



Committee on Foreign Affairs

2017/2145(DEC)

31.1.2018

OPINION

of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

for the Committee on Budgetary Control

on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the
European Union for the financial year 2016, Section X - European External
Action Service
(2017/2145(DEC))

Rapporteur: Cristian Dan Preda

PA_NonLeg

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Foreign Affairs calls on the Committee on Budgetary Control, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Welcomes that the European External Action Service (EEAS) has implemented its 2016 administrative budget without being affected by a material error; notes the increase in the error rate compared to 2015, as indicated by the ex-post controls; strongly emphasises the need to strengthen efforts to reduce the significant rate of anomalies detected in ex-ante verifications of financial transactions;
2. Notes that at the end of 2016, 31,7% of the staff of the EEAS came from the Member States (25,3% at the headquarters and 40,8% in delegations); calls for a more balanced distribution of staff, in line with Council Decision 2010/427/EU¹; welcomes the commitment of the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy made to the Parliament to address the existing overrepresentation of national diplomats in the positions of Heads of Delegations;
3. Takes positive note that the 13 Member States that joined the Union since 2004 account for 19,6% of overall AD EEAS staff, approaching their share of the population of the Union (20,6%); draws attention nevertheless that they only account for 13,28% of management positions and emphasises, that, while respecting a merit-based recruitment policy, this should be further strengthened to reflect within the EEAS their share of the population of the Union;
4. Reiterates its concern regarding the gender imbalances in the EEAS staff at management level; takes note of the slight increase of women in management and emphasizes that further efforts should be made in order to raise the current rate (23,99%); welcomes in this context the establishment, by the EEAS Secretary-General, of a task force on gender;
5. Notes that the implementation by the EEAS of the mandatory 1% reduction of statutory staff continued in 2016; underlines nevertheless the importance of matching the ambitious objectives of the Union external policies defined in the Global Strategy with appropriate resources, both in the Headquarters and in the Union Delegations; draws attention that the effectiveness of the Union action on the ground should not be hampered by an overwhelming workload of the staff, especially in small sized delegations or when a delegation is in charge of more than one country;
6. Welcomes the establishment of the Mission Support Platform to provide centralised administrative support to CSDP missions; draws attention to the importance of addressing the financing of the Platform, with a clear and transparent framework for the allocation and utilisation of its funding, maximising the effect of pre-existing levels of expenditure, in order to ensure a strong and observable effect where it is deployed;

¹ Council Decision 2010/427/EU of 26 July 2010 establishing the organisation and functioning of the European External Action Service (OJ L 201, 3.8.2010, p. 30).

7. Welcomes the loan facility of EUR 200 million to improve the management of the building policy and calls for this loan facility to be increased;
8. Notes that, both in 2015 and 2016, the European Court of Auditors found weaknesses in procurement procedures organised by Union Delegations for contracts worth less than EUR 60 000; welcomes the proposed changes to be initiated from 2018 on the training and contract templates and looks forward to improved efficiency in this regard;
9. Calls on the Council and the EEAS to fulfil their legal obligation to send to the European Parliament, without delay and without requiring requests, all relevant documents related to negotiations on international agreements, including negotiating directives, agreed texts and minutes of each negotiation round in line with Article 218(10) TFEU, according to which the "European Parliament shall be immediately and fully informed at all stages of the procedure"; reminds the Council and the EEAS that, due to the infringement of Article 218(10) in the past, the Court of Justice of the European Union has already annulled the Council decisions on the signing and conclusion of several agreements and emphasises that the Parliament's consent on new agreements, such as the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement with Armenia, may also be withheld in the future, until the Council and the EEAS fulfil their legal obligation;
10. Is pleased to note that, building upon the findings of the European Court of Auditors in 2015-16 that certain weaknesses existed in the recruitment procedures of local agents in delegations and in procurement procedures organised by delegations, there have been some steps taken to improve the quality of procedures undertaken by the EEAS from 2018; however, notes that these improvements must be substantive and show a clear and measurable advancement in accountability and transparency on the part of the EEAS;
11. Notes that the EEAS has not yet followed up on the recommendation made in European Court of Auditors' Special Report 14/2013 which calls for the preparation of a detailed action plan in order to enhance effectiveness of Union support to Palestine; encourages the EEAS to fully implement this recommendation in cooperation with the Commission;
12. Welcomes the Union's decision, in line with the European Ombudsman's recommendation, to offer paid traineeships with its foreign delegations, thereby making them accessible also to young people of limited financial resources in accordance with the principle of non-discrimination.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	23.1.2018
Result of final vote	+: 49 -: 6 0: 2
Members present for the final vote	Lars Adaktusson, Michèle Alliot-Marie, Francisco Assis, Petras Auštrevičius, Amjad Bashir, Bas Belder, Goffredo Maria Bettini, Victor Boştinaru, Elmar Brok, Klaus Buchner, James Carver, Fabio Massimo Castaldo, Lorenzo Cesa, Javier Couso Permuy, Arnaud Danjean, Georgios Epitideios, Eugen Freund, Michael Gahler, Iveta Grigule-Peťterse, Sandra Kalniete, Tunne Kelam, Janusz Korwin-Mikke, Andrey Kovatchev, Eduard Kukan, Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Ryszard Antoni Legutko, Sabine Lösing, Andrejs Mamikins, Alex Mayer, David McAllister, Tamás Meszerics, Francisco José Millán Mon, Clare Moody, Javier Nart, Pier Antonio Panzeri, Ioan Mircea Pașcu, Alojz Peterle, Tonino Picula, Jozo Radoš, Sofia Sakorafa, Alyn Smith, Jaromír Štětina, Dubravka Šuica, László Tőkés, Miguel Urbán Crespo, Ivo Vajgl
Substitutes present for the final vote	Brando Benifei, Rebecca Harms, Marek Jurek, Jo Leinen, Miroslav Poche, Traian Ungureanu, Bodil Valero, Marie-Christine Vergiat
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio, Barbara Kudrycka, Tiemo Wölken

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

49	+
ALDE	Petras Auštrevičius, Iveta Grigule-Petersonē, Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Javier Nart, Jozo Radoš, Ivo Vajgl
ECR	Amjad Bashir, Bas Belder, Marek Jurek, Ryszard Antoni Legutko
EFDD	Fabio Massimo Castaldo
PPE	Lars Adaktusson, Michèle Alliot-Marie, Elmar Brok, Lorenzo Cesa, Arnaud Danjean, Michael Gahler, Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio, Sandra Kalniete, Tunne Kelam, Andrey Kovatchev, Barbara Kudrycka, Eduard Kukan, David McAllister, Francisco José Millán Mon, Alojz Peterle, Jaromír Štátník, Dubravka Šuica, László Tőkés, Traian Ungureanu
S&D	Francisco Assis, Brando Benifei, Goffredo Maria Bettini, Victor Bontinaru, Eugen Freund, Jo Leinen, Andrejs Mamikins, Alex Mayer, Clare Moody, Pier Antonio Panzeri, Ioan Mircea Pașcu, Tonino Picula, Miroslav Poche, Tiemo Wölken
VERTS/ALE	Klaus Buchner, Rebecca Harms, Tamás Meszerics, Alyn Smith, Bodil Valero

6	-
EFDD	James Carver
GUE/NGL	Javier Couso Permuy, Sabine Lösing, Miguel Urbán Crespo, Marie-Christine Vergiat
NI	Georgios Epitideios

2	0
GUE/NGL	Sofia Sakorafa
NI	Janusz Korwin-Mikke

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention