2016 discharge: EU general budget, European Ombudsman

2017/2143(DEC) - 13/07/2017

PURPOSE: presentation of the Annual report of the Court of Auditors on the implementation of the budget concerning the financial year 2016.

CONTENT: the Court of Auditors published its 40th annual report on the implementation of the general budget of the Union for the year 2016. This report follows a five-part structure:

- the statement of assurance (DAS) and a summary of the results of our audit on the reliability of accounts and the regularity of transactions;
- the analysis of budgetary and financial management;
- the Commission's performance reporting framework;
- the findings on EU revenue;
- the presentation of the main headings of the current multiannual financial framework (MFF), the results of the testing of the regularity of transactions.

The Court concludes that **payments for 2016 are legal and regular, with the exception of those based on the cost reimbursement payments**. It believes that the EU accounts present a true and fair view of the EU's financial position.

The audit also focuses on the budget implementation of the **European Ombudsman**.

Overall, audit evidence indicates that **spending on 'Administration' is not affected by a material level of error**. For this MFF heading area, testing of transactions indicates that the estimated level of error present in the population is 0.2 %.

The Court noted that the institutions had **collectively cut the number of posts** in the establishment plan by 4% over the period from 2013 to 2017. The institutions had reduced the number of staff (posts actually occupied by a staff member) by 1.4 % between 2013 and 2017.

The Court also examined how the budgeted number of **contract staff** had changed. This number rose from 4 517 to 5 417 between 2013 and 2017 - an increase of 19.9 %. Contract staff made up 11.4 % of the number of staff in the establishment plan in 2013, and 14.2 % in 2017.

The institutions are **achieving the 5 % reduction target** by eliminating vacant posts in the establishment plan and by not replacing staff members leaving upon retirement, illness or at the end of temporary contracts.

The Court **did not detect any specific problem regarding the European Ombudsman**.