2015 discharge: EU general budget, European External Action Service (EEAS)

2016/2160(DEC) - 27/04/2017 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to **grant discharge** to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European External Action Service for the financial year 2015.

In its resolution accompanying the decision on discharge, adopted by 512 votes to 120 with 3 abstentions, Parliament welcomed the fact that the overall level of error in the administrative budget has been estimated by the Court of Auditors at 0.5 % and that **no significant weaknesses** were identified as regards the annual activity report and the internal control system of the EEAS;

Budget and financial management: Parliament noted that the total budget of the EEAS for 2015 was EUR 602.8 million, representing a total increase of 16.2 % compared to 2014, which resulted from the transfer to its budget of EUR 71.5 million from the Commission's administrative budget (EUR 25.2 million) and from other budget lines (up to EUR 46.3 million) to finance the common costs of the Union's delegations such as rents, offices' security and IT costs.

Members regretted the **increase of the average rate of anomaly on commitments** to 22.4 % in 2015 (compared to 18.3 % in 2014) at the level of ex ante controls. They pointed out that the execution of the EEAS administrative budget remains a point of concern and invited all the stakeholders to further refine and simplify the budget sources and arrangements.

EEAS actions: Parliament made a series of observations on the management of the EEAS:

- remedy certain weaknesses found by the Court in the recruitment procedures of local agents in delegations and in procurement procedures;
- pay attention, especially in delegations, to 'business continuity' and 'document management' as key internal control standards, particularly for the availability and reliability of information used for various management purposes;
- ensure a **more balanced distribution of staff**: the share of Member States' diplomats represents 32.9 % of the EEAS overall AD staff in comparison to 33.8 % in 2014; this proportion is higher in delegations with 43.1 %;
- reshape its conditions and recruitment policies in order to **attract both genders equally for management positions**, the ratio is currently at 21.4 % / 78.6 %.
- make geographical balance an important element of the EEAS human resources management, particularly with respect to the Member States that have acceded the Union in 2004 or after;
- develop the role of **Union delegations**, particularly facilitating and supporting coordination between Member States in providing consular assistance;
- join the future Inter-Institutional Agreement on a Mandatory Transparency Register, including for the Union delegations, insofar as this is legally possible.

The EEAS is called upon to:

- present a **review of its human resources policy** in the course of 2017, addressing issues such as gender balance and mobility of staff between institutions;

- overhaul its **building policies** notably as regards the need for consistency and improved selecting of delegation buildings. Members welcomed the increase in co-location projects of Union delegations and encouraged the EEAS to further seek ways to extend this good practice;
- give priority to **strengthening the security** of the EEAS and when choosing buildings and spaces for its delegations.

Lastly, the EEAS should improve its communication policy towards Union citizens.