter-institutional HR policy on various statutory issues. This resulted in the adoption of Conclusion No 281/20 of the College of Heads of Administration and the implementation of CoR Decision No 132/2020 on aid for persons with a disability. The HR legal advisor was also in close contact with the EESC HR directorate and several times was asked to explain the CoR's HR policy on ethical rules.

As the central contact point for all matters related to data protection within the Directorate for Human Resources and Finance, in coordination with the HR services the HR legal advisor monitored updates and new privacy statements, published on the centralised HR privacy statements intranet page and HR intranet pages.

Since 2020, the HR legal advisor has provided training on ethics and integrity geared to the CoR.

## Support for the Legal Affairs Unit

Following the relevant internal procedure, the HR departments regularly consult the CoR Legal Affairs Unit on a variety of files, such as draft implementing rules, draft replies to requests under Article 90(1) of the Staff Regulations and interpretation of the provisions of the Staff Regulations. In accordance with the Guide to lodging and handling requests, requests for assistance and complaints within the secretariat-general of the Committee of the Regions, the Legal Affairs Unit is directly in charge of preparing draft replies to complaints under Article 90(2) of the Staff Regulations and requests for assistance under Article 24 of the Staff Regulations and representing the CoR in appeals under Article 91 of the Staff Regulations before the General Court of the European Union. The Legal Affairs Unit is also consulted on any other complex and/or sensitive file concerning CoR staff, such as negotiations of amicable settlements, European Ombudsman inquiries, OLAF investigations, administrative investigations, disciplinary proceedings, draft administrative cooperation agreements, vacancy notices and internal competition notices. Full compliance with the Staff Regulations and their implementing rules, as well as with the fundamental rights and principles recognised by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union is paramount; in the event of an appeal, any infringement of these rules may entail the annulment of the relevant CoR decision by the General Court and may give rise to compensation.

### Staff cases in 2020

In 2020, no requests for assistance were lodged under Article 24 of the Staff Regulations. There was however one complaint lodged under Article 90(2) of the Staff Regulations, which was not further contested through an appeal before the General Court. In fact, no legal action against the CoR was brought before the General Court under Article 91 of the Staff Regulations. However, a former staff member challenged the termination of her contract several years earlier before the Belgian courts. The CoR also conducted negotiations with another former staff member in order to reach an amicable settlement and thus avoid litigation. In one pending case brought against the CoR in 2019, the General Court completed the written and oral parts of the procedure. In another case also brought against the CoR in 2019, the General Court delivered a judgment by which it dismissed the staff member's legal action.

### Data protection

The rules on personal data protection are laid down in Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC. A Decision of the Bureau adopting implementing rules concerning Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 was adopted on 9 October 2020 (Decision No 19/2020). In 2020, compliance with these rules was generally good and the data protection officer (DPO) was routinely consulted on its implementation. Under Articles 14 and 31 of Regulation 2018/1725, the DPO received 22 draft privacy statements and records of processing activities.

## SECURITY AND SAFETY

A new electronic system to manage visitor identification and access to the Committees' buildings, called e-visitors, was prepared and configured in 2020 and will be implemented in the first half of 2021. Due to the restrictions following the COVID-19 pandemic (lockdown, etc.), the technical implementation of the system has been delayed.

The renovation of the VMA building entrance hall was launched in 2020 and will be completed in early 2021. This will increase the level of security for members and staff to the same level as that of the entrances to the JDE and BVS buildings, that were renovated in 2018 and 2019 respectively.

The security services at the Committees and the European Parliament continued to work closely in 2020 on topics such as training (before the COVID-19 pandemic), investigations and providing satisfactory security at joint events. Both services are working to ensure that badges are electronically recognised in 2021. This will allow both members and staff to have easy and fast access to the buildings of the other institution. Subsequently, it will be proposed that electronic recognition of badges be extended to the European Commission and the European External Action Service. Both services also cooperate on making sure that the new passageway between the Committees and the European Parliament will provide users of both European institutions with safe and secure access.

The security service is also in constant contact with the European Commission's security directorate, which is the institutions' point of contact with the threat analysis institute of the Belgian State and with the Belgian crisis centre.

It ensures that information is passed on to the other institutions in order to provide comprehensive responses in real time to specific situations that affect them directly or indirectly. It has also proven to be a good channel for exchanging information about the changing measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

During the difficult period of lockdown implemented in order to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, and taking into account other measures taken in this context, the security and safety service has been permanently present on the premises to ensure constant follow-up and dynamic response to the continuously changing challenges.

## BUILDINGS

The CoR and the EESC share premises for their activities. The buildings are mainly managed by the Infrastructure unit within the Joint Services. The physical working environment clearly influences satisfaction, productivity and well-being among members and staff. Currently, the Committees have six buildings at their disposal. One of them, the Van Maerlant building (VMA), is leased from the European Commission through an administrative agreement. The Committees became full owners of three buildings (namely the Jacques Delors building, the Bertha von Suttner building and the Remorqueur building) since their options to purchase were exercised in 2018 and 2019. These options to purchase were provided for in the long-term leasehold contracts. The other two buildings are rented from their respective owners on long leases with an option to purchase: Belliard 68 (B68) and Trèves 74 (TRE74).

