Basic information

2019/2057(DEC) DEC - Discharge procedure	Procedure completed
2018 discharge: EU general budget, European Council and Council **Subject** 8.70.03.08 2018 discharge	

Key players

European Parliament	**Committee responsible**	**Rapporteur**	**Appointed**
	CONT Budgetary Control	ZDECHOVSKÝ Tomáš (EPP)	03/06/2020
European Commission	**Commission DG**	**Commissioner**	
	Budget	OETTINGER Günther	

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
27/06/2019	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2019)0316	
18/09/2019	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
19/02/2020	Vote in committee		
02/03/2020	Committee report tabled for plenary	A9-0038/2020	
13/05/2020	Decision by Parliament	T9-0090/2020	Summary
13/05/2020	Results of vote in Parliament		
13/05/2020	Report referred back to committee		
14/05/2020	Results of vote in Parliament		
15/05/2020	Results of vote in Parliament		
01/10/2020	Vote in committee		
13/10/2020	Committee report tabled for plenary	A9-0189/2020	
19/10/2020	Results of vote in Parliament		
20/10/2020	Decision by Parliament	T9-0271/2020	Summary

20/10/2020	Results of vote in Parliament		
21/10/2020	Results of vote in Parliament		
22/10/2020	Results of vote in Parliament		
23/10/2020	Results of vote in Parliament		
14/12/2020	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2019/2057(DEC)
Procedure type	DEC - Discharge procedure
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 165
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	CONT/9/03070 CONT/9/00981

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee opinion	AFCO	PE642.907	09/12/2019	
Committee draft report		PE639.828	11/12/2019	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE645.089	30/01/2020	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A9-0038/2020	02/03/2020	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T9-0090/2020	13/05/2020	Summary
Committee draft report		PE653.749	07/07/2020	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE657.304	10/09/2020	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A9-0189/2020	13/10/2020	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T9-0271/2020	20/10/2020	Summary

Council of the EU

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Supplementary non-legislative basic document	05760/1/2020	17/02/2020	

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2019)0316	27/06/2019	

Additional information		
Source	**Document**	**Date**
European Commission	EUR-Lex	

Final act
Budget 2020/2044 OJ L 420 14.12.2020, p. 0013

2018 discharge: EU general budget, European Council and Council

2019/2057(DEC) - 13/05/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided by 643 votes to 37, with 11 abstentions, to postpone its decision on the discharge to the Secretary-General of the Council in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Council and of the Council for the financial year 2018.

In the resolution accompanying its discharge decision (adopted by 641 votes to 30, with 22 abstentions), the European Parliament made a series of observations:

Budgetary and financial management

Parliament noted that in 2018 the Council had a general budget of EUR 572 854 377 (compared to EUR 561 576 000 in 2017), with an overall implementation rate of 91.9% (compared to 93.8% in 2017). It praised the sound financial management and the prudence shown by the Council (the Council's budget had decreased from EUR 634 million in 2010 to EUR 573 million in 2018, a decrease of 9.63 %).

Appropriations carried over from 2018 to 2019 amounted to EUR 56 599 584, or 10.7 % (compared to EUR 60 576 175 in 2017, or 11.5 %), coming mainly from areas such as IT systems (EUR 18.3 million), buildings (EUR 16 million) and interpretation (EUR 11.9 million). Appropriations have been cancelled in 2018, amounting to EUR 46 348 862 (compared with EUR 35 025 789 in 2017). Members called on the Council to strengthen its efforts to avoid budget over-estimates.

Parliament regretted that the request to separate the budget of the European Council and the Council into one budget for each institution, made by Parliament in previous discharge resolutions, has not been considered. It called on the Council to separate the budget in that way for reasons of transparency and to improve accountability and expenditure efficiency for both institutions.

