# 2019 discharge: General budget of the EU - European Ombudsman

2020/2147(DEC) - 26/03/2021 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Olivier CHASTEL (Renew Europe, BE) calling on the European Parliament to give discharge to the European Ombudsman in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Ombudsman for the financial year 2019.

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 Ombudsman. The Court concluded that the payments as a whole for the year ended on 31 December 2019 for administrative and other expenditure of the institutions and bodies were free from material error.

2019 was a transition year for the Ombudsman given that it coincided with the end of her first mandate and her re-election for the 2019-2024 parliamentary term. Members fully support the objectives identified by the Ombudsman for her strategy ‘Towards 2024’ covering her second mandate.

***Budgetary and financial management***

Members noted that the Ombudsman’s budget is mostly administrative, with a large amount being used for expenditure related to persons, buildings, furniture, equipment and miscellaneous running costs. This amounted in 2019 to EUR 11 496 261 (EUR 10 837 545 in 2018). The implementation rate in terms of commitments (including appropriations carried over from 2019 to 2020) is 92.3 % (compared to 95.3 % in 2018) and that of the total appropriations, 89.5 % were paid in 2019 (compared to 91.3 % in 2018).

The report welcomed the improvements in carry-overs, such as the fact that the amount of appropriations carried over from 2019 to 2020 is EUR 323 410 representing 2.8 % of the 2019 budget (compared to EUR 433 866 carried over from 2018 to 2019, representing 4 % of the 2018 budget).

***Human resources***

The need for gender balance at all hierarchical levels was recalled. The report acknowledged plans for a reorganisation in 2020 to increase the Ombudsman’s efficiency resulting in a reduction in the number of managers, while taking into account the geographical balance, to the extent possible.

The Ombudsman was called on to tackle personnel-related issues and look into ways of improving recruitment processes. The flexible working arrangement offered to staff (flexitime, telework and part-time work) as well as training on team cohesion was highlighted. The Ombudsman should be a more inclusive workplace for persons with disabilities.

***Complaints and inquiries***

The report observed that in 2019, the number of complaints registered was 2171 (compared to 2160 in 2018), that the number of new cases processed was 2201 (compared to 2180 in 2018) and that the number of cases within the Ombudsman’s mandate was 871 (compared to 880 in 2018). It noted that the Ombudsman opened 456 new inquiries based on complaints (compared to 482 in 2018) and closed a record number of 552 complaint-based inquiries (compared to 534 in 2018) and as a result of the high turnover of cases, only 117 inquiries were carried over to 2020 (compared to (222 carried over to 2019).

The categories of complaints that saw the biggest increase include: respect for fundamental rights, proper use of discretion (including infringement procedures), culture of service, transparency and respect for procedural rights.