2013 discharge: EU general budget, Court of Justice

2014/2080(DEC) - 29/04/2015 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 513 votes to 158, with 23 abstentions, a decision to **give discharge** to the Registrar of the Court of Justice in respect of the implementation of the budget of the Court of Justice for the financial year 2013.

In its resolution accompanying the discharge decision, adopted by 577 votes to 106, with 9 abstentions, Parliament welcomed the fact that the Court of Auditors observed that **no significant weaknesses** had been identified in respect of the audited topics relating to human resources and procurement for the Court of Justice of the European Union (ECJ).

The payments as a whole for the year ended on 31 December 2013 for administrative and other expenditure of the institutions and bodies were **free from material error**.

Budgetary and financial management: in 2013, the Court of Justice had appropriations amounting to EUR 354 880 000 and that the implementation rate was **96.3**%; Members regretted the decrease of the utilisation rate in 2013 compared to that in 2012 (98.6%), this being due to the fact that the initial appropriations for 2013 had included a proposed adjustment to salaries and pensions, totalling almost EUR 6 000 000, whereas no adjustment was ultimately granted by the Council.

ECJ actions: the Court completed 701 cases in 2013 (595 completed cases in 2012), had 699 new cases brought before it (632 in 2012), including 450 appeals and references for preliminary ruling. Members found that despite the good outcome, there was **still margin for improvement**. Members also considered that the Civil Service Tribunal needed to consolidate its human resources.

However, **the elimination of the Civil Service Tribunal was an inadequate solution** for dealing with the Council's long lasting blockage. The CST completed 184 cases, as against 121 in 2012 (i.e. an increase of 52%), thus reducing the number of pending cases by 24 (i.e. a decrease of its backlog by 11%).

Parliament made a **series of observations** on the Court’s daily management and asked for:

- improvement within the existing **resources** at the disposal of the Court of Justice;
- **reorganisation of the Court** in such a way as to make a clearer separation between legal and administrative functions, so that judges no longer run the risk of having to rule on appeals against acts in which their authorities have been directly involved;
- respect for **multilingualism** in the Court of Justice;
- publication on the ECJ homepage of a **Register** which includes detailed information on the outside activities of each judge;
- a consolidation of the Registries of the Court of Justice into **one Registry** in order to ensure a better coordination of procedural actions between the Courts;
- a plan to encourage all the Member States to use the **e-Curia application**;
- a more efficient planning of the **hearings' calendar**;
- **outsourcing**, bearing in mind the very high unused appropriations - EUR 2 200 000 - allocated to freelance translation;
- implementing a system of **translation "on demand"** for specific cases and making more frequent use of technological based translation tools;

- strengthening cooperation with the other institutions in order to work out a uniform method of presenting translation costs;
- a reduction in the **costs of away days** for staff ;
- the establishment of some objective criteria to define the **excessive delay in the period for delivering judgments**;
- a better **geographical balance** at all levels of administration;
- the introduction of an **equal opportunities plan** specifically geared towards management posts;
- reduction in the number of **official cars** at the disposal of the Members and staff;
- more information on the reasons for the **high number of contracts** concluded under negotiated procedure;
- clarification on the ECJ's **buildings policy**;
- inclusion in its annual activity reports, in compliance with the existing rules on confidentiality and data protection, the results and consequences of **closed OLAF cases**, where the institution or any of the individuals working for it were the subject of the investigation.