Basic information

2014/2078(DEC) DEC - Discharge procedure	Procedure completed
2013 discharge: EU general budget, European Parliament **Subject** 8.70.03.03 2013 discharge	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
CONT Budgetary Control	PARGNEAUX Gilles (S&D)	08/09/2014
	Shadow rapporteur PIEPER Markus (PPE) VISTISEN Anders (ECR) GERBRANDY Gerben-Jan (ALDE) DE JONG Dennis (GUE/NGL) JÁVOR Benedek (Verts/ALE) VALLI Marco (EFDD)	

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
AFET Foreign Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
DEVE Development	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
INTA International Trade	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
BUDG Budgets	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
ECON Economic and Monetary Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
EMPL Employment and Social Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	

ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
ITRE Industry, Research and Energy	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
IMCO Internal Market and Consumer Protection	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
TRAN Transport and Tourism	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
REGI Regional Development	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
AGRI Agriculture and Rural Development	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
PECH Fisheries	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
CULT Culture and Education	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
JURI Legal Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
LIBE Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
AFCO Constitutional Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
FEMM Women's Rights and Gender Equality	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
PETI Petitions	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Budget	GEORGIEVA Kristalina

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
30/07/2014	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2014)0510	Summary
20/10/2014	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
24/03/2015	Vote in committee		
30/03/2015	Committee report tabled for plenary	A8-0082/2015	Summary
28/04/2015	Debate in Parliament		
29/04/2015	Decision by Parliament	T8-0121/2015	Summary
29/04/2015	Results of vote in Parliament		
29/04/2015	End of procedure in Parliament		
30/09/2015	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2014/2078(DEC)
Procedure type	DEC - Discharge procedure
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	CONT/8/01250

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE537.551	05/02/2015	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE549.348	09/03/2015	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A8-0082/2015	30/03/2015	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T8-0121/2015	29/04/2015	Summary

Council of the EU

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Document attached to the procedure	05303/2015	30/01/2015	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
	COM(2014)0510		

Non-legislative basic document		30/07/2014	Summary

Additional information		
Source	**Document**	**Date**
European Commission	EUR-Lex	

Final act	
Budget 2015/1614 OJ L 255 30.09.2015, p. 0001	Summary

2013 discharge: EU general budget, European Parliament

2014/2078(DEC) - 30/07/2014 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: presentation by the Commission of the consolidated annual accounts of the European Union for the financial year 2013, as part of the 2013 discharge procedure.

Analysis of the accounts of the EU Institutions: **European Parliament**.

Legal reminder: the consolidated annual accounts of the European Union for the year 2013 have been prepared on the basis of the information presented by the institutions and bodies under Article 148(2) of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Union. They were prepared in accordance with Title IX of this Financial Regulation.

(1) Purpose: the document helps to bring insight into the EU budget mechanism and **the way in which the budget has been managed and spent in 2013** , including the different expenses of the European institutions. It should be recalled that only the Commission budget contains administrative appropriations and operating appropriations. **The other Institutions have only administrative appropriations.**

The document also presents the different financial actors involved in the budget process (accounting officers, internal officers and authorising officers) and recalls their respective roles in the context of the tasks of sound financial management.

Amongst the other legal elements relating to the implementation of the EU budget presented in this document, the paper focuses on the following issues:

- accounting principles applicable to the management of EU spending (business continuity, consistency of accounting methods, comparability of information ...);
- consolidation methods of figures for all major controlled entities (the consolidated financial statements of the EU comprise all significant controlled entities –institutions, organisations and agencies);
- the recognition of financial assets in the EU (tangible and intangible assets, financial assets and other miscellaneous investments);
- the way in which EU public expenditure is committed and spent, including pre-financing (cash advances intended for the benefit of an EU organ);
- the means of recovery following irregularities detected;
- the modus operandi of the accounting system;
- the audit process followed by the European Parliament's granting of the discharge.

Discharge procedure: the final control is the discharge of the budget for a given financial year. The discharge represents the **political aspect of the external control of budget implementation** and is the **decision by which the European Parliament, acting on a Council recommendation, "releases" the Commission from its responsibility for management of a given budget** by marking the end of that budget's existence. When granting discharge, Parliament may make observations which it considers important and often recommends the Commission and the other institutions to **take actions concerning these matters.**

The document also details specific expenditure of the institutions, in particular: (i) pensions of former Members and officials of institutions; (ii) joint sickness insurance scheme and (iii) buildings.

The document also presents a series of tables and detailed technical indicators on (i) the balance sheet; (ii) the economic outturn account; (iii) cashflow tables; (iv) technical annexes concerning the financial statements.

