

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

2016/2156(DEC) - 27/04/2017 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to **grant discharge** to the Secretary-General of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in respect of the implementation of the Committee's budget for the financial year 2015.

In its resolution accompanying the decision on discharge, adopted by 511 votes to 115 with 7 abstentions, Parliament noted with satisfaction that, in its annual report for 2015, the Court identified **no significant weaknesses** in respect of the audited topics relating to human resources and procurement for the Committee.

Payments as a whole for the year ended on 31 December 2015 for administrative and other expenditure of the EESC were **free from material error**.

**Financial and budgetary management:** in 2015, the EESC's budget 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 resolution noted that the **opinions of the Committee are not well integrated in Parliament's work** and called for a streamlined procedure 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.

Parliament welcomed: (i) the setting up of a support service for public procurement in 2015; (ii) the implementation of a cost-based system for reimbursement of members' travel expenses; (iii) the downward trend of the unused rate of interpretation services requested; (iv) 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; (v) 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.

Lastly, Members took note of the Committee's plan to comply with the inter-institutional agreement to reduce staff by 5 % over a period of five years. They asked to be informed as to how this reduction tallies with the situation in 2016.