

2014 discharge: EU general budget, European Ombudsman

2015/2161(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 European Ombudsman in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Ombudsman for the financial year 2014.

It 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 Ombudsman. The Court concluded that the payments as a whole for the year ended on 31 December 2014 for administrative and other expenditure of the institutions and bodies were **free from material error**.

Budgetary and financial management: the report observed that the Ombudsman's budget amounted in 2014 to EUR 9 857 002 and that of the total appropriations, 97.87 % were committed and 93.96 % paid, with a utilisation rate of 97.87 %. It noted a decrease in the utilisation rate in 2014.

Members made a series of observations and recommendations on the **daily management** of the body:

- They welcome the fact that in line with the Strategy Towards 2019, the Ombudsman pursued **own-initiative inquiries**, taking up a more systematic and systemic approach towards complex issues falling within its mandate. They ask the Ombudsman to regularly inform the discharge authority about the impact of the inquiries.
- They note that the Strategy Towards 2019 introduces new key performance indicators (KPI) with very specific targets and that some of the targets in terms of the **proportion of enquiries closed and in which the admissibility decision is taken within one month** have not been reached. They call on the Ombudsman to develop a strategy towards mitigation of any potential weaknesses and to inform the discharge authority on the development.
- They stress that there is a high **number of complaints falling outside the Ombudsman's remit**, especially from citizens of some Member States such as Spain and Poland. The Ombudsman needs to improve its information and communication policy and to forge stronger links for smooth and regular cooperation with the European Network of Ombudsmen and national and regional ombudsmen to remedy this problem.
- They note the **large number of missions** by Ombudsman staff between Brussels and Strasbourg and call on the Ombudsman to reduce to the fullest extent possible the number of missions and to make maximum use of videoconferencing.
- They are concerned at the Ombudsman's **recruitment policy**, which has involved using emergency procedures directly to employ former trainees on short-term contracts. They call on the Ombudsman to bring its staff selection criteria into line with the European civil service's standards of quality, transparency, objectivity and equal opportunities.
- They ask the Ombudsman, with a view to ensuring greater transparency, to include in its Annual Activity Report (AAR):
 - a table of all **human resources** broken down by nationality, gender and grade;
 - the rate of **requested but unused interpretation services** for 2014;
 - the **results and consequences of closed OLAF cases**, where the institution or any of the individuals working for it were the subject of an investigation.

