Basic information

2022/2090(DEC) DEC - Discharge procedure	Procedure completed
2021 discharge: General budget of the EU - European External Action Service **Subject** 8.70.03.11 2021 discharge	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
CONT Budgetary Control	PEKSA Mikuláš (Greens/EFA)	14/07/2022
	Shadow rapporteur MARINESCU Marian-Jean (EPP) MANDA Claudiu (S&D) MITUȚA Alin (Renew) CZARNECKI Ryszard (ECR) KUHS Joachim (ID) FLANAGAN Luke Ming (The Left)	

Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
AFET Foreign Affairs	OHLSSON Carina (S&D)	08/09/2022
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
23/06/2022	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2022)0323	
13/09/2022	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
28/02/2023	Vote in committee		
31/03/2023	Committee report tabled for plenary	A9-0088/2023	Summary
09/05/2023	Debate in Parliament		
10/05/2023	Decision by Parliament	T9-0146/2023	Summary
10/05/2023	Results of vote in Parliament		
29/09/2023	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2022/2090(DEC)
Procedure type	DEC - Discharge procedure
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	CONT/9/09826

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE738.392	16/12/2022	
Committee opinion	AFET	PE737.446	24/01/2023	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE742.346	02/02/2023	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A9-0088/2023	31/03/2023	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T9-0146/2023	10/05/2023	Summary

Council of the EU

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Supplementary non-legislative basic document	06247/2023	16/02/2023	

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(2022)0323	23/06/2022	

Other institutions and bodies

Institution/body	Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
CofA	Court of Auditors: opinion, report	N9-0066/2022 OJ C 391 12.10.2022, p. 0006	12/10/2022	
CofA	Court of Auditors: opinion, report	N9-0003/2023 OJ C 429 11.11.2022, p. 0008	11/11/2022	

Additional information

Source	Document	Date
European Commission	EUR-Lex	

Final act

Budget 2023/1839
OJ L 242 29.09.2023, p. 0165

2021 discharge: General budget of the EU - European External Action Service

2022/2090(DEC) - 31/03/2023 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Mikuláš PEKSA (Greens/EFA, CZ) on the discharge for implementation of the European Union general budget for the financial year 2021, section X - European External Action Service.

The committee responsible recommended that Parliament **give discharge** to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European External Action Service for the financial year 2021.

Budgetary and financial management

The report notes that, in 2021, the budget for the EEAS was **EUR 767 626 000**, representing an increase of 5.0% compared to 2020. The EEAS also disposed of an amount of EUR 211 200 000 from the Commission to cover the administrative costs of Commission staff working in Union delegations. The EEAS also received contributions to cover common costs of European Development Fund staff in Delegations, which brought the total budgetary amounts (commitment appropriations) managed by the EEAS to **EUR 1 091.1 million**.

In 2021, 99.4% of the final EEAS budget in commitments was executed, which is higher than in 2020 where 95.0% was executed. For payments 84.5% of the budget for 2021 was executed, slightly higher than 2020, where 82.3% was executed.

The final budget for the EEAS HQ, after transfers, amounted to EUR 295 million, while the final budget for EEAS delegations, after transfers, amounted to EUR 472.6 million.

Internal management, performance and control

Members note that in 2021, the EEAS carried out the largest reorganisation of its service since its creation in 2011, establishing six large geographical departments and an Office of the Secretary-General in order to better reflect the current geopolitical situation.

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to have a significant impact on the working conditions of the EEAS in 2021. It created opportunities for the spread of disinformation and foreign manipulation and interference. In addition, the EEAS has been confronted with several security crises in Afghanistan, the Sahel and Ethiopia, in which it was rather late to inform and react to the changes on the ground, leading to speedy evacuations of Union personnel.

The report is pleased to note that all financial transactions in the EEAS budget recorded in the 2021 financial year are audited by means of random stratified samples based on a methodology similar to that used by the Court.

Human resources, equality and staff well-being

At the end of 2021, the EEAS employed 5 072 staff members, of whom 2 303 (45.4%) worked at EEAS headquarters and 2 769 (54.6%) in the Union's delegations and offices worldwide. **Women** represented 46.7% of EEAS staff, down slightly from 48.7% at the end of 2020. However, there has been a relative increase in the number of women in all management positions.

Members welcome the appointment of an EEAS Ambassador for Gender and Diversity to raise awareness and consideration in diplomacy, political dialogue and policy-making. They call for effective gender training strategies within the EEAS.

