

2015 discharge: EU general budget, European Parliament

2016/2152(DEC) - 03/04/2017 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Dennis de JONG (EPP, DE) recommending the European Parliament to **give discharge** to its President in respect of the implementation of the budget of the Court for the financial year 2015.

Parliament's budgetary and financial management: Members noted that Parliament's final appropriations for 2015 totalled EUR 1 794 929 112, or 19.78 % of heading V of the Multiannual Financial Framework set aside for the 2015 administrative expenditure of the Union institutions as a whole, representing a 2.2 % increase compared to the 2014 budget.

It pointed out that four chapters accounted for 71 % of total 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).

2015 discharge: Members noted that overall audit evidence indicated that the spending on administration is not affected by a material level of error, but that on the basis of the seven quantified errors the estimated level of error present under heading 5 of the MFF on administration is 0.6 % (up from 0.5 % in 2014).

They noted that Parliament, which costs about **EUR 3.60 per citizen per year**, does not need to shy away from comparisons with other parliamentary systems, especially since one-third of costs is accounted for by basic factors (multilingualism and number of sites) over which Parliament itself has limited influence and which do not apply to other parliaments in that form.

They acknowledged that, according to the Court, **the costs of the geographic dispersion of Parliament amount to EUR 114 million per year** and noted the finding that in the 2013 Fox-Häfner report 78 % of all missions by Parliament staff coming under the Staff Regulations arise as a direct result of the fact that Parliament's services are geographically dispersed.

Members recalled that the estimate of the environmental impact of that dispersal is between 11 000 to 19 000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions. They called on the Bureau to request the Secretary-General to develop without delay a roadmap for a single seat for Parliament. They reiterated their call on Parliament and the Council to address, in order to create **long-term savings**, the need for a roadmap for a single seat, as stated by Parliament in several previous resolutions.

They stated that the withdrawal of the UK and the need to reallocate the European Agencies which currently have their seats in the UK could provide an **excellent opportunity to solve several issues in the same time**. They pointed however to Article 341 TFEU which establishes that the seats of the institutions of the Union shall be determined by common accord of the governments of the Member States and Protocol 6 annexed to the TEU and the TFEU which lays down that Parliament shall have its seat in **Strasbourg**. In this regard, Members recalled that a single-seat solution **requires Treaty change**.

Members also noted the issue of the cost of long missions.

Specific indemnities for the EP's President: Members recalled that all officials and other servants of the Union, even those who work within cabinets, are to carry out their duties solely with the interests of the Union in mind. They pointed out that Union officials are paid by taxpayers' money, **which is not intended to finance press or other staff engaged in promoting any national political interest of a President.**

They called on the Bureau to lay down clear provisions in Parliament's regulations. Moreover, they took note of the decision of the President of 21 October 2015, by which he sought to appoint people to managerial posts within Parliament without observing procedures, and in particular without calls for applications. Members insisted that that decision by the President be formally revoked.

They also noted that, on 15 December 2015, the President gave himself authority to allocate an **uncapped special allowance** to his cabinet staffers, over and above the existing cabinet allowance. They once again raised the question of the lawfulness of that authority and the validity of the special allowances and asked for consideration to be given to whether the decision concerned should be revoked.

Administration and management of the European Parliament: Members made a series of recommendations concerning the following:

- management of the subsidy scheme for visitors' groups;
- conflicts of interest;
- financing of political parties;
- the LUX prize;
- the house of European history;
- the activities of certain DGs.

Lastly, Members made a number of recommendations regarding energy performance and the reduction of food waste on the different sites of the European Parliament.