2010 discharge: EU general budget, Committee of the Regions

2011/2207(DEC) - 10/05/2012 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 541 votes to 87, with 5 abstentions, a decision to grant discharge to the Secretary-General of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) in respect of the implementation of the budget for the financial year 2010.

In its accompanying resolution, adopted by 548 votes to 84, with 16 abstentions, the European Parliament emphasises 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, it is 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.

In parallel, Parliament recalls that in 2010, the CoR had commitment appropriations available amounting to a total of EUR 90.8 million (EUR 88 million in 2009), with an improved utilisation rate of 99.4% for 2010 (in 2009 it stood at 98.37%). It stresses that the CoR’s budget is purely administrative, with 72% of expenditure relating to persons working with the institution and 28% relating to buildings, furniture, equipment and miscellaneous running costs.

Administrative and financial management of the CoR: Members call on the CoR 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 an amendment adopted in plenary, Parliament calls on the CoR to undertake a comprehensive spending review based on the principle of zero-based budgeting to identify savings, rather than simply adding a nominal percentage increase in line with inflation to existing budgets during each budget cycle. It is pleased to note that, in response to the call made by Parliament, the CoR has strengthened its budgetary procedure, which now comprises four stages: (i) preparation by the CoR’s administration, (ii) assessment of the preliminary draft by the Committee for Financial and Administrative Affairs (CAFA), (iii) decision by the CoR Bureau and Plenary Assembly on the draft budget, and (iv)a mid-term review of implementation;

Members also welcome:

- 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;
- the view that the CoR’s annual impact report is a useful tool for assessing its work;
- the overall quality of the summary of the internal audit service’s activities;
- the improvement plan drawn up in response to the organisation management self-assessment; etc.

Lastly, Members reconfirm their position that, in the interests of transparency, declarations of financial interests, including regular updates, of members of all institutions should be accessible on the Internet and are pleased to note the CoR's Bureau decision in this regard.