# 2015 discharge: EU general budget, European Council and Council

2016/2153(DEC) - 30/03/2017 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Bart STAES (Greens/EFA, BE) in which it called on the European Parliament to **postpone its decision on granting 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 2015.

Members noted that in 2015, the European Council and the Council had an overall budget of EUR 541 791 500 (EUR 534 202 300 in 2014), with an implementation rate of 92.6 %. They also took note of the increase of EUR 7.6 million (+ 1.4 %) in the Council's budget for 2015.

**Systematic underspending**: Members noted the publication by the General Secretariat of the Council (GSC) of the annual activity reports of the Legal Service, the Communication and Document Management and the Administration directors-general on under spending and called for key performance indicators to be put in place to improve the budgetary planning.

Moreover, Members are still concerned about the very high amount of appropriations being carried over from 2015 to 2016 particularly those on property, plant and equipment.

They reiterated that the **budget of the European Council and the Council should be separated in order to contribute to the transparency** of the financial management of the institutions and to improve the accountability of both institutions.

**Building policy**: Members expressed concern at the delivery delay of the Europa building and asked for the Council's building policy to be provided to the discharge authority. They reminded the Council of Parliament's call for progress reports on building projects and a detailed breakdown of the costs incurred to date.

**State of play**: Members once again noted the lack of transparency which has characterised Parliament's information on the discharge procedure concerning the Council and the European Council and noted that they ought to be transparent and fully accountable to Union citizens for the funds entrusted to it as a Union institution.

The Council must take part fully and in good faith in the annual discharge procedure, just as the other institutions do. In this regard, they considered that effective supervision of the Union's budget implementation requires cooperation between Parliament and the Council through a working arrangement. They deeply regretted the difficulties encountered in the discharge procedures to date.

As with previous years, Members insisted that the **expenditure of the Council must be scrutinised in the same way as that of other institutions** and pointed out that the basics of such scrutiny have been laid down in its discharge resolutions of the past years. They hoped for a much improved cooperation with the Council’s secretary-general for whom the year 2015 was the first year he took on these new responsibilities.

**Towards improved cooperation**: Members stated that the Parliament and the Council should show greater goodwill on both sides. They recalled Parliament’s power to grant discharge pursuant to Articles 316, 317 and 319 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and Articles 164 to 167 of the

Financial Regulation, and affirmed that granting or not granting discharge is a duty that Parliament has towards the Union citizens.

Members recalled that each of the institutions, as defined in Article 2(b) of the Financial Regulation, is autonomous in implementing its own section of the budget given its budgetary autonomy laid down in Article 55 of that Regulation. Parliament grants discharge to **each institution individually**.

In this regard, Members considered that satisfactory cooperation between Parliament, the European Council and the Council as a result of an open and formal dialogue procedure can be a **positive sign to be sent to the citizens of the Union**.