

# 2023 discharge: General budget of the EU - Committee of the Regions

2024/2026(DEC) - 28/03/2025 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Joachim Stanisław BRUDZISKI (ECR, PL) on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2023, Section VII - Committee of the Regions.

The committee called on the European Parliament to **grant discharge** to the Secretary-General of the Committee of the Regions in respect of the implementation of the Committee of the Regions' budget for the financial year 2023.

## *Budgetary and financial management*

Members noted that the final budget adopted by the Committee amounted to **EUR 116 675 392** in 2023, including Amending Budget No. 4/2023 (salary and energy related), which represents an increase of EUR 6 698 534 (or +6.10%) compared to 2022. The Committee's budget implementation rate for commitment appropriations for the current financial year increased from 99.20% in 2022 to **99.9%** in 2023. The areas where the Committee was most affected by the high inflation rate include travel expenses (missions), energy, building rents and leases, maintenance contracts, construction projects, as well as paper and offset plates.

Noting that the mission budget has remained stable, Members encouraged the Committee to continue streamlining and reducing expenditure in this area. Members are concerned about the significant increase in travel and meeting allowances paid to Committee members, which rose from EUR 6.6 million in 2022 to EUR 8 million in 2023. They called on the Committee to adopt a clear strategy for cost-effective travel expenditure, including increased use of remote participation and hybrid meetings.

## *Internal management, performance and internal control*

The Committee plays a key role in **EU decision-making** by representing the interests of local and regional authorities. In 2023, it assessed its performance across 25 objectives and 80 indicators. The majority of these indicators (around 75%) achieved 90% of their targets.

Members regretted that budgetary limitations have compromised the Committee's ability to fully achieve its objective of bringing citizens closer to the Union. They nevertheless acknowledged the impact of the Committee's work, in particular its opinions, some of which have been taken into account in resolutions, positions, proposals, reports, reviews, conclusions or trilogues of the Commission, Parliament or the Council. In 2023, the Committee adopted 53 opinions and 6 resolutions.

The Committee is invited to (i) ensure greater involvement of regional and local authorities in the Union's decision-making process by establishing structured consultation mechanisms with regional and local authorities, before issuing opinions; (ii) advocate for a mandatory consultation process on legislative matters with a significant impact on regional development and cohesion policy.

The Committee continued its efforts to improve its efficiency through the 'Going for IMPact' programme, promoting digitalisation, inter-institutional cooperation, and the simplification of procedures.

The competent committee makes the following observations, *inter alia*:

- at the end of 2023, the Committee had a total of **559 staff** (not including seconded national experts, temporary staff, *intra muros* staff and trainees), compared to 533 in 2022. The occupation rate of the posts in the establishment plan was 98%. The Committee employed **56.9% women and 43.1% men**. The Committee has not yet achieved gender balance in senior management positions, but Members acknowledged the significant progress made under the Committee's five-year diversity and inclusion strategy and action plan for 2022-2026, including a significant increase in the proportion of women in senior management positions from 37.5% in 2022 to 44.4% in 2023. Members also noted with concern that 18 cases of burnout were reported to the Committee in 2023;

- the Committee consolidated **ethical rules and practices** into a single ethical legal framework covering disciplinary procedure, dignity at work, **conflict management**, anti-harassment, outside activities and whistleblowing. It continued, in 2023, to offer ethics training to different groups of staff. The Committee is invited to strengthen the detection and prevention of conflicts of interest by introducing a mandatory cooling-off period for outgoing members before they can engage in lobbying or consultancy activities involving the Union institutions;

- the Committee made progress in 2023 in **digitalisation** in various areas such as administrative processes (including staff selection), procurement and interpretation, among others. It is urged to accelerate digital transformation efforts. It is also commended for having met the standards for cybersecurity risk assessment, as well as for having established a system based on incident response plans, recovery measures and lessons learned;

- budgetary and administrative savings have been achieved through **interinstitutional cooperation**, in particular the close cooperation established at administrative level with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), with which the Committee shares common premises and services in the areas of translation, infrastructure, logistics and IT, with 470 staff members and around EUR 60 million (excluding salary-related expenditure) being pooled by the two institutions in 2023. The Committee and the EESC are invited to examine the possibility of creating a **single administration** for their common services, while maintaining separate directorates or units for services dealing with issues related to their specific mandates;

- the Committee is invited to take steps to improve its budgetary planning with regard to **communication** related budget items. Members welcomed the Committee's efforts to increase outreach to regional governments and local communities, including the expansion of the Network of Regional and Local EU Councillors and the Young Elected Politicians Programme. Noting the Committee's success in media outreach, the report noted that by the end of 2023, the Committee had 200 000 followers on its social media channels, 15% more than in 2022.