Basic information

2018/2168(DEC) DEC - Discharge procedure	Procedure completed
2017 discharge: EU general budget, European Council and Council **Subject** 8.70.03.02 2017 discharge	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
CONT Budgetary Control	GARCÍA MUÑOZ Isabel (S&D)	24/07/2019
	Shadow rapporteur WINZIG Angelika (EPP) GARCÍA MUÑOZ Isabel (S&D) CHASTEL Olivier (Renew) PEKSA Mikuláš (Greens/EFA) FLANAGAN Luke Ming (GUE/NGL)	

Former committee responsible	Former rapporteur	Appointed
CONT Budgetary Control		

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.	

Former committee for opinion	Former rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
AFET Foreign Affairs		
DEVE Development		
INTA International Trade		
BUDG Budgets		
ECON Economic and Monetary Affairs		
EMPL Employment and Social Affairs		
ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety		
ITRE Industry, Research and Energy		
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PECH Fisheries		
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LIBE Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs		
AFCO Constitutional Affairs		

	FEMM Women's Rights and Gender Equality		
	PETI Petitions		

European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner
	Budget	OETTINGER Günther

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
28/06/2018	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2018)0521	Summary
11/09/2018	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
06/03/2019	Committee report tabled for plenary	A8-0096/2019	Summary
26/03/2019	Decision by Parliament	T8-0246/2019	Summary
26/03/2019	Results of vote in Parliament		
26/03/2019	Debate in Parliament		
25/09/2019	Vote in committee		
30/09/2019	Committee report tabled for plenary	A9-0010/2019	Summary
22/10/2019	Debate in Parliament		
23/10/2019	Decision by Parliament	T9-0040/2019	Summary
23/10/2019	Results of vote in Parliament		
23/10/2019	End of procedure in Parliament		
27/12/2019	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2018/2168(DEC)
Procedure type	DEC - Discharge procedure
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 165
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	CONT/9/00359

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE626.816	13/12/2018	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE634.523	30/01/2019	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A8-0096/2019	06/03/2019	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T8-0246/2019	26/03/2019	Summary
Committee draft report		PE638.755	26/07/2019	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE641.114	09/09/2019	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A9-0010/2019	30/09/2019	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T9-0040/2019	23/10/2019	Summary

Council of the EU

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Supplementary non-legislative basic document	05824/2019	04/02/2019	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2018)0521	28/06/2018	Summary

Other institutions and bodies

Institution/body	Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
CofA	Court of Auditors: opinion, report	N8-0013/2019 OJ C 357 04.10.2018, p. 0001	12/07/2018	Summary

Additional information

Source	Document	Date
European Commission	EUR-Lex	

Final act

Budget 2019/2224
OJ L 333 27.12.2019, p. 0134 Summary

2017 discharge: EU general budget, European Council and Council

2018/2168(DEC) - 28/06/2018 - Non-legislative basic document

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 Council and Council.**

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.

Implementation of the European Council/Council's (EC/C) appropriations for the financial year 2017: the overall EC/C budget 2017 was set at **EUR 561.6 million**. This corresponds to an increase of EUR 16.5 million (+3.0 %) compared to 2016. The global implementation rate of the 2017 budget is 93.8 % (+1.9 % on top of the average of the last eight years).

Some of the main outcomes for 2017 included:

- continuous work to consolidate positive developments after previous years' crises. One visible result of this has been the Leaders' Agenda which was presented by President Tusk and endorsed in the October European Council;
- the total number of meetings organised by the GSC went up by 26 % (1 524) compared to 2016 which is explained mainly by the increased activity of the presidency of the second semester and the creation of an ad hoc working group on Brexit.

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.

2017 discharge: EU general budget, European Council and Council

2018/2168(DEC) - 26/03/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to postpone discharge to the Secretary-General of the Council on the implementation of the budget of the European Council and the Council for the financial year 2017.

In its resolution adopted by 588 votes to 29, with 14 abstentions, Parliament stressed that the European Council and the Council, as Union institutions, should be democratically accountable towards the citizens of the Union in so far as they are beneficiaries of the general budget of the European Union.

Parliament postponed the discharge to the European Council and the Council on grounds that they failed to cooperate in supplying the information needed. Parliament has denied discharge to the European Council and the Council for the last eight years.

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

2017 discharge: EU general budget, European Council and Council

2018/2168(DEC) - 04/02/2019 - Supplementary non-legislative basic document

Based on the observations contained in the report by the Court of Auditors, the Council called on the European Parliament to grant discharge to all of the EU institutions in respect of the implementation of their respective budgets for the financial year 2017.

