



TEXTS ADOPTED

P9_TA(2020)0092

Discharge 2018: European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training

1. European Parliament decision of 13 May 2020 on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (now European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training Cedefop)) for the financial year 2018 (2019/2066(DEC))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the final annual accounts of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training for the financial year 2018,
- having regard to the Court of Auditors' annual report on EU agencies for the financial year 2018, together with the agencies' replies¹,
- having regard to the statement of assurance² as to the reliability of the accounts and the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions provided by the Court of Auditors for the financial year 2018, pursuant to Article 287 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to the Council's recommendation of 18 February 2020 on discharge to be given to the Centre in respect of the implementation of the budget for the financial year 2018 (05761/2020 – C9-0033/2020),
- having regard to Article 319 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002³, and in particular Article 208 thereof,
- having regard to Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation

¹ OJ C 417, 11.12.2019, p. 1.

² OJ C 417, 11.12.2019, p. 1.

³ OJ L 298, 26.10.2012, p. 1.

- (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012¹, and in particular Article 70 thereof,
- having regard to Regulation (EEC) No 337/75 of the Council of 10 February 1975 establishing a European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training², and in particular Article 12a thereof,
 - having regard to Regulation (EU) 2019/128 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 January 2019 establishing a European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) and repealing Council Regulation (EEC) No 337/75³, and in particular Article 15 thereof,
 - having regard to Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1271/2013 of 30 September 2013 on the framework financial regulation for the bodies referred to in Article 208 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council⁴, and in particular Article 108 thereof,
 - having regard to Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/715 of 18 December 2018 on the framework financial regulation for the bodies set up under the TFEU and Euratom Treaty and referred to in Article 70 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council⁵, and in particular Article 105 thereof,
 - having regard to Rule 100 of and Annex V to its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A9-0040/2020),
1. Grants the Executive Director of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) discharge in respect of the implementation of the Centre's budget for the financial year 2018;
 2. Sets out its observations in the resolution below;
 3. Instructs its President to forward this decision, and the resolution forming an integral part of it, to the Executive Director of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), the Council, the Commission and the Court of Auditors, and to arrange for their publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union* (L series).

¹ OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p. 1.

² OJ L 39, 13.2.1975, p. 1.

³ OJ L 30, 31.1.2019, p. 90.

⁴ OJ L 328, 7.12.2013, p. 42.

⁵ OJ L 122, 10.5.2019, p. 1.

2. European Parliament decision of 13 May 2020 on the closure of the accounts of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (now European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop)) for the financial year 2018 (2019/2066(DEC))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the final annual accounts of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training for the financial year 2018,
- having regard to the Court of Auditors' annual report on EU agencies for the financial year 2018, together with the agencies' replies¹,
- having regard to the statement of assurance² as to the reliability of the accounts and the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions provided by the Court of Auditors for the financial year 2018, pursuant to Article 287 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to the Council's recommendation of 18 February 2020 on discharge to be given to the Centre in respect of the implementation of the budget for the financial year 2018 (05761/2020 – C9-0033/2020),
- having regard to Article 319 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002³, and in particular Article 208 thereof,
- having regard to Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012⁴, and in particular Article 70 thereof,
- having regard to Regulation (EEC) No 337/75 of the Council of 10 February 1975 establishing a European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training⁵, and in particular Article 12a thereof,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2019/128 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 January 2019 establishing a European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) and repealing Council Regulation (EEC) No 337/75⁶, and in particular Article 15 thereof,
- having regard to Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1271/2013 of

¹ OJ C 417, 11.12.2019, p. 1.

² OJ C 417, 11.12.2019, p. 1.

³ OJ L 298, 26.10.2012, p. 1.

⁴ OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p. 1.

⁵ OJ L 39, 13.2.1975, p. 1.

⁶ OJ L 30, 31.1.2019, p. 90.

30 September 2013 on the framework financial regulation for the bodies referred to in Article 208 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council¹, and in particular Article 108 thereof,

- having regard to Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/715 of 18 December 2018 on the framework financial regulation for the bodies set up under the TFEU and Euratom Treaty and referred to in Article 70 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council², and in particular Article 105 thereof,
 - having regard to Rule 100 of and Annex V to its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A9-0040/2020),
1. Approves the closure of the accounts of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training for the financial year 2018;
 2. Instructs its President to forward this decision to the Executive Director of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop), the Council, the Commission and the Court of Auditors, and to arrange for its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union* (L series).

