

Budgetary Control MEPs greenlight the Commission's budget management

- record low error rate
- payments backlog on the rise

Budgetary Control Committee MEPs suggested giving the European Commission the thumbs up for the implementation of the 2016 EU budget, in a vote on Monday.

Committee MEPs welcomed the decrease in errors affecting the payments – according to the [Court of Auditors \(ECA\) report](#), the error rate of 3.1% was the lowest that it has been in the last 10 years.

Mounting payments backlog

In the accompanying draft resolution, MEPs call on the European Commission to speed up the delivery of cohesion policy programmes and related payments. They point out that delays led to low payments in 2016 and created an all-time high of EUR 238 billion in outstanding commitments at the end of 2016, equalling a backlog of 2.9 years of payments. MEPs fear the amounts left may not be sufficient to fund

unexpected events that may still occur before 2020, end of the current long term budget.

Calls to fix farming policies

MEPs also call on the European Commission to “fundamentally review” the young farmers’ and greening schemes, initially introduced to encourage young people to take up farming and provide for more environmentally sustainable farming practices respectively. ECA reports had [revealed](#) that “greening is unlikely to provide significant benefits for the environment and climate (...) because greening requirements are generally undemanding and largely reflect normal farming practice”. The Court had also [found](#) that the aid to young farmers was not based on a

sound needs assessment and was not always provided to young farmers in need.

One heading for migration policy

The draft resolution urges the Commission to improve transparency on the financing of migration policy. The Commission should regroup the budget lines financing migration policy under a single heading, MEPs suggest, calling for the annual EU budget to be presented according to EU political priorities.

Next steps

Committee MEPs suggested granting the Commission the discharge with 16 votes to 7. The plenary is set to vote on more than 50 discharge reports during the part-session in April, covering the implementation of the 2016 budget by EU institutions, agencies, Joint Undertakings and the European Development Fund.

Background

Discharge is the final approval of the implementation of the budget for a specific year. The European Parliament can grant, postpone or refuse a discharge. If the discharge is postponed, the Parliament may ask the respective institution to provide it with additional information before voting on a final decision later in the year. Granting the discharge closes a specific financial year.

Errors do not mean that money was lost or wasted. Level of error is an estimate of money that should not have been paid out because it was not used in line with the applicable rules and regulations – for instance, if supporting documents were not provided.

Further information

[Profile of rapporteur Joachim Zeller \(EPP, DE\)](#)

[Procedure file](#)

[EP Think Tank briefing: “Discharge procedure for the EU budget - Political scrutiny of budget implementation” \(21.04.2016\)](#)

[Committee on Budgetary control – Discharge 2016](#)

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