2017 discharge: EU general budget, European Economic and Social Committee

2018/2172(DEC) - 27/02/2019 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Arndt KOHN (S&D, DE) calling on the European Parliament to grant discharge to the Secretary-General of the European Economic and Social Committee discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Economic and Social Committee for the financial year 2017.

Members welcomed the conclusion of the Court of Auditors, according to which the payments as a whole for the year ended on 31 December 2017 for administrative and other expenditure of the European Economic and Social Committee were free from material error. No significant weaknesses were identified in respect of the audited topics relating to human resources and procurement.

Budgetary and financial management

In 2017, the Committee's budget amounted to EUR 133 807 338 (compared to EUR 130 586 475 in 2016), with an implementation rate of 96.5 % compared to 97.2 % in 2016. The implementation rate of appropriations carried forward from 2016 to 2017 was higher than in 2016, 84.9 % (EUR 7.4 million) compared to 65.7 % in 2016 (EUR 6.8 million).

Members welcomed the Committee's commitment to extend the performance-based budgeting methodology to relevant parts of its budget.

Staff

The Committee reduced the overall number of posts in its establishment plan by 59 posts, from 727 in 2013 to 665 in 2017, mainly due to the implementation of the 5 % staff cuts decision. It also adjusted its organisational structure, in particular through the merger of the directorate for human resources and the directorate for finance in May 2017.

Performance

Members took note that the Committee adopted in 2017 a total of 155 opinions and reports, including 13 exploratory opinions on referral from the EU presidencies or the Commission, 59 opinions on referral from Parliament and Council, and 45 on referral from the Commission.

They highlighted that translation services are still in transition towards a higher degree of outsourcing due to the transfer of staff to Parliament under the cooperation agreement (with 16.61 % of the budget in 2016 being used for outsourced translation and 17.10 % in 2017). Members called on the Committee to follow up the areas related to translation management requiring further attention from management highlighted by the internal audit service.

Inter-institutional administrative cooperation with Parliament was welcomed and further encouraged.

Procurement

Members regretted the low participation of economic operators in the calls for tenders launched by the Committee. They asked the Committee to increase the publication efforts and to reduce the number of exceptional negotiated procedures with only one candidate.

Brexit

Lastly, Members noted that the Council has not taken a decision yet about any change in the number of Committee members and delegates following the decision of the United Kingdom to withdraw from the Union. They called on the Committee to provide information of the direct budgetary impact of the decision, at the latest in the follow-up to the 2017 discharge.