¹ OJ L 328, 7.12.2013, p. 42.

² OJ L 122, 10.5.2019, p. 1.

3. European Parliament resolution of 14 May 2020 with observations forming an integral part of the decision on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (now European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop)) for the financial year 2018 (2019/2066(DEC))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its decision on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training for the financial year 2018,
 - having regard to Rule 100 of and Annex V to its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A9-0040/2020),
- A. whereas, according to its statement of revenue and expenditure¹, the final budget of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (the ‘Centre’) for the financial year 2018 was EUR 17 850 210, representing a slight decrease of 0,11 % compared to 2017; whereas the budget of the Centre derives mainly from the Union budget²;
- B. whereas the Court of Auditors (the ‘Court’), in its report on the Centre’s annual accounts for the financial year 2018 (the ‘Court’s report’), states that it has obtained reasonable assurances that the Centre’s annual accounts are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular;

Budget and financial management

1. Notes with satisfaction that the budget monitoring efforts during the financial year 2018 resulted in a budget implementation rate of 100 %, representing a slight increase of 0,04 % compared to 2017; notes that the payment appropriations execution rate was at 96,50 %, representing an increase of 6,84 % compared to the 2017;

Performance

2. Notes that the Centre uses an exemplary performance measurement system that includes key performance indicators to assess the added value provided by its activities in the project, activity and organisational levels and other measures to improve its budget management;
3. Notes furthermore that the Centre’s Work Programme 2018 has been fully implemented in line with the set objectives, targets and indications;
4. Welcomes the fact that the Centre is developing synergies and sharing resources with the other agencies;

¹ OJ C 108, 22.3.2018, p. 1.

² OJ C 108, 22.3.2018, p. 2.

5. Notes the Centre's continued and formalised close cooperation with the European Training Foundation (ETF) and the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound);
6. Notes that the external evaluation, to which the Centre was submitted in 2017, as required by the financial rules, concluded that the Centre's reinforced cooperation with the three other decentralised agencies within the remit of the Commission's Directorate-General for Employment - ETF, the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) and Eurofound - emerged as a feasible option; notes that the Centre's recast founding regulation (Regulation (EU) 2019/128), which came into force in February 2019, took up the outcome of that external evaluation;
7. Calls on the Commission to conduct a feasibility study in order to assess the possibility of, if not fully merging, then at the very least setting up shared synergies with Eurofound; calls on the Commission to evaluate both scenarios, namely the transfer of the Centre to the Eurofound Headquarters in Loughlinstown, Ireland, and the transfer of the Eurofound Headquarters to the Centre's Thessaloniki Headquarters; notes that this would result in the sharing of corporate and support services and the common management of premises, as well as the sharing of ICT, telecommunications and internet-based infrastructures, saving a significant amount of costs, which could be used on further funding for both agencies; acknowledges that the effective, efficient and error-free work of the agencies is closely linked to an adequate level of funding to cover their operational and administrative activities; therefore, calls on Member States to accommodate the activities the agencies have to perform to the funding they are assigned;
8. Calls on the Centre to pursue the digitalisation of the institution;
9. Encourages the Centre to implement the Court's recommendations;
10. Appreciates the Centre's expertise and its continued high-quality work to provide research, analyses and technical advice to assist the development of European lifelong learning and vocational education and training (VET), qualifications and skills policies with the aim of promoting high-quality training tailored to the needs of the labour market; stresses, to that end, the importance of ensuring adequate material and human resources allowing the Centre to implement its growing and changing tasks, while ensuring, in general, the Centre's pre-eminence over private contractors;
11. Welcomes the Centre's contributions and expertise in providing new knowledge, evidence and policy analysis, monitoring policy trends and acting as a knowledge broker to highly relevant policy themes on the Union agenda; acknowledges the Centre's quality work on different projects, in particular the Skills Agenda for Europe, Europass, the revision of the Skills Panorama and its role in supporting the participants of the Copenhagen process, the European Skills Index and Skills forecast;
12. Considers it to be noteworthy that the Centre has launched a new strand of digitalisation, and in particular with regard to its online tools, providing country-specific information and improved visualisation opportunities of online data, such as guidance resources on labour market information or skills forecasts; acknowledges to that end the Centre's targeted marketing campaigns in raising awareness of the content of its website;

