2015 discharge: EU general budget, European Economic and Social Committee

2016/2156(DEC) - 31/03/2017 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Bart STAES (Greens/EFA, BE) calling on the European Parliament to **grant discharge** to the Secretary-General of the European Economic and Social Committee discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Economic and Social Committee for the financial year 2015.

Members welcomed the conclusion of the Court of Auditors, according to which the payments as a whole for the year ended on 31 December 2015 for administrative and other expenditure of the European Economic and Social Committee were **free from material error**. No significant weaknesses were identified in respect of the audited topics relating to human resources and procurement.

Financial and budgetary management: Members noted that in 2015 the Committee's budget – mostly administrative - amounted to EUR 129 100 000 (compared to EUR 128 559 380 in 2014), **with a utilisation rate of 95.9 %.** A slight increase compared to 2014.

Members stated that the report on the implementation of the Cooperation Agreement between Parliament and the Committee assessed the cooperation between both institutions in a timely and positive manner. However, the nature of the 'intensified' cooperation referred to in the Agreement needs to be better clarified in the Agreement. They called for a **joint assessment of the budgetary savings** resulting from the Agreement to be included in its mid-term review or in the next follow-up report of the Agreement.

The report noted that the opinions of the Committee are not well integrated in Parliament's work. It called on the Committee to develop proposals together with Parliament's Secretary-General to streamline the procedures of the Committee and Parliament in this respect.

EESC's actions: Members made a series of recommendations to the EESC:

- extend the scope of the concept of performance-based budgeting (PBB) in its daily activities: this concept should not apply only to the EESC'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;
- provide a comparative annual overview of members' travel expenses for 2014, 2015 and 2016;
- join the future Inter-Institutional Agreement on a Mandatory Transparency Register;
- implement the necessary measures to improve its recruitment procedures given the number of vacant permanent posts in 2015;
- take action to correct gender imbalances and to report back to the discharge authority on the measures taken and on the results achieved;
- present a report on staff's sick leave divided by the number of working days on sick leave per individual member of staff;
- target its well-being activities to include as many members of staff as possible to help further improve its staff's well-being;
- assess the cost-effectiveness of the arrangement now in practice as regards outsourcing rate for translation.

The report welcomed the setting up of a support service for public procurement in 2015. It also noted with great satisfaction the efforts and the results so far achieved in improving the environmental footprint of the Committee and the renewal of the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) certification.

Lastly, Members welcomed the information on the Committee's building policy in its annual activity report, its efforts and achievements in stepping up its information and communication policy.