

# 2010 discharge: EU general budget, Economic and Social Committee

2011/2206(DEC) - 30/03/2012 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Inés AYALA SENDER (S&D, ES) on discharge to be granted to the Secretary-General of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in respect of the implementation of the budget for the financial year 2010.

Members emphasise that in its 2010 Annual Report the Court of Auditors identified errors in relation to the recruitment of a permanent member of staff and a procurement procedure for interpreting services. In this regard, they are satisfied with the explanations provided by the Committee of the Regions (CoR) regarding these errors, and with the decisions taken in order to ensure that such situations do not recur.

Members note that in 2010 the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) had available commitment appropriations amounting to a total of EUR 127.2 million (EUR 122 million in 2009), and that the implementation rate of these appropriations was 98% (also 98% in 2009). They stress that the EESC budget is purely administrative: 70% is spent on persons working with the institution and 30% on buildings, furniture, equipment and various operating expenditure.

They call on the EESC to **limit increases of future budgets to a strict minimum** and to finance new or extended activities primarily from savings and rationalisation of existing expenditure.

In parallel, Members reiterate Parliament's call in its resolution on discharge to the EESC for the financial year 2009 to undertake with urgency a comprehensive spending review of all areas of activity to ensure all expenditure is delivering value for money.

They welcome the fact that in its annual report the Court of Auditors concluded, based on its audit work, that the payments as a whole for the year ended 31 December 2010 for the administrative and other expenses of the institutions and bodies were free from material error. However, they point out that the Court of Auditors included observations in its 2010 annual report concerning the **reimbursement of travel expenses to EESC members** and the awarding of contracts based on a restricted procedure. They welcome the reform of the system for reimbursing expenses to members on the basis of real costs only. They also welcome the changes made as regards confirmation of attendance and reimbursement for taking part in video conferences.

Members also note:

- the publication of the declarations of financial interests of the EESC's members;
- the recent increased interest on the part of EESC members in financial and budgetary matters;
- the fact that the two Committees (the CoR and the European Economic and Social Committee) finally obtained EMAS (EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme) certification for the use of renewable energies;
- the administrative cooperation agreement between the two Committees is operating satisfactorily, thus enabling them to make budgetary savings.

They suggest, in particular, an **enhanced compatibility of the priority budget lines of the two Committees** as this would in turn lead to an increase in savings and to additional reinforcement of the

inter-institutional cooperation. They call on the EESC to improve the quality of the summary of the internal audit service's activities in order for Parliament to be able to assess the monitoring and control mechanisms at the EESC.

They also call for: i) better financial planning and budgetary management ; ii) an exhaustive table of all the human resources at the EESC's disposal in its annual activity report.

Lastly, Members call on the Ombudsman to inform the Committee on Budgetary Control of the results of the investigations into staff promotion procedures.