2015 discharge: EU general budget, Court of Justice

2016/2154(DEC) - 31/03/2017 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Benedek JÁVOR (Greens/EFA, HU) recommending the European Parliament to give discharge to the Registrar of the Court of Justice in respect of the implementation of the Court's budget for the financial year 2015.

Members noted with satisfaction that the Court of Auditors observed that **no significant weaknesses** in respect of the audited topics relating to human resources and procurement for the Court of Justice of the European Union.

The payments as a whole for the year ended on 31 December 2015 for administrative and other expenditure of the Court of Justice were free from material error.

Budgetary and financial management: Members noted that in 2015, the Court of Justice had appropriations amounting to EUR 357 062 000 (EUR 355 367 500 in 2014) and that the implementation rate was 99 %, a very high utilisation rate.

They noted that the estimated revenue of the Court of Justice for the financial year 2015 was EUR 44 856 000. They asked the Court of Justice to explain why the established entitlements in the financial year 2015 are EUR 49 510 442, which is 10.4 % higher than estimated.

Court's actions: Members welcomed the productivity of the judicial activity of the Court of Justice in 2015. They noted that the 2015 statistics for the three courts confirm the trend seen in recent years as regards the average duration of proceedings, which remains satisfactory.

2015 was the year of adoption of the **judicial architectural reform of the Court of Justice**, which was accompanied by the development of new rules of procedure for the General Court. Members stated that the reform will enable the Court of Justice to continue to deal with the increase in the number of cases. They look forward to **analysing the achievements** of that reform in the Court of Justice's capacity to deal with cases within a reasonable period and in compliance with the requirements of a fair hearing.

The report noted that the Court of Justice complies with the interinstitutional agreement to reduce staff by 5 % over a period of five years.

Members made a series of recommendations to the Court:

- implementing the concept of performance-based budgeting (PBB) and good governance of human resources: this concept should also include the setting of specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-based (SMART) targets to individual departments, units and the annual plans of members of staff;
- provide information regarding other posts and paid external activities of the judges on its website and its annual activity reports;
- improve its budgeting and accountability in regard to the mission budget ;
- provide the discharge authority with a list of meetings with lobbyists, professional associations and civil society by June 2017;

- develop an internal control/remedy mechanism in order to provide in such cases a certain level of control by the Court of Auditors when the secrecy of deliberations as principle *ab ovo* prevents any external control;
- improve gender balance in management posts and the fact that the gender balance in middle and senior management posts;
- give greater importance to geographical balance in the area of resources management, particularly with respect to the Member States that have acceded the Union in 2004 or thereafter;
- set up rules on revolving doors;
- provide, by June 2017, details of the whistleblower cases in 2015, if any, and of how they were handled and finalised;
- envisage the submission of declarations of interests, instead of declarations of the absence of conflicts of interests, as self-evaluation of conflicts of interests is, in itself, a conflict of interests; the evaluation must be done by an independent party;
- provide Parliament with the costs of translation;
- study the possibility of reducing the number of official cars at the disposal of its members and staff ;
- improve its information policy to the EU citizens.

Members welcomed the commitment of the Court of Justice to high environment targets. They also took note of the detailed information on the Court of Justice's buildings policy.