A long-term buildings strategy was established and approved by the two Committees in 2017. The strategy contains a set of guiding principles in the field of real estate and provides a generic framework for any specific decision to be taken in relation to the buildings. The guiding principles of the buildings strategy include the geographical concentration of buildings, preference for ownership rather than lease and for exercising options to buy, sustainable buildings management and multiannual planning.

Based on this strategy, on 28 August 2019 the Committees and the European Commission signed an administrative agreement to exchange the B68 and TRE74 buildings for the VMA building. The exchange will take effect on 16 September 2022. This exchange of buildings will result in a loss of 10 440 m<sup>2</sup> of office space for the Committees.

Therefore, alternative solutions have been looked for in order to accommodate the institution's needs in terms of office space. Negotiations with EEAS on the taking over of the lease of the B100 building began at the start of 2020 and should result in an agreement with the EEAS being signed in the first half of 2021. The takeover will take effect from 1 September 2021. As the B100 is adjacent to the VMA building, taking over its lease contract will also have the advantage for the Committees of having a fully interconnected single group of buildings.

### Adaptation of buildings due to COVID-19

Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, the Committees' buildings have been adapted by installing relevant measures in common areas:

- relevant posters and signs have been placed on walls and floors in entrance halls, close to and inside elevators, staircases, conference rooms, meeting rooms, restrooms, toilets, cafeteria and canteen;
- hydro-alcoholic gel dispensers have been installed in strategic places such as entrances of buildings and close to the entrance doors of elevators, staircases, conference rooms, meeting rooms, restrooms, toilets, cafeteria and canteen;
- the ventilation system is functioning with 100% fresh air;
- cleaning procedures have been adapted and a medical disinfection procedure set up to intervene in the event of suspicion of COVID-19 infection;
- the maximum number of people allowed to enter meeting rooms and conference rooms has been determined and indicated outside and inside the rooms;
- Plexiglas screens have been installed in strategic places;
- all catering vending points have been closed except for the JDE cafeteria.

## Main buildings projects in 2020

### *Refurbishment and security work*

Following the terrorist attacks in Brussels in March 2016, the Bureau decided in December 2016 to enhance security in our buildings. Thus, security and renovation work on the JDE entrance hall was carried out in 2018, similar work was carried out in the BvS building in 2019 and in 2020 work began on the VMA building, to be finished in early 2021. The main purpose of this work is to increase the level of security and service for members, staff and visitors. Furthermore, the perimeter of the BvS and JDE (rue du Remorqueur side) buildings have been secured at ground floor level against bomb damage.

### *Upgrading the ventilation and lifts in the BvS building*

Following the technical audit of the BvS building, a study was carried out on increasing both the capacity of the lifts and the ventilation of the meeting rooms. Refurbishment work started in 2020 and is expected to be finished by mid-2021.

### *Renovation of the VMA building*

Following the technical audit of the VMA building, the building will need to be renovated in the short term in order to comply with the regulations in force and extend its lifespan by 10 years. The most important problems concern air quality, noise and lighting. Several scenarios for interior configuration are under discussion with a view to the future use of the building.

### *Future occupation of the VMA, BvS, REM and B100 buildings*

In order to explore the possibilities for occupying the VMA after it has been renovated, and for occupying the BvS, REM and B100 buildings once the B68 and TRE buildings have been given up in September 2022, a proposal for criteria and principles to be applied when allocating space to the various services was presented to the Management Board and approved. In addition, different scenarios for the occupation of the VMA, BvS, REM and B100 buildings during and after the renovation of the VMA were proposed and an agreement reached on the future distribution of office space between the CoR and the EESC for the services currently housed in the VMA, BvS, REM, B68 and TRE buildings.

## IT

During 2020, the main activities were ensuring business continuity and rolling out the CoR Digital Strategy by delivering projects to support political work, document management, communication, HR & finance together with the necessary IT infrastructure and user support services.

The main achievements for the year were as follows:

- The IT unit worked well under **business continuity** measures. The need for user support services to provide intensive support for first-time or inexperienced remote users over the initial period of the COVID-19 pandemic quickly became apparent (double the normal level of requests). After that, the next important priorities were to distribute new portable PCs, in accordance with the priorities established by the resource directorates, and to take over the support for the web conferencing software. Within the space of one week, the onsite first-line Helpdesk converted itself into a remote support service. The logistics operations continued on-site under the constraints imposed (organised in “bubbles”, occupying adjacent offices, etc.). The operational objective for the IT infrastructure was to remotely operate and monitor the IT infrastructure components without creating security holes. This initial objective was quickly reached. Work then continued on the range of IT infrastructure projects included in the annual work plan. With some exceptions (e.g. network operations), this work could be done remotely. Information systems development continued as planned, but without major releases at first. Bringing in new consultants was a particular challenge, and required a very structured way of working.
- For **political work**, the first module of a new tool for processing amendments by the secretariat was developed. There were three major releases of the Agora application. The Members’ Portal was adapted as necessary to support the new mandate. The Phoenix application for managing meeting expenses was adapted to work with paperless

workflows. The Common Consultative Platforms were maintained and developed in line with business requests. Kiklos was developed in accordance with the agreed features roadmap: improved communication and thematic planners. During the February plenary session, IT was at the Members' village together with business to showcase the application.

