# 2007 discharge: EU general budget, Court of Justice

2008/2278(DEC) - 23/04/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 570 votes to 19, with 38 abstentions, a decision to grant the Court of Justice's Registrar discharge in respect of the implementation of its budget for the financial year 2007. The decision to grant discharge is also an approval of the closure of the accounts of this institution.

Furthermore, the Parliament adopted a resolution with observations which form an integral part of the decision to grant discharge. The resolution points out that in 2007 the European Court of Justice (ECJ) had commitment appropriations available amounting to a total of EUR 275 million (compared to EUR 252 million in 2006), with a utilisation rate of 96.84%, higher than last year.

The other main points of the resolution can be summarised as follows:

- **Code of conduct**: noting with satisfaction 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), the Parliament calls for the publication of this document, in the interest of transparency. Moreover, it proposes the appointment of an independent monitoring officer whose task would be to report annually and publicly on received declarations in order to ensure credible monitoring and control;
- **Recruitment**: the Parliament notes that, in 2007, the number of officials and agents in service (members of temporary staff and contract agents) increased over the year by 7.9% to a total of 1 928, principally due to the accession of Bulgaria and Romania. It therefore welcomes the improvement in the recruiting of qualified staff but regrets the absence of specific selection procedures for contract staff for auxiliary tasks and requests that appropriate selection procedures be put in place for this category of contract staff as well;
- **Internal audit**: the Parliament welcomes the administrative changes made within the Court in terms of auditing and notes that a new procedure for disposing of fixed assets was introduced in the context of the setting up, during 2007, of a new integrated system for management and financial control (SAP), representing substantial budget savings and gains in efficiency for the three institutions involved. It also welcomes the reduction in the number of negotiated contracts as a proportion of the number of contracts awarded from 34% in 2006 to 32% in 2007;
- **Duration of proceedings**: the Parliament welcomes for the fourth consecutive year the **reduction in the duration of proceedings** before the ECJ, as well as an increase in the number of cases completed. It notes with concern, however, that the backlog of pending cases increased for all three courts and, in particular, for the Court of First Instance (+12%).

Although the Parliament welcomes the measures taken by the Court to increase transparency, it regrets the fact that rules on procurement are still excessively cumbersome for smaller institutions. It therefore calls on the Commission to study the Court’s Financial Regulation in order to ensure that this institution’s concerns are fully taken into account.