

# Discharge 2024: General budget of the EU - European Council and Council

2025/2147(DEC) - 29/04/2026 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided, by 432 votes to 160, with 65 abstentions, to **refuse to grant 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 2024.

## *State of play*

Parliament deeply regrets that since 2009 and again for the financial year 2024, Parliament has had to **refuse discharge** to the Council because the Council continues to refuse to cooperate with Parliament on the discharge procedure despite Parliament's repeated efforts to establish constructive cooperation, thereby preventing Parliament from taking an informed decision based on a serious and thorough scrutiny of the implementation of the Council's budget. It stressed that, while the current situation has to be improved through better interinstitutional cooperation within the framework of the Treaties, a revision of the Treaties could make the discharge procedure clearer and more transparent by giving Parliament the explicit competence to grant discharge to all Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies individually. However, pending such a review, the current situation must be improved through enhanced inter-institutional cooperation. Parliament urged in this sense the Council to actively engage with Parliament.

## *Political priorities*

The resolution recalled that in 2024 the Union agreed to provide predictable financial support to Ukraine through the Ukraine Facility for 2024–2027. In this context, the Council and the Secretariat have a heightened responsibility to ensure transparency, integrity and sound financial management in all Council-related administrative spending connected to Ukraine-related decision-making, meetings and logistical arrangements, including clear reporting of related costs and contract management.

Parliament regretted that the Council exerts its prerogative in the nomination and appointment procedures for many Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies, without taking into account the views of interested parties or the recommendations of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). In this regard, the Council has repeatedly disregarded Parliament's recommendations in its consultative role regarding the appointment of the members of the Court. This practice may limit the extent to which the professional qualifications of candidates are checked.

In addition, Parliament also regretted that the participation of the Member States' Permanent Representatives in the mandatory transparency register is completely voluntary as the application of the conditionality principle is left to the discretion of each Member State's Permanent Representation. Only a limited number of Member States and the Union institutions abide by the best practice of applying a mandatory broad-scope definition of lobbyist in their regulatory framework. Members insisted that all Permanent Representations should take an **active part in the mandatory transparency register** before, during and after their Member State's Council presidency.

Parliament reaffirmed its call for the creation of a **Council of Defence Ministers** as an institutional forum for political and strategic coordination. It considered that a permanent and dedicated Council configuration on defence would reflect the need for the Union to assume greater responsibility for its own security and defence, complementing the establishment of a Security and Defence Committee in Parliament and a Commissioner for Defence and Space in the Commission.

Furthermore, the resolution called on the rotating Council Presidencies to stop using **corporate sponsorship** to contribute to covering their expenses as this entails a risk of creating conflicts of interest.

### *Separate budget*

Once again, Parliament reiterated its regret that the budget of the European Council and the Council has not been divided into two clearly separated budgets as recommended by Parliament in previous discharge resolutions in order to improve transparency and accountability.

### *Improved decision-making*

Parliament regretted that the decision-making process in the Council is still far from fully transparent, which affects citizens' trust in the Union as a transparent entity and thereby jeopardises the reputation of the Union as a whole. It recalled that the CJEU underlined that clearer legislative transparency would be needed from the Council in order to ensure access to legislative documents, simply corresponding to the Council's obligation in terms of public scrutiny and accountability of the co-legislators as the basis of any democratic legitimacy.

### *Interinstitutional cooperation*

The Council is called on to resume negotiations at the highest level to resolve the longstanding discharge impasse. Parliament requested the Commission and the Council Legal Service to provide a legal opinion on potential Treaty-based solutions to enforce Council accountability in the discharge procedure.