13. Highlights that transparency and citizens' awareness of the existence of the agencies are essential for their democratic accountability; considers that the usability and ease of use of agency resources and data are of paramount importance; calls therefore for an assessment of how data and resources are currently presented and made available and of the degree to which citizens find them easy to identify, recognise and use; recalls that public awareness in this respect can be raised by Member States through developing a comprehensive plan to reach out to more Union citizens;

Staff policy

14. Notes that, on 31 December 2018, the establishment plan was 96,70 % executed, with 12 officials and 76 temporary agents appointed out of 78 temporary agents and 13 officials authorised under the Union budget (compared to 92 authorised posts in 2017); notes that in addition 26 contract agents and three seconded national experts worked for the Centre in 2018;
15. Notes that the Centre has been taking measures in light of the observations and comments from the discharge authority related to the Centre's new head of service for human resources, which took up duties in January 2019, as well as to the decision to externalise the Centre's legal service; notes with concern that, given the high number of legal cases with which the Centre is involved, the full outsourcing of legal services creates a risk to the consistent treatment of cases and to the principle of efficiency; calls on the Centre to report to the discharge authority of any developments in that regard;
16. Notes the Centre's ongoing process to improve selection procedures by ensuring compliance with designing criteria assessed by the selection boards and increased controls by human resources; notes with concern that, according to the Court's report, the two audited recruitments made in 2018 from two reserve lists established in 2015 and 2016 were inadequately managed and documented, as was the case for several other recruitment procedures audited in previous years; urges the Centre to take immediate corrective actions to ensure regular recruitment procedures and to report to the discharge authority on the measures taken to that effect;
17. Notes the Centre's concern that its new founding regulation extends the mandate of the Centre to include qualifications and skills policies in addition to VET, but without accompanying the new duties by additional resources; notes that the Centre has already experienced a 10 % staff reduction and this experience has led to an increased workload and pressure for staff in the Centre;
18. Welcomes the fact that the Centre has close to an overall gender balance among its staff (59 % women female and 41 % men), but regrets the lack of detail provided regarding gender balance at management levels;
19. Notes with satisfaction that gender balance was achieved in 2018 with respect to the members of the management board (50 % women and 50 % men);
20. Regrets the lack of clarity provided regarding the geographical balance of the staff;

Procurement

21. Deplores the fact that, according to the Court's report, in the procurement procedure for the Centre's travel agency services, price and quality criteria were not always detailed

enough to ensure the procurement of the best value for money contracts; regrets the fact that the Centre's methodology and documentation of potentially abnormally low offers was insufficient;

Prevention and management of conflicts of interests and transparency

22. Notes the Centre's existing measures and ongoing efforts with regard to ensuring transparency, the prevention and management of conflicts of interests, and the protection of whistleblowers; points out with concern, however, that the Centre does not yet publish the CVs of its senior management on its website, and that the Centre's senior management, in-house experts and assistants declare potential conflicts of interests only as they occur in accordance with the Centre's 2014 policy on the prevention and management of conflicts of interests; notes the Centre's updated guidelines on reporting conflicts of interests in selection and recruitment processes and its preparation of revised rules for the prevention and management of conflicts of interests for management board members, independent experts and other staff;
23. Welcomes the fact that, in light of the observations and comments of the discharge authority, the Centre adopted implementing rules concerning Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001¹ on 2 September 2019;
24. Notes, in light of the observations and comments of the discharge authority, the establishment of an independent disclosure, advice and referral body for whistleblowers by the appointment of the Centre's internal control coordinator as the Centre's ethics and integrity correspondent;

General

25. Calls on the Centre to focus on disseminating the results of its research to the public, and to reach out to public via the social media and other media outlets;

Internal audit

26. Notes with deep concern that following the audit conducted by the internal audit service on the Centre's human resources management and ethics from 14 to 18 January 2018, recruitment procedures were still ranked as critical;

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27. Refers, for other observations of a cross-cutting nature accompanying its decision on discharge, to its resolution of 14 May 2020² on the performance, financial management and control of the agencies.

¹ Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents (OJ L 145, 31.5.2001, p. 43).

² Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0121.