2012 discharge: EU general budget, Court of Justice

2013/2199(DEC) - 21/03/2014 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Tamás DEUTSCH (EPP, HU) in which it called on the European Parliament to grant discharge to the Registrar of the Court of Justice for implementation of the Court of Justice's budget for the financial year 2012.

Members welcomed 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 2012 for administrative and other expenditure of the institutions and bodies were free from material error. They observed that no significant weaknesses had been identified in respect of the audited topics related to human resources and procurement for the Court of Justice.

Budgetary and financial management: Members took note that in 2012, the Court of Justice had commitment appropriations amounting to EUR 343 567 692.52 and that the implementation rate of 98.63% was higher than in 2011.

Court of Justice cases: Members noted that the amount of pending and closed cases in the General Court has decreased slightly in 2012 when compared to previous years. They regretted that the number of closed cases has been decreasing (i.e. 714 closed cases in 2011 and 688 closed cases in 2012). They considered that the proposal for the creation of additional appointments of judges in the General Court, which continues under examination in the Council, could contribute to the effective reduction of pending cases.

They emphasised the fact that the Court of Justice recognises that there is still a margin for improvement within the existing means at the Court of Justice's disposal. They stressed that the internal reforms implemented in 2012, namely the creation of the new five-Judge chamber and the new three-Judge chamber and the changes in the composition of the Grand Chamber, as well as the revision of the Rules of Procedure, have contributed to certain changes in the system and that more can be done with further reforms.

Members urged the Court of Justice to find a way to **properly manage the trend towards an increase in the number of new cases** and heavy workload as internal reforms and the revision of the Rules of Procedure alone will not be sufficient in the coming years to significantly decrease the number of pending cases in the Court of Justice. They stressed that in the years when the mandate of more judges come to an end, there is a high risk that productivity will decrease and that the continuity and stability of the Court of Justice's work will be affected **if the Council does not renew the mandate of the judges** and if there is a delay in the appointment of the new judges.

e-Curia and translation services: Members noted that the Court of Justice has the highest proportion of staff working in the translation service among all Union institutions, having 47.3% of its employees working as translators and interpreters. They stressed, however, that there is room for the rationalisation of the translation services of the Court of Justice. Members acknowledged the benefits of the e-Curia application and considered very positive that by the end of 2012, there were 1003 active users of e-Curia, among those 14 Member States, two European Free Trade Association countries and five European institutions (in particular Parliament, the Council and the Commission). They regretted, however, that there are still some Member States not using e-Curia to exchange documents with the Court of Justice.

Members called in addition for the following:

- an overview of the number of cases pending since more than 24 months;
- compliance with the rules concerning dignity in the workplace, including procedures for dealing with allegations of harassment;
- the need for a greater geographical balance at all levels of the administration, in particular as regards the new Member States;
- lowering the increases in expenditure on the Early Childhood Centre and the production and distribution of documents;
- reducing the number of hearings with interpretation;
- strengthening the ex post control of expenditure linked to the maintenance of infrastructure equipment and IT application;
- the publication of the results and consequences of closed European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) cases where the institution or any of the individuals working for it were subject of the investigation;
- the clarification as regards buildings policy of the Court of Justice.