


Procedure file

Basic information	
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2006/2001(INI)
Procedure completed	
Court of Auditors Special Report No 5/2005 on interpretation expenditure incurred by the Parliament, the Commission and the Council	
Subject	
8.40.09 European officials, EU servants, staff regulations	
8.70.03 Budgetary control and discharge, implementation of the budget	

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	CONT Budgetary Control	PPE-DE STUBB Alexander	12/09/2005
Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	Economic and Financial Affairs ECOFIN	2707	14/02/2006
European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	Human Resources and Security	KALLAS Siim	

Key events			
19/01/2006	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
14/02/2006	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		Summary
13/07/2006	Vote in committee		Summary
25/07/2006	Committee report tabled for plenary	A6-0261/2006	
05/09/2006	Results of vote in Parliament		
05/09/2006	Decision by Parliament	T6-0331/2006	Summary
05/09/2006	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2006/2001(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed

Documentation gateway

Amendments tabled in committee	PE370.210	28/02/2006	EP	
Committee draft report	PE369.878	18/05/2006	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee	PE376.325	26/06/2006	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading	A6-0261/2006	25/07/2006	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading	T6-0331/2006	05/09/2006	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2006)4772	19/10/2006	EC	
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2006)4861	15/11/2006	EC	

Court of Auditors Special Report No 5/2005 on interpretation expenditure incurred by the Parliament, the Commission and the Council

The Council made the following conclusions:

- it welcomed the Court's special report on interpretation expenditure incurred by three institutions and considered it very useful as the audit covers the period of the accession of 10 new Member States, increasing the number of official and working languages to 21;
- it agreed that sound financial management in the field of interpretation involves providing cost-effective and high quality interpretation services where needed without, however, exceeding real requirements;
- it noted with satisfaction that the institutions have been successful in containing interpretation expenditure although the number of working languages has increased, but underlined nevertheless that an amount of EUR 24 million has been spent for interpretation services requested but not used because of meeting cancellations;
- it recommended that efforts be made by reducing late cancellations, last-minute meeting requests and unequal distribution of meetings over the course of the week and the year;
- further savings are possible through a better management of meetings, on-request linguistic arrangements, a review of the level of resources kept on standby, a further integration of computer services and interinstitutional cooperation between all institutions;
- it stressed the need to maintain the high quality of interpretation provided in the institutions while controlling costs, and invited all institutions to assess the quality of interpretation, including making inquiries of the final users;
- it agreed that procedures to avoid the provision of interpretation services exceeding real requirements are an absolute necessity for all institutions. Therefore, it encouraged them to apply one another's best practices in order to set up efficient systems in this respect, including forecasting the expected use of languages, monitoring actual use, maintenance of updated interpretation language profiles by users, keeping a list of interpretation facilities requested but not used and surveys to assess such cases;
- the European institutions do not only employ permanent staff interpreters whose working conditions, remunerations and reimbursement of expenses are governed by the Staff Regulations, but also freelance interpreters (AICs), governed by an agreement signed between the International Association of Conference Interpreters (IACI) and the three institutions, which affect the interpretation cost in different ways. The Council is in favour of the renegotiation of this agreement with the IACI aiming at reducing all elements of the costs;
- the policy of providing interpretation either by permanent staff or ACIs has to be examined carefully to have an appropriate availability of interpretation resources either local or non-local, permanent or freelance, taking into account the balance between permanent and freelance interpreters for working languages involving high travel expenses;
- it also stressed the importance of the availability of interpretation services in all languages and therefore, invited the Commission to ensure that sufficient competitions are organised on time.

Lastly, the Council asked for an independent evaluation concerning the possible costs and benefits of the creation of one single interinstitutional Office providing interpretation services to all EU institutions, compared with those achieved by an increased interinstitutional cooperation.

Court of Auditors Special Report No 5/2005 on interpretation expenditure incurred by the Parliament, the Commission and the Council

The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Alexander STUBB (EPP-ED, FI) in response to the Court of Auditors' Special Report No. 5/2005 on interpretation expenditure incurred by the Parliament, the Commission and the Council. MEPs began by stressing the importance of preserving multilingualism, thereby guaranteeing citizens' right to communicate with the institutions in any of the EU's official languages and hence enabling them to exercise their right of democratic control. They concluded that, "while the increasing number of official

languages calls for pragmatic solutions in the preparatory work within the institutions, multilingualism must be guaranteed to ensure the legitimacy and diversity of the European Union".

However, the report expressed concern at the high proportion of costs involving services supplied but not used and stand-by arrangements, and wanted to see organisational improvements. It called for greater interinstitutional cooperation, in particular more exchanges and other arrangements between Parliament and the Commission. It also called for a reduction in travel and accommodation costs, to be achieved inter alia by better coordination, planning and organisation. The institutions were urged to facilitate the use of "local interpreters" where possible, while ensuring that a high quality of interpretation is guaranteed.

As far as Parliament was concerned, the committee noted the higher costs of interpretation, mainly as a result of the Strasbourg sessions (during which very few local interpreters can be used) and urged the EP administration to raise Members' awareness of interpretation costs. It raised the question of whether Parliament made the "best possible use" of the language profiles of its members, while stressing that "this should not lead to a ranking of official EU languages". Lastly, noting that Article 1 of the Code of Conduct on Multilingualism stipulated that resources should be allocated taking into consideration the users' real needs, the report called for Parliament's responsible bodies to adapt its calendar of committee, group and plenary session weeks in order to achieve a better balance between needs and resources available.

Court of Auditors Special Report No 5/2005 on interpretation expenditure incurred by the Parliament, the Commission and the Council

The European Parliament adopted an own-initiative report drafted by Alexander STUBB (EPP-ED, FI) on the Court of Auditors' Special Report No 5/2005 on interpretation expenditure incurred by the Parliament, the Commission and the Council. This report follows the presentation in November 2005 of a Special Report by the Court of Auditors on the interpretation expenditures of Parliament, Commission and Council for the year 2003. (Please see the summary of 13/07/2006.)