2006 discharge: EC general budget, European Ombudsman

2007/2036(DEC) - 22/04/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted, by 614 votes in favour, 15 against and 38 abstentions, a Decision to grant the European Ombudsman 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 616 votes in favour, 14 against and 37 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 Ombudsman had available commitment appropriations amounting to a total of EUR 7 682 538 (compared to EUR 7 224 554 in 2005), with a utilisation rate of 88.13%. The Parliament also notes that, over the period 2003 to 2006, commitment appropriations steadily increased (from EUR 4 438 653 to EUR 7 682 538 (+73%), the number of posts increased from 31 to 57 units (+84%), while complaints increased by 57% and new inquiries opened increased from 253 to 258 (+2%)).

Recalling that the European Court of Auditors indicated in its Annual Report that the audit did not give rise to any observations as regards the Ombudsman, the Parliament welcomes the Ombudsman’s internal management as well as the internal control of the services. However, it notes that improvements in efficiency are needed in some areas (for example, identification of sensitive functions).

Furthermore, the Parliament welcomes the conclusion of the new framework cooperation agreement with the Parliament concerning the provision of certain administrative services (buildings, IT, communications, legal advice, medical services, training, translation and interpretation) as well as the appointment of the Ombudsman's Secretary General on 1 April 2006.

Lastly, the Parliament makes some observations concerning the following points:

- **Recruitment of personnel**: the Parliament notes with concern the recruitment difficulties highlighted in the Ombudsman's 2006 annual report, especially in relation to qualified lawyers, due to the two successive waves of enlargement (2004 and 2007), to staff turnover and to the difficulty in attracting and retaining candidates in Strasbourg with temporary contracts;
- **Declarations of financial interests**: the Parliament welcomes the Ombudsman’s decision to publish the annual declaration of interests on his website. In addition, it welcomes the Ombudsman's decision to accede to the Interinstitutional Agreement of 25 May 1999 on internal investigations by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF).