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

2020/2144(DEC) - 28/04/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided by 686 votes to 8, with 4 abstentions, to give discharge to the Secretary-General of the European Court of Auditors in respect of the implementation of the budget of the Court for the financial year 2019.

Members took note of the opinion of the external auditor that the financial statements of the Court give a true and fair view of the Court's financial position.

Budgetary and financial management

In 2017, the Court's budget amounted to a total of EUR 146 890 000 (compared to EUR 146 469 000 in 2018 and EUR 141 240 000 in 2017) and that 98 % of all appropriations were committed by the end of 2019 (compared to 96.21 % in 2018 and 97.73 % in 2017).

Members reiterated the need for a deeper examination by the Court of each and every institution in order to allow Parliament to fulfil its duties as discharge authority.

They welcomed the Court's commitment to produce the first report on the performance of the EU budget, at Parliament's request, which aims in particular to provide an assessment of the results achieved under each EU policy. Members believe that the performance audit is essential to evaluate the real impact of EU investments.

Human resources

At the end of 2019, there were 853 permanent and temporary posts compared to 891 posts in 2013, constituting a decrease of 4.26 %. Members expressed concern about the decrease in the number of female directors from 30 % in 2018 to 20 % in 2019 and the decrease in the number of female heads of unit from 39 % in 2018 to 35 % in 2019.

They reaffirmed that the Council should always present at least two candidates, one female and one male, during the appointment procedure of the members of the Court.

Parliament called on the Court to develop an action plan for the recruitment of new members, paying particular attention to geographical balance. It welcomed the fact that the Court had established several partnerships with universities and professional organisations for future cooperation.

Inter-institutional cooperation

Members encouraged the Court to develop further synergies and rationalisation with other Union bodies through inter-institutional cooperation. They acknowledged the fact that, following the inter-institutionally agreed methodology, the cost of outsourcing translations in 2019 was EUR 2 740 366 and that if the corresponding translations had been done by in-house services, the total cost of the same pages would have been EUR 4 647 880.

Parliament welcomed the administrative agreement signed in 2019 establishing a structured framework for cooperation between the Court and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). It also asked the Court to

inform the Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control about the discussions on the future administrative agreement that will provide a framework for cooperation between the Court and the European Public Prosecutor's Office.

Communication

Parliament underlined the Court’s efforts to further improve the way it communicates with its stakeholders, media and the general public. Members are aware that following the 2019 European elections the Court created a publications portal providing all Members of Parliament with relevant facts and figures.

Transparency

Members recalled that Parliament has called clearly on the Court to establish procedures for keeping a register of members’ annual leave, sick leave and absence from work for other reasons in order to ensure that all leave taken by members is effectively recorded. They stressed that the current practice could undermine the trust of Union citizens and institutions in the Court.

Parliament asked the Court to provide information on the outcome of three harassment complaints that were reported and investigated in 2019. It supported the findings of the peer review regarding the need for regular updates of declarations of interest.

Internal management

Noting that the Court applies a set of key performance indicators to monitor progress, Parliament welcomed the fact that the Court's analysis showed that 96% of the recommendations in the 2015 Annual Report and 94% of those in the special reports published in 2015 had been implemented. It invited the Court to explore ways of providing more information on the administrative expenditure of the other EU institutions in the context of the discharge procedure.