

2004 Discharge: EC general budget, European Ombudsman

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PURPOSE : presentation of the final annual accounts of the European Community for the financial year 2004 – Other institutions : Section VIII (A) - European Ombudsman.

CONTENT : this document sets out the amount of expenditure and the financial statement of the European Ombudsman for 2004 and presents an analysis of its financial management. The available appropriations set out in the Ombudsman's 2004 budget amounted to EUR 5,8 million, with a 89,4% utilisation rate.

Main axes of 2004 expenditure : the budget implementation was highlighted by the implementation of the new Financial Regulation and the consecutive direct management of a whole series of administrative and financial tasks which were until recently carried out by the Parliament (yet paid by the Ombudsman). Until 1999, the Ombudsman's budget was linked to the Parliament's and for some years certain administrative tasks were still being carried out by Parliament staff. This system is no longer in force.

The implementation report states that the activities carried out by this institution can be characterised by 4 main issues :

- Ombudsman's workload following enlargement : the number of complaints increased by around 51% compared to 2003 which was a real challenge for the institution;
- implementation of the new Staff Regulations : many interinstitutional agreements were put in place to find satisfying solutions for all;
- new budget and financial independence : in order to comply with the new Financial Regulation which entered into force in 2003, the Ombudsman was authorised to increase its staff dealing in these areas;
- improve working methods within the Office : to improve the filing and archiving of documents and to create a new database containing all the complaints made to the Ombudsman.

Amendments to the 2004 budget : throughout 2004, the Ombudsman made amendments to the budget through appropriation transfers between items and chapters :

- costs relating to the implementation of the Ombudsman's Work Programme (notably increasing its profile in the new Member States);
- costs relating to the reform of the Staff Regulations (notably for contractual agents);
- anticipated costs (for example, for the translation of the Ombudsman's Annual Report or to cover IT and other equipments costs).

The main issues of the 2004 budget implementation can be summarised as follows:

Title I (Staff costs) : the budget implementation showed that certain items were strengthened such as :

- mission and travel costs : this item was strengthened due to the increase in missions by the Ombudsman and his staff;
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costs relating to the organisation of training courses and the exchange of personnel due to the increase in the number of applications and the recruitment of candidates from the new Member States;

- interinstitutional cooperation costs.

Title II : (Operational expenditure) : this heading showed an increase in appropriations for IT investment, telecommunications, office equipment and the hiring of an official car for the Ombudsman. Overspending was noticed under the information and publication sector. On the other hand, an under-utilisation of meeting and study costs was noted.

Title III : (Specific mission costs) : only EUR 2.644 were committed from the EUR 3.000 available to cover costs relating to relations with the Ombudsman's international organisations.

DETAILED SYNTHESIS OF 2004 EXPENDITURE: this detailed synthesis analyses the breakdown of the Ombudsman's expenditure for the financial year 2004. The figures mentioned can also be found in the "Final annual accounts of the European Communities - Financial year 2004 – Volume III".

Implementation rate in 2004 :

- Appropriations available for 2004 : **EUR 5.782.968**;
- Appropriations committed amounted to EUR de 5.168.269,89, an **89,37%** utilisation rate;
- Appropriations paid amounted to EUR 4.722.644,41;
- Appropriations carried over from 2003 to 2004 : EUR 500.488,68.

Main budget items and use of committed appropriations (Title I, II and III):

- I : Institutional costs (Members and active staff) : EUR 4,273 million;
- II : Operational costs (including buildings and material) : EUR 0,892 million;
- III : Specific mission costs : EUR 0,0026 million.