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

2018/2172(DEC) - 26/03/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided by 510 votes to 124, with 7 abstentions, to grant discharge to the Secretary-General of the European Economic and Social Committee in respect of the implementation of the committee's budget for the 2017 financial year.

It 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

Parliament 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.

Members welcomed the inter-institutional administrative cooperation with Parliament and the mid-term evaluation results on the implementation of the cooperation agreement between the Committee and the Committee of the Regions, which highlights the successful implementation of several measures. It noted that in the context of a redeployment exercise, the Committee has already moved 16 posts from the directorate for translation to its own services, and that remaining moves will happen progressively. The calculation of the budgetary savings made by the Committee and the Committee of the Regions through this inter-institutional cooperation, such as the savings, inter alia, in infrastructure costs amounting to EUR 12.5 million, in IT costs amounting to EUR 5 million, or in security staff costs amounting to EUR 500 000.

Parliament called on the Committee and the Committee of the Regions to continue to improve this inter-institutional cooperation in order to achieve further savings.

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, Parliament 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. It 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.