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**A8-0115/2015**

31.3.2015

# REPORT

on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the  
European Union for the financial year 2013, Section VIII – European  
Ombudsman  
(2014/2084(DEC))

Committee on Budgetary Control

Rapporteur: Ryszard Czarnecki

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## 1. PROPOSAL FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DECISION

### **on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2013, Section VIII – European Ombudsman (2014/2084(DEC))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2013<sup>1</sup>,
  - having regard to the consolidated annual accounts of the European Union for the financial year 2013 (COM(2014)0510 – C8-0153/2014)<sup>2</sup>,
  - having regard to the Court of Auditors' annual report on the implementation of the budget concerning the financial year 2013, together with the institutions' replies<sup>3</sup>,
  - having regard to the statement of assurance<sup>4</sup> as to the reliability of the accounts and the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions provided by the Court of Auditors for the financial year 2013, pursuant to Article 287 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
  - having regard to Article 314(10) and Articles 317, 318 and 319 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
  - having regard to Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities<sup>5</sup>,
  - having regard to Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002<sup>6</sup>, and in particular Articles 55, 99, 164, 165 and 166 thereof,
  - having regard to Rule 94 of and Annex V to its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A8-0115/2015),
1. Grants the European Ombudsman discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Ombudsman for the financial year 2013;
  2. Sets out its observations in the resolution below;
  3. Instructs its President to forward this decision and the resolution forming an integral part

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 66, 8.3.2013.

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 403, 13.11.2014, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 398, 12.11.2014, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> OJ C 403, 13.11.2014, p. 128.

<sup>5</sup> OJ L 248, 16.9.2002, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> OJ L 298, 26.10.2012, p. 1.

of it to the European Council, the Council, the Commission, the Court of Justice of the European Union, the Court of Auditors, the European Ombudsman, the European Data Protection Supervisor and the European External Action Service, and to arrange for their publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union* (L series).

## 2. MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

**with observations forming an integral part of the decision on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2013, Section VIII – European Ombudsman (2014/2084(DEC))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its decision on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2013, Section VIII – European Ombudsman,
  - having regard to Rule 94 of and Annex V to its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A8-0115/2015),
1. Notes with satisfaction that in its 2013 annual report, the Court of Auditors observed that no significant weaknesses had been identified in respect to the audited topics related to the human resources and the procurement for the European Ombudsman ("the Ombudsman");
  2. Emphasises the fact that on the basis of its audit work, the Court of Auditors concluded that the payments as a whole for the year ended on 31 December 2013 for administrative and other expenditure of the institutions and bodies were free from material error;
  3. Stresses that the Ombudsman's budget is purely administrative and amounted in 2013 to EUR 9 731 371 (EUR 9 516 500 in 2012), with EUR 7 567 371 being allocated to Title I (expenditure relating to persons working for the institution), EUR 1 606 700 attributed to Title 2 (buildings, equipment and miscellaneous operating expenditure) and EUR 557 300 for Title 3 (expenditure resulting from special functions carried out by the institution);
  4. Takes note that of the total appropriations, 98,20 % were committed (98,30 % in 2012) and 91,82 % paid (88,69 % in 2012) with a utilisation rate of 98,20 % (95,88 % in 2012); welcomes the results achieved in 2013;
  5. Notes the continued improvements of the financial planning and its monitoring; calls for this effort to continue in the next budgetary exercises;
  6. Endorses the Ombudsman's Annual Management Plan for 2013 including a Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) scoreboard to measure the office's performance in achieving its objectives;
  7. Takes note of the Ombudsman's commitment to continue to improve its system for the timely monitoring and control of the recruitment and procurement procedures; supports the Ombudsman to continue to monitor the management of allowances and improve its performance levels;

