2006 discharge: EC general budget, Court of Justice

2007/2040(DEC) - 22/04/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted, by 634 votes in favour, 17 against and 39 abstentions, a Decision to grant the Court of Justice's Registrar discharge in respect of the implementation of its budget for the financial year 2006. The decision to grant discharge also constitutes closure of the accounts of this institution.

At the same time, the Parliament adopted by 621 votes in favour, 15 against and 40 abstentions, a Resolution containing the comments which form part of the decision giving discharge. The report had been tabled for plenary by Nils **LUNDGREN** (ID, SE) on behalf of the Committee on Budgetary Control.

The Resolution recalls that, in 2006, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) had available commitment appropriations amounting to a total of EUR 252 306 372 (compared to EUR 232 602 467 in 2005), with a utilisation rate of 94.58%.

Overall, the Parliament welcomes the adoption by the ECJ of a code of conduct applying to Members and former Members of the Court of Justice, the Court of First Instance and the Civil Service Tribunal, including an obligation to submit a declaration of financial interests. However, it regrets that this information has not been published on the ECJ's website. Likewise, the Parliament expresses its satisfaction that, since 1 October 2007, two separate administrative units carry out the internal audit and verification of accounts, ending a situation criticised in previous years by both the European Court of Auditors and the Parliament. The Parliament also welcomes the quality of the results of the audits carried out by the Court as well as the action taken following the recommendation made during the 2005 discharge procedure.

The Parliament also makes a series of observations which can be summarised as follows:

- **Procurement**: while the Parliament welcomes the reduction of the number of negotiated contracts as a proportion of the number of contracts awarded (from 38% in 2005 to 34% in 2006 with a value of more than EUR 60 000), it believes that further efforts should be made to further reduce this proportion;
- **Expenditure on buildings of the Court**: the Parliament notes that a lease-purchase contract has been signed between the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and the ECJ, setting out the provisions necessary to supplement the framework contract of 2001 and providing for the sale to the ECJ of the land on which the complex is situated for the symbolic price of EUR 1 (when the ECJ becomes the owner of the buildings). It recalls that the Court of Auditors pointed out that there had been a "lack of competition" concerning the building of the extension to the Court of Justice in Luxembourg in its 2007 Special Report and therefore calls on the Commission to submit, by July 2008 at the latest, the findings of the further investigations into this situation;
- **Personnel**: lastly, MEPs highlight that, in 2006, the number of officials and agents in service rose over the year by 4.8% to 1 786. However, the Court continues to have difficulties in recruiting qualified staff for interpreter and IT specialist posts.