2008 discharge: EU general budget, Economic and Social Committee

2009/2073(DEC) - 23/03/2010

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Ryszard CZARNECKI (ECR, PL) recommending the European Parliament to grant the European Economic and Social Committee's Secretary-General discharge in respect of the implementation of its budget for the financial year 2008.

The committee recalls that in 2008 the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) had commitment appropriations available amounting to a total of **EUR 118 million** (EUR 116 million in 2007), with a utilisation rate of 95.64%, the same as the average of the other institutions (95.67%).

The Court of Auditors indicated in its annual report that the audit did not give rise to any significant observations as regards the EESC. However, Members note the minor increase in the number of permanent posts (700 posts in 2008; 695 posts in 2007) allocated to the EESC.

Members also point to the remark made by the Court of Auditors on the different approach of the EESC (as well as the Parliament) when applying the provisions of the Staff Regulations as regards the multiplication factor. They point out that the EESC thereby grants its staff a financial advantage not granted by the other institutions, and that that results in higher expenses. They reiterate that the provisions of the Staff Regulations concerning the multiplication factor should be interpreted and implemented by all the institutions in the same way and note the EESC's intention to adapt its practice in conformity with the awaited Civil Service Tribunal's ruling.

The report welcomes the implementation of the **Administrative Cooperation Agreement between the EESC and the Committee of the Regions (CoR) for the period 2008 to 2014**, and invites the EESC and the Committee of the Regions (CoR) to communicate the progress made as regards harmonising their internal control standards, as well as relevant financial procedures relating to the Joint Services.

Members recall that de-coupling resulting from the Administrative Cooperation Agreement should be budget neutral, and is looking forward to the mid-term review of the Agreement, due in 2011. They welcome the results of evaluation of the mini-cooperation agreements in the areas affected by de-coupling, as carried out jointly by the EESC and the CoR, in particular, their conclusions that the new governance structure has improved the administrative cooperation between the Committees.

Furthermore, the committee urges that **travel expenses of members of the EESC** should be based only on actual travel costs. It suggests that daily allowances should be equal to the ones received by the Members of the European Parliament.

Lastly, it recalls that members of the EESC do not declare their financial interests or disclose relevant information on declarable professional activities and remunerated posts or activities. The committee requests that the EESC introduces this obligation for its members without delay.