2016 discharge: EU general budget, European Committee of the Regions

2017/2142(DEC) - 27/03/2018 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Ingeborg GRÄSSLE (EPP, DE) calling on the European Parliament to **give discharge** to the Committee of the Regions in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2016, Section VII – Committee of the Regions.

It welcomed the fact that 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 Court concluded that the payments as a whole for the year ended on 31 December 2016 for administrative and other expenditure of the institutions and bodies were **free from material error**.

Budgetary and financial management: Members welcomed the overall prudent and sound financial management of the Committee in the 2016 budget period and expressed support for the successful paradigm shift towards performance-based budgeting in the Commission's budget planning. They encouraged the Committee to apply that method to its own budget-planning procedure.

In 2016, the Committee had an approved budget of EUR 90.5 million (EUR 88.9 million in 2015), of which EUR 89.4 million were commitment appropriations with a **utilisation rate of 98.7 %.** The increase of the utilisation rate in 2016 was welcomed.

Members stressed the importance of deepening the **cooperation with Parliament** based on the cooperation agreement between the Committee and Parliament, and asked to be kept informed of any developments in this regard. They asked that the Committee's strategy strengthen connections first of all with Parliament, but also with other Union institutions in order to increase the involvement of the regions in the Union legislative process. The stressed that a joint assessment of the budgetary savings resulting from the cooperation between the Committee and Parliament is of interest to both institutions and to Union citizens and suggested that the Committee and Parliament consider carrying out this exercise as a complement to the ongoing political strategic dialogue.

The report welcomed the administrative cooperation agreement between the Committee and the European Economic and Social Committee, which entered into force in 2016 and provides for shared translation and logistics directorates. This agreement will ensure also further efficiency in both committees' performance and economic savings.

The reopening of the **direct access between the RMD and the REM buildings** was also welcomed following the decision by Belgian authorities to reduce the threat level for European Institutions. This will facilitate the communication and cooperation between the Parliament and the Committee.

Members observed the **lack of progress concerning the continued shortage of women** holding senior and middle management posts and encouraged the Committee to improve its performance in this regard.

Following an *ex post* control exercise carried in 2016, the Committee has a recurrent recommendation to update or establish **written procedures**. The Committee is urged to make sure that that recommendation is duly followed up.

Lastly, Members regretted the decision of the United Kingdom to withdraw from the European Union and observed that at this point no predictions can be made about the financial, administrative, human and other consequences related to the withdrawal. The Committee and the Court are called on to perform impact assessments and inform Parliament of the results by the end of 2018.