2016 discharge: EU general budget, European Council and Council

2017/2138(DEC) - 18/04/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided by 659 votes to 32, with 6 abstentions, to **postpone its decision to grant discharge** to the Secretary-General of the Council with respect to the implementation of the Council's budget for the 2016 financial year.

In 2016, the European Council and the Council had an overall budget of EUR 545 054 000 (compared to EUR 541 791 500 in 2015), with an implementation rate on average of 93.5 %, this is an increase of EUR 3.3 million (equivalent to 0.6 %) in the 2016 budget of the European Council and the Council.

Budget: Parliament 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.

Members expressed their support for the successful shift towards **performance-based budgeting** in the Commission's budget planning and encouraged the European Council and the Council to apply the method to their own budget-planning procedure.

Staff: Parliament observed that the objective of the Council's establishment plan to comply with the interinstitutional agreement to **reduce staff by 5 %** over the period of five years was achieved on 1 January 2017. It called on the Council to continue with the gender balance policy toward a truly balanced presentation of both genders in management posts

Members emphasised the need to establish an independent body with sufficient budgetary resources to support **whistleblowers** wishing to disclose information on possible irregularities negatively impacting on the Union's financial interests, while ensuring their confidentiality is protected.

Buildings policy: the **late delivery of the Europa building** had a significant impact on the 2016 budget of the European Council and of the Council; asks to be informed of the overall financial impact of the delay. Members regret that there is still a lack of information on the buildings policy and related expenditures, which should be public as a sign of transparency for European citizens.

Transparency: once again, Parliament regretted that the Council has still not joined the **Union transparency register** despite being one of the most important institutions involved in the Union's decision-making process. It urged the Council to comply with the Ombudsman's recommendations and suggestions for improvement to facilitate the public's access to documents.

Brexit: Members regretted the decision by the **UK** to withdraw from the Union and stated that at this point no predictions can be made about the financial, administrative, human and other consequences related to the withdrawal. The European Council and the Council are asked to perform impact assessments and inform the Parliament of the results by the end of the year 2018.

State of play: Members noted that **failure to grant discharge has so far not led to consequences of any kind**. They stressed that the situation should be resolved as rapidly as possible in the interest of the citizens of the Union. They recalled that the procedure of giving discharge separately to the individual Union institutions and bodies is a long-standing practice accepted by all the other institutions except the Council, and that this procedure has been developed to guarantee transparency and democratic

accountability towards Union citizens. The Council was urged to take part fully and in good faith in the annual discharge procedure, just as the other institutions do.

Parliament criticised the **irregular nomination, without a call for applications, of two judges for the Tribunal of First Instance** for a mandate which moreover lasted only from 14 April 2016 until 31 August 2016. They noted with regret the costs associated with one of those judges taking up and ending his '4-month mandate', amounting to EUR 69 498.25 in addition to the salary received by the judge. They condemned such a waste of Union taxpayers' money.