2021 discharge: General budget of the EU - Court of Justice of the European Union

2022/2084(DEC) - 10/05/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided by 563 votes to 73, with 1 abstention, to **grant discharge** to the Registrar of the Court of Justice in respect of the implementation of the budget of the Court of Justice of the European Union for the financial year 2021.

In its resolution, adopted by 560 votes to 75 with 2 abstentions, Parliament made the following observations:

Budgetary and financial management

The overall budget allocated to the CJEU for 2021 was approximately EUR 444 million, higher than the EUR 436 million for 2020 and the EUR 429 million for 2019. Members noted the high budget implementation rate of 98.69% in 2021.

In 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on all the activities of the CJEU, both judicial and administrative, and this crisis had an impact on the budget consumption of several of the CJEU's budget lines. For some budget lines, the net impact of the COVID-19 crisis was a reduction in the use of appropriations, while for others, the crisis required additional expenditure. In terms of figures, the additional expenditure due to the COVID-19 pandemic can be estimated at EUR 1.7 million while the savings are estimated at EUR 6 million. The net amount of savings can be estimated at EUR 4.3 million.

Internal management, performance and control

In 2021, the measures to counter the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic enabled the CJEU to maintain a high level of performance.

The resolution noted the increase in 2021 in the total **number of cases** brought before the two courts (1 720 in 2021 compared with 1 584 in 2020), as well as in the number of cases closed (1 723 in 2021 compared with 1 540 in 2020). This increase mainly concerns the Court of Justice and is essentially linked to the significant increase in the number of appeals against decisions of the Court of First Instance, which in turn is due to the increase in the Court's activities.

The **average duration of proceedings** before the Court of Justice increased from 15.4 months in 2020 to 16.6 months in 2021, while at the General Court it reached 17.3 months in 2021 compared to 15.4 months in 2021. The number of cases pending before both courts remained stable in 2021.

Human resources, equality and staff well-being

In 2021, a significant partial renewal of the CJEU occurred with the arrival of nine new judges at the Court of Justice and five new judges at the General Court.

Parliament maintained that it is important to **remedy the lack of gender balance in the College of Judges** . At the end of 2021, women represented 60% of the staff, which shows that the CJEU has surpassed the average of the EU institutions as regards the representation of women in positions of responsibility within the administration.

At the end of 2021, there were 2 247 officials and other staff working at the CJEU. Members were pleased to note that the CJEU is seeking to achieve geographical balance by encouraging applications from people from under-represented Member States. They regretted that in 2021, the percentage of paid trainees (68%) had fallen compared to the previous year (72% in 2020).

Parliament noted with satisfaction that in 2021 the activities of the Training and Development Unit of the CJEU included specific initiatives relating to equal opportunities, diversity and inclusion. It welcomed the fact that the CJEU has deployed more resources to prevent cases of burnout and commended the CJEU for taking specific measures to ensure the physical and mental well-being of staff in the context of the particular teleworking conditions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021.

Ethical framework and transparency

Members welcomed the adoption of the **new code of conduct** for members of the Court of Justice and the General Court, which entered into force on 7 October 2021 and which places emphasis on members' declarations of interest. They regretted that the new code of conduct for members of staff was still in the process of being adopted and called on the CJEU to conclude the procedure as soon as possible. They stressed the importance of providing staff with an updated and comprehensive term of reference on many sensitive topics such as revolving doors, outside activities and occupational activities after leaving the service.

Parliament noted the satisfactory degree of transparency achieved through the annual publication on the Curia website, since 2018, of lists of the outside activities of the members of the Court of Justice and the General Court. In addition, 96 requests were submitted by staff for an authorisation to engage in professional activity after leaving the CJEU, all of which were approved, that no breach of the cooling-off period was detected.

Parliament also commented on digital transition, cybersecurity and data protection, buildings and security, environment and sustainability, interinstitutional cooperation and communication.

In particular, the resolution welcomed:

- the efforts made by the CJEU to accelerate and broaden the digitalisation of its activities and procedures, both in judicial and administrative areas. The CJEU has played an active role in supporting initiatives to strengthen cybersecurity in all EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies;

- the detailed report provided to the budgetary authority on the CJEU's property investment plans; since June 2021, the CJEU has had a contract for the establishment of an inventory of its architectural assets and their systematic inspection, a contract to which EUR 140 000 has been allocated in 2021 and EUR 230 000 in 2022;

- the adoption by the CJEU of an environmental policy, which is publicly available on its website. By 2021, the CJEU had considerably reduced its consumption of electricity, water and paper, its catering and office waste, and its greenhouse gas emissions;

- the commitment of the CJEU to inter-institutional cooperation;

- the rate of use of e-Curia, which was 85% before the Court of Justice and 93% for the General Court. The Curia website was consulted by 6.1 million visitors and its pages were viewed 25.3 million times in 2021. The CJEU is encouraged to step up its communication efforts to strengthen the link with citizens.