Basic information

2020/2145(DEC) DEC - Discharge procedure	Procedure completed
2019 discharge: General budget of the EU - European Economic and Social Committee **Subject** 8.70.03.09 2019 discharge	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
CONT Budgetary Control	CHASTEL Olivier (Renew)	10/07/2020
	Shadow rapporteur LENAERS Jeroen (EPP) GARCÍA MUÑOZ Isabel (S&D) PEKSA Mikuláš (Greens/EFA) CZARNECKI Ryszard (ECR) FLANAGAN Luke Ming (GUE/NGL)	

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
AFET Foreign Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
DEVE Development	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
INTA International Trade	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
BUDG Budgets	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
ECON Economic and Monetary Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
EMPL Employment and Social Affairs		

		The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
	ENVI Environment, Public Health and Food Safety	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
	ITRE Industry, Research and Energy	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
	IMCO Internal Market and Consumer Protection	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
	TRAN Transport and Tourism	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
	REGI Regional Development	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
	AGRI Agriculture and Rural Development	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
	PECH Fisheries	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
	CULT Culture and Education	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
	JURI Legal Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
	LIBE Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
	AFCO Constitutional Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
	FEMM Women's Rights and Gender Equality	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
	PETI Petitions	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	

European Commission	**Commission DG**	**Commissioner**

Budget	HAHN Johannes

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
29/07/2020	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2020)0288	
15/09/2020	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
01/03/2021	Vote in committee		
25/03/2021	Committee report tabled for plenary	A9-0057/2021	Summary
27/04/2021	Debate in Parliament		
28/04/2021	Decision by Parliament	T9-0169/2021	Summary
24/09/2021	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2020/2145(DEC)
Procedure type	DEC - Discharge procedure
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	CONT/9/03789

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE657.242	20/01/2021	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE680.757	08/02/2021	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A9-0057/2021	25/03/2021	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T9-0169/2021	28/04/2021	Summary

Council of the EU

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Supplementary non-legislative basic document	05792/2021	05/02/2021	

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2020)0288	29/07/2020	

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

Final act
Budget 2021/1552 OJ L 340 24.09.2021, p. 0140

2019 discharge: General budget of the EU - European Economic and Social Committee

2020/2145(DEC) - 25/03/2021 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Olivier CHASTEL (Renew Europe, BE) calling on the European Parliament to grant discharge to the Secretary-General of the European Economic and Social Committee discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Economic and Social Committee for the financial year 2019.

Members welcomed the conclusion of the Court of Auditors, according to which the payments as a whole for the year ended on 31 December 2019 for administrative and other expenditure of the European Economic and Social Committee were free from material error. No significant weaknesses were identified in respect of the audited topics relating to human resources and procurement.

Budgetary and financial management

In 2019, the Committee's budget amounted to EUR 138 502 768 (compared to EUR 135 630 905 in 2018) with an implementation rate of 98.1 % (compared to 98,7 % in 2018). Members welcomed the fact that the implementation rate of appropriations carried forward from 2018 to 2019 was 82.1 % as compared to 77.5 % for appropriations carried forward from 2017 to 2018.

Regarding travel expenses, Members regretted that the Committee's bureau in 2020 adopted a decision allowing for the reimbursement of expenses for remote participation in cases where a member was prevented from travelling to Brussels as a result of COVID-19 related issues. They called on the Committee to withdraw this decision, which is not proportionate to the real cost of participation, represents a considerable loss for the Union budget and damages the reputation of the Committee.

Human resources

Members noted that the establishment plan indicates 668 posts in 2019, the same as in 2018. The total number of staff employed was 702 on 31 December 2019 (compared to 705 in 2018). Gender balance among the Committee's managerial staff reached parity in 2018 and remains relatively stable. The Committee is asked to report to the discharge authority on the concrete achievements of the action plan for equal opportunities and diversity, in particular on the results of the measures taken as regards strengthening diversity and making the Committee a more inclusive workplace for persons with disabilities.

Serious concern was expressed about the public disquiet caused by certain recruitment procedures used by the Committee.

Internal management

Members noted with concern that the Committee's total annual budget has increased from EUR 108 000 000 in 2006 to more than EUR 138 000 000 in 2019 while the overall number of opinions and reports produced by the Committee has decreased significantly (from 215 in 2018 to 127 in 2019). They understand that the reduction in opinions delivered may be connected to the electoral cycle but is concerned about the raise of the cost per opinion (EUR 1.1 million in 2019 compared to EUR 630 000 in 2018), and express concerns about the outsourcing to external companies of reporting work.

The report noted with concern that out of the 127 opinions and reports, only 55 were own-initiative opinions. The Committee is encouraged to increase its efforts to achieve a higher profile for its opinions.

On the other hand, the Committee is congratulated on the fact that in 2019 it had the highest take-up of e-invoices, in both absolute and relative terms, of all Union bodies.

