2020 discharge: General budget of the EU - European Economic and Social Committee

2021/2111(DEC) - 10/10/2022 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted a second report by Isabel GARCÍA MUÑOZ (S&D, ES) on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2020, Section VI – European Economic and Social Committee.

The committee called on the European Parliament to grant the Secretary-General of the European Economic and Social Committee discharge in respect of the implementation of the Agency's budget for the financial year 2020. It made, however, a number of recommendations that needed to be taken into account when the discharge is granted.

Budgetary and financial management

Members reiterated its observations with regard to the 'IT co-financing allowance for members' that provides a yearly IT allowance of EUR 3 000 to each member (EUR 5 000 in 2020 under the one time increase related to the measures introduced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic). They asked the European Economic and Social Committee to reconsider the amount of the IT allowance as well as its nature, with the aim of switching from a flat-rate allowance to a payment based on actual and justified costs.

The committee also reiterated its call to enhance the interinstitutional cooperation and consequently the impact of the Committee's work and for its legal service to be provided with sufficient resources and the requisite mandate to perform its tasks successfully.

Human resources, equality and staff well-being

The report noted that the Committee's establishment plan has suffered a reduction of 7.98 % compared to 2013 figures (exceeding the 5 % target established by the Commission), which has an evident **negative impact** on the workload/resources ratio and therefore on the well-being of staff.

Moreover, in order to benefit from the lessons learnt in the COVID-19 pandemic, a recovery action plan for the Committee was set-up in 2021 aiming to help staff members to move forward towards a post-pandemic way of working. In this regard, Members noted that a new decision on teleworking and flexitime was adopted in April 2022 to establish modern, flexible and output-driven working conditions for staff.

On gender equality, Members noted the ongoing consideration on new measures to promote women's access to management posts, such as intermediate management responsibilities below head of unit level and the practical implementation of gender budgeting.

Ethical framework and transparency

The report noted the entry into force in January 2021 of the strengthened code of conduct for members which provides greater clarity and imposes more severe sanctions in the event of any breach of the rules. Members objected to the rejection by the Committee of the use of the Transparency Register on the grounds that the Committee is a consultative body and urged it to join the Register to improve the transparency of its interactions with external interest representatives.

Inter-institutional cooperation

While taking note of the ongoing negotiations with the Commission and the Council aiming to strengthen institutional and administrative relations, Members called for the cooperation agreement between the Committee and the Parliament to be made binding, in particular calling for close and timely cooperation between the respective rapporteurs of the two institutions, for the Committee's opinions to be shared with the relevant committees of the Parliament during the report drafting phase and for the Committee's rapporteurs to be systematically invited to the presentation of those reports.