

# 2011 discharge: EU general budget, European External Action Service

2012/2176(DEC) - 17/04/2013 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 558 votes to 108 with 5 abstentions, a decision granting the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy discharge in respect of the implementation of the European External Action Service's budget for the financial year 2011.

In its resolution accompanying the decision for discharge, Parliament notes that 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 notes, however, that while 2011 was the first financial year for the EEAS, the latter is fully responsible for the financial year 2011 and it requires the EEAS to improve on all issues queried by the Court. Parliament requests that the EEAS, in the context of the 2012 discharge procedure, informs Parliament of the results.

At the same time, Members note that at the end of 2011, the final budget for EEAS headquarters was EUR 188 million, with an execution rate of 91% and was EUR 276.1 million for the delegations, with a lower execution rate of around 89%. They are concerned that after an amending budget and some transfers from the Commission and within services in 2011, underspending and carrying over of appropriations continues to be quite high. Therefore, Parliament suggests developing **key performance indicators** to monitor the most critical areas in order to improve the budget execution over the coming years.

Parliament also discusses certain problems in buildings and procurement policy.

**Personnel policy:** Parliament highlights issues relating to the recruitment and the management of staff and **chronic absenteeism in the delegations**. In general, Members call for improvements to the quality of the financial and administrative management of the EEAS and a reduction in top-heavy administration. It notes in particular:

- the low proportion of staff coming from the newer Member States;
- the need for a greater gender and geographical balance in the recruitment and the appointment of staff;
- the high number of management positions compared to other institutions

It reiterates its wish to see, as soon as possible, the establishment of a human resources policy that reflects the political priorities of the Union and the actual requirements on the ground.

Parliament takes the view that the inefficiency of the current situation risks seriously impairing the reputation of the EEAS.

**Delegations:** in general, Parliament wants to see improvements in administrative and financial management of delegations as well as in certain services in headquarters. It urges the EEAS to maximise the benefits of economies of scale by creating new synergies within the EEAS headquarters and delegations as well as in cooperation with Member States and national diplomatic services, in the spirit of a true Union external policy and services. It emphasises the need, in that respect, to seek, as much as possible, **the co-location of services in third countries**, for the sake of enhanced exchange of information and savings. Parliament expresses concern about the administrative shortcomings in the Union delegations in Afghanistan, Djibouti, Guyana, Solomon Islands and Zambia. It asks for a report on the state of play about those shortcomings including security contracts. It also expects a report on the

situation about internal control standards in the Union delegations in Liberia and Iraq and asks for a state of play about compliance rates of the Union delegations in Egypt and Malawi and for an update on security contracts in the Union delegations in the West Bank, Haiti, Saudi-Arabia, Pakistan, Sri-Lanka, Libya and Lebanon. In an amendment adopted in plenary, Parliament asks for clarification as to why a security company under contract with the Union delegation to Afghanistan, subject to OLAF investigation, has recently been awarded a new contract of about EUR 50 million in the same delegation.

Lastly, Parliament emphasises the need for the Union to have a delegation in Panama, and insists on an explanation for the recall of the Union ambassador to Libya.