

2014 discharge: EU general budget, European Council and Council

2015/2156(DEC) - 27/10/2016 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided, with 615 votes for with none against and no abstentions, 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.**

In a resolution attached to the decision refusing to grant discharge, Parliament made a series of observations that justify its decision and form an integral part of the decision taken in plenary.

Parliament began by regretting the fact that the Council continues to be silent in relation to the remarks made by Parliament in its discharge resolution of 28 April 2016. It also regretted that the European Council and the Council do not provide the Parliament with their annual activity report, and regards this as inadmissible and detrimental to the reputation of the EU institutions. It reiterated its 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.

Recurrent difficulties: overall, Parliament regretted the difficulties repeatedly encountered in the discharge procedures to date. It insisted that an effective budgetary control exercise requires the cooperation of Parliament and the Council. It 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.**

Parliament went on to regret 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. Without an effective budgetary control exercise, **Parliament is unable to make an informed decision on granting discharge.**

Parliament stated that the expenditure of the Council must be scrutinised in the same way as that of other institutions. It 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.

Parliament 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.** It stated that this constitutes a serious failure to comply with the obligations laid down by the Treaties and believed that the relevant stakeholders need to take the necessary steps to address this issue without further delay.

Parliament 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, it considered that the lack of cooperation of the European Council and the Council with the discharge authority sends a negative sign to the citizens of the Union.

