2017 discharge: EU general budget, European Economic and Social Committee

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PURPOSE: presentation by the Commission of the consolidated annual accounts of the European Union for the financial year 2017, as part of the 2017 discharge procedure.

Analysis of the accounts of the EU Institutions: **European Economic and Social Committee**.

CONTENT: the organisational governance of the EU consists of institutions, agencies and other EU bodies whose expenditure is included in the general budget of the Union.

This Commission document concerns the **EU's consolidated accounts for the year 2017** 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 is the responsibility of the Commission's Accounting Officer to prepare the EU's consolidated annual accounts and ensure that they present fairly, in all material aspects, the financial position, the result of the operations and the cash flows of the EU institutions and bodies with a view to granting discharge.

Discharge procedure: **the final step of a budget lifecycle is the discharge**. It is the decision by which the European Parliament '**releases**' the Commission from its responsibility for management of a given budget by marking the end of that budget's existence. It is granted by the European Parliament on the recommendation of the Council.

The decision is based in particular on the European Court of Auditors reports, in particular its annual report, in which the Court provides a Statement of Assurance (DAS) on the legality and regularity of transactions (payments and commitments).

The procedure results in the granting, postponement or refusal of discharge.

The final discharge report including specific recommendations to the Commission for action is adopted in plenary by the European Parliament and are subject to an annual follow up report in which the Commission outlines the concrete actions it has taken to implement the recommendations made.

All EU institutions and other agencies, bodies and joint undertakings are subject to their own discharge procedures.

(2) Implementation of the Economic and Social Committee's appropriations for the financial year 2017: the EESC's 2017 budget totalled **EUR 133.8 million**. In 2017, in line with an agreement between the EU institutions to reduce the staff by 5% within the period 2013-2017, 6 posts were cut. At the same time, as the exemption for the Irish language will come to an end, one post was added to build up an Irish translation capacity.

As regards the budget implementation of the EESC, the Annual Activity Report 2017 stated that the Committee focused on the following activities:

- the EESC adopted a total of **155 opinions and reports**, including 13 exploratory ones. A total of 61 opinions were adopted in response to referrals from the European Parliament and Council;
- Members of the European Parliament actively participated in 35 EESC legislative work meetings. This highlighted the **increased dialogue** at political level between the two institutions;
- continuation of the modernisation of administrative procedures which started in 2015 to help the EESC's general secretariat and administration increase its efficiency and provide better service to the institution and support for its members;
- a Brexit Follow-up Group was created in order to monitor the evolution in the UK's withdrawal from the EU and to assess the potential need for reactions or positions of the EESC;
- the official launch of the European circular economy platform by the EESC and the European Commission, during the Circular Economy Stakeholder Conference.