



## MEP's allowances and assistants - Key demands for improvements

In view of the discussions on the dossiers for Members allowances and assistants ( i.a. following the internal audit) the following key demands are made by the Group:

### I. Assistants

#### Objective: A statute for assistants

The Commission should bring forward a new proposal for an assistant's statute, creating a new category of EU contract agents with contracts of maximum 5 years, renewable. Such a proposal must be adopted by the EP *and Council*. It cannot be decided by the EP alone. The Parliament can do preparatory legislative drafting work if the Commission and the Council would be willing to work towards such a solution. A deadline of 30 June 2008 should be set for the EP to finish its preparatory work.

Under this scheme assistants would pay taxes to the EU and have the same social security, pension scheme and medical insurance as other EU officials. Members would still be free to hire and fire their assistants and chose the duration of the contracts. The "grille de salaire" of the current contract agents could be taken over or a special "grille de salaire" for assistants could be developed.

Option1) The contract agent model would apply *both for Brussels based assistants and for those working elsewhere*, exploring the option of a special clause for assistants in constituencies allowing them to remain covered for social security, pension and medical insurance under their national law, as is now also possible for contract agents, although for a limited time only.

Option 2) The contract agent model would apply only to Brussels based assistants. Assistants in the constituency would still be covered and paid for under national law through a (list of) paying agent selected by the EP  
This corresponds to the proposal by the Secretary General of the Parliament. In such case mechanisms need to be developed to avoid assistants being declared as working in the constituency but actually working in Brussels.

#### Short term measures, awaiting a statute

- The EP launches a call for tender to select one or more organisms that will manage Members' contracts with assistants, both in Brussels and in the Member States (eventually by subcontracting) in accordance with EU and national law. The organism(s) would thus also help implement the Codex (set of rules on assistants), drawn up by the

Bureau working party on assistants chaired at the time by Vice-President Gerard Onesta (Greens/EFA), under the Borrell presidency, which is still a dead letter. The Codex makes reference to an exception clause in Regulation 1408/71 on the application of social security schemes to employed persons and their families moving within the Community, which foresees in the possibility of concluding bilateral agreements between member states whereby (Brussels based) assistants could still remain covered under their national schemes as regards social security. Belgium has agreed to approve such requests for a period of maximum 5 years. Nothing has been done until now to help put this possibility in practice.

- The Bureau sharpens the rules on service providers. Not only the contracts with the service providers and the service providers' contracts with eventual assistants should be provided to the administration but also *supporting documents* that show that tax and social security obligations arising from the applicable national law have been met *rather than just a declaration* as is now the case. Consideration should be given to limiting the use of service providers to a maximum duration and/ or percentage of the parliamentary allowance.
- The Bureau should respect its commitment to meet at least once a year with the European Parliament Assistants Association (EPAA), which it has not yet done. The Bureau working group that deals with assistants should meet with the EPAA as a matter of urgency after the internal auditors report.
- There should be a contact point in the EP to help assistants in handling administrative matters *vis a vis* the Belgian authorities.

## II. Members Statute implementing rules

- The Group confirms its support for auditing of the general allowance and the obligation to provide supporting documents for at least 50% of the amount of the general allowance.
- The Group recalls that the EP has already decided -in the report by Greens/EFA member Bart Staes on discharge for the EP for the year 2005- to rule out that re-elected members remaining under their national scheme can continue to acquire new rights under the voluntary pension fund

## III. Ombudsman

- The Group confirms its support for the recommendations by the Ombudsman (and European Data Protection supervisor) to give access to documents on MEP's use of funds related to travel allowance, general allowance and parliamentary allowance (as regards the latter in a form that allows public scrutiny of MEP's proper use of allowances but does not make it possible to link amounts paid to the names of individual assistants)

## Annex

- EP budget 2008 parliamentary allowance amounts to **EUR 160 million**
- Each Member is entitled to a monthly parliamentary assistance allowance of **€16 914 (as at 1.1.08)**.

This is an increase of 1418 EUR in comparison to 2007, brought about by a net increase voted by Parliament in the budget of EUR 1000 and an annual increase for inflation of 418 EUR ( Bureau decision of 30 January 2007)

*The amounts mentioned by Paul van Buitenen (140 million and EUR 15.500 per member) relate to the year 2007.*

- Text adopted by the EP in October 2007 as regards assistants

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*23. As regards parliamentary assistance, calls on the administration to strengthen the internal control system in order to ensure that recruitment of Members' assistants is clear and transparent, guaranteeing that tax and social regulations (salary and social security rights, etc.) are respected;*

*24. Calls on the Commission to present a new proposal for an assistants' statute that guarantees the necessary freedom of choice and flexibility for Members in terms of duration of contracts and salaries on the one hand and uniformity and security in terms of the tax regime, social security provisions and medical insurance for assistants on the other hand;*

The text of paragraph 24 was introduced by the Greens/EFA Group in committee, see am 27

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004\\_2009/documents/am/688/688137/688137en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/am/688/688137/688137en.pdf)

The text in par 23 ( PSE AM 25 in committee, which Greens supported) repeats the comment introduced in the budgetary amendment ( of PPE and PSE) that asked for an increase in the Parliamentary allowance for 2008 of EUR 1000 net per month

The PPE tabled an amendment in Plenary to replace the word "assistant statute" but did not succeed.

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### **AMENDMENT 14**

by Salvador Garriga Polledo on behalf of the PPE-DE Group</AuNomDe>

### **ReportA6-0394/2007**

**Ville Itälä**

2008 budget (sections I, II, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX)

Motion for a resolution

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Paragraph 22

22. Calls on the Commission to present a new proposal for *Members' Assistants* that guarantees the necessary freedom of choice and flexibility for Members in terms of duration of contracts and salaries on the one hand and uniformity and security in terms of the tax regime, social security provisions and medical insurance for assistants on the other hand;