2012 discharge: EU general budget, European Parliament

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PURPOSE: presentation by the Commission of the consolidated annual accounts of the European Union for the financial year 2012, as part of the 2012 discharge procedure.

Analysis of the accounts of the EU Institutions: **Section I - European Parliament**.

Legal reminder: the consolidated annual accounts of the European Union for the year 2012 have been prepared on the basis of the information presented by the institutions and bodies under Article 129(2) of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Union. They were prepared in accordance with Title VII of the Financial Regulation and with the accounting principles, rules and methods set out in the notes to the financial statements.

The objective of the financial statements is to provide information about the financial position, performance and cashflow of a body that is useful to a wide range of users. The objective is to provide information that is useful for decision making, and to demonstrate the accountability of the entity for the resources entrusted to it.

1) Purpose: the document helps to bring insight into the EU budget mechanism and **the way in which the budget has been managed and spent in 2012**. It recalls that the European Union's operational expenditure covers the various headings of the financial framework and takes different forms, depending on how the money is paid out and managed. In accordance with the Financial Regulation, the Commission implements the general budget using the following methods: direct or indirect centralised management (by means of bodies or agencies of public law or other); decentralised management where the Commission delegates certain tasks for the implementation of the budget to third countries; and, thirdly, shared management where budget implementation tasks are delegated to Member States, in areas such as agricultural expenditure and structural actions.

The document also presents the different financial actors involved in the budget process (accounting officers, internal officers and authorising officers) and recalls their respective roles in the context of the tasks of sound financial management.

Amongst the other legal elements relating to the implementation of the EU budget presented in this document, the paper focuses on the following issues:

- accounting principles applicable to the management of EU spending (business continuity, consistency of accounting methods, comparability of information ...);
- consolidation methods of figures for all major controlled entities (the consolidated financial statements of the EU comprise all significant controlled entities –institutions, organisations and agencies);
- the recognition of financial assets in the EU (tangible and intangible assets, financial assets and other miscellaneous investments);
- the way in which EU public expenditure is committed and spent, including pre-financing (cash advances intended for the benefit of an EU organ);
- the means of recovery following irregularities detected;
- the *modus operandi* of the accounting system;
- the audit process followed by the European Parliament's granting of the discharge.

To recap, **the final control is the discharge of the budget for a given financial year**. The discharge represents the political aspect of the external control of budget implementation and is the decision by which the European Parliament, acting on a Council recommendation, "releases" the Commission from its responsibility for management of a given budget by marking the end of that budget's existence.

The document also details specific expenditure of the institutions, in particular: i) pensions of former Members and officials of institutions; ii) joint sickness insurance scheme and iii) buildings. For the Parliament, the outstanding contractual obligation relating to building contracts totalled EUR 434 million in 2011.

Lastly, the document presents a series of tables and detailed technical indicators on (i) the balance sheet; (ii) the economic outturn account; (iii) cashflow tables; (iv) technical annexes concerning the financial statements.

2) Implementation of appropriations under Section I of the budget for the financial year 2012: the document comprises a series of detailed tables, the most important concerning the implementation of the budget. Concerning the European Parliament's expenditure, the table on the financial and budgetary implementation of this institution is presented as follows (information drawn from the Report on budgetary and financial management - Section European Parliament).

- Budget: Parliament's final appropriations totalled **EUR 1 717 868 121**, i.e. 19,62 % of heading V of the Multiannual Financial Framework;

- Commitments totalled **EUR 1 693 038 015**, or 98.6 % of final appropriations;
- Payments totalled **EUR 1 387 580 140**, or 82 % of commitments entered into.

3) Budgetary implementation - conclusions: in more general and political terms, the financial year 2012 was chiefly marked by action to bring about new structural improvements in order to give Parliament all the resources it needs to play its role in the legislative process to the full and enable it to capitalise to the full on the enhanced powers conferred on it by the Treaty of Lisbon.

Parliament also:

- fully accommodated the **18 additional Members provided for by the Treaty of Lisbon, continued preparations for the accession of Croatia**;
- made major changes in the area of information and communication policy with a view to the 2014 elections;
- continued to implement multiannual programmes to rationalise and modernise key sectors of its Administration.

As regards Europarl TV, the report stated that it should be adjusted to the ready-to-broadcast-programmes to better match the needs of the media partners and be progressively integrated into Parliament's website and social media platforms.

It should also be noted that progress has been made in the establishment of the House of European history, the completion of the building work on the Trèves I Building and the lack of success as regards the tender procedure for the Konrad Adenauer project (LU) and the continuation of the "paperless" programme".