2017 discharge: EU general budget, European Council and Council

2018/2168(DEC) - 06/03/2019 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Arndt KOHN (S&D, DE) on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2017, Section II – European Council and Council.

Members proposed postponing the 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 2017.

Financial state of play

Members noted that in 2017 the European Council and Council had an overall budget of EUR 561 576 000 (compared with EUR 545 054 000 in 2016), with a global implementation rate of 93.8 % compared to 93.5 % in 2016.

Efforts were made to further improve its financial management and performance such as the harmonisation of budget planning at a central level by integrating Multiannual Activity and Budget Planning (MABP).

Members noted the increase of EUR 16.5 million (+3 %) in the budget of the European Council and Council in 2017 compared to an increase of 0.6 % in 2016. They also noted with concern the very high amount of appropriations being carried over from 2017 to 2018, particularly those in respect of furniture, technical equipment, transport and computer systems.

Budget separation

Once again, Members stressed that the budget of the European Council and the budget of the Council should be separated in order to contribute to transparency in the financial management of the institutions and to improve the accountability of both institutions.

Future cooperation between Council and Parliament

Members regretted that the Council again failed to provide answers to the written questions sent by Parliament and that the Secretary-General of the Council did not attend the hearing organised on 27 November 2018 in the context of the annual discharge which again shows a complete lack of cooperation on the Council's side. The Council’s expenditure must be scrutinised in the same way as that of other institutions.

The report recalled the difficulties repeatedly encountered in the discharge procedures to date due to a lack of cooperation from the Council. It recalled that Parliament refused to grant discharge to the Secretary-General of the Council in relation to the financial years 2009 to 2016.

Lastly, Members called on the Council to speed up its procedure for the discharge recommendations, with the goal to enable discharge in year n+1. They asked the Council to fulfil its particular role and to give discharge recommendations to the other Union institutions.