2011 discharge: EU general budget, Economic and Social Committee

2012/2172(DEC) - 17/04/2013 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 549 votes to 68, with no abstentions, a decision to grant the Secretary-General of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) discharge in respect of the implementation of the European Economic and Social Committee budget for the financial year 2011.

In its resolution accompanying the discharge decision, Parliament welcomes the fact that, on the basis of its audit work, the Court of Auditors concluded that the payments as a whole for the year ended on 31 December 2011 for administrative and other expenditure of the institutions and bodies were free from material error. It points out that, in the 2011 annual report, the Court of Auditors included observations on the conclusion of contracts with temporary and contract staff, identifying some inconsistencies in the guidelines applicable to the grading and recruitment of staff. It calls on the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) to ensure that those inconsistencies do not recur.

Parliament also notes that in 2011 the EESC had commitment appropriations of EUR 128.6 million available, with a utilisation rate of 95.4%, lower than the rate of 2010. This is mainly due to the Council's decision not to adopt the Commission's proposal for salary adjustments for 2011. It supports the EESC's efforts to limit the budget for 2013, keeping it at the level of 2012 and thereby ensuring a flat rate increase.

Parliament is also pleased with the achievements in the area of translation following the renewed EESC, Committee of the Regions Cooperation agreement. Further efforts are needed however.

Parliament calls for : (i) improvements as regards energy consumption; (ii) translation and interpretation services. It wishes to see more detailed information included in the EESC's annual report on the provision of space for meetings organised by external civil-society organisations working in conjunction with the EESC.

Maladministration: Parliament notes that in its resolutions of May 2011 and May 2012 granting discharge in respect of the implementation of the EESC budget, it called on the European Ombudsman to inform it of cases of maladministration which had arisen within the EESC. It expresses its concern at the Decision of the European Ombudsman of 6 November 2012 - complaint No 2744/2009(MF)JF - relating to a ‘very serious case of maladministration’ and stating its intention to forward that decision to the President of the Parliament for consideration as to whether it should be submitted to the competent parliamentary committee. Members take note that the EESC has pledged, and has taken measures, to prevent similar situations from happening in future.

Parliament regrets that during 2011, there was an inappropriate linkage of the institutional website of the EESC and the personal blog of its Secretary General, which only ceased after an incident in which comments on the latter were highlighted. It reiterates the importance of separating institutional information and the personal opinions of officials.