2022 discharge: General budget of the EU - Committee of the Regions

2023/2136(DEC) - 07/03/2024 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Luke Ming FLANAGAN (The Left, IE) on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2022, Section VII – Committee of the Regions.

The committee called on the European Parliament to grant the Secretary-General of the Committee of the Regions discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the Committee of the Regions for the financial year 2022.

Budgetary and financial management

In 2022, the final adopted budget for the Committee amounted to EUR 109 976 858, including Amending Budget 5/2022, representing an overall increase of 3.03 % compared to 2021. The appropriations on budget line 1004 for ‘travel and subsistence allowances, attendance at meetings and associated expenditure’ increased from EUR 4 244 488 to EUR 8 158 838, i.e. by 92 %, between 2021 and 2022, owing to the resumption of travel after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The budget implementation rate was 99.2 % in 2022, which is slightly higher than in 2021, when the budget implementation rate was 98.9 %.

The report noted that the Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine created budgetary pressure for the Committee, including through rising inflation and salary adjustments, strongly increasing energy costs and the cost of construction and raw materials.

Internal management, performance and internal control

In 2022, the Committee adopted 55 opinions and 8 resolutions which is slightly lower than in 2021 when the Committee adopted 60 opinions and 9 resolutions. Members welcomed that the Committee took concrete steps to strengthen its involvement in the entire Union political and legislative cycle in line with its prerogatives under the Treaties.

The report also noted that, in 2022, the Committee reviewed and strengthened its internal control framework at the levels of planning and reporting, systems, financial verification and sensitive functions.

Human resources, equality and staff well-being

At the end of 2022, the Committee had a total of 533 members of staff, compared to 547 in 2021 and 537 in 2020. The report noted that the Committee continued to raise awareness about the measures put in place to combat harassment in the workplace, managing conflict and combatting harassment.

Ethical framework and transparency

The Committee continued the implementation of its 2020 code of conduct for members and, in that respect, intensified its efforts to collect missing financial declarations of members. Moreover, new transparency measures focusing on office-holding members and rapporteurs, in line with the principles of the EU Transparency Register, were adopted by the Committee. Members welcomed that the Committee

formally joined the EU Transparency Register as from 1 January 2024. Members regretted that the Committee has not adopted an internal anti-fraud strategy.

Buildings

The report noted that the Committee and the EESC lost 5 000 m² in office space following the take-over of the rental contract of the former EEAS building at Belliard 100 (B100), which took effect in September 2021, and the buildings exchange between the Committee and the EESC's Belliard 68 and Trèves 74 and the Commission's Van Maerlant 2 (VMA), which took effect in September 2022. Fitting-out works in the two newly acquired buildings were necessary to enable a denser use of the office space.

Interinstitutional cooperation

Members welcomed the budgetary and administrative savings achieved through interinstitutional cooperation, in particular the close cooperation established at administrative level with the EESC with which the Committee shares premises and joint services in the areas of translation, infrastructure, logistics and IT, while maintaining its full institutional autonomy. They called on the Committee to keep explore synergies with other institutions both in terms of logistics, digital services, driver's service and other administrative tasks.

The report welcomed the willingness of the Committee to further develop its cooperation with other institutions, in particular Parliament, ahead of the 2024 European elections through a roadmap predicting a further intensification of cooperation and a bigger role for the Committee and local and regional authorities in that context.

Communication

The report noted that, in 2022, the Committee's overall budget for communication was EUR 2.2 million, compared to EUR 2.1 million in 2021, i.e. an increase of 4 %. Within that budget, approximately EUR 439 000 was used for events, EUR 795 000 for media and EUR 1 099 000 for digital communication.

Members welcomed the data-driven communication strategy developed by the Committee to close the gap with Union citizens at local and regional levels using multiplication channels, such as the European networks of regional and local counsellors that had 2 037 registered members at the end of 2022 and the programme for young elected politicians with 775 participants in events in 2022, i.e. an increase of 15 % as compared to 2021.