



Procedure file

Basic information		
DEC - Discharge procedure		Procedure completed
2009/2075(DEC)		
2008 discharge: EU general budget, European Ombudsman		
Subject		
8.70.03.07 Previous discharges		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible		Rapporteur
	CONT Budgetary Control		Appointed 01/10/2009
			ECR CZARNECKI Ryszard
	Committee for opinion		Rapporteur for opinion
	AFET Foreign Affairs		Appointed
	DEVE Development		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	INTA International Trade		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	BUDG Budgets		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	ECON Economic and Monetary Affairs		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	EMPL Employment and Social Affairs		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	ITRE Industry, Research and Energy		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	IMCO Internal Market and Consumer Protection		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	TRAN Transport and Tourism		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	REGI Regional Development		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	AGRI Agriculture and Rural Development		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	PECH Fisheries		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	CULT Culture and Education		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	JURI Legal Affairs		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	LIBE Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs		The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	AFCO Constitutional Affairs		The committee decided not to give an opinion.

European Commission	FEMM Women's Rights and Gender Equality	The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	PETI Petitions	The committee decided not to give an opinion.
	Commission DG Budget	Commissioner ŠEMETA Algirdas

Key events

23/07/2009	Non-legislative basic document published	SEC(2009)1089	Summary
07/10/2009	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
23/03/2010	Vote in committee		Summary
25/03/2010	Committee report tabled for plenary	A7-0070/2010	
21/04/2010	Debate in Parliament		
05/05/2010	Results of vote in Parliament		
05/05/2010	Decision by Parliament	T7-0096/2010	Summary
05/05/2010	End of procedure in Parliament		
25/09/2010	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2009/2075(DEC)
Procedure type	DEC - Discharge procedure
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 165
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	CONT/7/00686

Documentation gateway

Non-legislative basic document		SEC(2009)1089	23/07/2009	EC	Summary
Document attached to the procedure		N7-0036/2009 OJ C 269 10.11.2009, p. 0001	10/11/2009	CofA	Summary
Committee draft report		PE430.318	02/02/2010	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A7-0070/2010	25/03/2010	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T7-0096/2010	05/05/2010	EP	Summary

Final act

[Decision 2010/504](#)
[OJ L 252 25.09.2010, p. 0101](#) Summary

2008 discharge: EU general budget, European Ombudsman

PURPOSE: to present the final annual accounts of the European Communities for the financial year 2008 - Other institutions: section VIII - European Ombudsman.

Note: this summary provides a general overview of the main trends in terms of the European Ombudsman's expenditure for the financial year 2008. It does not cover the details of the implementation of the expenditure by the institution due to the unavailability of the relevant document.

However, it does cover the figures for the Ombudsman's expenditure as presented in [Consolidated Annual Accounts of the European Communities for the financial year 2008](#).

CONTENT: the summary of the consolidated annual accounts of the European Communities for the year 2008 show that the European Ombudsman's expenditure was as follows:

Commitment appropriations

- Authorised commitments: EUR 9 million
- Amounts paid in 2008: EUR 8 million (91.51% implementation rate)
- Amounts lapsed: EUR 1 million (13.86% of the total commitments).

Payments

- Authorised commitments: EUR 6 million
- Amounts paid in 2008: EUR 4 million (68.12% implementation rate)
- Amounts lapsed: EUR 1 million (17.56% of the total commitments).

Main axes of expenditure for 2008: the Ombudsman's budget focused on the following main elements (refer to the [Ombudsman's Annual Report 2008](#)):

Complaints and enquiries: the Ombudsman registered a total of 3 406 complaints in 2008. In almost 80% of cases registered, it was able to help the complainant by opening an inquiry into the case, transferring it to a competent body, or giving advice on where to turn. A total of 293 new inquiries were opened in 2008 on the basis of complaints. Of these, 26% were submitted by companies and associations, whereas 74% were submitted by individual citizens.

The Ombudsman also launched three inquiries on his own initiative. Two of these concerned cases which had been submitted by a non-authorised person (i.e., a complainant who is not a citizen or resident of the Union or a legal person with a registered office in a Member State). The third involved the use of the Ombudsman's own-initiative power to tackle what appeared to be a systemic problem concerning the European Commission's Early Warning System.

As is the case each year, most inquiries opened by the Ombudsman in 2008 concerned the Commission (195 inquiries or 66% of the total). Given that the Commission is the main Community institution that makes decisions having a direct impact on citizens, it is logical that it should be the principal object of citizens' complaints. There were 28 inquiries (10%) concerning the European Parliament's administration, 20 (7%) concerning the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO), 10 (3%) concerning the Council of the EU, and 7 (2%) concerning the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). Twenty other EU institutions and bodies were the subject of a further 37 inquiries.

The main types of maladministration alleged in inquiries opened in 2008 were lack of transparency, including refusal of information (107 cases or 36% of the total), unfairness or abuse of power (59 cases, 20%), unsatisfactory procedures (27 cases, 9%), negligence (25 cases, 8%), avoidable delay (24 cases, 8%), legal error (21 cases, 7%), discrimination (14 cases, 5%), and failure to ensure fulfilment of obligations, that is, failure by the Commission to carry out its role as "guardian of the Treaty" vis-à-vis the Member States (14 cases, 5%).

The Ombudsman closed 355 inquiries in 2008 (compared to 348 in 2007). Of these, 352 were linked to complaints and three were own-initiatives. Most of the inquiries were closed within one year (52%). Over one-third (36%) were closed within three months. On average, cases took 13 months to close.