- For **document management**, new versions of the search engines were deployed to better support paper-poor meetings and the specific needs of the translation directorate. The Adonis document workflow tool was significantly improved to support paperless document workflows.
- For **communication**, the existing catalogue of web services was maintained. The use of Dynamics was developed and improved (e.g. new interfaces with the European Parliament mailing lists).
- For human resources and finance, the staff assessment application was adapted for the new procedures.
- A specialised **technical domain** works on transversal improvements to all applications. During 2020, further improvements were made to the database layer, and new components for supporting paperless workflows were developed.
- The main projects completed by the **IT infrastructure** service during 2020 were the installation of new generation office automation and application servers, the replacement of network switches and the doubling of internet capacity. Multi-factor authentication for external access to webmail was introduced. A number of important forward-looking actions were undertaken; including a network evolution strategy, a hybrid cloud assessment and a backup strategy review.
- **IT user support services** provide user support, develop user solutions, maintain user relations, organise logistics and manage user policies. Due to the crisis, the principal activity indicators increased sharply while the performance indicators remained stable.

Finally, during 2020 some EUR 4 500 000, the equivalent of approximately 50% of the initial budget, was transferred to IT budget headings (from both Committees). These transfers were used to finance a total of 23 projects aligned with the objectives of the Digital Strategy.

## INTERNAL CONTROL AND OTHER HR ASPECTS

### Business continuity

The extraordinary situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic (with travel restrictions and an extended telework scheme applying for most of the year) has put the organisational resilience of the CoR and of the Committee's staff to the test.

The CoR's Business Continuity Plan (BCP) dates back to 2009 and has not been substantially modified since then. It follows that a number of its provisions are outdated. Furthermore, although the institution managed to ensure business continuity in a satisfactory manner in almost all areas of activity, it is fair to say that the experience of coping with the COVID-19 crisis demonstrated that the current BCP was not fit-for-purpose.

In order to keep developing the CoR's readiness for and resilience to major disruptions, as well as to ensure that our services will be able to continue operating to the full extent possible, an in-depth revision of the BCP was launched in 2020 and a revised business continuity (BC) policy will be shaped and adopted in the course of 2021.

The overall purpose of the operation is to update the CoR's BCP to transform it into a simplified and more effective BC management tool, which provides a clear roadmap for continuance and/or restoration of the institution's mission and priority business functions during and after a crisis.

### Internal control environment

Several Internal Control Standards (ICSs) for effective management deal with HR matters (such as ICS 2 on ethical and organisational values, ICS 3 on staff allocation and mobility and ICS 4 on staff evaluation and development). Activities in the sphere of internal control are monitored by the Internal Control Standards working group.

An in-depth cost-effectiveness analysis of the existing internal control environment was carried out with the help of an external expert and in close association with key internal stakeholders in 2020. The goal of this analysis was to simplify, modernise and/or find synergies of processes without jeopardising an adequate internal control environment.

In 2021, on the basis of the external expert's report, the ICS working group intends to propose a multiannual action plan for a gradual revision and simplification of the existing internal control environment and planning & reporting cycle, in line with the institution's mission, risks and resources.

In terms of financial management, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as from 19 March 2020 the authorising officer by delegation decided to introduce an exceptional paperless workflow for all financial transactions. In the absence of an adequate technical solution for electronic signatures, contracts had to be signed on paper with blue ink by both parties (the authorising officer by subdelegation and the contractor). In the course of 2021, a solution for adequate electronic signatures will be sought.

Notwithstanding the extraordinary COVID-19 circumstances, and thanks to the efforts made by all CoR departments, there was only a moderate increase in the number of financial exception reports in 2020 compared with 2019. During 2020, the strengthened approach to following up on the implementation of corrective measures identified in exception reports was kept up. This approach aims to improve the internal control environment and prevent breaches instead of authorising or condoning them.

### **Planning and reporting**

Reporting back on the previous year, the CoR Annual Activity Report for 2019 was drawn up and adopted during the first half of 2020, along with the Declaration of Assurance of the AOD for the 2019 budget exercise.

In 2020, an in-depth cost-effectiveness analysis was carried out on the CoR planning & reporting cycle and a number of long- and short-term improvements were identified. While some changes were applied as from the 2021-2022 cycle (initiated in late 2020), others will be explored for subsequent cycles. The gradual implementation of these improvements is expected to turn the planning & reporting cycle into a more effective and purposeful management and communication tool, to increase its added value and to align it in an optimal manner with the institution's mission, resources and risks.

Looking ahead, the 2021-2022 Strategic Management Plan (SMP) was prepared in cooperation with all CoR services and approved by the secretary-general a.i. in December 2020. Administrative priorities focus on achieving increased outreach, a smart and modern administration, focused policy support and incorporating the lessons learnt from the COVID-19 crisis.

### **Financial verification**

The central verification service verified 13 023 financial files (plus salaries) ex ante within the prescribed timeframe. Files include establishing statutory rights, budgetary commitments, legal commitments, payments and recovery orders.

Furthermore, a series of ex post verifications were carried out on transactions subject to simplified workflows and on files for which the CoR verification service did not intervene ex ante pursuant to the provisions of the CoR-EESC cooperation agreement. Upon request or if needed, the financial verifying agents also continued to provide guidance to staff members involved in financial management.

The overall number of financial files handled in 2020 decreased by 24% compared to 2019 (when 17 152 were handled) and by 16% compared to 2018. The decrease essentially took place between April and August 2020, when 3 591 fewer files were handled compared to the previous year. This decrease is the direct consequence of the exceptional COVID-19 circumstances that have had a direct impact on several activities, including staff missions and reimbursements to members.

