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REPLIES OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT TO THE SPECIAL REPORT OF THE EUROPEAN COURT OF AUDITORS

ADOPTED BY THE BUREAU OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ON 6 JUNE 2022

**“EU INSTITUTIONS AND COVID-19: RESPONDED RAPIDLY, CHALLENGES STILL
AHEAD TO MAKE THE BEST OF THE CRISIS-LED INNOVATION AND FLEXIBILITY”**

OBSERVATIONS

The institutions managed to minimise disruption to their core activities

The institutions fulfilled their duty of care towards staff and maintained working capacity

Para 43. Parliament’s testing facilities, available as of September 2020, were instrumental in ensuring business continuity in Parliament through a strict tracing and limitation of in-house transmissions and in ensuring that Members and staff could travel, in spite of existing travel limitations.

The assessment of the efficiency of the new ways of working in a post-crisis environment has started

The assessment is more advanced for core activities than for support tasks

Para 78. The EP carried out two staff surveys: June and November 2020. Both surveys showed that, post-pandemic, there were expectations from staff for a wider use of teleworking.

The budgetary and environmental impacts of the new working arrangements are not consistently evaluated across the institutions

Para 92. Parliament executed several analyses on the impact of COVID-19 measures on environmental performance, including preliminary analyses in late 2020, and detailed breakdown as part of regular environmental reporting in 2021. As a first among all EU institutions, environmental impacts (both costs and benefits) of teleworking were analysed and included in Parliament’s key environmental performance indicators.

The EMAS Mid-Term Strategy, review of environmental performance and targets also indicated the impacts of the pandemic-related measures as well as referring to potential

longer-term benefits of continuing some of the practices developed in response to the pandemic.

Para 93. Reduced mission travel for interpreters as well as other staff members led to significant positive impacts on Parliament's environmental performance, in particular its carbon footprint. Transport of persons (including commuting, mission travel, transport of Members, and transport of subsidised visitors) accounted for over 60% of Parliament's total carbon footprint in pre-COVID years. In 2020, this figure was reduced to 33% of the carbon footprint, which was itself almost 50% smaller than in 2019.

In order to maintain these positive impacts several activities have been launched to reduce the emissions from transport of persons post-COVID, such as the adoption of the SEF 2022-2024 with a chapter on Ecological Transformation, including 17 projects to improve environmental performance, the EMAS Action Plan 2022 as well as a gap analysis and possible actions to attain the 2024 targets.

The gap analysis and possible activities are currently followed up at different levels, including the Bureau.

The European Parliament is already carbon-neutral since 2016 as it offsets its unavoidable emissions based on a decision of the Bureau from October 2015.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1 – Include long-term disruptions and interinstitutional cooperation in the business continuity plans

Parliament accepts the Court's recommendation.

Parliament has set up a new Inter-DG Steering Group on Organisational Resilience. Its main mission is to foster threat analysis and risk detection. Different types of possible disruptions, including long-term ones, will be analysed. Business Continuity Plans, at Directorate-General and corporate levels, will be enriched accordingly.

The interinstitutional cooperation which took place regularly on all levels during the COVID-19 crisis will be pursued and formalised further, whenever deemed effective. Particular attention will be paid to defining practical BC arrangements and agreements, wherever relevant, in order to provide a coordinated response to crises impacting several or all Union institutions.

Recommendation 2 – Further develop the digitalisation of administrative services

The European Parliament accepts the Court's recommendation.

This objective is part of the Secretary-General's Strategic Execution Framework 2022-2024 and its 2024 digital transformation strategy for the EP.

The two programmes "Digital transformation for efficient workflows" and a "productive workplace" comprise altogether 12 projects initiated in 2021 and 2022 each intending to

deliver further digitalisation of Parliament administrative and legislative processes. The further digitalisation of procurement including electronic invoices and the further digitalisation of all workflows including electronic signatures will be addressed in that framework.

Parliament plans to start using the qualified electronic signature still in the course of the year 2022. Parliament has established a working group to further promote the use of the eInvoicing platform.

Recommendation 3 – Assess the suitability of new ways of working in the post-COVID-19 environment

Parliament accepts the Court’s recommendations.

Parliament disposes of a sophisticated system to collect metrics of its key activities. Those metrics are already used and will be further refined to measure the quality and efficiency of hybrid meetings and teleworking.

Parliament has started deliberations on the utilisation of its office space in a post-COVID scenario.

Parliament monitors the environmental impacts of all its activities, including specifically analysing the impact of teleworking, as part of its monitoring of key environmental performance indicators.