

2020 discharge: General budget of the EU - European External Action Service

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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 External Action Service

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 EEAS's appropriations for the financial year 2020

The initial budget for 2020 approved by Budget Authority was **EUR 731.1 million**, representing an increase of 5.2% compared to 2019. This amount was divided between:

- **budget headquarters: EUR 276.3 million:** 62.3% of this budget (EUR 172.1 million) was allocated to the payment of salaries and other entitlements of statutory and external staff. Other significant costs in the budget relate to buildings and associated costs (15% or EUR 42.2 million) and computer systems (including classified information systems), equipment and furniture with 18% or EUR 48.5 million;

- **budget delegations: EUR 454.7 million:** this amount was divided between EUR 132.3 million (29.1%) for remuneration and entitlements of statutory staff, EUR 79.4 million (17.5%) for external staff and outside services, EUR 33.9 million (7.5%) for other expenditure related to staff, EUR 162.6 million (35.7%) for buildings and associated costs and EUR 46.5 million (10.2%) for other administrative expenditure.

In addition to the EEAS's own budget, the EEAS also disposed of an amount of EUR 212.4 million (including assigned revenues and carried over amounts) of Commission money to cover the administrative costs of Commission staff working in EU Delegations.

The EEAS's activities in 2020 were marked by:

- the continuation of a challenging security environment affecting several areas of the work under civil unrest and political turmoil due to intensified conflicts or election processes;
- the COVID-19 pandemic which lead to a special situation for the entire Institution and impacted heavily the operations of the HQ and EU Delegations. The EEAS implemented the Joint Communication on the Global EU response to COVID-19 and the Team Europe package with Member States. It contributed to

addressing the urgent needs arising from the crisis through an emergency humanitarian response, support to the strengthening of health systems and research capacities, as well as to address the socio-economic consequences. By mobilising all existing cooperation programmes and redirecting existing financial resources, Team Europe has mobilised over EUR 38 billion in support to partner countries with over 50% of the funds disbursed in 2020. A particular focus was put on the most vulnerable partner countries and fragile populations, especially in the Neighbourhood, Africa and the Western Balkans, but also in the Middle East, parts of Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean;

- the EEAS contributing to the efforts at multilateral level. The EU used its convening power to secure funding and commitment across the world for universal access to prevention, diagnostic and treatment against COVID-19, including through the Coronavirus Global Response Pledging Conference. It pledged EUR 1.4 billion to this COVID-19 response pillar in the form of grants and guarantees. Team Europe contributed EUR 850 million to COVAX, the global vaccine initiative;

- the HR/VP supported the repatriation of stranded EU citizens. Coordinated by the EEAS and EU Delegations, more than 625 000 European nationals were repatriated between January and May 2020;

- an unprecedented disruption to the 2020 budget execution caused by the pandemic;

- the EU Delegation to China organising the voluntary evacuation of non-essential expatriate staff and / or their family members;

- the EEAS withdrew evacuation decisions in Iraq, Haiti and Afghanistan after significant reinforcements of these Delegations' security.