Basic information

2020/2149(DEC) DEC - Discharge procedure	Procedure completed
2019 discharge: General budget of the EU - European External Action Service **Subject** 8.70.03.09 2019 discharge	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
CONT Budgetary Control	MITUȚA Alin (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	ANDROULAKIS Nikos (S&D)	10/09/2020
DEVE Development	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
AFCO Constitutional Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	

European Commission

Commission DG	Commissioner
Budget	HAHN Johannes

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
29/06/2020	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2020)0288	
15/09/2020	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
01/03/2021	Vote in committee		
26/03/2021	Committee report tabled for plenary	A9-0063/2021	Summary
27/04/2021	Debate in Parliament		
28/04/2021	Decision by Parliament	T9-0173/2021	Summary
24/09/2021	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2020/2149(DEC)
Procedure type	DEC - Discharge procedure
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	CONT/9/03852

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE655.988	15/12/2020	
Committee opinion	AFET	PE660.190	27/01/2021	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE680.753	05/02/2021	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A9-0063/2021	26/03/2021	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T9-0173/2021	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	29/06/2020	

Additional information

Source	Document	Date
European Commission	EUR-Lex	

Final act
Budget 2021/1560 OJ L 340 24.09.2021, p. 0176

2019 discharge: General budget of the EU - European External Action Service

2020/2149(DEC) - 28/04/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided by 606 votes to 85, with 7 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 (EEAS) for the financial year 2019.

Members noted with satisfaction that no specific issues were identified in the sample of transactions concerning the European External Action Service (EEAS) for the third consecutive year. The Court did not identify material levels of error in the EEAS annual activity report.

Budgetary and financial management

Parliament acknowledged the operational difficulties encountered by the EEAS in the financial management of the EU Network of Delegations due to various crisis situations. It called on the EEAS to inform the Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control promptly on the budgetary impacts and expenses incurred because of the pandemic.

The total budget of the EEAS for 2019 amounted to EUR 694.8 million (an increase of 2.4 % compared to 2018) split as follows: EUR 249.7 million for EEAS headquarters and EUR 445.1 million for the Delegations. A contribution of EUR 215.8 million was transferred by the Commission to cover the administrative costs of the Commission's staff working in the Union's delegations.

For the EEAS budget year 2019, the main orientations were a budgetary reinforcement to deal with the UK's withdrawal from the EU, the strengthening of regional security officers and delegation networks, the deployment of additional staff for the EU Military Staff (EUMS) and the Crisis Management and Planning Directorate (CMPD), information technology capacity and secure communications.

Members called on the EEAS to ensure that the EU delegation in the UK has a permanent and stable status in accordance with the treaties and that it has the necessary human and material resources to carry out its tasks, including compliance monitoring.

Parliament welcomed the overall improvement in the implementation of the EEAS budget for 2019 with a commitment implementation rate of 99.94% (compared to 99.9% in 2018) and a payment implementation rate of 87.9% (compared to 84.8% in 2018).

Members stressed the importance of simplifying and modernising the financial and administrative management of the EEAS.

Control effectiveness as regards legality and regularity

Parliament noted the rate of anomalies detected in ex ante verifications of commitments and payments (respectively, 308 errors out of 1193, and 394 out of 2119). In both cases the errors are of an administrative nature i.e. incorrect amounts for commitments or a lack of supporting documents for payments presented for ex-ante financial verification.

The EEAS should investigate and resolve cases of administrative errors and report back to the Parliament on its achievements.

Human resources

Noting the EEAS's vital role in ensuring the coherence of the EU's foreign policy, Members called for sufficient human resources to be made available in order to not put at risk the Union's effectiveness on the international scene. Necessary resources are need for a successful implementation of an efficient EU common security and defence policy.

Regarding the overall increase in the number of contractual staff from 322 to 444 (a 38% increase) between 2012 and 2018, Parliament supported the EEAS's efforts to strengthen its administration and asked the EEAS to report to Parliament's Budgetary Control Committee on the results and impact of the increase in contractual staff.

