2006 discharge: EC general budget, Court of Auditors

2007/2041(DEC) - 22/04/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted, by 615 votes in favour, 16 against and 36 abstentions, a Decision to grant the Court of Auditor's Secretary-General 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 for this institution.

At the same time, the Parliament adopted, by 615 votes in favour, 14 against and 41 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 the Court had the following appropriations available to assure its functions: EUR 113 596 668 in commitment appropriations (compared to EUR 107 548 618 in 2005) with a utilisation rate of 89%, i.e. lower than other institutions. In addition, the Parliament recalls that the Court's accounts were audited by an external firm, which concluded that the financial statements of the Court were completely satisfactory.

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

- **Market procedures**: On the whole, the Parliament indicates that the 2006 report of the Court's Internal Auditor was largely positive, establishing that the quality of tender files and contracts was satisfactory although the choice of simplified or derogatory procedures could have been better justified;
- **Recruitment of personnel**: the Parliament notes with concern the recruitment difficulties faced by the Court, particularly as regards professionally qualified staff. This is partly due to the higher cost of living in Luxembourg and the lesser attractiveness of the salary for the proposed grades (basic grades). However, the number of vacant posts has decreased in the space of a year, from 74 in 2006 and 56 in 2007, which shows the efforts made by the Court to close this gap. The Parliament notes that 5 new Members joined the Court in 2006 and hopes that a more rational structure will be devised before the next enlargement, notably in order to reduce the total number of Members (the Parliament suggests the introduction of a rotating system similar to that applying to the Governing Council of the ECB);
- **Declarations of financial interests**: the Parliament notes that, in compliance with the ECA's Code of Conduct, Members of the Court declare their financial interests and other assets (including shares, convertible bonds and investment certificates as well as land and real estate, together with their spouses' professional activities). Lastly, the Parliament reiterates its opinion that Members of all EU institutions should be required to submit a declaration of financial interests, which should be accessible on the Internet.