

The President

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Members of the European Parliament

Dear Colleagues,

In answer to your letter raising important questions about procurement practices used by Parliament's administration, I asked the relevant services to supply more details about the acquisition of the thermal scanning equipment currently in use in Parliament.

The acquisition of the thermal cameras and scanners was extremely urgent in May in order to implement on time the Bureau decision to measure the temperature of all Members and staff entering the buildings, as a protective measure against the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. It should be recalled that in May, all public and private organisations were starting to return to offices and were equipping their entrance points with thermal scanners and cameras, resulting into a severe shortage of this material on the market at that time. The relevant services in Parliament's administration, i.e. the Directorate General for Infrastructures and Logistics, therefore decided to start a pilot project on the premises in Brussels while equipping the sites of Luxembourg and Strasbourg only later.

The existing contract for technical maintenance and operation, signed in 2018 with the company Veolia, registered in Belgium, was used to this purpose given that it includes the provision of technical material, such as scanning equipment, and related services. Thermal cameras are largely used in facility management to monitor the high voltage switchboards for overheating as well as to spot and assess heating losses of buildings or insulation deficiencies. These devices are therefore rather customary equipment used by all maintenance companies in their daily work, which under the circumstances were put to use in the fight against the pandemic.

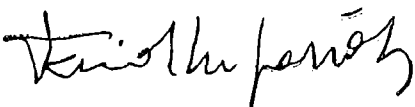
Veolia furnished the required equipment for a total cost of 193.176 € through their subcontractors Metronelec (registered in France), Relaitron (part of Veolia Group) and i-Care (registered in Belgium). These companies regularly work with products manufactured by Hangzhou Hikvision Digital Technology Co. Ltd. This Chinese company has a European branch headquarters registered in the Netherlands, is not on the EU blacklist and has signed the EU Transparency Register.

The actual contractual relationship was thus established between Veolia and Parliament (contract signed in 2018 on the basis of an open call for tender).

In view of these facts, Parliament's services had to accept the delivery of material, as long as it complies with the technical specifications set which is the case for the equipment used in Brussels.

I would like to add that, with regard to the equipment of the Luxembourg and Strasbourg sites, in view of the availability of more time to find solutions, a supply contract was procured on the basis of a low value procedure, inviting six companies to make an offer. As a result, a contract was signed with the Metronelec and 17 scanners were installed in August on Parliament's premises in Luxembourg and Strasbourg for a total amount of 156.360 €.

I take this opportunity to inform you that Parliament's administration is fully aware of geopolitical and technological realities, and consequently of the sensitivity of hardware procurement. Therefore, upon proposal of the Secretary-General, the Bureau endorsed on 25 March 2019 a strategic approach for a cybersecurity-sensitive equipment policy. Additionally, authorising officers have received guidance prepared in cooperation with the Legal Service that assists them, within the limits of the current Financial Regulation, in the drafting of technical specifications and the monitoring of contractor compliance to ensure information security in areas of connected or connectable devices. I am attaching the corresponding guidance herewith for your information.



David Maria SASSOLI

Annex