8. Takes note that the Ombudsman seeks constant improvements in financial planning so as to ensure the most efficient possible budget implementation;
9. Calls on the Ombudsman to put the unused rate of the interpretation services requested during that year in the next annual activity report;
10. Notes with concern the enormous disparities in translation costs among the various Union institutions; calls, therefore, on the Interinstitutional Working Party on Translation to identify the causes of those disparities and to put forward solutions that will put an end to the imbalance and harmonise translation costs while also ensuring full respect for quality and linguistic diversity; notes, with this in mind, that the working party should relaunch cooperation among the institutions in order to share best practices and outcomes and to identify areas in which cooperation or agreements between institutions can be strengthened; notes that the working party should also aim to establish a unified methodology of presenting the translation costs which all the institutions can use in order to simplify the analysis and comparison of the costs; notes that the working party should present those findings before the end of 2015; calls on all the institutions to play an active role in the work of the Interinstitutional Working Party; recalls in this regard the fundamental importance of respect for multilingualism in the Union institutions in order to guarantee equal treatment and equal opportunities for all Union citizens;
11. Takes note of the internal auditor's conclusions in the 2013 audit reports that internal management and control systems are effective and efficient and that all the still-open actions were closed;
12. Welcomes the fact that the aim of closing 70 % of cases in less than a year was surpassed in 2013; notes, however, that the proportion of inquiries closed within 18 months is still below the target set by the Ombudsman, even though it has increased from 79 % to 81 %; believes that the 90 % target is realistic and can be achieved; expects that this target will be reached in 2014 and that this result be detailed in the annual activity report; welcomes the launch of specific own-initiative inquiries and asks to be informed about the initial outcomes of those inquiries;
13. Welcomes the Ombudsman's achievement of the European Foundation for Quality Management first level of recognition 'Committed to Excellence' in 2012 and welcomes the fact that an excellent, productive relationship was maintained with the Foundation in 2013;
14. Draws attention to the high level of spending on away days, conferences and similar events for staff at the Ombudsman's office in 2013, which was noticeably higher than it was in the other institutions; considers that at a time of crisis and budgetary cuts in general, the cost of away days for staff of the Union institutions has to be reduced and that they should take place, where possible, on the institutions' own premises, as the added value derived from away days does not justify such high costs;
15. Welcomes the fact that a woman has been elected as European Ombudsman; is concerned, nevertheless, about the lack of women in management posts at the Ombudsman's office; calls for the introduction of an equal opportunities plan specifically geared towards management posts with a view to correcting this imbalance as soon as

possible;

16. Considers that the Ombudsman should continue to strive for consistent quality in the annual activity report and provide a comprehensive annual impact report which is an important tool for the assessment of its work;
17. Demands that the Ombudsman's building policy be attached to its annual activity report, especially given that it is important that the costs of such a policy are properly rationalised and that such costs are not excessive;
18. Calls on the Ombudsman to include in its annual activity reports, in compliance with the existing rules on confidentiality and data protection, the results and consequences of closed OLAF cases, where the institution or any of the individuals working for it were the subject of the investigation;
19. Agrees wholeheartedly with the transparency policy advocated by the Ombudsman's office and calls for the introduction of a procedure to assess the possible impact of certain publications in advance, with a view to publishing them, along with an explanatory report, so as to avoid them being used in a biased way; points out that this procedure should be launched by the Ombudsman in cooperation with the European Data Protection Supervisor, the Commission and the institution to which the publication refers;
20. Points out that the annual report on the activities of the Ombudsman in 2013 was adopted by the plenary on 15 January 2015<sup>1</sup> and takes note of the observations made therein.

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P8\_TA(2015)0009.

## RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

<b>Date adopted</b>	23.3.2015
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+: 25 -: 1 0: 0
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Nedzhmi Ali, Inés Ayala Sender, Zigmantas Balčytis, Ryszard Czarnecki, Dennis de Jong, Tamás Deutsch, Martina Dlabajová, Ingeborg Gräßle, Rina Ronja Kari, Bogusław Liberadzki, Verónica Lope Fontagné, Monica Macovei, Fulvio Martusciello, Dan Nica, Georgi Pirinski, Petri Sarvamaa, Claudia Schmidt, Igor Šoltes, Bart Staes, Michael Theurer, Marco Valli, Derek Vaughan, Anders Primdahl Vistisen, Joachim Zeller
<b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>	Caterina Chinnici, Iris Hoffmann, Andrey Novakov
<b>Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote</b>	Laura Ferrara