2013 discharge: EU general budget, Committee of the Regions

2014/2083(DEC) - 29/04/2015 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 556 votes to 129, with 6 abstentions, a decision to **give discharge** to the Secretary General of the Committee of the Regions in respect of the implementation of the budget of the Committee of the Regions for the financial year 2013.

In its resolution accompanying the discharge decision, adopted by 579 votes to 109, with 4 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 Committee of the Regions. 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 Committee had an approved budget of EUR 87 373 000, of which EUR 84 800 000 were commitment appropriations with an utilisation rate of 97%; Members regretted the **decrease of the utilisation rate in 2013** when compared to that in 2012 (98.2%), while taking into account the Committee's explanation for the decreased utilisation rate.

Actions of the Committee of the Regions: Members:

- noted with satisfaction that the recommendations and requirements made by Parliament’s Committee on Budgetary Control were recorded by the budget service of the Committee in a **central database** and that the progress of implementation was regularly monitored;
- welcomed the fact that an **internal audit committee** had been set up, consisting of five members and an external expert, and that the Court of Auditors' and Parliament's recommendations were so far being taken into account.

Parliament made a series of **observations** on the daily management of the Committee of the Regions and asked for:

- increased publicity for the Annual Subsidiarity Report 2013 on the Committee's subsidiarity monitoring activities which is a valuable tool for Parliament's legislative work;
- more information on the plans and budgetary consequences of measures taken regarding the Committee's **political activities**, notably, the creation of a new political group (ECR) in the Committee;
- an assessment of the advantages of the **new budgetary system** implemented by the Committee;
- the establishment of a regular review of the savings made from the **new Cooperation Agreement** between the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the Committee, and Parliament, which was eventually signed on 5 February 2014 and led to the transfer of a large number of Committee staff to the new European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS);
- information on the Committee’s intention to **rationalise translation requests** and to standardise some types of documents;
- more information on the **common methodology** agreed with other institutions to calculate and compare translation costs;
- reduction in the costs of staff **away days**;
- improvement in the rate of **unused interpretation services** and better planning meetings;
- improvement in **raising the Committee’s profile** by stepping up the necessary information and communication policy;

- establishment of an **equality plan**, particularly with regard to management posts;
- clarifications on 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.

Parliament recalled that the Committee was enmeshed, from 2013, in the same case related to a **whistleblowing**. It stressed the considerable cost to the taxpayers of the Union as well as the harm suffered by the informant. It demanded that the Committee of the Regions complies within the shortest deadlines to the conclusions contained in the judgment of the European Union Civil Service Tribunal dated 7 May 2013, to recognize the action of the applicant as being legitimate and finally closing the case.

Lastly, it stressed that the Parliament will not tolerate **any unfavourable treatment against whistleblowers** in its own ranks and in any other institution of the Union.