Basic information

2024/2021(DEC) DEC - Discharge procedure	Procedure completed
Discharge 2023: EU general budget – European Council and Council **Subject** 8.70.03.13 2023 discharge	

Key players

European Parliament	**Committee responsible**	**Rapporteur**	**Appointed**
	CONT Budgetary Control	BRUDZIŃSKI Joachim Stanisław (ECR)	11/09/2024
		Shadow rapporteur KOVATCHEV Andrey (EPP) MOLNÁR Csaba (S&D) JORON Virginie (PfE) GERBRANDY Gerben-Jan (Renew) BOESELAGER Damian (Greens/EFA) TRIDICO Pasquale (The Left) JUNGBLUTH Alexander (ESN)	

European Commission	**Commission DG**	**Commissioner**
	Budget	HAHN Johannes

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
25/06/2024	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2024)0272	
17/09/2024	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
18/03/2025	Vote in committee		
01/04/2025	Committee report tabled for plenary	A10-0052/2025	Summary
06/05/2025	Debate in Parliament		

07/05/2025	Decision by Parliament	T10-0079/2025	Summary
07/05/2025	Results of vote in Parliament		
07/05/2025	Report referred back to committee		
24/09/2025	Vote in committee		
26/09/2025	Committee report tabled for plenary	A10-0167/2025	
08/10/2025	Final act published in Official Journal		
22/10/2025	Decision by Parliament	T10-0245/2025	Summary
22/10/2025	Results of vote in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference	2024/2021(DEC)
Procedure type	DEC - Discharge procedure
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	CONT/10/00558 CONT/10/02918

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee draft report		PE764.997	16/01/2025	
Committee opinion	AFCO	PE766.587	29/01/2025	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE768.134	11/02/2025	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A10-0052/2025	01/04/2025	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T10-0079/2025	07/05/2025	Summary
Committee draft report		PE775.471	12/08/2025	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE776.943	10/09/2025	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A10-0167/2025	26/09/2025	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T10-0245/2025	22/10/2025	Summary

Council of the EU

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Supplementary non-legislative basic document	05754/2025	05/02/2025	

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary

Non-legislative basic document	COM(2024)0272	25/06/2024	

Other institutions and bodies

Institution/body	Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
CofA	Court of Auditors: opinion, report	N10-0020/2024 OJ OJ L 10.10.2024	10/10/2024	
EU	For information	32025B1596 OJ OJ L 08.10.2025	07/05/2025	
EU	For information	52025BP1597 OJ OJ L 08.10.2025	07/05/2025	
EU	For information	52026BP0061 OJ OJ L 13.01.2026	22/10/2025	

Additional information

Source	Document	Date
European Commission	EUR-Lex	

Final act

Budget 2026/0060
OJ OJ L 13.01.2026

Discharge 2023: EU general budget – European Council and Council

2024/2021(DEC) - 22/10/2025 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided, by 441 votes to 125, with 73 abstentions, to refuse to grant the Secretary-General of the Council discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Council and of the Council for the financial year 2023.

State of play

Parliament deeply regrets that since 2009, and again for the financial year 2023, Council continues to refuse to cooperate with Parliament on the discharge procedure, preventing Parliament from taking an informed decision based on a serious and thorough scrutiny of the implementation of the Council's budget and thereby compelling Parliament to refuse discharge. The resolution stressed that the current situation must be improved through better interinstitutional cooperation within the existing framework of the Treaties. It should be noted that in May 2025, during his intervention in Parliament's plenary, the Representative of the Presidency of the Council expressed the latter's willingness 'to engage in a meaningful and pragmatic cooperation between our institutions' when it comes to discharge in relation to the European Council and Council section of the Union budget.

The Council is therefore called on to resume negotiations with Parliament at the highest level as soon as possible, involving the Secretary-Generals and the Presidents of both institutions, in order to **break the deadlock** and find a solution while respecting the respective roles of Parliament and the Council in the discharge procedure and ensuring transparency and proper democratic control of budget implementation.

Separate budget

Once again, Parliament reiterated its regret that the budget of the European Council and the Council has not been divided into two clearly separated budgets as recommended by Parliament in previous discharge resolutions in order to improve transparency and accountability.

Improved decision-making

While welcoming the decision to adopt conclusions supported by 26 Member States on the Union's continued and unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, Parliament regretted that such a course was necessary due to persistent vetoes. It called for the development of alternative mechanisms to **bypass vetoes in urgent matters**, pending treaty changes to improve decision-making efficiency and unity within the European Council. Members undermined that the Union's budget for 2023 has already mobilised substantial resources to support Ukraine and stressed the importance of ensuring that future budgetary decisions reflect this strategic commitment.

