



TEXTS ADOPTED

P9_TA(2022)0154

Discharge 2020: European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop)

1. European Parliament decision of 4 May 2022 on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) for the financial year 2020 (2021/2119(DEC))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the final annual accounts of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) for the financial year 2020,
- having regard to the Court of Auditors' annual report on EU agencies for the financial year 2020, 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 2020, pursuant to Article 287 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to the Council's recommendation of 28 February 2022 on discharge to be given to the Centre in respect of the implementation of the budget for the financial year 2020 (06003/2022 – C9-0074/2022),
- having regard to Article 319 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- 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 966/2012³, and in particular Article 70 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

¹ OJ C 439, 29.10.2021, p. 3. ECA annual report on EU agencies for the financial year 2020: <https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/Pages/DocItem.aspx?did=59697>.

² OJ C 439, 29.10.2021, p. 3. ECA annual report on EU agencies for the financial year 2020: <https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/Pages/DocItem.aspx?did=59697>.

³ OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p. 1.

Vocational Training (Cedefop) and repealing Council Regulation (EEC) No 337/75¹, and in particular Article 15 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 (A9-0125/2022),
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 2020;
 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 30, 31.1.2019, p. 90.

² OJ L 122, 10.5.2019, p. 1.

2. European Parliament decision of 4 May 2022 on the closure of the accounts of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) for the financial year 2020 (2021/2119(DEC))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the final annual accounts of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) for the financial year 2020,
- having regard to the Court of Auditors' annual report on EU agencies for the financial year 2020, 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 2020, pursuant to Article 287 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to the Council's recommendation of 28 February 2022 on discharge to be given to the Centre in respect of the implementation of the budget for the financial year 2020 (06003/2022 – C9-0074/2022),
- having regard to Article 319 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- 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 966/2012³, and in particular Article 70 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 337/75⁴, and in particular Article 15 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,

¹ OJ C 439, 29.10.2021, p. 3. ECA annual report on EU agencies for the financial year 2020: <https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/Pages/DocItem.aspx?did=59697>.

² OJ C 439, 29.10.2021, p. 3. ECA annual report on EU agencies for the financial year 2020: <https://www.eca.europa.eu/en/Pages/DocItem.aspx?did=59697>.

³ OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p. 1.

⁴ OJ L 30, 31.1.2019, p. 90.

⁵ OJ L 122, 10.5.2019, p. 1.

- having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A9-0125/2022),
- 1. Approves the closure of the accounts of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) for the financial year 2020;
- 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).

3. European Parliament resolution of 4 May 2022 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 (Cedefop) for the financial year 2020 (2021/2119(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 (Cedefop) for the financial year 2020,
 - 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 (A9-0125/2022),
- A. whereas, according to its statement of revenue and expenditure¹, the final budget of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) (the ‘Centre’) for the financial year 2020 was EUR 18 277 890, representing an increase of 2,30 % in comparison with the 2019 budget; whereas the Centre’s budget derives mainly from the Union budget;
- B. whereas the Court of Auditors (the ‘Court’), in its report on the Centre’s annual accounts for the financial year 2020 (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 2020 resulted in a budget implementation rate of 100 %, representing a slight increase of 0,01 % compared to 2019; notes the fact that the target for the commitment implementation rate set for 2020 in the Centre’s work programme (98 %) was achieved; notes with satisfaction that the payment appropriation rate is 93,76 %, representing a slight decrease of 1,36 % compared to 2019;
2. Notes with concern from the Court’s report that the Centre did not apply the proper method for calculating the contributions for Iceland and Norway, similarly to 2019; notes that the cooperation agreement Cedefop and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) provides for EFTA cooperation partners to contribute at a level determined by the proportion of their GNP to the total GNP of the European Economic Area (EEA) and that Norway’s and Iceland’s contributions in the initial budget were calculated according to the proportion of their GDP (2,27 % for Norway and 0,14 % for Iceland) to the GDP of the Members States in the EEA, not to the total GNP of the EEA; notes that, as a result, Norway and Iceland contributed EUR 8 601 less to the Centre’s 2020 budget than they should have done and that the Union contributed EUR 8 601 more; notes that, although payment appropriations and revenues were reduced by EUR 1 100 000 in the first 2020 budget amendment, no part of the budget reduction was returned to Norway and Iceland,

