

2015 discharge: EU general budget, European Ombudsman

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The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Benedek JÁVOR (Greens/EFA, HU) 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 2015.

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 2015 for administrative and other expenditure of the institutions and bodies were **free from material error**.

Financial and budgetary management: the Ombudsman's budget is purely administrative and amounted in 2015 to EUR 10 346 105 (EUR 9 857 002 in 2014). The total appropriations, 92.32 % were committed (compared to 97.87 % in 2014) and 86.19 % paid (compared to 93.96 % in 2014), with a utilisation rate of 92.32 % (compared to 97.87 % in 2014). **The utilisation rate continued to decrease in 2015.** The lowering of the utilisation rate in 2015 influenced the Ombudsman's decision to reduce several budget lines, namely, those for missions, representation expenses and publications, and translations.

Ombudsman's actions: Members made a series of observations and recommendations on the management of the Ombudsman:

- extend the scope of the concept of performance-based budgeting (PBB) in its daily activities: this concept should not apply only to the Ombudsman's budget as a whole but should also include the setting of specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-based (SMART) targets to individual departments, units and staffs' annual plans;
- improve the transparency of recruitment conditions and processes;
- ensure that an updated version of its organisational chart is available on its website;
- analyse the situation and to work out rules in order to avoid conflicts of interests if it considers it to be necessary;
- monitor the implementation of internal rules for the protection of whistleblowers on an ongoing basis and to evaluate whether they provide appropriate protection for Parliament's accredited parliamentary assistants
- interpret maladministration as widely as possible when performing its duties and to develop closer cooperation with Parliament's Committee on budgetary control in its strategic work.

The report noted that the results achieved in the complaints handling in 2015 and welcomed the fact that the Union institutions complied with the Ombudsman's proposals at a rate of 90 %. The Ombudsman is called upon to provide a breakdown of compliance of the Union institutions with its proposals in its annual activity reports.

Members welcomed the achievement of **gender balance** at management level in 2015 but called on the Ombudsman to correct this geographic imbalance at middle and senior management level, and, in particular, the overrepresentation of managers emanating from the Member State of which the Ombudsman is a national.

Lastly, Members welcomed the provision of exhaustive information on all the human resources at the Ombudsman's disposal, broken down according to grade, sex and nationality. That information be

automatically included in the Ombudsman's annual activity report. They expected the Ombudsman to continue to strive for consistent quality in its annual activity report.