2019 discharge: General budget of the EU - European Council and Council

2020/2142(DEC) - 14/04/2021 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Pascal DURAND (Renew Europe, FR) on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2019, 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 2019.

State of play in the refusal of discharge

Members recalled the difficulties repeatedly encountered in the discharge procedures to date due to a lack of cooperation from the Council and recalled that Parliament refused to grant discharge to the secretary-general of the Council in relation to the financial years 2009 to 2019.

They underlined the need to re-start negotiations with the Council with a view to reaching a mutually satisfactory agreement to finally overcome this situation of deadlock.

Separate budgets

Members regretted that the longstanding request to divide the budget of the European Council and the Council into a separate budget for each of the two institutions for transparency reasons and to improve accountability for both institutions has not been considered. They urged the Council, as it has done repeatedly in previous discharge resolutions, to prepare separate budgets for the European Council and the Council for reasons of transparency and to improve accountability and expenditure efficiency for both institutions.

Budgetary and financial management

The report observed that the Council’s budget is mostly administrative with a large part of it being used for expenditure in relation to persons, buildings, furniture, equipment and miscellaneous running costs.

The report noted that in 2019 the Council had an overall budget of EUR 581 895 459 (compared to EUR 572 854 377 in 2018), with a global implementation rate of 92.3 % (compared to 91.9 % in 2018).

The appropriations carried over from 2018 to 2019 amounted to a total of EUR 56 599 584, equivalent to a carry-over rate of 10.7 %, coming mainly from categories such as computer systems (EUR 19.5 million), buildings (EUR 16 million) and interpretation (EUR 11.9 million).

The implementation of carry-overs in 2019 amounted to payments in total of EUR 49 240 654 or 87.7 %.

Human resources

The number of posts in the establishment plan for 2019 was fixed at 3 033 (compared to 3 031 posts in 2018). Members called on the Council to tackle gender and geographical imbalances in order to establish a proper representation of nationals from all Member States, including at management level.

Transparency

The report noted that the Member States are expected to finance their own Council presidencies and regretted that they resort to corporate sponsorship to cover some of their expenses. Members are highly concerned about the possible reputational damage that this practice might cause to the Council and the EU. They urged that presidencies should avoid resorting to corporate sponsorship to cover expenses.