

# 2011 discharge: EU general budget, European Council and Council

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The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Andrea EŠKOVÁ (ECR, CZ) on discharge in respect of the implementation of the European Union general budget for the financial year 2011, Section II – European Council and Council. The Committee recalled that Parliament had **refused to grant discharge** to the Secretary-General of the Council in respect of the implementation of the budget of the Council of the European Union and the Council for the 2011 financial year.

Members noted, firstly, that under Rule 77 of its Rules of Procedure, "the provisions governing the procedure for granting discharge to the Commission in respect of the implementation of the budget shall **likewise apply** to the procedure for granting discharge to [...] the persons responsible for the implementation of the budgets of the other institutions and bodies of the European Union **such as the Council (as regards its activity as executive)**, the Court of Justice of the European Union, the Court of Auditors, the European Economic and Social Committees and the Committee of the Regions".

Members noted in particular that the Council **continued to leave a number of issues unaddressed since the situation as it stood in April** (when the discharge was postponed) and recalled the difficulties encountered in discharge procedures for the financial years 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010, which were **due to a lack of cooperation from the Council**, as well as the consecutive refusals of Parliament to grant discharge to the Council on the implementation of its 2009 and 2010 budgets for similar reasons.

**Towards an improvement in the information provided to Parliament:** Members expected that future annual activity reports which are received by Parliament and the Council would include a comprehensive overview of all human resources broken down by category, grade, sex, nationality and vocational training, as well as the internal budget decisions of the Council.

They also underlined the need to **separate the budgets** of the European Council and the Council to ensure the better accountability of both institutions.

They also recalled that the Council should provide a **thorough written explanation detailing the total amount of appropriations used in the purchase of the Résidence Palace building**, the budget items from which those appropriations were drawn, the instalments that have been paid thus far, the instalments that are yet to be paid and the purpose that the building will serve.

Regretting that the Council continues to refuse to answer Parliament's questions, Members recalled that they still awaited a reply from the Council to the questions and the request for documents set out in its [resolution](#) of 10 May 2012. They called on the Secretary-General of the Council to provide Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control with comprehensive written answers to these questions.

They welcomed the fact that the Presidency in office of the Council accepted Parliament's invitation to the debate held in plenary on 17 April 2013 on the 2011 discharge reports and noted the Irish Presidency's proposal to **establish an interinstitutional working group to negotiate possible solutions to the Council's discharge**. They expected the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council to make proposals to address these questions.

**The right of Parliament to grant discharge:** Members recalled Parliament's prerogatives to grant discharge in line with current interpretation and practice, namely to grant discharge to each heading of the

budget individually in order to maintain transparency and democratic accountability towards Union taxpayers. They recalled that the Commission, in its reply of 25 November 2011 to the letter from the Chair of the Committee on Budgetary Control, wrote that it is desirable for Parliament to continue to give, postpone or refuse discharge to the other institutions, including the Council.

Members were of the opinion that, in any event, an assessment must be carried out of the Council's management as a Union institution during the financial year under examination, thereby upholding Parliament's prerogatives, in particular **the assurance of democratic accountability towards the citizens of the Union.**

They believed, therefore that some progress could be achieved if Parliament and the Council could set up together a **list of documents to be exchanged** in order to fulfil their respective roles in the discharge process.