2012 discharge: EU general budget, Committee of the Regions

2013/2202(DEC) - 26/07/2013 - Non-legislative basic document

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 VII – Committee of the Regions**.

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.

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 VII of the budget for the financial year 2012: the document also comprises a series of detailed tables, the most important concerning the implementation of the budget. Concerning the expenditure of the Committee of the Regions (CoR), the information drawn from the CoR Impact Report 2012 shows that:

credits authorised for 2012 were EUR 86.5 million of which EUR 85 were committed (98.2%);

credits paid were EUR 77.4 million, 89.4% rate of implementation.

3) Budgetary implementation - conclusions: in more general and political terms, the Committee's budgetary implementation for the financial year 2012 primarily consisted of the sovereign debt and the Euro crisis on cohesion policy. Measures were taken with the Committee to measures the real impact of this crisis on cohesion policy in the Member States.

In addition to the tradition adoption of opinions on legislation in force, the following may also be noted:

- a series of initiatives for the European elections in 2014;
- initiatives to integrate the 2020 Strategy at local and regional level;
- monitoring the progress of the negotiations on the financial framework 2014-2020 and its impact on the future cohesion policy;
- monitoring the application of subsidiarity in legislation;
- holding a Euro-Mediterranean Conference (ARLEM in August 2012);
- continued CORLEAP networks on neighbourhood policy;
- holding the 5th Summit of Cities and Regions (Copenhagen, March 2012).