### **Public procurement**

The CoR Public Procurement department assists operational services and decentralised authorising officers with the handling of tender procedures of a value of EUR 15 000 and above. Throughout 2020, the Public Procurement department managed 18 such calls for tenders, eight of which were awarded in 2020, resulting in the signing of eight contracts. Three procedures were cancelled/not awarded due to event cancellations linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. For the remaining seven ongoing procedures, the contract is expected to be signed in early 2021.

Upon request, the PPS also continued to provide guidance to staff members involved in tender procedures of a lower value and/or to answer services' questions related to contract implementation.

As from January 2020, an update to the service instruction laying down the mandate of the Public Procurement department entered into force, introducing a number of administrative simplification measures.

At the end of 2020, the CoR signed a SLA (service-level agreement) with DG DIGIT for the provision of digital services including eSubmission, the corporate eProcurement system for electronic submission and receipt of tenders, scheduled to be deployed in January 2021.

### Management of missions

In 2020, the Missions service handled some 225 missions, i.e. 450 files (requests for travel order and statements of expenses). This is substantially less than previous years (829 missions in 2019) because since March 2020, staff missions were largely halted as a result of the travel restrictions decided by EU Member States in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Administrative cooperation agreements

The CoR participates in a number of statutory inter-institutional joint committees, the most significant of which are listed below, along with their main role(s):

Acronym	Name
CGAM	Management Committee of the Joint Sickness Insurance Scheme
ILISWG	Inter-institutional Infrastructure, Logistics and Internal Services Working Group
INTERCOPEC	Inter-institutional Joint Committee for Equal Opportunities

Table no. 14

The CoR also cooperates with other institutions in inter-institutional working groups and committees, such as the following:

Acronym	Name	Main role(s)
CPQS	Preparatory Committee for Matters relating to the Staff Regulations	Interpretation of the Staff Regulations
CCA	College of Heads of Administration	Harmonisation of how statutory provisions are applied across the institutions
	EPSO Management Board	Strategies concerning functioning of EPSO, competitions, the number of successful candidates, etc.
	EPSO taskforces	Five specific taskforces were set up in 2020 to improve the diversity of the candidate pool in EPSO competitions, improve the legal security of linguistic policies, improve cooperation with the institutions and upgrade communication with candidates and review selection mechanisms
COPARCO	Interinstitutional Common Joint Committee	Staff + Admin on competition notices. CoR HR deputy director is current chair.

Table no. 15

Technical questions are dealt with by EPSO working groups or, if necessary, by specific ad hoc working groups (CAST permanent, management of reserve lists, quotas, employer branding, etc.).

## ADMINISTRATIVE COOPERATION AGREEMENTS

### European Economic and Social Committee

The CoR and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) share a number of “Joint Services”, as agreed upon in an administrative cooperation agreement which is subject to regular revision. The latest agreement entered into force on 1 January 2016 and will remain in force until 30 June 2021. The renewal of the administrative cooperation agreement is under discussion with the EESC.

### European Parliament

In February 2014, a cooperation agreement was signed between the European Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Parliament with a view to increasing cooperation between the political and administrative services of the three institutions. On the basis of this agreement, by the end of 2016, 24 staff members (including eight AST) from the CoR were transferred to the EP.

### European Commission

Service-level agreements have been concluded in the following areas, outsourcing certain services from the CoR to the European Commission:

- **Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security.** IT tools such as Sysper Career (HR management) and EU-Learn (access to European Commission training courses), Welcome Office (facilities for newcomers and staff family members, first-line access to legal advice on private matters, etc.), Protocol on Privileges and Immunities (special ID cards, specific administrative documents, etc.) and medical services (such as pre-recruitment visits).
- **Paymaster’s Office (PMO).** Sysper Right modules (as PMO is the business owner), rights on leaving the service (pension, unemployment, end of service) and sickness insurance. Except for Sysper, in the area covered by the agreement, the PMO has taken over as Appointing Authority.
- **Office for Infrastructure and Logistics in Brussels (OIB).** Childcare facilities.
- **Directorate-General for Informatics (DIGIT).** IT tools such as hosting of the ABAC system, IT procurement, Cloud brokering services, e-Prior services and NDP services (electronic personal files).

## ENVIRONMENT

In December 2019, the European Commission adopted the European Green Deal<sup>1</sup>, the European strategy that calls on Member States, institutions and people to take action to make Europe the first carbon-neutral continent by 2050. The CoR, in cooperation with the EESC and along with other EU institutions, has fully embraced the European Green Deal. Partly thanks to the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) and the calculation of the Committees’ carbon footprint, the CoR aims to “put the Green Deal into practice” in all of its work. This means adopting exemplary environmentally responsible practices to reduce its carbon footprint.

### Eco-management

The CoR, in cooperation with the EESC within the framework of the Joint Services, has set up an environmental management system as part of a process of continuous improvement in this sphere. These efforts have yielded remarkable results over the last few years and earned the Committees the Brussels Ecodynamic Enterprise label in 2009. In 2011, the Committees were awarded EMAS and ISO 14001 certification.

<sup>1</sup> In its communication COM(2019) 640, the European Commission says that it is also keen to reduce its environmental impact as an institution and as an employer. It presented a comprehensive action plan in 2020 to implement the objectives of the Green Deal and become climate neutral by 2030. It calls on all the other institutions, bodies and agencies of the EU to work with it and come forward with similar ambitious measures.

