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DRAFT REPORT

on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the
European Union for the financial year 2016, Section VII – Committee of the
Regions
(2017/2142(DEC))

Committee on Budgetary Control

Rapporteur: Marco Valli

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1. PROPOSAL FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DECISION

on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2016, Section VII – Committee of the Regions (2017/2142(DEC))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2016¹,
 - having regard to the consolidated annual accounts of the European Union for the financial year 2016 (COM(2017)0365 – C8-0253/2017)²,
 - having regard to the Court of Auditors' annual report on the implementation of the budget concerning the financial year 2016, together with the institutions' replies³,
 - having regard to the statement of assurance⁴ as to the reliability of the accounts and the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions provided by the Court of Auditors for the financial year 2016, pursuant to Article 287 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
 - having regard to Article 314(10) and Articles 317, 318 and 319 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
 - having regard to Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002⁵, and in particular Articles 55, 99, 164, 165 and 166 thereof,
 - having regard to Rule 94 of and Annex IV to its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A8-0000/2018),
1. Grants the Secretary-General of the Committee of the Regions discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the Committee of the Regions for the financial year 2016; / Postpones its decision on granting the Secretary-General of the Committee of the Regions discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the Committee of the Regions for the financial year 2016;
 2. Sets out its observations in the resolution below;
 3. Instructs its President to forward this decision and the resolution forming an integral part of it to the Committee of the Regions, the European Council, the Council, the Commission, the Court of Justice of the European Union, the Court of Auditors, the European Ombudsman, the European Data Protection Supervisor and the European

¹ OJ L 48, 24.2.2016.

² OJ C 323, 28.9.2017, p. 1.

³ OJ C 322, 28.9.2017, p. 1.

⁴ OJ C 322, 28.9.2017, p. 10.

⁵ OJ L 298, 26.10.2012, p. 1.

External Action Service, and to arrange for their publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union* (L series).

2. MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

with observations forming an integral part of the decision on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2016, Section VII – Committee of the Regions (2017/2142(DEC))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its decision on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2016, Section VII – Committee of the Regions,
 - having regard to Rule 94 of and Annex IV to its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A8-0000/2018),
1. Takes note that on the basis of its audit work, the Court of Auditors concluded that the payments as a whole for the year ended on 31 December 2016 for administrative and other expenditure of the institutions and bodies were free from material error;
 2. Notes that in its 2016 annual report, the Court of Auditors observed that no significant weaknesses had been identified in respect of the audited topics relating to human resources and procurement for the Committee of the Regions (the “Committee”);
 3. Notes that in 2016 the Committee had an approved budget of EUR 90 500 000 (EUR 88 900 000 in 2015), of which EUR 89 400 000 were commitment appropriations with a utilisation rate of 98,7 %; notes the increase of the utilisation rate in 2016;
 4. Stresses that the Committee’s budget is purely administrative, with a large amount being used on expenditure concerning persons working within the institution and the remaining amount relating to buildings, furniture, equipment and miscellaneous running costs; underlines the importance of the Committee applying the performance based budget principles in its daily operations; asks the Committee to duly and regularly inform Parliament on the progress made in this matter;
 5. Underlines the importance of a positive assessment of the cooperation agreement between the Committee and the European Parliament; asks that the Committee’s strategy strengthen connections first of all with Parliament, but also with other Union institutions;
 6. Is of the opinion that a joint assessment of the budgetary savings resulting from the cooperation between the Committee and Parliament is of interest to both institutions and to Union citizens; suggests that the Committee propose that exercise to Parliament as a complement to the ongoing political strategic dialogue;
 7. Welcomes the administrative cooperation agreement between the Committee and the European Economic and Social Committee, which entered into force in 2016 and provides for shared translation and logistics directorates; considers this a good basis for potential economic savings in both committees; trusts that this agreement will also

prompt cooperation in other areas; requests a detailed plan and description of the committees' activities in those areas; believes that this agreement will ensure also further efficiency in both committees' performance and economic savings;

8. Notes that the targets set by the Committee in 2016 to increase the involvement of Parliament and the Council in activities related to the Committee's opinions have been achieved only modestly as far as Parliament is concerned; requests that the Committee make greater efforts in this regard;
9. Asks the Committee to ensure an overall execution rate for payments of around 90%;
10. Notes the inclusion of data on the missions undertaken by the Committee's members in its annual activity report; asks the Committee to provide a list of the events attended by its members in 2016 in an annex to its annual activity report for 2017;
11. Is still concerned with the continued shortage of women holding senior and middle management posts; notes the adoption of a new five-year equal opportunities strategy foreseeing actions to strive for a more balanced gender representation, particularly in management positions; encourages the Committee to improve its performance in this regard;
12. Notes that the number of days of sick leave within the Committee staff has slightly decreased; underlines the importance of putting in place measures for improving wellbeing at work but also of duly verifying absences;
13. Observes that the communication strategy of the Committee is geared towards reconnecting Europe with its citizens, with activities organised in several Member States and online surveys; supports the organisation of citizen dialogues and asks for a regular improvement of those initiatives, in order to duly involve Union citizens; invites the Committee to communicate detailed results in this regard in its annual activity report for 2017;
14. Notes that the translation output objective was not achieved and that therefore further rationalisation measures are needed; asks the Committee to include detailed information in this regard in its annual activity report for 2017;
15. Notes that one whistleblowing file was opened in 2016 and has been forwarded to OLAF; asks the Committee to keep Parliament informed of the progress of the case;
16. Regrets that the whistleblower file of the Committee's former internal auditor is still not closed; insists that the Committee do its utmost to find a just, honourable and equitable settlement of the case as soon as possible; requests that the Committee keep Parliament informed of its progress;
17. Acknowledges the Committee's commitment to EMAS and its environmental results, which show a decrease in consumption of gas, water, electricity, paper, cleaning products and in production of waste; encourages the Committee to continue to improve its performance in this regard;

18. Notes that following an *ex post* control exercise carried in 2016, the Committee has a recurrent recommendation to update or establish written procedures; urges the Committee to make sure that that recommendation is duly followed up;
19. Notes that the average time for payment to the Committee's creditors has increased from 20 days in 2015 to 26 days in 2016; calls on the Committee, to improve the average payment time to its creditors as a matter of urgency, taking into account that payments need to be made within 30 days.