

2022 discharge: General budget of the EU - European External Action Service

2023/2134(DEC) - 11/04/2024 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided, by 532 votes to 69, with 3 abstentions, to grant the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European External Action Service for the financial year 2022.

In its resolution, adopted by 419 votes to 153 with 19 abstentions, Parliament made the following observations:

The EEAS's budget of approximately **EUR 1.1 billion** represents around 9.4 % of the total administrative expenditure. Members noted that 14 of the 60 transactions contained errors but that the Court, based on the five errors which were quantified, estimate the level of error to be below the materiality threshold.

Budgetary and financial management

The budget for 2022 for the EEAS was **EUR 786 947 220**, representing an increase of 2.5 % from 2021. The EEAS also received additional contributions to cover common costs of European Development Fund staff in Delegations and other amounts bringing the total available budget for the EEAS (in commitment appropriations) to **EUR 1 143.6 million**, which represents an increase of 4.8 % from 2020. Members regretted that the EEAS administrative budget for 2022 was underbudgeted despite the important role of the institution for the early 2022 broader international context and the increased costs that implied.

The final budget for the EEAS HQ after transfers amounted to **EUR 308.1 million** in 2022, which represents an increase of 4.4 % from 2021, whereas the final budget for the EEAS delegations after transfers amounted to EUR 478.9 million in 2022, which represents an increase of 1.3 % from 2021.

Members noted with concern that the EEAS reports that the 2022 budget was especially challenging due to new tasks and increasing running costs. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine created budgetary pressures for the EEAS, including through rising inflation and salary adjustments. The resolution stressed the importance of establishing a robust and secure financial foundation for the EEAS, emphasising its pivotal role in effectively executing the Union's common security and foreign policy.

The total paid mission costs for the EEAS was EUR 24.065 million in 2022, which represents a significant increase from EUR 6.128 million in 2021. It called on the EEAS to inform Parliament about how many times the High Representative/Vice President travelled with commercial planes and how many times charter planes were used.

Internal management, performance and internal control

During 2022, the exceptional measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic were phased out and the institutions started to resume functioning normally. Members stressed , however, that the EEAS was affected by the Russian war of aggression on Ukraine as well as security crises in Afghanistan, Haiti and Sahel.

Members welcomed that as a response to the different crises during the last couple of years, the EEAS created the Crisis Response Centre in July 2022.

Procurement and recruitment procedures organised by Union Delegations continue to be a cause for concern. The report stressed that while certain flexibility might be justifiable, the differences between deadlines and rules for each of the host country might lead to further errors and inconsistencies in procurement procedures. It called on the EEAS to adopt necessary measures to ensure that the number of errors by Union delegations is reduced and report to Parliament about measures adopted.

Human resources

By the end of 2022, there were **5 188 people** employed by the EEAS, out of which 2 419 (46.6 %) were posted at the EEAS HQ and 2 769 (53.4 %) worked in Union Delegations and Offices, which represents an increase of 2.3 % from 5072 people working in the EEAS at the end of 2021 with 2 303 at the HQ and 2 769 in Delegations and Offices.

At the end of 2022, out of 1 715 officials and temporary agents, 881 (51.4 %) were men and 834 (48.6 %) were women, which represents a slight increase from 2021. Members noted that women are notably underrepresented in senior positions.

The resolution welcomed that all Member States are represented in the members of staff of the EEAS. It noted however that significant imbalances still persist with 25 Member States represented in all staff categories. Members regretted that the amount of Ambassador posts held by Member States that joined in 2004 or later (EU13) decreased to 17 % in 2022, compared to 18 % in 2021. Members welcomed that, during 2022, the EEAS intensified its efforts and launched a number of initiatives to raise awareness about harassment.

Members welcomed that the Commission and the HR/VP, in response to the calls from Parliament, has adopted a Gender Action Plan for 2021-2025 as a cross-cutting measure for all aspects of foreign policy as a first step towards a genuine feminist diplomacy. The expressed concern about the global status of LGBTIQ+ rights and the growing resistance to women's rights, gender equality, and sexual and reproductive health and rights in developing countries. The Commission and the EEAS are asked to address setbacks in recognising and protecting these rights.

Ethical framework and transparency

The EEAS plays an important role in EU legislation in relation to sanctions decisions and the negotiation of international trade agreements, which have considerable regulatory impact. Members should therefore consider it appropriate for the EEAS to join the **EU's transparency register**, on the basis of a service level agreement. They called on the EEAS, in the interests of transparency, to publish a list of all meetings held with interest groups of any kind, including those attended by heads of EU delegations. The EEAS should also monitor the positions held by former senior managers and Heads of Delegation and systematically review potentially problematic transitions to the private sector or to third country organisations.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the situation in Gaza

Parliament highlighted the key role of the EEAS and especially of its Delegations in the context of the geopolitical impact of the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the resulting need to support partner countries around the world and strengthen global alliances. It called for more efficient use of available resources to be introduced to avoid putting the Union's effectiveness at risk on the international scene.

Members are extremely concerned about the continued engagement of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán with the Russian President despite Union sanctions and an International Criminal Court arrest warrant for war crimes. They invited him, against this backdrop, to report to Parliament on his consideration of the Hungarian Prime Minister's policy vis à vis Russia. Members welcomed that the HR

/VP convened an extraordinary Foreign Affairs Council on 10 October shortly after the horrific Hamas terror attack on Israel. They also took note that the European Council established a common position on the situation in Israel and Palestine at its extraordinary meeting on 17 October 2023 including an action plan with several work strands.

Concerned by speculation that European taxpayers' money could be used by Hamas, rather than benefiting the Palestinian civilian population, Members noted with satisfaction that the review of EU aid to Palestine has shown that there is no evidence to date that funds have been diverted from their intended purpose. As regards the serious allegations by Israel that 12 UNRWA employees may have been involved in acts of terrorism, Parliament noted that UNRWA immediately terminated the contracts of the employees in question, launched a UN investigation and appointed an independent review group. Members noted the continued monitoring by the EEAS to prevent the misuse of EU funds by terrorist organisations such as Hamas, while recalling the irreplaceable role of UNRWA in the humanitarian response in Gaza.

Recalling that the consequences of **climate change** undermine global peace and security, while exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and inequalities and threatening human rights, Parliament urged the Commission and the EEAS to develop and implement a strong EU climate diplomacy.

Lastly, Parliament warned that 129 cyberattacks on the EEAS were confirmed in 2022. It invited the EEAS to continue to have a strong focus on cybersecurity and hybrid threats.