The EEAS is invited to strengthen the Union's delegations in the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkan countries and to create local reporting posts to improve the Union's understanding of its neighbours and to enable them to move closer to the Union's acquis.

Parliament noted with satisfaction the upward trend in the proportion of women in senior positions (30.3% compared to 27.1% in 2018 and 24.5% in 2017).

Geographical imbalances in the composition of the EEAS staff are a recurrent issue and should be addressed.

Strategic communication activities

Parliament welcomed the strengthening of the EEAS' strategic communication capacity to combat disinformation and hybrid threats through the establishment of three task forces for Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans and Southern Europe, and the participation of the EEAS in the early warning system established in the EU institutions and the Member States. It called on the EEAS to further develop this policy with the Parliament's new special committee on foreign interference in order to refine its capacity response.

Members called for the creation of strategic communication task forces specifically dedicated to interference from China and the Middle East, in particular Iran. Strategic communication should also focus on combating disinformation about the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ethical framework and conflicts of interest

Parliament called on the EEAS to increase awareness of its ethical framework and culture among its staff. It called on the EEAS to apply the Staff Regulations effectively and consistently in order to prevent conflicts of interest, including, but not limited to, senior officials and seconded national experts (SNEs).

2019 discharge: General budget of the EU - European External Action Service

2020/2149(DEC) - 26/03/2021 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Alin MITUȚA (Renew Europe, RO) calling on the European Parliament 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 (EEAS) for the financial year 2019.

Members noted with satisfaction that no specific issues were identified in the sample of transactions concerning the European External Action Service (EEAS) for the third consecutive year. The Court did not identify material levels of error in the EEAS annual activity report.

Budgetary and financial management

The report acknowledged the operational difficulties encountered by the EEAS in the financial management of the EU Network of Delegations due to various crisis situations.

The EEAS is asked to inform the Parliament’s Committee on Budgetary Control promptly on the budgetary impacts and expenses incurred because of the pandemic.

The report noted that the total budget of the EEAS for 2019 amounted to EUR 694.8 million (an increase of 2.4 % compared to 2018) split as follows: EUR 249.7 million for EEAS headquarters and EUR 445.1 million for the Delegations.

The main budgetary trends in 2019 concern, *inter alia*, reinforcement to deal with the impact of the UK’s withdrawal from the EU. Members called on the EEAS to ensure that the Union Delegation to the United Kingdom has a permanent and stable status consistent with the Treaties and that it is provided with the human and material resources to carry out its tasks, in particular with regard to monitoring of compliance.

The headquarters’ budget amounted to approximately EUR 250 million, of which EUR 161.8 million (64.8 %) concerned the payment of salaries and other entitlements of statutory and external staff, EUR 32 million (3 %) were for buildings and associated costs, and EUR 35.3 million (14 %) related to IT computer systems including classified information systems, equipment and furniture.

Members stressed the importance of simplifying and modernising the EEAS’s financial and administrative management.

Control effectiveness as regards legality and regularity

The report noted the rate of anomalies detected in *ex ante* verifications of commitments and payments (respectively, 308 errors out of 1193, and 394 out of 2119). In both cases the errors are of an administrative nature i.e. incorrect amounts for commitments or a lack of supporting documents for payments presented for ex-ante financial verification.

The EEAS should investigate and resolve cases of administrative errors and report back to the Parliament on its achievements.

Human Resources

Noting the EEAS’s vital role in ensuring the coherence of the EU’s foreign policy, Members called for sufficient human resources to be made available in order to not put at risk the Union’s effectiveness on the international scene. Necessary resources are need for a successful implementation of an efficient EU common security and defence policy.

Geographical imbalances in the composition of the EEAS staff are a recurrent issue and should be addressed.

Working environment

The report noted that there is an increase in cases reported to the mediation service concerning either unsolved disagreements around rights and obligations or different kinds of conflict at work, reaching 183 cases in 2019 (compared to 135 cases in 2018).