However, it considered that budget implementation required a series of comments from the Council which should be fully taken into account by the Commission.

The Council welcomed the fact that the administrative and related expenditure of the EU institutions remained, as in previous years, free from material error with an estimated level of error of 0.5 %, which while being well below the materiality threshold is higher by 0.3 % compared to the Court's findings for 2016 (0.2 %). It noted with satisfaction that no serious weaknesses were identified by the Court in the supervisory and control systems and in the examined annual activity reports.

The Council took note that, as in previous years, there was a small number of errors relating to staff costs and some weaknesses in the Office for Administration and Payment of individual entitlements' (PMO) management of family allowances. It called on the Commission to improve its procedures to avoid errors related to staff expenditure.

The Court did not identify any specific problems concerning the Council and the European Council.

2017 discharge: EU general budget, European Council and Council

2018/2168(DEC) - 12/07/2018

PURPOSE: presentation of the Annual report of the Court of Auditors on the implementation of the budget concerning the financial year 2017.

CONTENT: the Court of Auditors published its 41th annual report on the implementation of the general budget of the Union for the year 2017. This report follows a five-part structure:

- the statement of assurance (DAS) and a summary of the results of the audit on the reliability of accounts and the regularity of transactions;

- the analysis of budgetary and financial management;

- the Commission’s performance reporting framework;

- the findings on EU revenue;

- the presentation of the main headings of the current multiannual financial framework (MFF), the results of the testing of the regularity of transactions.

The Court concludes that payments for 2017 are legal and regular, with the expenditure recorded in 2017 covering spending on a reimbursement basis. It believes that the EU accounts present a true and fair view of the EU’s financial position.

The report also assessed the potential impact on the 2017 accounts of the United Kingdom’s withdrawal from the European Union. On 29 March 2017, the United Kingdom (UK) formally notified the European Council of its intention to leave the European Union (EU). On 22 May 2017, the negotiations started for the withdrawal agreement between the EU and the UK.

Part Five (Financial Provisions) of the draft withdrawal agreement of 19 March 2018 concerning the financial settlement states that the UK will pay all its obligations under the current and previous Multiannual Financial Frameworks as if it were still a Member State.

Based on this, the Court concluded that the accounts as at 31 December 2017 correctly reflect the withdrawal process.

The audit also focuses on the budget implementation of the Committee of the ***Council and the European Council***.

The overall audit evidence indicates that the level of error in spending on ‘Administration’ was not material. For this MFF heading, our testing of transactions produced an estimated overall level of error of 0.5 %

The Court did not detect any specific problem regarding the Council and the European Council.

2017 discharge: EU general budget, European Council and Council

2018/2168(DEC) - 30/09/2019 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted a second report, presented by Isabel GARCÍA MUÑOZ (S&D, ES), 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.

The committee invited the European Parliament 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 the draft resolution accompanying the report, Members recalled Parliament's role in the discharge procedure while stressing that the European institutions must act in a responsible and professional manner with regard to the implementation of their budgets.

Members 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 in March 2019 for the financial year 2017. They regretted that the request to separate the budget of the European Council and the Council into one budget for each institution, made by Parliament in previous discharge resolutions, has not been considered. They reiterated their concern at the very high level of appropriations carried over from 2017 to 2018, in particular for furniture, technical equipment, transport and IT systems.

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.

2017 discharge: EU general budget, European Council and Council

2018/2168(DEC) - 27/12/2019 - Final act

PURPOSE: to grant discharge to the Council for the 2017 financial year.

NON-LEGISLATIVE ACT: Decision (EU) 2019/2224 of the European Parliament 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.

CONTENT: the European Parliament has refused 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.

The decision is accompanied by a resolution of the European Parliament containing the observations which form an integral part of the decision on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the 2017 financial year.

In its resolution, 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.

Outstanding issues

Parliament expressed regret that the request to separate the budget of the European Council and the Council into one budget for each institution, made by Parliament in previous discharge resolutions, has not been considered. It insisted on this separation that will contribute to increased transparency in the financial management of both institutions and improve their accountability and expenditure efficiency.

It also 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.

Parliament deplored the Council's lack of participation in the transparency register. The Council should 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.

Moreover, concern was expressed 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.

State of play

Parliament is encouraged by the fact that the Council considers it necessary to address the discharge procedure and is open to arriving at an agreement with Parliament on how to cooperate in this regard as rapidly as possible.

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.