In 2020, the Committees calculated their carbon footprint for the fourth time. Total emissions amounted to 20 427 tonnes of CO2 equivalent for the year 2019. This is the equivalent of the emissions produced by 2 375 EU citizens<sup>2</sup>. As in the previous years, the transport of people remains the largest source of CO2 emissions (80.7%). The second largest emitter of CO2 is the provision of equipment and services, which includes external services (maintenance, catering, security, IT, consultancy, interpreting and external translation), office equipment and purchase of catering equipment and food supplies:

## Carbon footprint 2019

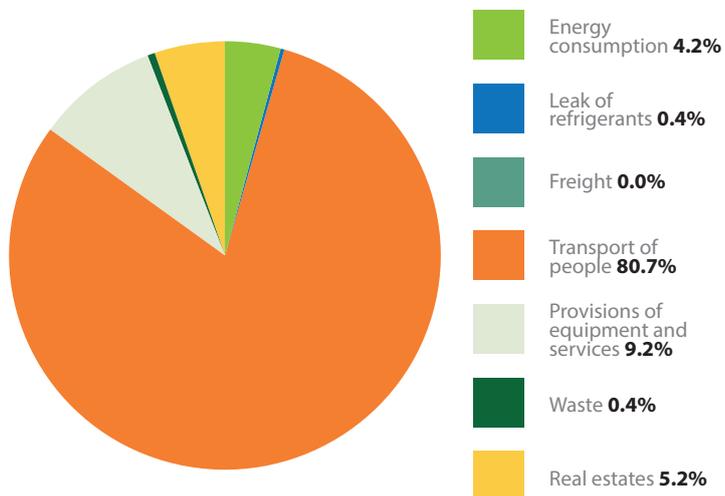


Chart no. 12 Carbon footprint 2019

Here are some examples of the two Committees' environmental results in 2019<sup>3</sup>.

Environmental Results 2019		
	Global achievement	Compared to 2018
<b>Electricity (kWh/person)</b>	- 34.6 % compared to 2009 100%	- 8%
<b>Gas (kWhDD/person)</b>	- 74 % compared to 2009	-15%
<b>Water (m<sup>3</sup>/person)</b>	- 55 % compared to 2010	+3%
<b>Paper (pages/person)</b>	- 74 % compared to 2009	- 42%
<b>Waste (kg/person)</b>	- 55 % compared to 2010	+ 3 %
<b>Green public procurement</b>	100 % of calls for tenders (over EUR 60 000) include environmental clauses	
<b>Cleaning products</b>	100 % of all products used are environmentally friendly	- 2%
	- 59 % products used compared to 2012	
<b>Plant care products (green areas)</b>	100 % environmentally friendly since 2010 (98% for specific purpose)	
<b>Official cars</b>	Increase in eco score (i.e. reduction in pollution)	
<b>Staff mobility</b>	78.95 % of CoR staff using eco-friendly means of transport	
<b>Sustainable food</b>	80 % seasonal products on menu	+ 2 points
	24 % MSC-certified fish	- 2 points
	18 % organic products	+ 9 points
	8 % fair-trade products	+ 2 points
<b>Environmental certifications</b>	EMAS, ISO 14001, Eco-dynamic Enterprise (3 stars), Good Food label (sustainable canteen)	

Chart no. 13 Examples of the two Committees' environmental results in 2019

<sup>2</sup> Source: Eurostat.

<sup>3</sup> The Committee's environmental results for 2020 have not yet been published

In addition, in 2020, the secretary-general launched a taskforce called “The Green Deal Going Local”. It is coordinated by the ENVE secretariat and the EMAS service is represented.

### Catering Service

The Catering service aims to provide satisfactory service across its range of catering activities on the Committees’ premises.

The key aspects of the Committees’ catering strategy are the following:

- Quality, safety and health
- Customer-oriented service
- Sustainability

Overall customer satisfaction with the food served at the canteen was 78%, according to the last independent survey. On 14 May 2019, the Committee set up the first plastic-free canteen in the European institutions. No disposable plastic products or products packaged with plastic are used in the canteen shared by the European Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee.

This is not restricted to plastics banned by the Directive on single-use plastics, including plates, cups and cutlery; water is now only available from water fountains and all other beverages are served in glass bottles or cans. Various types of containers (for oil, salt and pepper, yoghurt, etc.) are also made of glass, stainless steel or other sustainable materials, while butter and cheese are no longer served in individual portions with plastic packaging or cellophane tape. Wooden toothpicks and coffee stirrers complete the green picture.

In 2017, the canteen was awarded the “Good Food” label, recognising the Committees’ efforts to offer sustainable food and combat food waste. In 2019 and 2020, the Catering service continued to implement the label’s sustainable criteria, considerably increasing the amount of healthy food (salad bar) consumed at the canteen (more than 1 ton per month).

Overproduction remains stable and very low at around 3% on average. The food donation project was fully implemented in 2019: 650 sandwiches and 450 kg of all other kinds of food were donated under strict hygiene conditions.

In June 2020, a new framework contract entered into force and established higher quality, nutritional and sustainable criteria. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, all the Committees’ catering activities were significantly affected; with so few people present in the buildings, a major financial loss in the catering contract brought normal catering services to a halt.

Only one cafeteria remained open for some weeks and the potential of the new contract has not been fully deployed.

