2015 discharge: EU general budget, Committee of the Regions

2016/2157(DEC) - 27/04/2017 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to **grant discharge** to the Secretary-General of the Committee of the Regions in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2015.

In its resolution accompanying the decision on discharge, adopted by 517 votes to 107 with 11 abstentions, Parliament noted that in its 2015 annual report, 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 Committee.

The payments as a whole for the year ended 31 December 2015 for administrative and other expenditure of the institutions and bodies were **free from material error**.

Budgetary and financial management: in 2015, the Committee had an approved budget of EUR 88 900 000 (compared with EUR 87 600 000 in 2014), of which EUR 87 200 000 comprised commitment appropriations with a **utilisation rate of 98.2 %,** a slight decrease.

Parliament noted with satisfaction that the report on the implementation of the **Cooperation Agreement between Parliament and the Committee** was timely and positively assesses the cooperation between both institutions. It reiterated its request for a joint assessment of the budgetary savings resulting from the Agreement to be included in the next follow-up report of the Agreement.

Members welcomed the Committee's interest in having a more systematic approach to the cooperation with Parliament, particularly in political areas and with Parliament's research service (EPRS). They noted with concern that none of the targets set by the Committee in 2015 to increase involvement of Parliament and Council in activities related to the Committee opinions were achieved.

CoR actions: Members made a series of observations and recommendations on the management of the Committee:

- 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;
- improve its performance to ensure that the consistent decrease in the payment execution rate in 2015 in some budgetary items does not impact the budgetary management;
- improve the transparency of its operations and include all the data available on the missions undertaken by its Members in its annual activity report, with detailed expenses;
- join the future Inter-Institutional Agreement on a mandatory transparency register;
- improve its gender balance imbalance in senior and middle management posts and report back to the discharge authority on the measures taken to tackle this issue, and the results achieved;
- assess the reasons, focus its human resources' governance to improve the situation and target its well-being activities to include as many staff members as possible to help prevent this kind of absenteeism;
- implement the audit recommendations on performance of IT projects for internal applications;

- ensure the Committee immediately follow up on the two Union Civil Service Tribunal's rulings and the European Anti-Fraud Office's (OLAF) case report, and Parliament's resolutions and brings the whistleblower case of the former internal auditor of the Committee to a just, honourable and equitable settlement before the end of 2017;
- work together with the EESC to follow-up immediately the ruling of the Union Civil Service Tribunal in a harassment case involving officials from both institutions, that it reports to Parliament on the progress and that it review its procedures for handling future allegations of harassment to ensure that they are in line with the case-law of the Civil Service Tribunal.

Lastly, Parliament noted that the outsourcing rate of translation increased from 2.57 % in 2014 to nearly 10 % in 2015 due to the transfer of staff to Parliament under the Agreement. It called on the Committee for an assessment of the cost-effectiveness of the new arrangement now in practice.