2020 discharge: General budget of the EU - European Economic and Social Committee

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PURPOSE: presentation by the Commission of the consolidated annual accounts of the European Union for the financial year 2020, as part of the 2020 discharge procedure.

Analysis of the accounts of the EU Institutions: European Economic and Social Committee

The consolidated annual accounts of the EU provide financial information on the activities of the institutions, agencies and other bodies of the EU from an accrual accounting and budgetary perspective. They are prepared according to the highest available international public sector standards.

The discharge is a Parliament decision that reflects its conclusions at the end of a process, the discharge procedure, on the way the Commission (and other institutions and bodies) has carried out its task of implementing the EU budget.

The decision is based in particular on the European Court of Auditors reports, in particular its annual report, in which the Court provides a Statement of Assurance (DAS) on the legality and regularity of transactions (payments and commitments).

Implementation of the Economic and Social Committee's appropriations for the financial year 2020

The total 2020 budget was **EUR 142.5 million**, of which EUR 130.9 million was spent or carried forward to 2021 as commitments. This equals a take-up rate of 91.8%, compared to 98.1% in 2019. This difference is mainly explained by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on EESC activities. The take-up of appropriations carried forward from 2019 to 2020 was slightly lower than in 2019: 79.2% (EUR 6.9 million) in 2020 as compared to 82.1% in 2019 (EUR 7.1 million).

The EESC's activities in 2020 were marked by:

- COVID-19: contingency plans were set up to allow the EESC's activities to continue under the exceptional circumstances, by proposing guiding principles such as setting-up adequate logistical support to allow remote meetings to be held, partly with simultaneous interpretation (via suitable videoconferencing tools), as well as providing reimbursement for participation in remote meetings under certain conditions and providing guidance on transfers of unused funds;

- significant leftovers mainly on the budget lines for members' travel costs and allowances, as well as on those covering interpretation, staff missions and the organisation of events and hearings, including catering related to these events;

- the EESC adopted a total of **131 opinions and reports**, including 19 exploratory opinions, 65 opinions on referral from the European Parliament and Council, 30 own-initiative opinions and 17 other opinions and reports.

- the preparation of a new management plan (2021-2025) defining five sets of values and five key strategic objectives that will steer the work of the general secretariat over the five-year period.