The COVID-19 crisis had a heavy impact on the catering sector in general and caused major problems for the Committees’ catering activities and services as well.

The Catering service had to cope with strong security measures, reduced customer flows and the need to keep up some crucial services for the continuation of the Committees’ core business. In June 2020, it was decided to open only one catering site, the cafeteria in the JDE building, and to provide catering services for political meetings and staff working in the Committees’ premises during the pandemic. With most activities being held virtually and the more stringent security measures, it was decided to temporarily suspend all catering activities from the beginning of November 2020. Catering activities should gradually restart in the first quarter of 2021, depending on the measures taken in relation to the pandemic.

### Transport

The Mobility/Transport service contributes to the CoR’s efforts in support of sustainable development and environmental protection, particularly through a Mobility Plan supporting initiatives to promote the use of public transport and other sustainable means of transport. Examples of such actions are subsidies for public transport season tickets and a bike-friendly infrastructure. The latter is traditionally also promoted by events such as “Friday Bike Day” and the inter-institutional “VéloMay” competition. In 2020 however, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and with staff working in an extended telework regime for most of the year, only “VéloMay” was organised (in October, during the short period when lockdown measures were eased).

“Green” transport modes between home and the workplace are defined as: walking, car (if car-pooling), bicycle and public transport. Surveys on staff transport modes are conducted on a three-year basis. According to the latest survey report in

2017 (58% participation rate), green modes of transport have gained further ground among CoR staff compared to the survey in 2014. In table 15, the Brussels-Capital Region average is shown in brackets.

	2017	2014
Green transport modes	77.5 % (63.4 %)	72.7 % (53.1 %)
Car or motorcycle	22.5 % (36.6 %)	27.4 % (46.9 %)

Table no. 16 Transport modes evolution

The results of the 2017 staff survey fed into the Committee’s new Mobility Plan (“Plan de déplacement d’entreprise – PDE”) which was finalised in December 2018. While only 22.5% of CoR staff travel to work by car or motorcycle, the environmental impact of these transport modes is significant.

These numbers do not take into account the fact that telework is largely available to staff (see chapter on Working Conditions), presumably reducing the carbon footprint of teleworkers who would otherwise travel to work by car. Nor do they reflect the extraordinary impact of the extended telework regime applicable to all staff throughout most of 2020.

During the period 2010-2019, the average number of staff members applying for subsidies for public transport season tickets was around 170 per year, i.e. approximately 35% to 40% of the evolving workforce. Whilst the precise numbers are not yet known, it is expected that a smaller proportion of staff will have claimed reimbursement for public transport season tickets in the extraordinary year that was 2020.

A new mobility staff survey will be conducted and a new CoR Mobility Plan prepared on that basis in 2021.

## CO<sub>2</sub> emissions

Per day: **480.76 kg CO<sub>2</sub>**  
 Per worker, per day: **1.69 kg CO<sub>2</sub>**  
 Per kilometer: **19 g CO<sub>2</sub>**

