



QUAESTORS' Quarterly

Issue 8
Summer 2017

Dear Colleagues,

At the end of my latest six months chairing the rotating presidency of the Quaestors, I would like to thank all Members for supporting our work and continued efforts to provide you with optimal conditions to carry out your parliamentary activities.

Aside from the regular rhythm of Quaestors matters addressed in our monthly meetings, this last term saw us revise the outdated Guidelines governing the work and competences of the Quaestors, which had been laid down by the Bureau in 1981 when the European Union only had 10 Member States after Greece joined earlier that year! The range of issues dealt with by the Quaestors in the intervening 36 years has inevitably grown along with the size and powers of Parliament itself. It was high time to update our internal guidelines, bringing them into line with what has been established as current practice and grounding them in the relevant legal basis of Bureau Decisions.

This issue of the Quaestors' Newsletter also highlights enhanced efforts being

taken by the Quaestors to address some of the problems encountered by our disabled colleagues who manage to pursue their political mandate despite the challenge of a severe visual, audio or physical impairment. Minor adjustments to procedures can often make a huge difference to participating or not in meetings as well as the more common accessibility issues surrounding mobility in Parliament's buildings.

I have enjoyed getting to know many of you better and working closely with Parliament's staff to improve life in the Parliament and will now be handing over the chairmanship of the Quaestors for the next six months to my colleague, Andrey Kovatchev.



Elisabeth MORIN-CHARTIER
Chair-in-Office of the Quaestors

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New Guidelines & Rules

On a proposal from the Quaestors, the Bureau has approved a revision of the guidelines governing the Quaestors activities and responsibilities, replacing the old ones that date back to 1981. The guidelines seek to codify existing practice, update rules accordingly and provide a more solid legal basis for the growing body of issues addressed by the Quaestors in the course of their work.



In addition, the annex to the guidelines enumerates the existing competences and responsibilities of the Quaestors, some of which may be assigned to individual Quaestors, mandated to act on behalf of their colleagues.

Most of the tasks falling within the scope of the Quaestors' work are delegated by a Bureau Decision, for instance complaints in relation to the implementation of the Members' Statute, approval of events and exhibitions or assistance to disabled Members.

However, others have accrued overtime on an ad hoc basis as Members have raised concerns or issues related to parliamentary life that have required the intervention of the Quaestors in collaboration with the relevant services.

Other matters dealt with by the Quaestors on a regular basis, which derive from a specific role assigned by the Bureau, include transport arrangements for Members, in particular the official car service and, more recently, bicycles placed at the disposal of Members and staff for work-related use. Other tasks relate to computer, language and other training courses, occupancy of EP information offices by

political group staff, harassment cases between Members and assistants, catering facilities, audio-visual facilities etc.

In parallel, new internal rules that implement the guidelines have been drawn up for the first time. They describe in more detail the length of the mandate and principle of the rotating presidency, the regularity of meetings, the collegial nature of the Quaestors' decision-making as well as the procedure for handling matters of a confidential nature.

These rules can be found on the [intranet](#).

It is hoped that the new rules now in place will remain valid and useful in guiding the work of the Quaestors for the foreseeable future, if not for another 30 years!

Bicycle Service



The Quaestors have recommended that the Bureau adopt a new set of rules to provide a better and more flexible service for Members as well as staff.

Members and staff will be able to use the bicycles also for travel between office and home/hotel, during weekdays.

Users will be requested to provide their personal details and complete and sign the register with the person in charge. After each journey, the user must return the key for the lock and countersign the register. At all three sites users may request a helmet, a reflective jacket and an extension cable for the bike padlock. These items must be returned when the journey is completed.

Members will have priority for bookings in Strasbourg, via an email reservation

system, with a deadline of mid-day on the Friday before a session. Members will be served on a first-come, first-served basis.

Assistance to disabled Members

Under Article 30 of the IMMS, the Quaestors, further to a proposal by the Secretary-General and consultations with the Parliament's medical service, authorise special assistance needed by Parliament's disabled Members in order for them to be able to carry out their daily parliamentary work.

Further to specific requests made by the Members concerned, an accelerated authorisation procedure for mission-related requests has been introduced, without having to wait for the next full meeting of the Quaestors. The new, more expeditious procedure is an important step towards reducing the administrative burden previously experienced by the Members in question.

The Quaestors also address any ad hoc matter brought to their attention by the Members concerned, including the modification of travel arrangements, emergency evacuation procedures, and accessibility issues in the Parliament's buildings and restaurants.

The June Quaestors' meeting examined several outstanding issues raised by the disabled Members such as developing visual alerts in emergencies, to complement the current audio warning system. In addition, new provisions were adopted for authorising costs for these Members' special assistants, for missions that are not official EP activities ("additional travel" provided for by Article 22 IMMS). The Quaestors also agreed to continue to regularly address all the aforementioned issues in their monthly meetings and will report on the matter also to the Bureau in the near future.

Members' salaries and taxation in Belgium

Members' salaries are subject to Community tax on the same terms and conditions as those for officials of the European Union and deducted directly at source. The Statute stipulates however, that national tax law may be applied, provided that any double taxation is avoided.

Belgian residents are subject to personal income tax, unless they provide evidence that they are not domiciled for tax purposes. It is in the interest of those who do not have Belgian nationality and are registered as resident in their own country to enroll in the special 'non-residents' register kept by each municipality, so that the presumption that they are domiciled in Belgium for tax purposes does not apply.



If you are not registered as being in receipt of taxable income in Belgium you do not have to fill out an income tax return. However, if you have received an income tax return, you must send it back, signed and dated, in order to avoid a fine and to ensure that you are treated as a non-taxable person in the future. You can enclose a tax certificate issued by the European Parliament and a photocopy of your Belgian special identity card.

If you are in receipt of taxable income in Belgium (occupational income other than the MEP salary or from renting out a property), you must complete and return the tax form with a tax certificate issued by the European Parliament.

Members, regardless of nationality, who have their principal private residence in Belgium, are required to fill in a personal income tax return in Belgium and to

declare all income from anywhere in the world.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Should you require any further information, please contact:
meps.portal@ep.europa.eu.

The tax certificates referred to above are available on request from the same address.

For further information concerning Belgian tax arrangements:

http://finances.belgium.be/fr/particuliers/declaration_impot/declaration_non-residents

EP Sport Centre - update

The EP sports centre in Brussels will undergo an extensive renovation over the summer, in particular the renewal of the piping supplying water to the showers.



As a result, the centre will be closed between 3 July and 25 August 2017. During this period a number of fitness classes will be organised in the well-being rooms of the Belmont (rue d'Arlon 62) and Square de Meeus buildings.

The Sport Centre is due to re-open again after the summer recess on a subscription basis and with a wider range of activities and fitness classes for members.

The President thanks the Quaestors

At a short hand-over reception in June, out-going Chair, Elisabeth Morin-Chartier formally passed the baton to her colleague Andrey Kovatchev who takes over on 1 July for the second half of the year. President Tajani kindly attended in person to thank the Quaestors for their work in dealing with the multitude of issues that often go unrecognised due to their confidential or sensitive nature.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

This Newsletter is produced by the Secretariat of the Bureau and Quaestors. For further information on any of the articles in this edition, please contact one of the Quaestors responsible or the Secretariat at the following address:

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Link to the website of the [Quaestors](http://www.quaestors.eu)