2017 discharge: EU general budget, European Council and Council

2018/2168(DEC) - 23/10/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided 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 2017 financial year.

In a resolution adopted by 662 votes to 24 with 9 abstentions, the European Parliament recalled the difficulties repeatedly encountered in the Council discharge procedures to date due to the lack of cooperation from the Council which led Parliament to refuse to grant discharge to the Secretary-General of the Council in relation to the financial years 2009 to 2016 and to postpone its decision on discharge in March 2019 for the financial year 2017.

Members stressed the importance of separating the budget of the European Council and the Council in order to contribute to greater transparency in the financial management of the two institutions and to strengthen their accountability and the effectiveness of their expenditure.

Parliament reiterated its concern at the very high level of appropriations carried over from 2017 to 2018, in particular for furniture, technical equipment, transport and IT systems. It also deplored the Council's failure to give sufficient information on real estate policy.

Deploring the Council's lack of participation in the transparency register, Members called on the Council to continue discussions on the technical aspects of the package of instruments regarding the Transparency Register in order to achieve a political agreement between the three institutions as soon as possible, given that enhanced transparency within in the European institutions will increase public confidence in the Union. They recalled Parliament's support for the Ombudsman's recommendations to the Council, namely to make it easier for citizens to follow the Union's legislative process (transparency of the Council's legislative process). They also called on the Council to be transparent to the citizens of the Union regarding the funds entrusted to it.

Members stressed that satisfactory cooperation between the European Parliament and the Council institutions, in the form of an open and formal dialogue procedure, would send a strong signal to the citizens of the Union.

Lastly, Parliament expressed concern about reports in the European media about corporate sponsorship of Member States hosting the EU Presidency. It proposed that the Council adopt guidelines to promote financial transparency and independence of Presidencies, and recommended that the Council envisage budgetisation of the Presidencies.