Refusal of discharge in 2018, harassment and whistle blowing

Members recalled that several members of staff suffered acts of psychological harassment by the then president of Group I over a long period of time. They regretted that the anti-harassment measures in place in the Committee failed to tackle and remedy this case sooner because of the senior position of the member concerned. They also recalled that Parliament refused to grant the Committee's secretary-general discharge in respect of the financial year 2018, among other reasons on the ground of a flagrant breach of the duty of care and the lack of action by the administration, along with the financial consequences.

Even during the 2018 and part of the 2019 discharge procedures, the secretary-general was unable to provide sufficient, transparent and reliable information to Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control.

2019 discharge: General budget of the EU - European Economic and Social Committee

2020/2145(DEC) - 28/04/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament by 484 votes to 209, with 5 abstentions, to grant discharge to the Secretary-General of the European Economic and Social Committee discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Economic and Social Committee for the financial year 2019.

Members welcomed the conclusion of the Court of Auditors, according to which the payments as a whole for the year ended on 31 December 2019 for administrative and other expenditure of the European Economic and Social Committee were free from material error. No significant weaknesses were identified in respect of the audited topics relating to human resources and procurement.

Budgetary and financial management

In 2019, the Committee’s budget amounted to EUR 138 502 768 (compared to EUR 135 630 905 in 2018) with an implementation rate of 98.1 % (compared to 98,7 % in 2018). Members welcomed the fact that the implementation rate of appropriations carried forward from 2018 to 2019 was 82.1 % as compared to 77.5 % for appropriations carried forward from 2017 to 2018.

Regarding travel expenses, Members regretted that the Committee’s bureau in 2020 adopted a decision allowing for the reimbursement of expenses for remote participation in cases where a member was prevented from travelling to Brussels as a result of COVID-19 related issues. They called on the Committee to withdraw this decision, which is not proportionate to the real cost of participation, represents a considerable loss for the Union budget and damages the reputation of the Committee.

While stressing the importance of the Committee's role, Members expressed concern about the impact of its work.

Human resources

Members noted that the establishment plan indicates 668 posts in 2019, the same as in 2018. The total number of staff employed was 702 on 31 December 2019 (compared to 705 in 2018). Gender balance among the Committee's managerial staff reached parity in 2018 and remains relatively stable even though the new political leadership of the Committee does not reflect this trend with only one out of seven section presidents and none of the three group presidents being women.

The Committee is asked to report to the discharge authority on the concrete achievements of the action plan for equal opportunities and diversity, in particular on the results of the measures taken as regards strengthening diversity and making the Committee a more inclusive workplace for persons with disabilities.

Members encouraged the Committee to complement the introduction of flexible working arrangements with a protection of the staff members’ right to disconnect.

Serious concern was expressed about the public disquiet caused by certain recruitment procedures used by the Committee.

Internal management

Members noted with concern that the Committee’s total annual budget has increased from EUR 108 000 000 in 2006 to more than EUR 138 000 000 in 2019 while the overall number of opinions and reports produced by the Committee has decreased significantly (from 215 in 2018 to 127 in 2019). They understand that the reduction in opinions delivered may be connected to the electoral cycle but is concerned about the raise of the cost per opinion (EUR 1.1 million in 2019 compared to EUR 630 000 in 2018), and express concerns about the outsourcing to external companies of reporting work.

Out of the 127 opinions and reports, only 55 were own-initiative opinions. The Committee is encouraged to increase its efforts to achieve a higher profile for its opinions.

Parliament welcomed the fact that the Committee followed Parliament’s recommendation made in recent resolutions to ask for an increased budget share for IT costs (up to 4.5 % of the total budget compared to 3 % in 2018). In the long run, the figure of 4.5 % should ideally increase to 6 %.

On the other hand, the Committee is congratulated on the fact that in 2019 it had the highest take-up of e-invoices, in both absolute and relative terms, of all Union bodies.

The Committee was asked to develop a comprehensive plan for sustainable development.

Institutional cooperation

Members called for continued efforts to strengthen political cooperation between the Committee and the Parliament. They also noted that the new service level agreement launched in 2019 between the Parliament and the Committee allows the Committee to benefit from the Parliament's interpretation services (for which payment will be made) when using the Parliament's premises for its meetings.

Noting the current cooperation arrangements between the Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the Committee, Members called on the Committee to identify further potential synergies and savings and other areas in which back-office functions could be shared.

Refusal of discharge in 2018, harassment and whistle blowing

Members recalled that several members of staff suffered acts of psychological harassment by the then president of Group I over a long period of time. They regretted that the anti-harassment measures in place in the Committee failed to tackle and remedy this case sooner because of the senior position of the member concerned. They also recalled that Parliament refused to grant the Committee's secretary-general discharge in respect of the financial year 2018, among other reasons on the ground of a flagrant breach of the duty of care and the lack of action by the administration, along with the financial consequences.

During the 2018 and part of the 2019 discharge procedures, the secretary-general was unable to provide sufficient, transparent and reliable information to Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control.

Parliament expressed its deep concern that in April 2021 the EESC is still failing in its duty of care towards the victims of harassment and grave misconduct given the fact it only concluded settlement agreements with two out of the four victims and has not yet published the public apology it promised.