2014 discharge: EU general budget, European Parliament

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The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Markus PIEPER (EPP, DE) and called on the European Parliament to give discharge to its President in respect of the implementation of the budget of the Court for the financial year 2014.

Parliament's budgetary and financial management in 2014: Members noted that Parliament's final appropriations for 2014 totalled EUR 1 755 631 742, or 20.13% of heading V of the multiannual financial framework (MFF) set aside for the 2014 administrative expenditure of the Union institutions as a whole representing a 0.3% increase over the 2013 budget (EUR 1 750 463 939).

They recalled that four chapters accounted, in 2014, for 72 % of the total of the commitments:

- Chapter 10 (Members of the institution),
- Chapter 12 (Officials and temporary staff),
- Chapter 20 (Buildings and associated costs),
- Chapter 42 (Expenditure relating to parliamentary assistance).

2014 discharge: acknowledging the Internal Auditor's observations, Members deplored the transfer of responsibilities from the administration to the offices of Members and called for a review by and about the administration to check which obligations (e.g. responsibility for insuring trainees) can be returned to the administration. They noted that after considerable delay, internal whistleblowing rules have been adopted and are in force since January 2016. They also expressed concern at the lack of protection granted to whistleblowers and called on Parliament to ensure that their rights are fully respected.

EP President: Members noted that it was difficult to differentiate fully the President's political activities from his preparation as "Spitzenkandidat" to head the Party of European Socialists in the 2014 European election. They considered that an unequivocal distinction has not been made between the two roles and called for a **clear segregation of office holders' functions and candidacies for European election campaigns**. They regretted the at least indirect use of Parliament staff to help prepare the campaign and called for action to ensure that it does not happen again in future. They recalled its discharge resolution for the financial year 2012, in which detailed information was called for "on how the President, as a politically neutral figure, has kept his duties in office separate from his preparations to head the Socialists and Democrats' list in the European elections, in particular with regard to the staff in his cabinet and in Parliament's information offices and to travel expenses".

General expenditure allowance (GEA): Members recalled that the GEA is intended to cover expenditure in the Member State of election, such as a Members' office rent, equipment, supplies, documentation or logistical organisation of events. They took note that a comprehensive system of control of the Member's parliamentary mandate allowance would represent 40 to 75 new administrative posts, which would go against the staff reduction scheme.

Conflicts of interest: Members welcomed the fact that the Commission has started a public consultation procedure in respect of the **revision of the current transparency register of the Commission and Parliament and its extension to the Council**. They requested that immediately after the public consultation an inter-institutional working group be set up for preparing proposals concerning the revision of the register, the accompanying code of conduct, and the functioning thereto.

They called additionally for a report by Parliament's administration on which former managers, CEOs, directors and board members in relevant European NGOs are now Members of the Parliament. They also called for a report by Parliament's administration on the use of the Parliament's premises by **interest groups and other external organisations** and called on the Bureau to examine the compatibility of these events with parliamentary work whilst ensuring that Parliament remains an institution open to exchange with civil society and to public debate.

Administration and management of the European Parliament: Members made a series of recommendations concerning certain DGs, with particular reference to the following:

- **DG for Communication**: Members noted that VoteWatch received two grants (EUR 149 172 in 2012 and EUR 350 000 in 2013) for the co-financing of specific projects related to the European elections. They requested an added value assessment of those projects. Members noted that DG COMM is extremely vocal in calling for a reduction in expenditure and a greater stress on efficiency. They noted that **despite the large sums spent on the Parliament website**, it remains complex, difficult to navigate and fails to generate the desired visibility. Members are disappointed to learn that the works on the Eastman Building, which will provide the premises for the **House of European History**, has continued to accumulate delays. The works should have been completed by the end of 2014. While welcoming the success of the Parlamentarium, Members are concerned the budget line for the European Parliament Visitors' Centre increased by 24 % over the previous year in comparison with the visitors increase which was only 1%. Regarding the **LUX Prize**, Members await the results of a survey on awareness and impact of the LUX-Prize. They called for a careful consideration, based on the study of the impact of the LUX Prize, if the continuation of the LUX Prize is worth the expenditure.
- **DIGIT**: Members noted that **Parliament's information security policy requires a coordinated and harmonised corporate security strategy**. They are concerned that the assessment of Parliament's ICT security organisation, maturity and capabilities carried out according to the ISO 27002:2013 standards and international best practices showed a relatively weak level of maturity of organisational security. They called for regular stress-testing of the Parliament's security systems in the domain of ICT.
- **DG for Security and Safety**: Members took noted that the internalisation of security services was completed in Brussels on December 2014 and in Strasbourg on 1 July 2015 following the adoption of a global security concept. They stressed that further security measures and an **urgent revision of the global security concept** as adopted by the Bureau in 2011 should take place in view of the recent security context. Members expressed concern with regard to the different approaches taken by the Brussels and Strasbourg authorities concerning the security of parliamentary premises and considers it indispensable to work closely with the Belgian, French and Luxembourg authorities to **enhance the security perimeter around the Parliament's buildings**. Members also called for effective screening of all security staff with a view to ensuring their aptitude for the completion of their tasks in terms both of reliability and levels of professional competence. They called for a revision of building security measures and for greater control at the entrance to the Parliament's carparks by means of automatic number plate recognition.

Lastly, Members encouraged a number of recommendations to improve energy efficiency in its different premises.