2019 discharge: General budget of the EU - Court of Justice

2020/2143(DEC) - 28/04/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided by 612 votes to 78, with 8 abstentions, to grant discharge to the Registrar of the Court of Justice in respect of the implementation of the Court's budget for the financial year 2019.

Members noted with satisfaction that the Court of Auditors observed that no significant weaknesses in respect of the audited topics relating to human resources and procurement for the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU). The payments as a whole for the year ended on 31 December 2019 for administrative and other expenditure of the Court of Justice were free from material error.

Budgetary and financial management

In 2019, the CJEU's budget amounted to EUR 429 468 936 (EUR 410 025 089 in 2018) and that the implementation rate was 98.7 % (compared to 99.18 % in 2018). Almost 75 % of the CJEU's budget was allocated to expenditure on the members and staff. Members noted that the CJEU continues to overestimate some of its commitments for various budget lines and that substantial amounts were paid in 2020 from the commitments carried forward. The CJEU is called on to pursue its efforts to ensure sound financial management for all budget lines in order to avoid significant discrepancies between commitments and payments.

Internal management, internal control, performance

Parliament pointed out that the Court of Justice registered a large number of new cases in 2019, 966, a 13.78 % increase compared to 2018. A large number of new cases were also brought before the General Court in 2019, 939, compared to 834 in 2018. A record number of closed cases was recorded at 865, a 13.8% increase compared to 2018.

In 2019, the issues dealt with by the Court of Justice related mainly to competition and state aid and the area of freedom, security and justice, while the issues dealt with by the General Court concerned mainly state aid and intellectual and industrial property.

Members welcomed the reduction of the average length of proceedings before the Court of Justice and the General Court.

Stressing the importance of reporting on the main key performance indicators put in place as part of the structural reform process, Members called on the CJEU to provide a summary in the next annual activity report.

Human resources

The distribution of posts by area of activity remains similar to that of previous years, with almost 85% of posts devoted to judicial and linguistic activities.

Members stressed the importance of addressing the lack of gender balance in the College of Judges, while noting that equal opportunities efforts are increasingly visible at the administrative level, with the proportion of women rising to 41% in middle management and 40% in senior management.

Noting with concern the high number of burnout cases reported in recent years at the CJEU, Members urged the CJEU to closely monitor the effectiveness of newly introduced measures to cope with the increased workload and to make more substantial efforts to prevent burnout.

Ethics and integrity policy

Parliament noted that one case of alleged harassment was reported in 2019 and that it was concluded that the alleged facts did not constitute harassment within the meaning of Article 12a of the Staff Regulations. It welcomed the fact that rules and procedures to combat harassment are published on the CJEU's intranet site.

Members welcomed the "Rules of good conduct" training and the creation of the "Equal Opportunities and Diversity" unit in the Directorate for Human Resources and Personnel Administration.

Recalling that the latest revision of the code of conduct for staff members came into force on 1 January 2017, Members reiterated the need for detailed provisions on issues such as conflicts of interest, outside activities, occupational activities after leaving service and gainful employment of spouses.

Communication

A key focus of the CJEU's communication activities in 2019 was the increased use of proprietary social media to ensure greater dissemination of its information. Members called on the CJEU to be present on free social networks to improve transparency and broaden its audience. They also highlighted the development of cooperation with national judges, 2824 of whom were received at the Court for seminars, training, visits or internships in 2019, compared with 2292 in 2018.

Lastly, Parliament welcomed the fact that the CJEU has always cooperated fully with OLAF and that it is committed to continuing this good cooperation.