Parliament strongly regretted the Hungarian government's obstructive stance within the European Council and noted that ongoing political deadlocks and insufficient progress on transparency reforms continue to undermine trust and the European Council's effectiveness. It called for **targeted treaty reforms** to enhance democratic decision-making and transparency within the European Council.

The Council is urged to ensure that the Presidency of the Council is conducted strictly in line with Union law, principles and the Union's credibility. It deplored the Hungarian government's misconduct of the Presidency of the Council in pursuing bilateral activities that contradict the Union's fundamental values and strongly urged the Council to condemn such conduct.

Discharge 2023: EU general budget – European Council and Council

2024/2021(DEC) - 01/04/2025 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Joachim Stanisław BRUDZIŃSKI (ECR, PO) on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2023, Section II – European Council and Council.

The committee called on the European Parliament to **postpone** its decision on granting the Secretary-General of the Council discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Council and of the Council for the financial year 2023.

State of play of the discharge procedure

Members deeply regretted that, since 2009, and again for the financial year 2023, Parliament has had to refuse discharge to the Council because the Council continues to refuse to cooperate with Parliament on the discharge procedure, preventing Parliament from taking an informed decision based on a serious and thorough scrutiny of the implementation of the Council's budget. They also regretted that, on 23 September 2024, the Secretariat informed Parliament once again that it would not be answering Parliament's questionnaire and that the Council would not be participating in the hearing organised on 12 November 2024 as part of the discharge process and in which all other invited institutions participated.

The report deplored that the Council, for more than a decade, has shown that it does not have any political willingness to collaborate with Parliament in the context of the annual discharge procedure. The Council is called on to resume negotiations with Parliament without undue delay and to actively engage with Parliament at the highest level as soon as possible in order to break the deadlock and resolve the long-standing discharge impasse. The report also stressed that a **revision of the Treaties** could make the discharge procedure clearer and more transparent by giving Parliament the explicit competence to grant discharge to all Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies individually. Pending such a review, the current situation must be improved through enhanced inter-institutional cooperation. The Council is urged to actively engage with the Parliament.

Political priorities

The report regretted that the Council exerts its prerogative in the nomination and appointment procedures for many Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies without taking into account the views of the interested parties or the recommendations of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF).

Members expressed deep concern over the Hungarian government's misuse of its role in the EU Presidency to pursue bilateral engagements that contradict the Union's core values, such as Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin, despite Union sanctions and the International Criminal Court arrest warrant against the latter for war crimes. It noted with alarm similar engagements with other authoritarian leaders, undermining the EU's credibility. In this regard, they called on the Council to firmly condemn such actions and to take all necessary measures to ensure that Member States holding the Presidency act in alignment with EU principles, safeguarding the Union's integrity and values.

Budgetary and financial management

The report noted that the budget for Council was **EUR 647 908 757** for 2023, representing an increase of 6 % compared to 2022, which is higher than the increase of 2.3 % between 2021 and 2022. Members reiterated their regret that the budget of the European Council and the Council has **not been divided into two clearly separated budgets** as recommended by Parliament in previous discharge resolutions in order to improve transparency and accountability.

The overall implementation rate of the Council's budget in 2023 was **97%**. Appropriations carried over from 2023 to 2024 totalled EUR 85.5 million covering mainly computer systems, cost of interpretation provided in 2023, for which invoices have not been yet agreed with the European Commission services at the time of the closure, buildings, information and communication, audio-visual and conference equipment, other staff expenditure: and transport.

Members also expressed concern over insufficient control mechanisms regarding the Council's use of consultancy services and external contractors and called for full disclosure of all contracts exceeding EUR 50 000.

Human resources, equality and staff well-being

The report noted that, given the Council's lack of cooperation with Parliament, observations in this section primarily rely on aggregated information published on the Council's website which provides limited detail.

Out of 3 116 members of staff at the end of 2023, 79 % were permanent staff, 12.8% were temporary staff, 7.2% were contractual agents and 1% were seconded national experts. Members regretted the lack of publicly available information concerning the gender and geographical distribution of staff in the Secretariat.

Ethical framework and transparency

Members criticised that the code of conduct for the President of the European Council has not been brought in line with those of Parliament and the Commission, in particular in terms of post term-of-office activities. The Council is urged to establish stricter post-term employment rules for senior officials, including an extended cooling-off period and mandatory public disclosure of private-sector affiliations. It is also called on to make the participation of Member States' Permanent Representations in the EU Transparency Register mandatory.

Members called for stronger and harmonised ethics rules on conflicts of interest, revolving doors, and lobbying transparency.