The report notes with satisfaction that **all Member States are represented** among the staff and that, in particular, the relative number of staff from the Member States that joined in 2004 or later (EU-13) has increased. However, it points out that significant disparities remain in management positions.

Members notes that, in 2021, the number of persons who were absent due to illness increased by 9.3%, while the number of days of absence due to illnesses increased by 36%. They consider that this is a relatively large increase and calls on the EEAS to investigate further if there is anything that can be done in terms of improving physical and mental work conditions to ensure that the situation improves in the coming years.

Ethical framework and transparency

Members welcome the recent adoption by the EEAS of the 'Principles of Professional Behaviour'. They note that the EEAS offers training in ethics in the framework of Newcomers Welcome Sessions and as part of pre-posting seminars for Union Ambassadors.

The report calls on the EEAS to **monitor the positions of former senior staff and heads of delegations**, given their sensitive political role. It invites the EEAS to systematically review potentially problematic transitions to the private sector or to third country organisations and to continue monitoring the occupation of former senior officials until the end of the mandatory cooling-off period.

The EEAS should ban all officials who have left the service from lobbying or advocacy.

In the interests of transparency, the EEAS is invited to publish all meetings held with interest groups of any kind, including those involving heads of EU delegations.

The report makes the following observations, *inter alia*:

- the EEAS should take action to remedy the problems that led to the **errors in procurement** and to avoid future breaches of procurement rules. The EEAS is encouraged to put in place appropriate measures, such as better training or clarification of guidelines and templates for procurement documentation, to reduce the number of errors in procurement and recruitment procedures organised by EU Delegations and to inform the discharge authorities of the measures taken;

- the EEAS Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) solution generated more than 16 000 cyber alerts, resulting in the identification of 236 cyber-attacks: the EEAS should continue to **focus strongly on cyber security and hybrid threats**, in particular those supported by foreign states, and to work with other EU institutions and Member States to identify such threats;

- given the size and complexity of the EEAS **building stock**, it agrees that in Brussels and in most countries around the world where the Union can foresee to maintain a representation, it is likely that in the long-term savings can be made by owning rather than renting the buildings;

- the EEAS budget for **strategic communication** and public diplomacy activities in 2021 amounted to over EUR 26.17 million to support communication activities at headquarters and in all EU delegations. Members welcome the fact that communication priorities include areas such as the Union's values and interests, response to international health crises and climate action.

2021 discharge: General budget of the EU - European External Action Service

2022/2090(DEC) - 10/05/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 553 votes to 82 with 5 abstentions, to **grant discharge** to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European External Action Service for the financial year 2021.

In its resolution, adopted by 544 votes to 81 with 9 abstentions, Parliament made the following observations:

Budgetary and financial management

In 2021, the budget for the EEAS was **EUR 767 626 000**, representing an increase of 5.0% compared to 2020. The EEAS also disposed of an amount of EUR 211 200 000 from the Commission to cover the administrative costs of Commission staff working in Union delegations. The EEAS also received contributions to cover common costs of European Development Fund staff in Delegations, which brought the total budgetary amounts (commitment appropriations) managed by the EEAS to **EUR 1 091.1 million**.

In 2021, 99.4% of the final EEAS budget in commitments was executed, which is higher than in 2020 where 95.0% was executed. For payments 84.5% of the budget for 2021 was executed, slightly higher than 2020, where 82.3% was executed.

The final budget for the EEAS HQ, after transfers, amounted to EUR 295 million, while the final budget for EEAS delegations, after transfers, amounted to EUR 472.6 million.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the budget for IT was increased during 2021, while the budget of various items including salaries was reduced.

Internal management, performance and control

In 2021, the EEAS carried out the largest reorganisation of its service since its creation in 2011, establishing six large geographical departments and an Office of the Secretary-General in order to better reflect the current geopolitical situation.

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to have a significant impact on the working conditions of the EEAS in 2021. It created opportunities for the spread of disinformation and foreign manipulation and interference. In addition, the EEAS has been confronted with several security crises in Afghanistan, the Sahel and Ethiopia, leading to speedy evacuations of Union personnel. No Union Delegations submitted reservations in 2021.

Members are pleased to note that all financial transactions in the EEAS budget recorded in the 2021 financial year are audited by means of random stratified samples based on a methodology similar to that used by the Court.

Parliament noted with concern, that the Court in five of the ten procurement procedures examined found some deficiencies in how the Union Delegations applied public procurement rules and found some weaknesses in all eight of the recruitment procedures for local agents. The EEAS is called on to take action to resolve the problems leading to the procurement errors identified and to prevent future infringements of the relevant rules.

