



# Procedure file

Basic information		
DEC - Discharge procedure	<a href="#">2019/2057(DEC)</a>	Procedure completed
2018 discharge: EU general budget, European Council and Council		
Subject 8.70.03.08 2018 discharge		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	<b>CONT</b> <a href="#">Budgetary Control</a>	 <a href="#">ZDECHOVSKÝ Tomáš</a>	03/06/2020
European Commission	Commission DG <a href="#">Budget</a>	Commissioner OETTINGER Günther	

Key events			
26/06/2019	Non-legislative basic document published	<a href="#">COM(2019)0316</a>	
18/09/2019	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
19/02/2020	Vote in committee		
02/03/2020	Committee report tabled for plenary	<a href="#">A9-0038/2020</a>	
13/05/2020	Results of vote in Parliament		
13/05/2020	Decision by Parliament	<a href="#">T9-0090/2020</a>	Summary
13/05/2020	Report referred back to committee		
01/10/2020	Vote in committee		
13/10/2020	Committee report tabled for plenary	<a href="#">A9-0189/2020</a>	
20/10/2020	Decision by Parliament	<a href="#">T9-0271/2020</a>	Summary
14/12/2020	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2019/2057(DEC)
Procedure type	DEC - Discharge procedure
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 159
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	CONT/9/00981; CONT/9/03070

Documentation gateway
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Non-legislative basic document		<a href="#">COM(2019)0316</a>	27/06/2019	EC	
Committee opinion	<b>AFCO</b>	<a href="#">PE642.907</a>	09/12/2019	EP	
Committee draft report		<a href="#">PE639.828</a>	11/12/2019	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		<a href="#">PE645.089</a>	30/01/2020	EP	
Supplementary non-legislative basic document		<a href="#">05760/1/2020</a>	17/02/2020	CSL	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		<a href="#">A9-0038/2020</a>	02/03/2020	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		<a href="#">T9-0090/2020</a>	13/05/2020	EP	Summary
Committee draft report		<a href="#">PE653.749</a>	07/07/2020	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		<a href="#">PE657.304</a>	10/09/2020	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		<a href="#">A9-0189/2020</a>	13/10/2020	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		<a href="#">T9-0271/2020</a>	20/10/2020	EP	Summary

## Final act

Budget 2020/2044  
[OJ L 420 14.12.2020, p. 0013](#)

## 2018 discharge: EU general budget, European Council and Council

The European Parliament decided by 643 votes to 37, with 11 abstentions, to postpone its decision on the discharge to the Secretary-General of the Council in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Council and of the Council for the financial year 2018.

In the resolution accompanying its discharge decision (adopted by 641 votes to 30, with 22 abstentions), the European Parliament made a series of observations:

### Budgetary and financial management

Parliament noted that in 2018 the Council had a general budget of EUR 572 854 377 (compared to EUR 561 576 000 in 2017), with an overall implementation rate of 91.9% (compared to 93.8% in 2017). It praised the sound financial management and the prudence shown by the Council (the Council's budget had decreased from EUR 634 million in 2010 to EUR 573 million in 2018, a decrease of 9.63 %).

Appropriations carried over from 2018 to 2019 amounted to EUR 56 599 584, or 10.7 % (compared to EUR 60 576 175 in 2017, or 11.5 %), coming mainly from areas such as IT systems (EUR 18.3 million), buildings (EUR 16 million) and interpretation (EUR 11.9 million). Appropriations have been cancelled in 2018, amounting to EUR 46 348 862 (compared with EUR 35 025 789 in 2017). Members called on the Council to strengthen its efforts to avoid budget over-estimates.

Parliament regretted that the request to separate the budget of the European Council and the Council into one budget for each institution, made by Parliament in previous discharge resolutions, has not been considered. It called on the Council to separate the budget in that way for reasons of transparency and to improve accountability and expenditure efficiency for both institutions.