(2) Implementation of the European Parliament's appropriations for the financial year 2013: the document comprises a series of detailed annexes, the most important concerning the implementation of the budget. As regards the expenditure of the European Parliament, the table on the financial and budgetary management of this institution states that the final appropriations amounted to EUR 1.857 billion, committed to 98.6%. Further information concerning the implementation of the European Parliament's budget is drawn from the Report on the budgetary and financial management of the European Parliament for 2013.

(3) Budgetary implementation - conclusions: in more general and political terms, the implementation of the Parliament's budget in 2013 was marked by the continuation of action, begun in 2011, to bring about structural improvements in order to give Parliament all the resources it needs to play its role in the legislative process to the full and enable it to capitalise to the full on the enhanced powers conferred on it by the Treaty of Lisbon.

The institution also continued to implement multiannual programmes to rationalise and modernise key sectors of its administration, particularly in the field of security, and undertook significant development of its **information and communication policy with a view to the 2014 elections**.

The document highlighted that the institutional changes arising from Croatia's accession were completed without any significant difficulties.

More technically, the major projects implemented by Parliament in 2013 may be summarised as follows:

- **continuation of institutional changes related to the Lisbon Treaty, including**: (i) support for research; (ii) knowledge management; (iii) issues relating to external policy co-decision procedure and consent; (iv) improving plenary sitting services;
- **communications strategy and preparing for the 2014 elections**: (i) centrally organised activities in EP and decentralised activities in the Member States; (ii) EYE (European Youth Event to raise awareness of European identity); (iii) the continuation of the House of European History project; (iv) improving services to visitors;
- **further institutional changes arising from the accession of Croatia**;
- **continuing to implement the multiannual programmes to rationalise and modernise key parts of Parliament's Administration**: (i) building /property policy (planning permission granted for the construction of Trebel building in Brussels, continuing work on the Konrad Adenauer building in Luxembourg, negotiations for a new building in Sofia (BG); temporary closure of zone A of the Paul-Henri Spaak in Brussels following the discovery of cracks in three of the ceiling beams in the Chamber roof during inspections in September 2012 as part of the new policy on maintenance and renovation; (ii) environmental policy; (iii) catering policy with a revision of costing of meals in restaurants and canteens; (iv) modernisation of information technologies/security; (iv) relations with national parliaments; (v) further restructuring of the security services;
- **other technical modernisation measures** (in particular assistance to Members and archive management).

2013 discharge: EU general budget, European Parliament

2014/2078(DEC) - 30/01/2015

On the basis of the observations made by the Court of Auditors, the Council recommends the European Parliament to **give a discharge to the European Union institutions in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Union for the financial year 2013**.

The Council welcomes the fact that, as in previous years, the administrative and related expenditure of the institutions and bodies of the European Union remained free from material error and that their examined control systems were **assessed as effective**.

However, the Council points out that, according to the Court, the estimated error rate of this policy group increased from 0% to **1%**. The Council takes note that 10% of the audited sample of transactions were affected by error.

The Council welcomes the measures already taken and encourages the institutions concerned to address the remaining weaknesses identified by the Court.

2013 discharge: EU general budget, European Parliament

2014/2078(DEC) - 29/04/2015 - Final act

PURPOSE: to grant discharge to the European Parliament for the financial year 2013.

NON LEGISLATIVE ACT: Decision (EU) 2015/1614 of the European Parliament on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2013, Section I — European Parliament.

CONTENT: with the present decision, the European Parliament grants discharge to its President for the implementation of its budget for the financial year 2013.

This decision is in line with the European Parliament's resolution adopted on 29 April 2015 and comprises a series of observations that form an integral part of the discharge decision (please refer to the summary of the opinion of 29 April 2015).

Amongst Parliament's main observations, the latter noted that Parliament's final appropriations totalled EUR 1 750 463 939, or 19.07% of heading V (Administration) of the Multiannual Financial Framework.

Parliament welcomed the fact that the Court of Auditors' audit did not identify any serious weaknesses in respect of the topics audited for Parliament, but it was concerned about maintaining the security of Parliament's buildings and their immediate surroundings. It stressed the need for **greater transparency** as regards the general spending allowances for Members, and called for more clarity on this issue.

Lastly, Members stressed that in order to create long-term savings in the Union budget, Parliament and Council must address the need for a roadmap to a **single seat**.

2013 discharge: EU general budget, European Parliament

2014/2078(DEC) - 30/03/2015 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Gilles PARGNEAUX (S&D, FR) and called on the European Parliament to give discharge to its President in respect of the implementation of the budget of the Court for the financial year 2013.

