2014 discharge: EU general budget, Court of Auditors

2015/2158(DEC) - 08/04/2016 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Ryszard CZARNECKI (ECR, PL) calling on the European Parliament to give discharge to the Secretary-General of the European Court of Auditors in respect of the implementation of the budget of the Court for the financial year 2014.

Noting that the Court of Auditors' accounts are audited by an independent external auditor – PricewaterhouseCoopers SARL – Members noted the auditor's opinion that "the financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Court".

Budgetary and financial management: the report shows that in 2014, the Court's final appropriations amounted to a total of **EUR 133 498 000** (EUR 142 761 000 in 2013) and that the overall rate of implementation for the budget was **98.8 %** compared to 92 % in 2013; it welcomes the improvement in the executions rate with a reduced budget.

Members note with satisfaction that the **obligation of a 5 % staff reduction** is being implemented without negative impact on the Court's policy of reinforcing its audit services; they call on the Court to make sure that further cuts will not adversely affect the quality of its reports.

Court of Auditors' actions: Members made a series of observations on the daily management of the Court and called for:

- information to Parliament on the objectives achieved and of the impact identified following the **Court's reform projec**t started in late 2014 which is aimed at streamlining the audit process, transforming the Court into a task-based organisation and expanding the scope of work of the staff;
- the **common approach on decentralised agencies** from 2012 whereby all aspects of outsourced external audits remain under the full responsibility of the ECA, which manages all administrative and procurement procedures required and finances these, as well as any other costs associated with outsourced external audits; Members regret that the new audit approach of involving private sector auditors resulted in an **increase of administrative burden by 85 %**, to more than 13 000 hours, compared to the previous audit managed by the Court;
- the preparation of a **special report** on whether the Commission has made good use of its powers in supporting and controlling Member States when implementing Union law;
- **closer cooperation between the Court and national supreme audit institutions** should be pursued, in particular in connection with conducting the performance (value for money) audit reports of different Union policies and programmes and the auditing of shared-management arrangements;
- an examination of **the relationship between the number and timeliness of special reports**;
- **clearer recommendations** in special reports and the consistent disclosure of the positive and the negative conduct of the countries concerned;
- better **geographical balance** of its staff, in particular in management and directorial posts, as well as **improved gender balance**;
- clarifications on the **Court's building policy** to be attached to its annual activity report;
- consideration to be given to **outsourcing translation** as an additional way of saving costs;
- 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.

The report notes the Court's first steps towards a **paperless environment** and endorses the environmental strategy implemented by the Court up until now. Lastly, it welcomes the improved clarity of the Court's messages through the media.