

# 2009 discharge: EU general budget, Council

2010/2144(DEC) - 10/05/2011 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 631 votes to 9, with 7 abstentions a decision **to postpone granting to the Secretary-General of the Council discharge for the implementation of the Council's budget for the financial year 2009.**

Parliament also adopted by 637 votes to 4, with 13 abstentions, a resolution containing a number of observations which forms an integral part of the discharge decision. The resolution recalls that, in 2009, the Council had commitment appropriations available amounting to a total of **EUR 642 million** (2008: EUR 743 million), with a utilisation rate of 92.33 %, almost on par with 2007 (93.31 %), and still below the average of the other institutions (97.69 %).

## **Towards greater transparency in relation to the discharge procedure regarding the Council:**

Parliament regrets encountered in the 2007 and 2008 discharge procedures and reiterates the invitation to the Council to establish, together with Parliament, an annual procedure within the discharge procedure with a view to **providing all the information needed as regards the execution of the Council's budget.** Parliament reiterates that **the expenditure of the Council ought to be scrutinised in the same way as that of the other Union institutions** and that this scrutiny is based on the following written documents submitted by all institutions:

- accounts of the preceding financial year relating to the implementation of the budget,
- a financial statement of the assets and liabilities,
- Annual Activity Report on their budget and financial management,
- annual report of the internal auditor,
- an oral presentation given in the meeting of the Committee responsible for the discharge procedure.

Unlike the Committee on Budgetary Control, Parliament does not support the idea of replacing the **“gentlemen's agreement”** that is current in force in relation to budgetary matters. Parliament regrets that the Council Presidency declined the invitations to attend the meeting of the Committee responsible for the discharge procedure, where it was planned to discuss Council Presidency's standing on the proposed procedure and the possible modalities of cooperation as regards the discharge. Parliament notes the proposed memorandum of understanding between the Parliament and the Council on their cooperation during their annual discharge procedure, as annexed to the letter of the Secretary-General of the Council of 4 March 2011, and **takes note of the Council's readiness to treat the discharge procedure separately from the budgetary procedure. However, it reiterates that a distinction must be maintained with regard to the different roles of Parliament and the Council in the discharge procedure** and that at no time and under no circumstances can the Council be anything other than fully accountable to the public for the funds entrusted to it.

Parliament notes the goodwill of the Hungarian Presidency and the progress achieved; proposes, in order to facilitate the exchange of information in the discharge procedure, to follow the same approach as the rest of the other institutions, the fundamental elements of which should be:

- the organisation of a formal meeting between representatives of the Council and Parliament's Committee responsible for the discharge procedure (comprising the Secretary-General of the Council and the Presidency in office, the bureau of the Committee responsible for the discharge procedure, the rapporteur and the Members representing political groups (coordinators/shadow rapporteurs) with a view to providing the necessary information on the implementation of the Council's budget,

- the Secretary-General of the Council should comment on questions submitted by the Committee responsible for the discharge procedure to the Council,
- a calendar shall be established so as to streamline and stabilise this temporary solution.

**Parliament therefore considers unnecessary the idea of concluding an interinstitutional agreement with the Council concerning the latter's discharge.**

In parallel, Parliament calls on the Court of Auditors to carry out **a detailed assessment of the Council's supervisory and control systems** along the same lines as those undertaken in regard to the Court of Justice, the European Ombudsman and the European Data Protection Supervisor.

**Reasons for the postponement of the decision concerning the discharge:** to justify the postponement of the Council's discharge, Members point out that:

- the Council did not accept any of the invitations to meet formally with the Parliament's committee responsible for the discharge or its rapporteur with a view to examining the questions regarding the execution of the Council's 2009 budget;
- the Council refused to provide the Parliament with a response in writing giving the information and documents that it requested;
- Parliament has not received basic documents from the Council, such as the complete list of budgetary transfers.

Lastly, Parliament asks the Secretary-General of the Council to provide, by no later than 15 June 2011, to Parliament's committee responsible for the discharge the answers in writing to a series of questions that are found at the end of this resolution. The plenary also calls for a specific series of documents to be provided to Parliament by that same date.