The EEAS is strongly encouraged to take appropriate measures, such as enhancing training and improving guidelines and templates for procurement documentation, in order to reduce the number of errors when it comes to procurement and recruitment procedures organised by Union Delegations.

Human resources, equality and staff well-being

At the end of 2021, the EEAS employed **5 072 staff members**, of whom 2 303 (45.4%) worked at EEAS headquarters and 2 769 (54.6%) in the Union's delegations and offices worldwide. Most of the increases took place in delegations and offices.

At the end of 2021, the staff comprised 1 706 officials and temporary staff, 1 543 local staff, 567 contract staff, 467 seconded national experts, 43 young professionals in the Union's delegations and 746 other external staff and trainees.

Women represented **46.7%** of EEAS staff, down slightly from 48.7% at the end of 2020. However, there has been a relative increase in the number of women in all management positions. The EEAS is encouraged to increase the number of female heads of delegation and to engage in feminist diplomacy, particularly in third countries where gender equality standards are lower.

Members welcomed the appointment of an EEAS Ambassador for Gender and Diversity to raise awareness and consideration in diplomacy, political dialogue and policy-making. They called for effective gender training strategies within the EEAS.

The resolution noted with satisfaction that all Member States are represented among the staff and that, in particular, the relative number of staff from the Member States that joined in 2004 or later (EU-13) has increased. However, it points out that significant disparities remain in management positions. Only 24 Member States are represented among the EEAS Ambassadors and the five Member States with most ambassadors (France, Germany, Spain, Italy and Belgium) have 82 out of 135 posts, equivalent to 61%.

Members noted that, in 2021, the number of persons who were absent due to illness increased by 9.3%, while the number of days of absence due to illnesses increased by 36%. They considered that this is a relatively large increase and called on the EEAS to investigate further if there is anything that can be done in terms of improving physical and mental work conditions to ensure that the situation improves in the coming years.

Ethical framework and transparency

Compliance with rules and standards of ethical behaviour and transparency is essential, especially for the EEAS, as it represents the Union's values worldwide. Members welcomed the recent adoption by the EEAS of the "Principles of Professional Behaviour". They noted that the EEAS offers ethics training as part of induction sessions for newcomers and as part of pre-posting seminars for EU ambassadors.

Parliament called on the EEAS to monitor the posts of former senior officials and heads of delegation, given their sensitive political role. It called on the EEAS to systematically examine potentially problematic transfers to the private sector or to third-country organisations and to continue monitoring the professional activity of former senior officials until the end of the mandatory waiting period. The EEAS should ban all officials who have left the service from engaging in any lobbying or advocacy activity for the duration of the cooling-off period.

It would be particularly relevant for the EEAS to join the **EU Transparency Register**. In the interests of transparency, the EEAS is invited to publish a list of all meetings held with interest groups of any kind, including those attended by heads of EU delegations. The use of external companies that continue to operate in Russia should be discontinued.

Parliament also commented on the digital transition, cyber security and data protection, buildings and security, environment and sustainability, inter-institutional cooperation and communication.

The resolution made the following observations, *inter alia*:

- investment in IT projects and equipment decreased by 6.4% to EUR 22 290 743, while investment in security increased by 24.6% to EUR 5 778 000; the EEAS continued to upgrade and renew technical equipment in 2021;

- the EEAS Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) solution generated more than 16 000 cyber alerts, resulting in the identification of 236 cyber-attacks: the EEAS should continue to **focus strongly on cyber security and hybrid threats**, in particular those supported by foreign states, and to work with other EU institutions and Member States to identify such threats;

- given the size and complexity of the EEAS building stock, it agrees that in Brussels and in most countries around the world where the Union can foresee to maintain a representation, it is likely that in the long-term savings can be made by owning rather than renting the buildings;

- the EEAS has put in place an Environmental Management System (EMS) covering areas such as energy saving, staff mobility, CO2 emission ceilings for service cars, information technology, green procurement, recycling and waste sorting, etc., to be progressively improved;

- agreements have been reached between the EEAS and the Commission on the exchange of restricted documents, and an establishment agreement for the EU delegation in the UK has been signed;

- the EEAS budget for **strategic communication** and public diplomacy activities in 2021 amounted to over EUR 26.17 million to support communication activities at headquarters and in all EU delegations. Members welcome the fact that communication priorities include areas such as the Union's values and interests, response to international health crises and climate action.