

2022 discharge: General budget of the EU - European Data Protection Supervisor

2023/2138(DEC) - 12/03/2024 - 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 IX – European Data Protection Supervisor.

The committee called on the European Parliament to grant the European Data Protection Supervisor discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Data Protection Supervisor for the financial year 2022.

Budgetary and financial management

The report noted that the final adopted budget for the EDPS was EUR 20 266 000 in 2022, which represented an increase of 4.12% compared to 2021. The budget implementation rate was 98 % in 2022, which is higher than the previous year, when the budget implementation rate was 86 %.

The report noted that Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine created budgetary pressure for the EDPS, including through rising inflation and salary adjustments, strongly increasing energy costs and the cost of goods and services through public procurement and service-level agreements with other institutions. Members welcomed the internal reallocations within budget chapters performed in the course of 2022 in order to optimise the budget implementation.

The EDPS budget for staff missions increased from EUR 41 000 to EUR 251 000, i.e. an increase of 512 %, between 2021 and 2022 following the resumption of travel after the COVID-19 pandemic. Within this overall budget, the EDPS had a dedicated mission budget for the Supervisor of EUR 33 000 in 2022 compared to EUR 5 000 in 2021, i.e. an increase of 560 %. The increase in inflation and the substantial increase in energy prices in 2022 linked to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine had an adverse effect on flight tickets and hotel costs, thus leading to an increase in mission costs.

Internal management, performance and internal control

Members acknowledged the major organisational changes, and the corresponding revision of its rules of procedures, undertaken by the EDPS in 2022 to support the evolution of its tasks and improve the efficiency of its processes in light of the fast-changing international environment. As a result of these changes, the EDPS created a new function of Head of the EDPS Secretariat at the level of a Secretary General, a dedicated legal service function, a governance and internal compliance sector, two new operational sectors in the supervision and enforcement unit, a new finance sector in the HR, budget and administration Unit and an antenna in Strasbourg.

Furthermore, the oversight functions of the EDPS in relation to the operational personal data processed by Europol in the framework of its mandate were strengthened.

The EDPS received 367 complaints in 2022, which 47 more than in 2021, out of which 65 were admissible and 302 were inadmissible, in addition to the 129 admissible complaints ongoing in 2022.

The report called on the EDPS to review its rules of procedure of ensuring and timely review of complaints by citizens.

Human resources, equality and staff well-being

At the end of 2022, the EDPS had 127 staff members, compared to 124 at the end of 2021 and 114 at the end of 2020. Given the increase in workload due to new tasks and responsibilities allocated to the EDPS, as well as many more legislative consultations and data sets to monitor, the EDPS would need a proportionate increase in staff to maintain efficient workflows with reasonable response times. The report encouraged the EDPS to provide permanent contracts to its employees to guarantee business continuity and work security.

The occupancy rate of the establishment plan was at 86.9% at the end of 2022 which was lower than the target.

Members noted with satisfaction that the EDPS recruited 18 trainees in 2022, who were remunerated and enjoyed the same working arrangements as the rest of the staff.

Ethical framework and transparency

The report encouraged the EDPS to continue raising awareness and organising surveys to assess the level of staff awareness of the EDPS/EDPB ethical framework. It also welcomed the overall high level of transparency achieved by the EDPS concerning its activities.

Regretting that the EDPS has still not formally joined the transparency register, Members reiterated their calls on the EDPS to join up.

The report also welcomed the fact that the EDPS has set up a framework to prevent conflicts of interest at the level of senior management and staff.

Interinstitutional cooperation

Members welcomed the budgetary and administrative savings achieved through inter-institutional cooperation, notably the conclusion of service-level agreements with the Parliament for the rental of its premises and the use of its IT system applications, hardware supplies and maintenance, and with the Commission for ICT services.

Communication

The report noted that the budget for public communication and promotional activities in 2022 amounted to EUR 304 665, which represented an increase of 19 % compared to 2021. It welcomed the comprehensive communication strategy aiming to raise awareness about its role and the importance of respecting Union data protection rules.

Members noted the leading role of EDPS in piloting and promoting social media channels contributing to the Union's strategy for data and digital sovereignty in compliance with the data protection legal framework.