# 2018 discharge: EU general budget, European Council and Council

2019/2057(DEC) - 13/05/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided by 643 votes to 37, with 11 abstentions, to postpone its decision on the discharge to the Secretary-General of the Council in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Council and of the Council for the financial year 2018.

In the resolution accompanying its discharge decision (adopted by 641 votes to 30, with 22 abstentions), the European Parliament made a series of observations:

***Budgetary and financial management***

Parliament noted that in 2018 the Council had a general budget of EUR 572 854 377 (compared to EUR 561 576 000 in 2017), with an overall implementation rate of 91.9% (compared to 93.8% in 2017). It praised the sound financial management and the prudence shown by the Council (the Council's budget had decreased from EUR 634 million in 2010 to EUR 573 million in 2018, a decrease of 9.63 %).

Appropriations carried over from 2018 to 2019 amounted to EUR 56 599 584, or 10.7 % (compared to EUR 60 576 175 in 2017, or 11.5 %), coming mainly from areas such as IT systems (EUR 18.3 million), buildings (EUR 16 million) and interpretation (EUR 11.9 million). Appropriations have been cancelled in 2018, amounting to EUR 46 348 862 (compared with EUR 35 025 789 in 2017). Members called on the Council to strengthen its efforts to avoid budget over-estimates.

Parliament 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. It called on the Council to separate the budget in that way for reasons of transparency and to improve accountability and expenditure efficiency for both institutions.

***Transparency***

Members regretted that the Council has still not joined the transparency register, despite two rounds of negotiations in 2018 under the Bulgarian Presidency and in 2019 under the Romanian Presidency on the proposal for a new Interinstitutional Agreement on a mandatory transparency register accessible in a machine-readable format to interest representatives of Parliament, the Council and the Commission. The Council was called on to join the register, to make a real commitment to the principles of transparency and accountability by taking concrete steps and to set an example by refusing to hold meetings with unregistered lobbyists.

The General Secretariat of the Council was called on to ensure that the ethics rules governing the President of the European Council are brought into line with those of the President of the Commission so that ‘revolving door’ rules apply for three years and formal approval is required for any new roles with a link to the activities of the Union.

Parliament reiterated its support for the recommendations of the Ombudsman on the transparency of legislative discussions in the preparatory bodies of the Council. It asked the Council to step up its transparency efforts by, *inter alia*, publishing Council legislative documents, having formal minute-taking of Council preparatory bodies to record Member State positions and publishing those minutes, and making available more trilogue documents in line with the Ombudsman’s recommendations.

Members expressed its deep concerns about the information reported by European media regarding the corporate sponsorship of Member States hosting the Union Presidency and echoes the concerns expressed by Union citizens and Members of Parliament on the matter.

***Future cooperation between Council and Parliament***

Parliament regretted the lack of cooperation from the Council in the discharge procedure which has resulted in Parliament’s refusal to grant discharge to the Secretary-General of the Council since the financial year 2009. It welcomed the Council's willingness to reach an agreement with Parliament on how to cooperate in the discharge process and stressed the need for a Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and Parliament in order to resolve the differences of views that still exist between the two institutions.

Members called on Parliament's new negotiating team to ensure that the agreement is fully consistent with the position approved in February 2020 by Parliament's Budgetary Control Committee.