¹ OJ C 114, 31.03.2021, p. 4.

thus they contributed EUR 25 886 more in 2020; notes that the implementation of the correct method for calculating contributions is still ongoing despite the recommendations on the method for calculating contributions made by the Court in 2019;

3. Welcomes, however, the Centre's aim to establish a transparent and easy-to-apply methodology and prompt action to address it following the recommendation of the Commission's Directorate-General for Budget (DG BUDG) through the Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), as part of the 'Agreement on the European Economic Area - Protocol 31';
4. Welcomes the fact that, with the exception of one ongoing action related to the method for calculating contributions set out in the Statement on Cedefop-EFTA cooperation, the Centre completed all other actions taken to Court's observations related to the implementation of the budget for the financial years 2018 and 2019;

Performance

5. Notes that the Centre uses a noteworthy performance measurement system that includes key performance indicators to assess the added value provided by its activities on project, activity and organisational levels and other measures to improve its budget management; welcomes the presence of the environmental indicator 'CO₂ (ton) emissions' as it proves the engagement of the Centre in achieving green objectives and is a useful benchmark to track the evolution of post-pandemic emissions and the Centre's CO₂ footprint;
6. Commends the Centre on its multiple contributions to Union policy-making, in particular the Commission's European Skills Agenda for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (European Skills Agenda), the first ever Council recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) and the Osnabrück declaration;
7. Notes that on 4 May 2020 the Centre signed a new service-level agreement with the European Union Agency for Cyber Security (ENISA) to share resources, such as confidential counsellors' services between the two agencies; notes with interest that in 2021, the Centre and ENISA shared resources also regarding the Data Protection Officer;
8. Appreciates the Centre's expertise and high-quality work, providing research, analyses and technical advice in VET, qualifications and skills policies, with the aim of promoting high-quality training tailored to the needs of individuals and of the labour market;
9. Stresses the Centre's importance, autonomy and added value in its field of expertise;
10. Welcomes, in particular, the Centre's recent work in helping to analyse the impact of the pandemic and digital transition on adapting business practices to the new realities in the Union labour market through e.g. the COVID-19 European Company Survey in conjunction with Eurofound;
11. Recalls the importance of the Centre's role in ensuring digital skills are integrated into VET across the Union and monitoring the implementation and impact of the Council's recommendations on the European Skills Agenda, VET for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience and the Digital Education Action Plan;
12. Highlights the need to ensure adequate human and financial resources allowing the Centre to continue implementing its work programme with a very high activity completion rate;

13. Notes that the Centre pursues the effort to improve the Centre's cyber security and protection of personal data, especially through training and awareness raising activities for staff;
14. Welcomes the fact that the Centre accomplished and even exceeded its work plan and the targets and deliverables set therein for 2020 despite the challenges caused by the pandemic;
15. Notes with satisfaction the good cooperation of the Centre with the European Training Foundation (ETF) and Eurofund; notes that the three agencies have an observer role at each other's management board meetings; notes further that the Centre and the ETF also collaborate within the framework of the inter-agency working group with the OECD, the ILO, UNESCO and other international organisations;

Staff policy

16. Notes that, on 31 December 2020, the establishment plan was 97 % implemented (compared to 95 % in 2019), with 78 temporary agents appointed out of 81 temporary agents and 10 officials authorised under the Union budget; notes that two interim workers and eight-and-a-half consultants (comprising eight working full time and one working half time) worked at the Centre in 2020, while the Centre did not use these resources in 2019;
17. Notes the lack of gender balance of the Centre's senior management, with four men (66,7 %) and two women (33,3 %); notes that regarding its overall staff, the gender balance is 57 % women and 43 % men;
18. Encourages the Centre to pursue the development of a long-term human resources policy framework which addresses work-life balance, lifelong guidance and career development, gender balance, geographical balance and the recruitment and integration of people with disabilities; welcomes the Centre's proactive approach to the implementation of telework over the last few years;
19. Notes with concern that the Centre's issues regarding the externalisation of its legal service highlighted by the discharge authority and the Court are still not resolved but welcomes the decision of the Centre to re-establish an internal legal advisor in 2021; calls on the Centre to continue to report to the discharge authority on any developments in that regard;
20. Notes that the mandate of the health and safety committee has expired; welcomes the announcement of a wellbeing committee; calls for the wellbeing committee to be set up as soon as possible;
21. Regrets that many staff members have difficulty in contacting national authorities, such as the health care system and the social security system; calls for more support for staff members who move to the country where the agency is located; suggests in this regard a liaison person to ensure, inter alia, the smooth running of connections between the Centre's staff and national authorities;
22. Calls on the EU Agencies Network (EUAN) to establish clear rules on staff member affiliation with the national healthcare system in Greece; recommends that these explicitly state what is covered by health insurance and until what date health insurance applies;