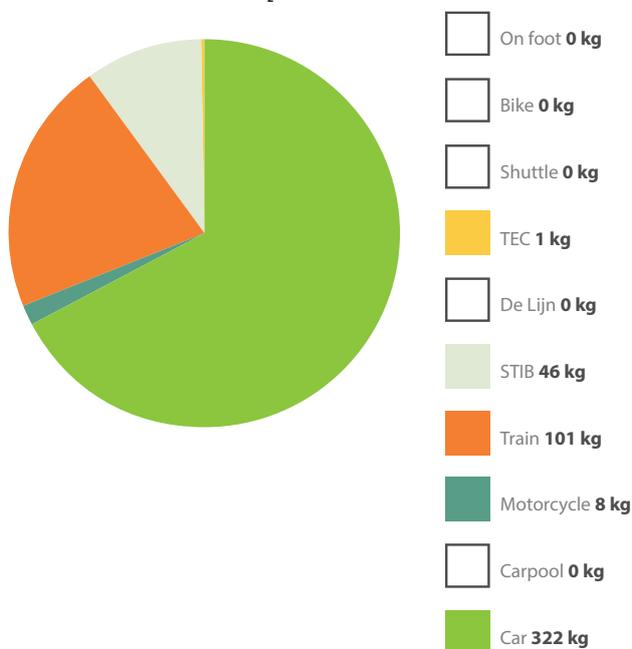


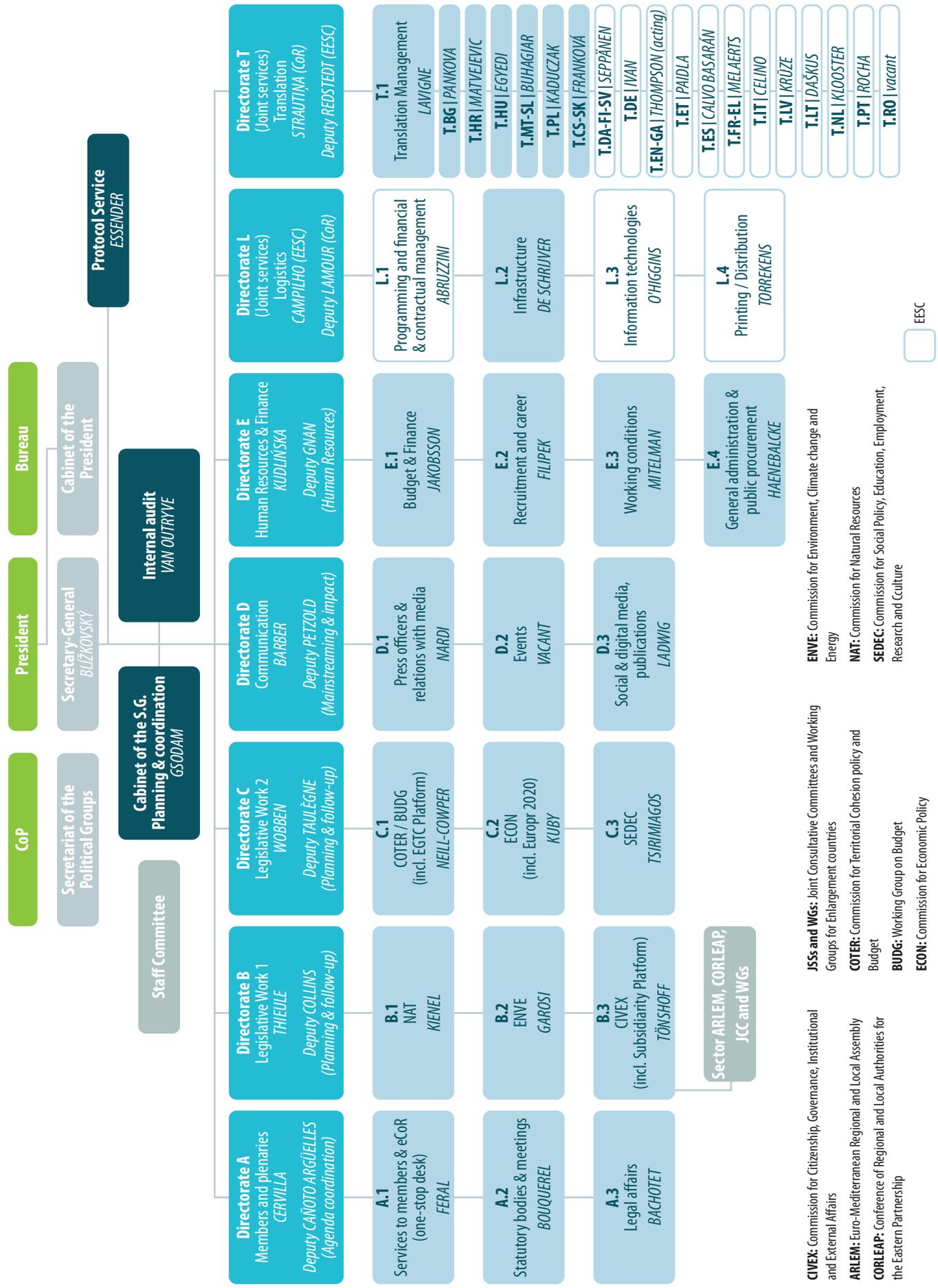
Chart no. 14 CO<sub>2</sub> emissions



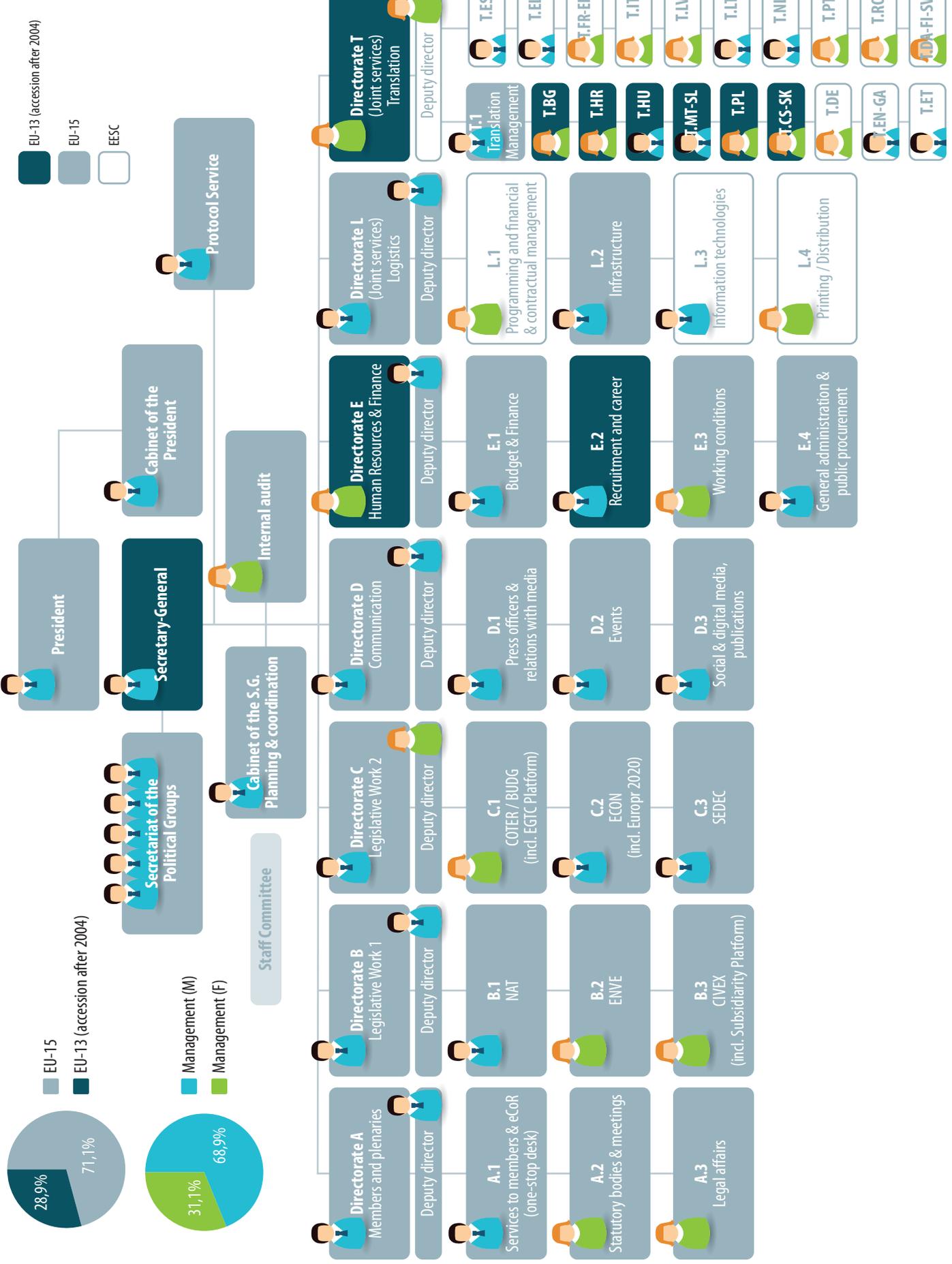
## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX I: ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AD	Administrators' Function Group	FTE	Full time equivalent
AECCE	Authority Empowered to Conclude Contracts of Employment	GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
ANS	[ <i>Autorité nationale de sécurité</i> ] Belgian National Security Authority	HR	Human resources
AST	Assistants' Function Group	IBGE	[ <i>Institut bruxellois pour la gestion de l'environnement</i> ] or Bruxelles Environnement, a public service of Brussels-Capital Region for the environment and energy
AST/SC	Secretaries and Clerks' Function Group	IFR	Internal Financial Rules
B68	Belliard 68 building	ILISWG	Inter-institutional Infrastructure, Logistics and Internal Services Working Group
BvS	Bertha von Suttner building	INTERCOPEC	[ <i>Comité paritaire pour l'égalité des chances (interinstitutionnel)</i> ] Inter-institutional Committee on Equal Opportunities
CAST	Contract Agents for Specific Tasks	JDE	Jacques Delors building
CCA	[ <i>Collège des chefs d'administration</i> ] Board of Heads of Administration	MS	Member State
CCP	[ <i>Congé de convenance personnelle</i> ] Leave on Personal Grounds	OCAM	[ <i>Organe de coordination pour l'analyse de la menace</i> ] Belgian Coordination Unit for Threat Analysis
CEOS	Conditions of Employment applicable to other servants of the European Communities	OLAF	[ <i>Office européen de lutte antifraude</i> ] European Anti-Fraud Office
CFAA	Commission for Financial and Administrative Affairs	OSP	[ <i>Organisations syndicales et associations professionnelles</i> ] Trade Unions and Staff Associations
CGAM	[ <i>Comité de gestion de l'assurance maladie</i> ] Management Committee of the Joint Sickness Insurance Scheme	OSS	One Stop Shop
COPARCO	[ <i>Commission paritaire commune</i> ] Common Joint Committee	PMO	The Paymaster's Office/Office for the Administration and Payment of Individual Entitlements
