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

2023/2136(DEC) - 11/04/2024 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided by 547 votes to 43, with 20 abstentions, 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.

In its resolution, adopted by 543 votes to 48 with 19 abstentions, Parliament made the following observations:

In its annual report for the financial year 2022, the Court of Auditors did not identify any specific problems concerning the Committee. Members noted that 14 (23%) of the 60 transactions contained errors, but that the Court considers, on the basis of the five errors that could be quantified, that the error rate is below the materiality threshold.

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 resolution 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 Committee organised 56 preparatory and follow-up meetings with Parliament for the rapporteurs of its opinions.

Members 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. It employed 56.8 % women and 43.2 % men. The situation remains particularly unbalanced both at senior and middle management levels.

Members 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. The Committee continued to implement transparency measures such as the publication of members' declarations of financial interest on its website but did not formally join the EU Transparency Register. The Committee did not detect any conflicts of interest nor was any mismanagement signalled. Members regretted that the Committee has not adopted an internal anti-fraud strategy.

Buildings

Parliament 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 resolution 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

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.

By the end of 2022, the Committee had 175 000 subscribers on its social media channels, 16% more than in 2021.

With regard to **digitalisation**, the Committee has worked to adapt and develop several strategic IT tools to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its political activities as well as its administrative processes and workflow. Members encouraged the Committee to raise awareness of cyber security among its

members and staff. On the **environment and sustainability**, Parliament welcomed the sustainable practices, including the paperless approach, of the Committee and the EESC, which have helped to reduce their environmental footprint.