Procurement

23. Notes with concern that, according to the Court's report, the Centre made errors in procurement contract management; notes in particular the Court's finding that the Centre signed a contract based on a negotiated procedure, with one tender without any documented market research and that, eventually, the price offered exceeded the estimated budget by 98 %, bringing the value of the contract above the threshold for which a negotiated procedure is allowed with a single tender under the Financial Regulation;
24. Acknowledges that, to address the irregularity observed by the Court, the Centre cancelled that contract after the audit, with effect from 26 February 2021;
25. Notes, with regard to following up on the recommendations in the discharge authority's 2019 discharge, that the implementation of the recommendations concerning procurement documentation and methodology is completed;

Prevention and management of conflicts of interest, and transparency

26. Notes the Centre's existing measures and ongoing efforts to secure transparency, prevention and management of conflicts of interest and whistleblower protection; points out, however, that the Centre's management board consists of 94 members (including observers) and 63 alternates; notes that the Centre reported on 28 June 2021 that 93 out of 157 CVs are published on the Centre's website; notes the absence of some declarations of interest and CVs of the management board and reiterates that all members and alternates who attend management board meetings, or exercise the right to vote, must submit a declaration of interest; notes that the CVs of the Centre's senior management are published, while the CVs of external and in-house experts are not published; calls on the Centre to ensure full transparency by publishing CVs and declaration of interest of all members of the management board and the external and in-house experts concerned;
27. Deplores the high number of members of the management board (157) which does not facilitate decision-making or simplified management; recalls that according to Centre's founding regulation, members of its management board are obliged to publish their declaration of interest; recalls that management board members are also invited to provide short CVs, although this is not a formal requirement;

Internal control

28. Notes that in 2020 the Commission's internal audit service (IAS) conducted remotely a full risk assessment covering the Centre's administrative, financial, operational and IT process and a follow-up auditing conducted by the IAS concluded that the Centre had implemented all the recommendation adequately and effectively; notes that all six recommendations from the audit on human resources management and ethics have been implemented;

COVID-19 response and business continuity

29. Notes with satisfaction that the Centre promptly shaped and activated a crisis management plan to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic by taking precautionary measures, such as teleworking and the cancellation of physical events and missions, to ensure business continuity; notes furthermore that a revision of the Centre's risk assessment identified

budget implementation and occupation rate as critical risks; notes that the Centre reported that the actions put in place allow for an effective mitigation of both risks;

Other comments

30. Notes that the Centre pursues the effort to improve the Centre's cyber security and protection of personal data, especially through training and awareness raising activities for staff;
31. Calls on the Centre to continue to develop its synergies, increase cooperation and exchange of good practices with other Union agencies with a view to improving efficiency (including in human resources, building management, IT services and security);
32. Recalls the importance of increasing the digitalisation of the Centre in terms of internal operation and management but also in order to speed up the digitalisation of procedures; stresses the need for the Centre to continue to be proactive in this regard in order to avoid a digital gap between the agencies at all costs; draws attention, however, to the need to take all the necessary security measures to avoid any risk to the online security of the processed information;
33. Welcomes the effective collaboration with Union agencies in the context of the EUAN and the particular focus set on identifying and harvesting inter-agency synergies, in the area of administration; as well as in core business activities and performance management indicator methodology with the ETF, Eurofound and EU-OSHA;
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34. Refers, for other observations of a cross-cutting nature accompanying its decision on discharge, to its resolution of 4 May 2022¹ on the performance, financial management and control of the agencies.

¹ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2022)0196.