### Transparency

Members regretted that the Council has still not joined the transparency register, despite two rounds of negotiations in 2018 under the Bulgarian Presidency and in 2019 under the Romanian Presidency on the proposal for a new Interinstitutional Agreement on a mandatory transparency register accessible in a machine-readable format to interest representatives of Parliament, the Council and the Commission. The Council was called on to join the register, to make a real commitment to the principles of transparency and accountability by taking concrete steps and to set an example by refusing to hold meetings with unregistered lobbyists.

The General Secretariat of the Council was called on to ensure that the ethics rules governing the President of the European Council are brought into line with those of the President of the Commission so that revolving door rules apply for three years and formal approval is required for any new roles with a link to the activities of the Union.

Parliament reiterated its support for the recommendations of the Ombudsman on the transparency of legislative discussions in the preparatory bodies of the Council. It asked the Council to step up its transparency efforts by, inter alia, publishing Council legislative documents, having formal minute-taking of Council preparatory bodies to record Member State positions and publishing those minutes, and making available more trilogue documents in line with the Ombudsmans recommendations.

Members expressed its deep concerns about the information reported by European media regarding the corporate sponsorship of Member

States hosting the Union Presidency and echoes the concerns expressed by Union citizens and Members of Parliament on the matter.

#### Future cooperation between Council and Parliament

Parliament regretted the lack of cooperation from the Council in the discharge procedure which has resulted in Parliament's refusal to grant discharge to the Secretary-General of the Council since the financial year 2009. It welcomed the Council's willingness to reach an agreement with Parliament on how to cooperate in the discharge process and stressed the need for a Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and Parliament in order to resolve the differences of views that still exist between the two institutions.

Members called on Parliament's new negotiating team to ensure that the agreement is fully consistent with the position approved in February 2020 by Parliament's Budgetary Control Committee.

## 2018 discharge: EU general budget, European Council and Council

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The European Parliament decided by 657 votes to 26, with 4 abstentions, to refuse to grant the Secretary-General discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2018, Section II European Council and Council.

In its resolution accompanying the decision on discharge, Parliament recalled that the European Council and the Council, as Union institutions, should be democratically accountable to all the citizens of the Union for the funds entrusted to them to perform their duties. However, for the past 10 years the Council has refused to cooperate in the discharge procedure and thus forced the Parliament to refuse to grant discharge.

The decision whether to grant discharge for 2018 was postponed in May 2020 similar to what was done in previous years.

#### Lack of respect and trust

Parliament stressed that this state of affairs is not tenable for either institution: for the Council because no positive decision on the implementation of its budget has been granted since 2009, and for Parliament because it shows a lack of respect for Parliament's role as discharge authority and guarantor of the transparency and democratic accountability of the budget of the Union.

If this situation continues, it shall damage public trust in the financial management of the Union institutions.

#### Lack of communication

Parliament repeatedly encounters difficulties in receiving answers from the Council due to a lack of cooperation, resulting in the refusal to grant discharge for more than 10 years. It recalled that effective control of the Union's budget implementation requires loyal cooperation among the institutions. Members recalled the wish of Parliament to start negotiations with the Council with a view to reach a mutually satisfactory agreement to finally overcome this situation of deadlock. The Council is invited to suggest an appropriate date to start negotiations.

#### Budget separation and transparency

As regards the budget, Parliament insisted that the budget of the European Council and the budget of the Council be separated in order to contribute to more transparency, accountability and efficiency with respect to the expenditure for both institutions as recommended by Parliament in many of its discharge resolutions over the last years.

Parliament also regretted that the Council has not joined the transparent register scheme for lobbyists which also leads to a lack of trust in the Union decision-making process.

Parliament emphasised the importance of allowing citizens to follow the legislative process of the Union easily. It called on the Council to step up its transparency efforts by, inter alia, publishing Council legislative documents including minutes of working group meetings and trilogues and other milestone working documents in line with the European Ombudsmans recommendations.

Once again, Members expressed their deep concerns about the corporate sponsorship of Member States hosting the Union Presidency and echoed the concerns expressed by Union citizens and Members on the matter. It strongly recommended the Council to envisage the budgetisation of Presidencies.