2013 discharge: EU general budget, European Parliament

2014/2078(DEC) - 30/03/2015 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Gilles PARGNEAUX (S&D, FR) and called on the European Parliament to give discharge to its President in respect of the implementation of the budget of the Court for the financial year 2013.

Parliament's budgetary and financial management: Members noted that Parliament's final appropriations for 2013 totalled EUR 1 750 463 939, or 19.07 % of heading Administration of the Multiannual Financial Framework. In 2013, 99.02 % of the appropriations entered in Parliament's budget were committed with a cancellation rate of 0.8%. EUR 54 000 000 was transferred from provisional appropriation headings and from other sources so as to help fund the extension and modernisation of the Konrad Adenauer Building (KAD), in Luxembourg.

Court of Auditors' opinions on the reliability of the 2013 accounts: the committee commended the fact that the audit did not identify any serious weaknesses in respect of the topics audited for Parliament. It reaffirmed that Parliament's governing bodies and administration were held accountable for the resources placed at Parliament's disposal throughout the discharge and that it was therefore essential for the entire decision-making procedure to take place in a completely **transparent** manner to ensure that Union citizens are provided with a true and accurate view of the way that Parliament takes its decisions and uses the resources placed at its disposal.

Election campaign 2014: Members were deeply worried that Parliament allocated EUR 17 800 000 to promotional activities described as institutional election campaign over the period 2013 to 2014 while turnout in the 2014 European elections declined again to 42.54 % (2009: 43 %). They encouraged the adoption of a new strategy aimed at increasing the attractiveness of the European elections in the Member States. They noted that the European Parliament Eurobarometer survey showed that during the 2014 electoral campaign 23 % of the respondents had a very negative image of Parliament, related to financial arrangements for Members such as allowances, salaries and the budget of Parliament in general. Members were convinced therefore that structural improvements, for example full transparency and the accounting of the general expenditure allowance, are needed to improve **trust and support for Parliament**.

Security and Safety: Members took note of the creation of Directorate-General for Security and Safety and recalled that the internalisation of Parliament's security services had generated savings of EUR 195 000 in 2013 and is projected to produce savings of more than EUR 11 million over the period 2013-2016. They considered that the **Belgian Government should make a greater contribution on its part to Parliament's security**, given that Belgium benefits economically from the presence of the Union institutions on its territory.

Greater transparency: the committee welcomed the fact that Members must be more transparent about the on-the-side activities they do while in public office. It was of the opinion that a more detailed declaration template for Members would help to increase transparency and avoid potential conflicts of interests. It also stressed the need for greater transparency as regards the general spending allowances for Members. It regretted that until now the GEA was considered as a lump-sum amount and that there were no precise rules for the expenditures that might be covered by the allowance.

Administration and management of the European Parliament: Members made a series of recommendations concerning certain DGs, with particular reference to the following:

- **Directorate-General for Communication:** Members commented on more information on (i) the multiannual grants programme 2012 to 2014, aimed at raising awareness on Parliament's role, and costing some EUR 14 500 000, asking for a full breakdown of all the grants for communication projects funded; (ii) the budget for the EuroparlTV at EUR 5 000 000 in 2014, appreciating that the performance of the service had been improved; (iii) the expenditure on the LUX Prize in 2013 amounted to EUR 448 000 but considering that the Prize was not a core activity of Parliament and questioning its relevance; (iv) Parliament's new logo and the lack of transparency regarding its use.

- **Directorate-General Personnel**, with Members deeply regretting the fact that Parliament was condemned for being unable to help Parliamentary Assistants in cases of harassment and irregular layoffs;

- **Directorate-General for Innovation and Technological support:** Members noted (i) the process of the internalisation of staff in the Directorate-General for Innovation and Technological Support and the promised increased level of expertise among the staff in the IT area; (ii) the problem of personal and confidential individual mail-boxes of selected Members, parliamentary assistants and officials which were compromised after Parliament had been subject to a hacker attack.

Lastly, Members made a series of recommendations on Parliament's policies on contracts and calls for tenders and negotiated procedures and the issue of greening Parliament.