

Antonio Tajani
President of the European Parliament
European Parliament
Rue Wiertz
Altiero Spinelli 09B111
1047 Brussels

22 February 2017

Joint Statement of Sweden and The Netherlands on the discharge of the 2015 general budget of the European Union.

Dear Sir,

Please find enclosed a joint statement of Sweden and The Netherlands on the discharge to be given to the Commission in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2015. We hope that the European Parliament will take this statement, alongside the Council's wider recommendations, into full account when deliberating on this year's discharge procedure.



Magdalena Andersson
Minister for Finance
Sweden



Jeroen Dijsselbloem
Minister of Finance of
The Netherlands

Joint statement of Sweden and the Netherlands on the discharge of the 2015 general EU budget

With reference to:

- The European Court of Auditors' annual report on the implementation of the EU budget concerning the financial year 2015;
- Discharge to be given to the Commission in respect of the implementation of the EU budget for 2015;
- Council recommendation on the discharge to be given to the Commission in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2015;

Sweden and The Netherlands,

Appreciate that the overall estimated level of error has improved compared to last year, however, regret that for the 22nd consecutive year, the European Court of Auditors has been unable to grant an unqualified Statement of Assurance on the EU budget as a whole and that the error rate for expenditure remains significantly above the acceptable 2 % threshold.

Are of the view that further discussion needs to take place on how the EU-budget can be re-designed to better support overall political priorities, generate results and react to unforeseen challenges, and support the Commission's "Budget focused on Results" initiative in this regard;

For this purpose, call on the Commission to initiate a comprehensive spending-review with the aim to systematically evaluate each area in the EU-budget regarding their efficiency, the EU added value and the contribution towards overall EU-priorities ahead of the next multiannual financial framework.

Urge the Commission to continuously examine and identify those areas of spending in the EU-budget where sufficient results could not be achieved and to propose corrective action.

The findings from this exercise should be included in the Commission's report on the evaluation of the Union's finances based on the results achieved according to article 318 of the Treaty to ensure full transparency on action taken.

Point to the fact that the levels of error vary considerably between different expenditure areas and call on the Commission to follow up on the requirement of the Financial Regulation and on the Council Recommendations regarding the discharge of the general EU-budget of 2014, to provide an analysis of areas with persistently high levels of error according to article 32(5) of the financial regulation with the aim of significantly reducing errors in the most risk-prone programs. This analysis shall be made publicly available to ensure full transparency and accountability.

Strongly urge the Commission and Member States to identify further opportunities to simplify the complex rules and regulatory framework governing EU budget expenditure and delivery systems for shared management in order to improve compliance, as well as focussing on first level controls in order to help get payments right first the time; and

Strongly urge the Commission to preserve the unanimously agreed payment ceilings, in particular by: maintaining fiscal discipline in relation to commitments; effectively de-committing unused appropriations in order to make room for new priorities and programmes; increasing transparency by providing long-term forecasts, and ensuring a balance between commitments and payments.