Basic information

2011/2287(INI) INI - Own-initiative procedure	Procedure completed
Towards more efficient and cost effective interpreting in the European Parliament **Subject** 8.40.01.08 Business of Parliament, procedure, sittings, rules of procedure 8.70.03 Budgetary control and discharge, implementation of the budget	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
CONT Budgetary Control	DE LANGE Esther (PPE)	22/09/2011
	Shadow rapporteur IVAN Cătălin Sorin (S&D) STAES Bart (Verts/ALE) CZARNECKI Ryszard (ECR) SØNDERGAARD Søren Bo (GUE/NGL) EHRENHAUSER Martin (NI)	

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
17/11/2011	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
12/06/2013	Debate in Parliament		
18/06/2013	Vote in committee		
25/06/2013	Committee report tabled for plenary	A7-0233/2013	Summary
09/09/2013	Debate in Parliament		
10/09/2013	Decision by Parliament	T7-0347/2013	Summary
10/09/2013	Results of vote in Parliament		
10/09/2013	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2011/2287(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 165
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	CONT/7/07716

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE508.175	13/05/2013	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE513.077	30/05/2013	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A7-0233/2013	25/06/2013	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T7-0347/2013	10/09/2013	Summary

Towards more efficient and cost effective interpreting in the European Parliament

2011/2287(INI) - 25/06/2013 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the own-initiative report by Esther DE LANGE (EPP, NL) on a more efficient and cost effective interpretation framework in the European Parliament.

Members recall that the European Union is the **only entity in the world running an official policy of multilingualism based on 23 official languages**, soon to be 24, with a total of 506, soon to be 552, language combinations to be covered. They welcome, in this connection, the very high quality of Parliament's interpretation services, but believe that **ways of reducing the burden entailed by the complex structure of multilingualism and its considerable and increasing costs should be sought**.

Interpretation in the European Parliament: the report notes that Notes that the practical implications of the use of official languages in the European Parliament are set out in its Code of Conduct on Multilingualism, and the concept of '**controlled full multilingualism**' laid down in that Code maintains equality among Members and citizens.

The report notes the decision on 'Resource-efficient full multilingualism in interpretation' taken by Parliament's Bureau in 2011, which increases the efficiency of interpretation services and reduces their structural costs.

Members welcome the fact that, as a result, the budgetary resources devoted to interpretation services in Parliament have started to decrease. With regard to Parliament's 2012 budget, **considerable savings**, including a reduction of EUR 10 million per year in the costs of interpretation services, were necessary in order to limit the budget's growth to 1.9 % compared with the previous year. The report welcomes the fact that Parliament's estimates of revenue and expenditure for the financial year 2014 propose reducing interpretation costs by 23% compared with the 2013 budget figure of EUR 58 000 000.

Although the implementation of 'resource-efficient full multilingualism' has led to considerable gains, Members note with concern that, according to the reports on the Code of Conduct on Multilingualism, requests for interpretation services originating from committees, delegations and political groups were still affected by a **high and growing level of late cancellations**.

In 2012, the sum of EUR 5 480 000 (11.9 % of the interpretation budget), was spent on interpretation services made available but not used on account of late requests or cancellations.

Proposed measures: Members insist that Parliament address, as a matter of priority, the considerable number of late cancellations and invites the Bureau to present a **detailed action plan** for reducing it.

The Bureau is called upon to adopt a further decision on multilingualism by the end of the year, dealing specifically with possible scenarios for ‘interpretation on demand’ and the efficiency gains expected to be achieved as a result.

The Secretary-General is expected to present, by the end of the year, a detailed analysis of the interpretation languages provided for all (working) group, committee and delegation meetings and of the languages actually spoken in these meetings.

Members consider that the **Committee on Budgetary Control should be informed regularly** about changes in the cost of interpretation. The annual Code of Conduct report prepared by the interpretation services and sent to the Secretary-General to be made public to members of the committee.

Lastly, Members ask the **Court of Auditors** to provide Parliament, within a reasonable time frame and at the latest by March 2014, with a special report on the interpretation and translation expenditure incurred by Parliament, the Commission and the Council, assessing the soundness of the financial management involved and updating the findings made in its Special Report No 5/2005. This report should provide information on whether the institutions involved have adequate tools and procedures to ensure that: (i) the services provided do not exceed the real needs; (ii) all the services needed can be provided; (iii) the services are provided at the lowest possible cost; (iv) the services provided are of high quality.