Other Salient facts concerning the activities in 2008:

- **Restructuration:** an ambitious programme of internal restructuring was carried out in the Ombudsman's office in 2008. It entered into force on 1 July and involved the creation of four Units within each of the existing Departments: the Legal Department and the Administration and Finance Department. The Ombudsman implemented the internal re-organisation of his office without the addition of any new staff, the number of staff posts in the establishment plan remaining at 57. The budgetary authority has agreed to an increase of six posts in the 2009 budget.
- **Staff retreat:** the year was marked by retreats and staff meetings. The European Ombudsman's staff retreats form an integral part of the Ombudsman's strategic planning, most notably by providing useful guidance for policy-making and the preparation of the Annual Management Plan (AMP). The retreats are an open forum of discussion, dialogue and brainstorming. They form part of an annual cycle of events that provide staff and trainees with an opportunity to share views on subjects directly linked to the Ombudsman's work.
- **European Network of Ombudsmen:** many complainants turn to the European Ombudsman when they have problems with a national, regional or local administration. The European Ombudsman co-operates closely with his counterparts in the Member States to make sure that citizens' complaints about EU law are dealt with promptly and effectively. This co-operation takes place for the most part under the aegis of the European Network of Ombudsmen. The Network met in Berlin in November 2008 to discuss how, together, they could improve the service they provide to citizens. Among the highlights in this regard were the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the President of the European Investment Bank and the agreement by the Union's Agencies to adopt the European Code of Good Administrative Behaviour in their relations with citizens.

Revision of the Ombudsman's Statute: one final important development in 2008 concerned the revision of the Ombudsman's Statute. The changes made ensure that citizens can have full confidence in the Ombudsman's ability to conduct a thorough investigation of their complaints without restrictions.

2008 discharge: EU general budget, European Ombudsman

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Ryszard CZARNECKI (ECR, PL) recommending the European Parliament to grant the European Ombudsman discharge in respect of the implementation of its budget for the financial year 2008.

Firstly, the committee notes that in 2008 the Ombudsman had commitment appropriations available amounting to a total of EUR 9 million (2008: EUR 8.2 million), with a utilisation rate of 91.51%, below the average of the other institutions (95.67%).

The Court of Auditors indicated in its annual report that the audit did not give rise to any significant observations as regards the Ombudsman. MEPs note a trend of persistent growth over the period from 2003 to 2008, during which time commitment appropriations doubled from EUR 4.4 million to EUR 9 million, and the number of posts increased from 31 to 57 units (with 6 more posts in 2009), while complaints have increased from 2 436 to 3 346 and new enquiries opened from 253 to 293.

As regards the internal audit, Members welcome the findings, in particular the observation that the procurement process had considerably improved, as well as the process for awarding grants. They note however, that the internal audit also revealed areas with scope for further improvement, in particular: procurement procedure files should include more complete information, delivery-due date modifications should only be allowed in exceptional cases, better planning of timing for tendering procedures, inconsistent clauses in contracts to be corrected before signature. They call on the Ombudsman to follow up these issues and report to the Parliament in its activity report.

2008 discharge: EU general budget, European Ombudsman

PURPOSE: to grant discharge to the European Ombudsman for the financial year 2008.

LEGISLATIVE ACT: Decision 2010/504/EU the European Parliament on the discharge for implementation of the European Union general budget for the financial year 2008 (Section VIII - European Ombudsman).

CONTENT: with the present decision, the European Parliament grants the European Ombudsman discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget for the financial year 2008.

This decision is in line with the European Parliament's resolution adopted on 5 May 2010 and comprises a series of observations that form an integral part of the discharge decision (please refer to the summary of the opinion of 5 May 2010).

2008 discharge: EU general budget, European Ombudsman

The European Parliament adopted a decision on discharge to be granted to the European Ombudsman in respect of the implementation of its budget for the financial year 2008.

Furthermore, Parliament adopted a resolution with observations which are an integral part of the decision to grant discharge.

Firstly, the resolution notes that, in 2008, the Ombudsman had commitment appropriations available amounting to a total of EUR 9 million (2008: EUR 8.2 million), with a utilisation rate of 91.51%, below the average of the other institutions (95.67%).

The Court of Auditors indicated in its annual report that the audit did not give rise to any significant observations as regards the Ombudsman. Parliament notes a trend of persistent growth over the period from 2003 to 2008, during which time commitment appropriations doubled from EUR 4.4 million to EUR 9 million, and the number of posts increased from 31 to 57 units (with 6 more posts in 2009), while complaints have increased from 2 436 to 3 346 and new enquiries opened from 253 to 293. Parliament notes that, since the internal restructuring in 2008, 24 of the 57 posts are now involved in examining complaints.

As regards the internal audit, Parliament welcomes the findings, in particular the observation that the procurement process had considerably improved, as well as the process for awarding grants. It notes, however, that the internal audit also revealed areas with scope for further improvement, in particular: procurement procedure files should include more complete information, delivery-due date modifications should only be allowed in exceptional cases, better planning of timing for tendering procedures, inconsistent clauses in contracts to be corrected before signature. It calls on the Ombudsman to follow up these issues and report to the Parliament in its activity report.

Lastly, Parliament welcomes the Ombudsman's decision to publish the annual declaration of interests of the Ombudsman and to publish it on its website.