2014 discharge: EU general budget, Economic and Social Committee

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PURPOSE: presentation by the Commission of the consolidated annual accounts of the European Union for the financial year 2014, as part of the 2014 discharge procedure.

Analysis of the accounts of the EU Institutions: **Economic and Social Committee**.

Legal reminder: the consolidated annual accounts of the European Union for the year 2014 have been prepared on the basis of the information presented by the institutions and bodies under Article 148(2) of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Union.

(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 2014**, including the different expenses of the European institutions. It should be recalled that only the Commission budget contains administrative appropriations and operating appropriations. **The other Institutions have only administrative appropriations.**

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 performance indicators in the framework of the financial implementation;
- the modus operandi of the accounting system;
- the audit process followed by the European Parliament's granting of the discharge.

Discharge procedure: 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. When granting discharge, Parliament may make observations which it considers important and often recommends the Commission and the other institutions to **take actions concerning these matters.**

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.

The document also 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 the Economic and Social Committee's appropriations for the financial year 2014: the document comprises a series of detailed annexes, the most important concerning the implementation of the budget. The appropriations available for 2014 amounted to **EUR 141 million with 88.2% committed**.

As regards the budget implementation of the EESC, the Annual Activity Report 2014 stated that the Committee focused on the following activities:

1. **helping to ensure that European policies and legislation tie in better with economic, social and civic circumstances** on the ground, by assisting the **European Parliament, Council and European Commission**, making use of EESC members' experience and representativeness, dialogue and efforts to secure consensus serving the general interest. In 2014, 61 formal opinions were adopted on referral from the European Parliament.
2. **promoting the development of a more participatory European Union** which is more in touch with popular opinion, by acting as an institutional forum representing, informing, expressing the views of and securing dialogue with organised civil society, notably through the Civil Society Day 2014;
3. **promoting the values on which European integration is founded** on the basis of enhanced cooperation with third countries and the organisation of numerous initiatives at European level, with civil society actors.

In 2014, 8 new projects were launched:

- Energy Dialogue
- European Medias
- Europe 2020 Strategy
- Platform of the EU outermost regions' civil society organisations
- More Europe locally
- My Europe tomorrow
- New attitudes towards consumption
- EU-US Commercial negotiations.