Parliament's budgetary and financial management: Members noted that Parliament's final appropriations for 2013 totalled EUR 1 750 463 939, or 19.07 % of heading Administration of the Multiannual Financial Framework. In 2013, 99.02 % of the appropriations entered in Parliament's budget were committed with a cancellation rate of 0.8%. EUR 54 000 000 was transferred from provisional appropriation headings and from other sources so as to help fund the extension and modernisation of the Konrad Adenauer Building (KAD), in Luxembourg.

Court of Auditors' opinions on the reliability of the 2013 accounts: the committee commended the fact that the audit did not identify any serious weaknesses in respect of the topics audited for Parliament. It reaffirmed that Parliament's governing bodies and administration were held accountable for the resources placed at Parliament's disposal throughout the discharge and that it was therefore essential for the entire decision-making procedure to take place in a completely **transparent** manner to ensure that Union citizens are provided with a true and accurate view of the way that Parliament takes its decisions and uses the resources placed at its disposal.

Election campaign 2014: Members were deeply worried that Parliament allocated EUR 17 800 000 to promotional activities described as institutional election campaign over the period 2013 to 2014 while turnout in the 2014 European elections declined again to 42.54 % (2009: 43 %). They encouraged the adoption of a new strategy aimed at increasing the attractiveness of the European elections in the Member States. They noted that the European Parliament Eurobarometer survey showed that during the 2014 electoral campaign 23 % of the respondents had a very negative image of Parliament, related to financial arrangements for Members such as allowances, salaries and the budget of Parliament in general. Members were convinced therefore that structural improvements, for example full transparency and the accounting of the general expenditure allowance, are needed to improve **trust and support for Parliament**.

Security and Safety: Members took note of the creation of Directorate-General for Security and Safety and recalled that the internalisation of Parliament's security services had generated savings of EUR 195 000 in 2013 and is projected to produce savings of more than EUR 11 million over the period 2013-2016. They considered that the **Belgian Government should make a greater contribution on its part to Parliament's security**, given that Belgium benefits economically from the presence of the Union institutions on its territory.

Greater transparency: the committee welcomed the fact that Members must be more transparent about the on-the-side activities they do while in public office. It was of the opinion that a more detailed declaration template for Members would help to increase transparency and avoid potential conflicts of interests. It also stressed the need for greater transparency as regards the general spending allowances for Members. It regretted that until now the GEA was considered as a lump-sum amount and that there were no precise rules for the expenditures that might be covered by the allowance.

Administration and management of the European Parliament: Members made a series of recommendations concerning certain DGs, with particular reference to the following:

- **Directorate-General for Communication:** Members commented on more information on (i) the multiannual grants programme 2012 to 2014, aimed at raising awareness on Parliament's role, and costing some EUR 14 500 000, asking for a full breakdown of all the grants for communication projects funded; (ii) the budget for the EuroparlTV at EUR 5 000 000 in 2014, appreciating that the performance of the service had been improved; (iii) the expenditure on the LUX Prize in 2013 amounted to EUR 448 000 but considering that the Prize was not a core activity of Parliament and questioning its relevance; (iv) Parliament's new logo and the lack of transparency regarding its use.

- **Directorate-General Personnel**, with Members deeply regretting the fact that Parliament was condemned for being unable to help Parliamentary Assistants in cases of harassment and irregular layoffs;

- **Directorate-General for Innovation and Technological support:** Members noted (i) the process of the internalisation of staff in the Directorate-General for Innovation and Technological Support and the promised increased level of expertise among the staff in the IT area; (ii) the problem of personal and confidential individual mail-boxes of selected Members, parliamentary assistants and officials which were compromised after Parliament had been subject to a hacker attack.

Lastly, Members made a series of recommendations on Parliament's policies on contracts and calls for tenders and negotiated procedures and the issue of greening Parliament.

2013 discharge: EU general budget, European Parliament

2014/2078(DEC) - 29/04/2015 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided by 545 votes to 148, with 6 abstentions to grant discharge to its President in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Parliament for the financial year 2013.

In a resolution adopted by 573 votes to 109, with 11 abstentions, Parliament recalled that Parliament's final appropriations for 2013 totalled EUR 1 750 463 939, or 19.07% of heading Administration of the Multiannual Financial Framework. In 2013, 99.02% of the appropriations entered in Parliament's budget were committed with a cancellation rate of 0.8%. EUR 54 000 000 was transferred from provisional appropriation headings and from other sources so as to help fund the extension and modernisation of the Konrad Adenauer Building (KAD), in Luxembourg.

Centralised activities of the European Parliament and a single seat: Plenary recalled that according to the Court of Auditors, the **potential savings for the Union budget would be about EUR 114 million a year if Parliament centralised its activities**. It stressed that Parliament and the Council, in order to create long term savings in the Union budget, must address the need for a roadmap to a single seat, as stated by Parliament in several previous resolutions.

