2016 discharge: EU general budget, European Council and Council

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PURPOSE: presentation by the Commission of the consolidated annual accounts of the European Union for the financial year 2016, as part of the 2016 discharge procedure.

Analysis of the accounts of the EU Institutions: **European Council and Council.**

Legal reminder: the consolidated annual accounts of the European Union for the year 2016 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.

Consolidated annual accounts of the EU: this Commission document concerns the EU's consolidated accounts for the year 2016 and details how spending by the EU institutions and bodies was carried out. The consolidated annual accounts of the EU provide financial information on the activities of the institutions, agencies and other bodies of the EU from an accrual accounting and budgetary perspective.

It also presents the accounting principles applicable to the European budget (in particular, consolidation).

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.

Audit and discharge: the EU’s annual accounts and resource management are audited by the European Court of Auditors, its external auditor, which as part of its activities draws up for the European Parliament and the Council:

- an annual report on the activities financed from the general budget, detailing its observations on the annual accounts and underlying transactions;
- an opinion, based on its audits and given in the annual report in the form of a statement of assurance, on (i) the reliability of the accounts and (ii) the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions involving both revenue collected from taxable persons and payments to final beneficiaries.

The European Parliament is the discharge authority within the EU. The **discharge** represents the **final step** of a budget lifecycle. It is 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 (and other EU bodies) from its responsibility for management of a given budget** by marking the end of that budget's existence.

This discharge procedure may produce three outcomes: (i) the granting; (ii) postponement; (iii) or the refusal of the discharge.

(2) Implementation of the European Council/Council’s appropriations for the financial year 2016: the total commitment appropriations amounted to **EUR 541 million**, with a 92% implementation rate. Some of the main outcomes for 2016 included:

- the consolidation and enhancement of the Council website launched in 2015. Visits to the website grew by 40% compared with 2015, reaching a total of 7 million by the end of 2016;
- the web team continued work on the single site strategic objective by aligning the Council livestreaming website with the single visual layout and integrating the Council library blog into the Council website;
- the Translation Service continued to deliver translations of a high quality with a deadline compliance of 99.8 % (99.6 % in 2015).