Basic information

2021/2113(DEC) DEC - Discharge procedure	Procedure completed
2020 discharge: General budget of the EU - European Ombudsman **Subject** 8.70.03.10 2020 discharge	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
CONT Budgetary Control	GARCÍA MUÑOZ Isabel (S&D)	12/07/2021
	Shadow rapporteur LENAERS Jeroen (EPP) CHASTEL Olivier (Renew) PEKSA Mikuláš (Greens/EFA) KUHS Joachim (ID) FLANAGAN Luke Ming (The Left)	

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
30/06/2021	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2021)0381	Summary
14/09/2021	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
28/02/2022	Vote in committee		
20/04/2022	Committee report tabled for plenary	A9-0068/2022	
04/05/2022	Decision by Parliament	T9-0151/2022	Summary
04/05/2022	Debate in Parliament		
05/10/2022	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2021/2113(DEC)
Procedure type	DEC - Discharge procedure
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 165
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	CONT/9/06606

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE699.018	17/12/2021	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE703.198	01/02/2022	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A9-0068/2022	20/04/2022	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T9-0151/2022	04/05/2022	Summary

Council of the EU

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Supplementary non-legislative basic document	06001/2022	03/03/2022	

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2021)0381	30/06/2021	Summary

Other institutions and bodies

Institution/body	Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
CofA	Court of Auditors: opinion, report	N9-0043/2022 OJ C 430 25.10.2021, p. 0007	25/10/2021	

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

Final act
Budget 2022/1707 OJ L 258 05.10.2022, p. 0133

2020 discharge: General budget of the EU - European Ombudsman

2021/2113(DEC) - 30/06/2021 - Non-legislative basic document

PURPOSE: presentation by the Commission of the consolidated annual accounts of the European Union for the financial year 2020, as part of the 2020 discharge procedure.

Analysis of the accounts of the EU Institutions: European Ombudsman

The consolidated annual accounts of the EU provide financial information on the activities of the institutions, agencies and other bodies of the EU from an accrual accounting and budgetary perspective. They are prepared according to the highest available international public sector standards.

The discharge is a Parliament decision that reflects its conclusions at the end of a process, the discharge procedure, on the way the Commission (and other institutions and bodies) has carried out its task of implementing the EU budget.

The decision is based in particular on the European Court of Auditors reports, in particular its annual report, in which the Court provides a Statement of Assurance (DAS) on the legality and regularity of transactions (payments and commitments).

Implementation of the Ombudsman's appropriations for the financial year 2020

CONTENT: the consolidated annual accounts of the EU provide financial information on the activities of the institutions, agencies and other bodies of the EU from an accrual accounting and budgetary perspective. They are prepared according to the highest available international public sector standards.

The discharge is a Parliament decision that reflects its conclusions at the end of a process, the discharge procedure, on the way the Commission (and other institutions and bodies) has carried out its task of implementing the EU budget.

The decision is based in particular on the European Court of Auditors reports, in particular its annual report, in which the Court provides a Statement of Assurance (DAS) on the legality and regularity of transactions (payments and commitments).

Implementation of the Ombudsman's appropriations for the financial year 2020

The appropriations available in the Ombudsman's budget for 2020 amounted to **EUR 12 348 231** and included 69 establishment plan posts.

- **Title 1** (Expenditure relating to persons working for the institution) amounted to EUR 10 050 131.

- **Title 2** (Buildings, equipment and miscellaneous operating expenditure) amounted to EUR 1 899 200.

- **Title 3** (Expenditure resulting from special functions carried out by the institution) amounted to EUR 398 900.

The implementation rate (including appropriations carried over from 2020 to 2021) is **94.9%** (compared to 92.3% in 2019). Of the total appropriations, 93.2% were paid.

The amount of appropriations carried over from 2020 to 2021 is EUR 215 896, i.e. 1.7% of the 2020 budget (compared to EUR 323 410 carried over from 2019 to 2020, i.e. 2.8% of the 2019 budget).

Furthermore, 74.31% of the appropriations carried over to 2020 from 2019 were used.

The Ombudsman's activities in 2020 were marked by:

- its **25th anniversary**. Since being set up in 1995, the Office has handled over 57 000 complaints, conducted more than 7 300 inquiries and raised ethical and accountability standards across a range of areas and EU institutions;

- the adoption of a new Strategy ‘Towards 2024’;

- several inquiries and initiatives into the COVID-19 response by the EU administration;

- the successful transition to 100% teleworking for all staff and paperless procedures in response to the COVID-19 crisis;

- the opening of an inquiry into how the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) deals with alleged breaches of fundamental rights;

- the opening of **365 new inquiries** on the basis of complaints and the **closing of 392 complaint-based inquiries**;

- several important inquiries related to the transparency of decision making around environmental issues.

2020 discharge: General budget of the EU - European Ombudsman

2021/2113(DEC) - 04/05/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided by 612 votes to 4, with 14 abstentions, to **grant discharge** to the European Ombudsman in respect of the implementation of the European Ombudsman's budget for the financial year 2020.

