

2014 discharge: EU general budget, European Council and Council

2015/2156(DEC) - 29/09/2016 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control unanimously adopted the report by Ryszard CZARNECKI (ECR, PL) in which it called on the European Parliament to **refuse to grant the Secretary-General of the Council discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Council and of the Council for the financial year 2014.**

Members regretted that the Council continues to be silent in relation to the remarks made by Parliament in its discharge resolution of 28 April 2016.

They also regretted that the European Council and the Council do not provide the Parliament their annual activity report; regards this as inadmissible and detrimental to the reputation of the EU institutions. They reiterated their call on the Council to provide information on its process of administrative modernisation and to **adopt a code of conduct as soon as possible in order to ensure the integrity of the institution.** Moreover, the Council was called upon to join the Union transparency register and to develop detailed anti-corruption guidelines.

Overall, Members regretted the difficulties repeatedly encountered in the discharge procedures to date. They insisted that an effective budgetary control exercise requires the cooperation of Parliament and the Council. They reminded the Council of the Commission's view, expressed in January 2014, **that all institutions are fully part of the follow-up process to the observations made by Parliament in the discharge exercise.**

Members regretted that the Council continues to fail to provide answers to Parliament's questions and that only three out of twenty-seven questions submitted to the Council in relation to the financial year 2014 received a clear reply in the documents provided by the Council within the discharge exercise.

According to Members, the expenditure of the Council must be scrutinised in the same way as that of other institutions. They emphasised Parliament's prerogative to grant discharge pursuant to Articles 316, 317 and 319 TFEU, in line with current interpretation and practice, namely to grant discharge of each heading of the budget individually in order to maintain transparency and democratic accountability towards Union taxpayers.

Members took the view that Council's failure to submit the requested documents to Parliament above all undermines the right of citizens of the Union to information and transparency and is becoming a cause for concern, reflecting as it does a certain democratic deficit within the Union institutions. They stated that this constitutes a serious failure to comply with the obligations laid down by the Treaties and believes that the relevant stakeholders need to take the necessary steps to address this issue without further delay.

They stressed that a revision of the Treaties and of the Financial Regulation is needed in order to clarify the objectives and processes of the discharge procedure, and to define sanctions for failing to comply with the rules as stated in the Treaties.

Lastly, they considered that the lack of cooperation of the European Council and the Council with the discharge authority is a negative sign to the citizens of the Union.