Towards more efficient and cost effective interpreting in the European Parliament

2011/2287(INI) - 10/09/2013 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 351 votes to 338, with 20 abstentions, a resolution on a more efficient and cost effective interpretation framework in the European Parliament.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled by the S&D as a joint motion for resolution intending to replace the motion for resolution tabled by the Committee on budgetary control.

In its resolution, Parliament recalls that the European Union is the **only entity in the world running an official policy of multilingualism based on 24 official languages**, with a total of **552 language combinations** to be covered. It welcomes, in this connection, the very high quality of Parliament’s interpretation services, but believes that **ways of reducing the burden entailed by the complex structure of multilingualism and its considerable and increasing costs should be sought**.

Interpretation in the European Parliament: Parliament states that it is a directly elected political body whose Members are elected regardless of their language skills. It reaffirms, therefore, the right of every Member to **speak in the official language of their choice**, as a key principle of Parliament's operating arrangements.

The resolution notes that the practical implications of the use of official languages in the European Parliament are set out in its Code of Conduct on Multilingualism, and the concept of ‘**controlled full multilingualism**’ laid down in that Code maintains equality among Members and citizens.

According to Members, the implementation of full multilingualism, while based on the principle of ‘interpretation on demand’, will in the long term be contingent upon **making users of language services** fully aware of the costs of providing those services, and hence of their responsibility to make the best possible use of them.

Efficient use of interpretation resources: Parliament notes the decision on ‘Resource-efficient full multilingualism in interpretation’ taken by Parliament's Bureau in 2011, which increases the efficiency of interpretation services and reduces their structural costs.

Members welcome the fact that, as a result, the budgetary resources devoted to interpretation services in Parliament have started to decrease. They point out that in 2010 the budget outturn figure was EUR 54 990 000, that in 2011 it was EUR 56 964 283 and that it currently stands at EUR 47 000 000 for 2012. They welcome the fact that Parliament's estimates of revenue and expenditure for the financial year 2014 propose **reducing interpretation costs by 23 % during an election year**, compared with the 2013 budget figure of EUR 58 000 000. They ask for detailed information proving that the proposed cuts are feasible and that the excellent quality of interpretation can be maintained.

Although the implementation of ‘resource-efficient full multilingualism’ has led to considerable gains, Members note with concern that, according to the reports on the Code of Conduct on Multilingualism, requests for interpretation services originating from committees, delegations and political groups were still affected by a **high and growing level of late cancellations**. In 2012, the sum of EUR 5 480 000 (11.9 % of the interpretation budget), was spent on interpretation services made available but not used on account of late requests or cancellations.

Proposed measures: Parliament takes the view that situations in which interpretation into certain languages is offered without being used should be avoided as far as possible. In order to reduce the costs of unneeded interpretation at meetings, it calls for the development and urgent implementation of a **system that prevents situations** in which interpretation is made available into languages that are not actually spoken at a given meeting or requested by webstream users.

The Bureau is called upon to adopt a further decision on multilingualism by the end of the year, dealing specifically with possible scenarios for ‘interpretation on demand’ and the efficiency gains expected to be achieved as a result.

The Secretary-General is expected to present, by the end of the year, a detailed analysis of the interpretation languages provided for all (working) group, committee and delegation meetings and of the languages actually spoken in these meetings.

Members consider that the **Committee on Budgetary Control should be informed regularly** about changes in the cost of interpretation.

Lastly, the Court of Auditors is asked to provide Parliament, within a reasonable time frame and at the latest by March 2014, with a special report on the interpretation and translation expenditure incurred by Parliament, the Commission and the Council, assessing the soundness of the financial management involved and updating the findings made in its Special Report No 5/2005. This report should provide information on whether the institutions involved have adequate tools and procedures to ensure that: (i) the services provided do not exceed the real needs; (ii) all the services needed can be provided; (iii) the services are provided at the lowest possible cost; (iv) the services provided are of high quality.