Court of Auditors' opinions on the reliability of the 2013 accounts: Parliament commended the fact that the audit did not identify any serious weaknesses in respect of the topics audited for Parliament. It reaffirmed that Parliament's governing bodies and administration were held accountable for the resources placed at Parliament's disposal throughout the discharge and that it was therefore essential for the entire decision-making procedure to take place in a completely **transparent** manner to ensure that Union citizens are provided with a true and accurate view of the way that Parliament takes its decisions and uses the resources placed at its disposal.

Election campaign 2014: Parliament is deeply worried that Parliament allocated EUR 17.8 million to promotional activities described as institutional election campaign over the period 2013 to 2014 while turnout in the 2014 European elections declined again to 42.54% (2009: 43%). It encouraged the adoption of a new strategy aimed at increasing the attractiveness of the European elections in the Member States.

Parliament noted that the European Parliament Eurobarometer survey showed that during the 2014 electoral campaign 23% of the respondents had a very negative image of Parliament, related to financial arrangements for Members such as allowances, salaries and the budget of Parliament in general. Parliament was convinced therefore that structural improvements, for example full transparency and the accounting of the general expenditure allowance, are needed to improve **trust and support for Parliament**.

Staffing: Parliament asked to be provided, by the end of 2015, with year-on-year breakdowns of trends in staffing levels and staff costs, by grade and level of management. It asked Parliament's administration to state whether comparable studies of the administrations of international parliamentary assemblies could contain important lessons for Parliament's work. It noted that work outsourced to specialists should also be included in the reports to promote the ethos of transparency, while also serving the best interests of constituents. It noted with concern that the large number of staff based in the office of the President of the European Parliament, which amounts to 35 staff, including two drivers and a personal usher, is **highly questionable and that this sets a bad example for cost reduction and fiscal responsibility within Parliament**.

Security and Safety: Parliament took note of the creation of Directorate-General for Security and Safety and recalled that the internalisation of Parliament's security services had generated savings of EUR 195 000 in 2013 and is projected to produce savings of more than EUR 11 million over the period 2013-2016. It considered that the **Belgian Government should make a greater contribution on its part to Parliament's security**, given that Belgium benefits economically from the presence of the Union institutions on its territory.

Greater transparency as regards the general spending allowances for Members: Parliament welcomed the fact that Members must be more transparent about the on-the-side activities they do while in public office. It insisted that a more detailed declaration template for Members would help to increase transparency and avoid potential conflicts of interests. It also stressed the need for greater transparency as regards the general spending allowances for Members and called on the Bureau to work on the definition of more precise rules regarding the accountability of expenditures authorised under this allowance, without causing additional costs to Parliament. Parliament was also concerned with the lack of ex post verification of the use of service cars by Members and questioned the **availability of two service cars for the President of Parliament**.

Administration and management of the European Parliament: Parliament made a series of recommendations concerning certain DGs, with particular reference to the following:

- **Directorate-General for Communication**: Parliament commented on more information on (i) the multiannual grants programme 2012 to 2014, aimed at raising awareness on Parliament's role, and costing some EUR 14 500 000, asking for a full breakdown of all the grants for communication projects funded; (ii) the budget for the EuroparlTV at EUR 5 000 000 in 2014, appreciating that the performance of the service had been improved; (iii) the expenditure on the LUX Prize in 2013 amounted to EUR 448 000. On this issue, Parliament called for a representative survey of Members to be conducted by the end of 2015 to determine whether the LUX Prize is well known and how, if at all, it is viewed in their respective Member State; (iv) Parliament's new logo and the lack of transparency regarding its use.
- **Directorate-General Personnel**, with Parliament deeply regretting the fact that Parliament was condemned for being unable to help Parliamentary Assistants in cases of harassment and irregular layoffs. It called for the names of the service providers and the services provided to the Member to be made accessible to the public on the homepage of the Members of Parliament, next to the data on the APAs and the local assistants;
- **Directorate-General for Innovation and Technological support**: Parliament noted (i) the process of the internalisation of staff in the Directorate-General for Innovation and Technological Support and the promised increased level of expertise among the staff in the IT area; (ii) the problem of personal and confidential individual mail-boxes of selected Members, parliamentary assistants and officials which were compromised after Parliament had been subject to a hacker attack.

Parliament also made a series of recommendations on Parliament's policies on contracts and calls for tenders and negotiated procedures and the issue of greening Parliament. Lastly, as regards the financing of political parties, plenary did not accept the committee's position which called for a gradual reduction, up to the eventual abolition, of contributions to European political parties from Parliament's budget.