

2005 discharge: EC general budget, Committee of the Regions CofR

2006/2076(DEC) - 24/04/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted Daniel **CASPARY** (EPP-ED, D) by 604 votes for, 64 against and 2 abstentions, and granted the Committee of the Regions' Secretary-General discharge for the implementation of the Committee of the Regions budget for the financial year 2005. In doing so, it made a series of observations on the discharge in its accompanying resolution.

Parliament began by noting that in 2005 the Committee of the Regions (CoR) had available commitment appropriations amounting to total of EUR 69 570 456,32 with a utilisation rate of 96,65%. Following the introduction of accrual accounting with effect from 1 January 2005 the CoR's financial statements disclose a positive economic out-turn for the year (EUR 4 050 062,65) and identical amounts of assets and liabilities (EUR 118 221 197,95).

Parliament went on to note that the CoR's administration had requested certain beneficiaries of weighted salary transfers to present additional evidence, and in 2005 the administration did not recover any overpayments. However, the internal audit on salaries transfer requested by the Secretary-General was completed in February 2006, and the administration is now proceeding with the recovery of overpayments which concern a limited number of officials. Furthermore, Parliament noted that as soon as he heard of this problem, the CoR's Secretary-General immediately asked the then Internal Auditor to continue his work on weighted salary transfers. He adopted a restrictive interpretation of the relevant rules of the recently amended Staff Regulations and ordered the recovery of any amounts considered to have been unduly paid. Some of the officials that have been obliged to repay dispute the CoR Secretary-General's reading of the relevant rules and have referred the matter to the Court of Justice. Parliament supported the Secretary-General in his intention to set up an administrative inquiry and expected him to start disciplinary proceedings on the basis of the OLAF report regarding staff concerned. There must be a strict prosecution of all cases where fraudulent behaviour could be proved.

On the matter of administrative cooperation, Parliament felt that such cooperation between the CoR and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) should be beneficial to both and financially advantageous for EU taxpayers. It insisted that any new structures put in place for administrative cooperation between the two committees should result in financial and organisational benefits, and demanded that both committees find a suitable way to continue the administrative cooperation. Having regard to the substantial divergences between the findings of the reports of the joint services and the CoR's two external experts, Parliament invited the two institutions to conduct a joint analysis based on appropriate bench marks – if necessary with the help of the ECA – of the precise costs, benefits and savings generated by cooperation and to submit the results of their examination to the competent committee by 31 October 2007.

Lastly, it noted with concern that it had not been possible to fill all vacant posts from the reserve lists drawn up after EPSO competitions and asked the CoR to analyse the reasons for the shortage of qualified candidates and to inform the competent committee.