

# 2009 discharge: EU general budget, Economic and Social Committee

2010/2147(DEC) - 10/05/2011 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 392 votes to 257, with 5 abstentions a decision to grant discharge to the Secretary-General of the European Economic and Social Committee in respect of the implementation of its budget for the financial year 2009.

Parliament also adopted by 567 votes to 75, with 11 abstentions a resolution containing a number of observations which forms an integral part of the discharge decision. The resolution recalls that, in 2009, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) had commitment appropriations available amounting to a total of EUR 122 million (2008: EUR 118 million), with a utilisation rate of 98.02%, higher than the average of the other institutions (97.69%).

**Allegations regarding the EESC's internal management:** in a series of amendments adopted in plenary, Parliament wonders about the allegation concerning the EESC's internal management, which led to the decision, on 11 March 2011, by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) to open an enquiry. It calls on the EESC and OLAF to inform the budgetary authority of the progress and results of the case. The Committee on Budgetary Control is invited to follow the issue closely, in order to obtain additional information on the impact of OLAF's investigation and to take its results into account in the 2010 discharge.

Specific information is asked of the EESC in regard to the following alleged irregularities:

- disciplinary procedures undertaken by the EESC and their economic consequences, in particular, Case No 2/2007;
- policy in regard to staff promotion to management positions
- the conflicts as regards the independence of the legal service of the EESC;
- the access of EESC members and members of its Bureau to all the information required;
- the state of the procedure and results of internal audits carried out by the EESC.

Parliament calls on the EESC to cooperate fully with OLAF and to provide all necessary assistance to OLAF staff to carry out their investigation. The Ombudsman is invited to inform Parliament's Committee on budgetary control, as soon as possible, of the results of its investigations relevant to disciplinary case No 2/2007.

**Audit of the EESC:** Parliament notes that the annual report of the Court of Auditors did not give rise to any significant observations as regards the EESC. It, nevertheless, calls on the Court to confirm whether the audits of the 2009 reports found any evidence of irregularities that have already been the subject of disciplinary case No 2/2007.

As regards the rest, Parliament notes:

- the further, minor increase in the number of permanent posts allocated to the EESC, and that the posts are consistently filled;
- the implementation of the Administrative Cooperation Agreement between the EESC and the Committee of the Regions (CoR) for the period 2008 to 2014;
- the efforts in the area of interinstitutional cooperation, in particular, the ongoing introduction of the staff management system 'Sysper2'.

Parliament reconfirms its position that declarations of financial interests of members of all Union institutions should be accessible on the Internet via a public register and requests that the EESC takes steps to make public the relevant information, and to follow up this issue in its Annual Activity Report.

Parliament welcomes the willingness of the EESC to accommodate the suggestion of the Parliament that travel expenses of members of the EESC should be based only on actual travel costs (and that daily allowances should be equal to those received by the Members of the European Parliament).

Lastly, in a new amendment adopted in plenary, Parliament calls on the EESC to undertake with urgency during 2011 **a comprehensive spending review of all areas of activity to ensure all expenditure is delivering value for money** in order to identify possible savings which will reduce the pressure on the budget in this period of austerity.