CPAS	[ <i>Comité de préparation pour les affaires sociales</i> ] Preparatory Committee for Social Affairs	RAA	see CEOS
CPQS	[ <i>Comité de préparation pour les questions statutaires</i> ] Preparatory Committee for Matters relating to the Staff Regulations	REM	Remorqueur building
De Lijn	[ <i>Vlaamse Vervoersmaatschappij De Lijn</i> ] Flemish transport company De Lijn	SA	Special Adviser
DG HR	Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security (European Commission)	SC	Staff Committee
DIGIT	Directorate-General for Informatics (European Commission)	SR	Staff Regulations
DPO	Data Protection Officer	STIB	[ <i>Société des Transports Intercommunaux de Bruxelles</i> ] Brussels Intercommunal Transport Company
DT	Directorate for Translation	TEC	[ <i>Société régionale wallonne du transport – Transport en commun</i> ] – Walloon Regional Transport Company TEC
EDPS	European Data Protection Supervisor	TRE74	Trèves 74 building
EESC	European Economic and Social Committee	VMA	van Maerlant building
EMAS	Eco-Management and Audit Scheme		
EO	Equal Opportunities		
EP	European Parliament		
EPI	[ <i>Équipier de Première Intervention</i> ] Member of the rapid response team/Evacuation stewards		
EPRS	European Parliamentary Research Service		
EPSO	European Personnel Selection Office		
Eurostat	Statistical Office of the European Communities		
FG	Function Group		



**APPENDIX III: STRUCTURAL ORGANISATIONAL CHART BY NATIONALITY AND GENDER OF MANAGERS**  
**European Committee of the Regions - organisational chart (by nationality and gender - 31 December 2020)**







**European Committee  
of the Regions**



Created in 1994, after the entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty, the European Committee of the Regions is the EU's assembly of 329 regional and local representatives from all 27 Member States, representing over 447 million Europeans.

Edited by the Directorate for Human Resources and Finance of the European Committee of the Regions

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