Parliament noted that the Court of Auditors found no significant weaknesses in respect of the audited topics related to human resources and procurement for the European Ombudsman. The Court found, on the basis of its audit work, that the payments for the financial year 2020 for the administrative expenditure of the institutions, including those of the Ombudsman, are, on the whole, **free from material error**. No specific problems concerning the regularity of transactions were detected by the Court.

In its resolution, adopted by 611 votes to 8 with 18 abstentions, Parliament made the following observations.

Budgetary and financial management

In 2020, the Ombudsman's budget amounted to **EUR 12 348 231** (EUR 11 496 261 in 2019 and EUR 10 837 545 in 2018). The implementation rate for commitments (including appropriations carried over from 2020 to 2021) was **94.91%** (compared to 92.33% in 2019) and 93.16% of total appropriations were paid in 2020. Parliament welcomed the increase in the Ombudsman's annual budget execution despite the difficulties encountered due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Parliament noted the reduction in the appropriations carried over from 2020 to 2021, which amounted to EUR 215 895.65, or 1.7% of the 2020 budget, compared to those carried over from 2019 to 2020 (which amounted to EUR 323 410, or 2.8% of the 2019 budget). The reduction in expenditure due to the pandemic has freed up resources that have been reallocated to finance part of the costs of moving the Brussels office (to be finalised in 2021). Members welcomed the demonstration of efficient and effective use of the Ombudsman's resources.

Internal management, performance, internal control

Parliament welcomed the adoption of the ‘Towards 2024’ strategy in December 2020 and noted that the Ombudsman has reviewed its organisational structure. The Ombudsman is invited to monitor and report on the results of the changes to its organisational structure in the long term. The Ombudsman has also developed a new set of key performance indicators (KPIs) which have for the first time been included in the annual management plan for 2021. Members welcomed the achievement of relevant performance results.

Parliament congratulated the Ombudsman on having succeeded in **increasing the level of efficiency in handling complaints and enquiries** by taking admissibility decisions within one month in 98% of cases, closing enquiries within 6 months in 76% of cases or within 18 months in 97% of cases.

Members noted the positive trend in the efficiency rate for the time taken to process complaints, with an average time of 36 days in 2020, while the average time taken to conclude investigations was 133 days. It welcomed the increased proportion of investigations opened on public interest cases, with 65 investigations opened in 2020.

In 2020, the percentage of complaints under the Ombudsman's mandate was 34%, above the target (33%) but below the 2019 level (39%). Members were pleased to note that the efficient handling of cases meant that an extraordinarily small number of enquiries (92) were carried over from 2020 to 2021.

Human resources, staff well-being and gender equality

Parliament noted that the profile and composition of staff in 2020 was very similar to 2019, with a total of **73 staff**, including 37 officials, 8 contract staff and 28 temporary staff.

Members believe that, based on the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic, policies on hybrid working arrangements should be reviewed, if necessary, to increase the resilience and efficiency of the institution while maintaining the well-being and satisfaction of staff members.

Parliament noted that the Ombudsman's ability to adapt quickly to the COVID-19 pandemic was largely due to its ability to anticipate and continue its activities. In this regard, it welcomed the Ombudsman's approach to prioritise training on issues related to managing widespread teleworking, improving communication and collaboration between staff and managers, and striking a balance between private life and work while working remotely.

As of 31 December 2020, the gender distribution was as follows: **66% female and 34% male**, which remained unchanged from 2019. Of a total of 6 management positions, 4 are held by women, who also hold the two main senior management positions.

The Ombudsman is encouraged to strengthen diversity in order to make the Ombudsman a more inclusive workplace, including for people with disabilities. It is encouraged to continue its efforts to achieve an acceptable geographical distribution, taking into account the small size of the office.

Ethical framework and transparency

Parliament welcomed the creation of a special page on the Ombudsman's intranet dedicated to ethics and good conduct, in particular the inclusion of guidelines for the implementation of the anti-harassment policy. It congratulated the Ombudsman for publishing its programme on its website and for systematically using the transparency register to check that speakers or guests at events or meetings organised by the Ombudsman were registered.

Members welcomed the conference on the future of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 regarding public access to documents of the EU institutions, where the Ombudsman stressed the importance of the legal framework for the public to hold the EU to account and called for its modernisation.

Inter-institutional cooperation

Parliament stressed the importance of the Ombudsman maintaining a high level of exchange and cooperation with the European Network of Ombudsmen. It encouraged the Ombudsman to maintain an advisory role for complainants and for members of the European Network of Ombudsmen, also using the remote cooperation tools successfully deployed in 2020.

Lastly, Parliament welcomed the Ombudsman for the series of inquiries and initiatives carried out in 2020 on the response to COVID-19 in the EU institutions and agencies, which helped the EU's administrative services to maintain particularly high standards of good administration, even in difficult times.