Members strongly regretted that the Council continues to systematically withhold or delay access to legislative documents and the decision-making process in the Council is still far from fully transparent, thereby hindering public scrutiny of its decision-making, negatively affecting citizens' trust in the Union as a transparent entity and jeopardising the reputation of the Union as a whole.

Digitalisation

In 2023, the Secretariat continued to pursue its goal of digital transformation. Out of 113 digitalisation projects in the annual work plan, concerning, in particular, the areas of shared services, policy, legal and IT, 37 % were completed at the end of the year while 8 % were cancelled or merged and 38% were still ongoing. Members urged the Council to accelerate the implementation of secure digital voting and document-sharing systems to enhance efficiency, accountability, and reduce unnecessary paper-based processes.

Discharge 2023: EU general budget – European Council and Council

2024/2021(DEC) - 07/05/2025 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided by 588 votes to 62, with 16 abstentions, to **postpone** its decision on granting the Secretary-General of the Council discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Council and of the Council for the financial year 2023, Section II - European Council and Council.

In its resolution, adopted by 526 votes to 119 with 20 abstentions, Parliament deeply regrets that, since 2009, and again for the financial year 2022, it has had to refuse discharge to the Council because the Council continues to refuse to cooperate with Parliament on the discharge procedure, preventing Parliament from taking an informed decision based on a serious and thorough scrutiny of the implementation of the Council's budget.

Parliament reiterated that the Council's continued refusal to engage in the discharge procedure is an unacceptable **breach of democratic accountability** and in this regard, it called for legal and procedural amendments to **withhold budgetary appropriations** to any Union institution that fails to comply with transparency obligations.

Despite the Council being unwilling to cooperate in the discharge procedure, Parliament, nevertheless, stressed some political priorities and sets out some observations concerning the budgetary and financial management of the Council and other observations relevant for the discharge procedure.

Political priorities

Parliament expressed deep concern over the Hungarian government's misuse of its role in the EU Presidency to pursue bilateral engagements that contradict the Union's core values, such as Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin, despite Union sanctions and the International Criminal Court arrest warrant against the latter for war crimes. It noted with alarm similar engagements with other authoritarian leaders, undermining the EU's credibility. In this regard, it called on the Council to firmly condemn such actions and to take all necessary measures to ensure that Member States holding the Presidency act in alignment with EU principles, safeguarding the Union's integrity and values.

Budgetary and financial management

The budget for Council was **EUR 647 908 757** for 2023, representing an increase of 6 % compared to 2022, which is higher than the increase of 2.3 % between 2021 and 2022. Members reiterated their regret that the budget of the European Council and the Council has not been divided into two clearly separated budgets as recommended by Parliament in previous discharge resolutions in order to improve transparency and accountability.

The overall implementation rate of the Council's budget in 2023 was 97%. Appropriations carried over from 2023 to 2024 totalled EUR 85.5 million covering mainly computer systems, cost of interpretation provided in 2023, for which invoices have not been yet agreed with the European Commission services at the time of the closure, buildings, information and communication, audio-visual and conference equipment, other staff expenditure: and transport.

Members also expressed concern over insufficient control mechanisms regarding the Council's use of consultancy services and external contractors and called for full disclosure of all contracts exceeding EUR 50 000.

Other observations

Parliament made a series of observations as follows:

- out of 3 116 members of **staff** at the end of 2023, 79 % were permanent staff, 12.8% were temporary staff, 7.2% were contractual agents and 1% were seconded national experts. Members regretted the lack of publicly available information concerning the gender and geographical distribution of staff in the Secretariat;

- the Council is urged to establish stricter post-term employment rules for senior officials, including an extended cooling-off period and mandatory public disclosure of private-sector affiliations. It is also called on to make the participation of Member States' Permanent Representations in the EU Transparency Register mandatory;

- stronger and harmonised **ethics rules** on conflicts of interest, revolving doors, and lobbying transparency are needed;

- regrettably, the Council continues to systematically withhold or delay **access to legislative documents** and the decision-making process in the Council is still far from fully transparent, thereby hindering public scrutiny of its decision-making, negatively affecting citizens' trust in the Union as a transparent entity and jeopardising the reputation of the Union as a whole;

- out of 113 **digitalisation projects** in the annual work plan, concerning, in particular, the areas of shared services, policy, legal and IT, 37 % were completed at the end of the year while 8 % were cancelled or merged and 38% were still ongoing. Parliament urged the Council to accelerate the implementation of secure digital voting and document-sharing systems to enhance efficiency, accountability, and reduce unnecessary paper-based processes.