

# 2013 discharge: EU general budget, Economic and Social Committee

2014/2082(DEC) - 29/04/2015 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 556 votes to 135, with 1 abstention, a decision to **give discharge** to the Secretary General of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in respect of the implementation of the EESC budget for the financial year 2013.

In its resolution accompanying the discharge decision, adopted by 576 votes to 109, with 4 abstentions, Parliament welcomed the fact that the Court of Auditors concluded that 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**. It also welcomed the fact that **no significant weaknesses** had been identified in respect of the audited topics related to the EESC human resources and procurement.

**Budgetary and financial management:** in 2013, the EESC budget amounted to EUR 130 104 400, with a **utilisation rate of 94.1%**. Parliament regretted the decrease of the utilisation rate in 2013 when compared to that in 2012 (96.8%), but took note of the EESC explanation for the utilisation rate decrease being due to precautionary measures.

Noting the rise by 1% in the 2013 budget compared to the previous annual budget, Members supported the EESC's efforts to **limit the budgets of the coming years**, thereby ensuring a flat rate increase. They asked to be informed about the detailed spending review and the results of that exercise;

**Administrative Cooperation Agreement:** the Cooperation Agreement between the EESC, the Committee of the Regions and Parliament, which was eventually signed on 5 February 2014 and had led to the transfer of a large number of committee staff to the new European Parliamentary Research Service.

Members expected that the agreement would benefit all three institutions equally, and contribute positively to the further rationalisation of resources. They recommended that the EESC develop a regular screening of the **budgetary savings** resulting from the implementation of the new administrative cooperation agreement with the Committee of the Regions.

**EESC actions:** Parliament went on to make a series of observations on the EESC's daily management and asked for:

- strengthening cooperation with the other institutions to work out a uniform method of presenting **translation costs**; if the use of external translation was less frequent in 2013, Members find, however, that the productivity of the internal translation service has also decreased;
- an overview of staff holding **management positions sorted by nationality, sex and position** in the annual activity report;
- an **equal opportunities plan** to be set in motion, particularly as regards management positions;
- information of progress made on the still-limited use of **videoconferencing** tools;
- a further **reduction in interpretation costs**, since the unused rate of interpretation services was still high;
- lowering the cost of staff **'away days'**;
- better planning and rationalization of the organisation of **in-house events**;
- adoption, without further delay, of the **internal whistle-blowing rules**;
- clarification of the EESC's **buildings policy**;

- inclusion in the annual activity reports, in compliance with the existing rules on **confidentiality and data protection**, the results and consequences of closed European Anti-Fraud Office cases, where the institution or any of the individuals working for it were the subject of the investigation.

Parliament deplored the European Civil Service Tribunal judgment published on 22 May 2014 condemning the EESC for breaching the **Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union** when dismissing one of its staff members in 2013. It called on the EESC and its new Secretary-General to take the steps required to prevent further serious breaches of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the Union.