Transparency

Members regretted that the Council has still not joined the transparency register, despite two rounds of negotiations in 2018 under the Bulgarian Presidency and in 2019 under the Romanian Presidency on the proposal for a new Interinstitutional Agreement on a mandatory transparency register accessible in a machine-readable format to interest representatives of Parliament, the Council and the Commission. The Council was called on to join the register, to make a real commitment to the principles of transparency and accountability by taking concrete steps and to set an example by refusing to hold meetings with unregistered lobbyists.

The General Secretariat of the Council was called on to ensure that the ethics rules governing the President of the European Council are brought into line with those of the President of the Commission so that ‘revolving door’ rules apply for three years and formal approval is required for any new roles with a link to the activities of the Union.

Parliament reiterated its support for the recommendations of the Ombudsman on the transparency of legislative discussions in the preparatory bodies of the Council. It asked the Council to step up its transparency efforts by, *inter alia*, publishing Council legislative documents, having formal minute-taking of Council preparatory bodies to record Member State positions and publishing those minutes, and making available more trilogue documents in line with the Ombudsman’s recommendations.

Members expressed its deep concerns about the information reported by European media regarding the corporate sponsorship of Member States hosting the Union Presidency and echoes the concerns expressed by Union citizens and Members of Parliament on the matter.

Future cooperation between Council and Parliament

Parliament regretted the lack of cooperation from the Council in the discharge procedure which has resulted in Parliament’s refusal to grant discharge to the Secretary-General of the Council since the financial year 2009. It welcomed the Council's willingness to reach an agreement with Parliament on

how to cooperate in the discharge process and stressed the need for a Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and Parliament in order to resolve the differences of views that still exist between the two institutions.

Members called on Parliament's new negotiating team to ensure that the agreement is fully consistent with the position approved in February 2020 by Parliament's Budgetary Control Committee.

2018 discharge: EU general budget, European Council and Council

2019/2057(DEC) - 20/10/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided by 657 votes to 26, with 4 abstentions, to refuse to grant the Secretary-General discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2018, Section II – European Council and Council.

In its resolution accompanying the decision on discharge, Parliament recalled that the European Council and the Council, as Union institutions, should be democratically accountable to all the citizens of the Union for the funds entrusted to them to perform their duties. However, for the past 10 years the Council has refused to cooperate in the discharge procedure and thus forced the Parliament to refuse to grant discharge.

The decision whether to grant discharge for 2018 was postponed in May 2020 similar to what was done in previous years.

Lack of respect and trust

Parliament stressed that this state of affairs is not tenable for either institution: for the Council because no positive decision on the implementation of its budget has been granted since 2009, and for Parliament because it shows a lack of respect for Parliament's role as discharge authority and guarantor of the transparency and democratic accountability of the budget of the Union.

If this situation continues, it shall damage public trust in the financial management of the Union institutions.

Lack of communication

Parliament repeatedly encounters difficulties in receiving answers from the Council due to a lack of cooperation, resulting in the refusal to grant discharge for more than 10 years. It recalled that effective control of the Union’s budget implementation requires loyal cooperation among the institutions. Members recalled the wish of Parliament to start negotiations with the Council with a view to reach a mutually satisfactory agreement to finally overcome this situation of deadlock. The Council is invited to suggest an appropriate date to start negotiations.

Budget separation and transparency

As regards the budget, Parliament insisted that the budget of the European Council and the budget of the Council be separated in order to contribute to more transparency, accountability and efficiency with respect to the expenditure for both institutions as recommended by Parliament in many of its discharge resolutions over the last years.

Parliament also regretted that the Council has not joined the transparent register scheme for lobbyists which also leads to a lack of trust in the Union decision-making process.

Parliament emphasised the importance of allowing citizens to follow the legislative process of the Union easily. It called on the Council to step up its transparency efforts by, *inter alia*, publishing Council legislative documents including minutes of working group meetings and trilogues and other milestone working documents in line with the European Ombudsman’s recommendations.

Once again, Members expressed their deep concerns about the corporate sponsorship of Member States hosting the Union Presidency and echoed the concerns expressed by Union citizens and Members on the matter. It strongly recommended the Council to envisage the budgetisation of Presidencies.