2015 discharge: EU general budget, European Council and Council

2016/2153(DEC) - 05/10/2017 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the second report by Bart STAES (Greens/EFA, BE) in which it called on the European Parliament to **refuse to grant discharge** to the Secretary-General of the Council in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Council and the Council for the financial year 2015.

Members regretted, first of all, that the Council has not responded to Parliament's remarks in its resolution of 27 April 2017 by which it postponed its decision granting discharge. They welcomed that for the first time the Council provided the Parliament with the 2015 **annual activity reports** of the Directorate General for Administration, of the Legal Service and of the Directorate General for Communication and Document Management.

As regards the pending issues, Members regretted the fact that the budget of the European Council and the Council have not yet been separated as recommended by Parliament.

They reiterated their call for reports on the progress of **real estate projects** as well as a detailed breakdown of the expenditure incurred so far and information on the costs of delays in the completion of the Europa building.

Members regretted that the Council's **whistleblowing rules** continue to be publicly unavailable and that the Council has not yet joined the Union transparency register.

The Council is urged to develop detailed **anti-corruption guidelines** and independent policies within its structures.

Overall, Members regretted the **difficulties repeatedly encountered** in the discharge procedures to date, which were due to a **lack of cooperation** from the Council. They pointed out that the refusal to grant discharge to the Secretary-General of the Council in relation to the financial years 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 has not led to consequences of any kind. They insisted that an effective budgetary control exercise requires the cooperation of Parliament and the Council.

Members confirmed that **Parliament is unable to make an informed decision on granting discharge**. They reminded the Council of the Commission's view that all institutions should be fully part of the follow-up process to the observations made by Parliament in the discharge exercise and that all institutions should cooperate to ensure the smooth functioning of the discharge procedure. They regretted that the Council continues to **fail to provide answers** to Parliament's questions.

According to Members, 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.