



**2024/2019(DEC)**

30.1.2025

# **OPINION**

of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

for the Committee on Budgetary Control

on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2023, Section III - Commission and executive agencies  
(2024/2019(DEC))

Rapporteur for opinion: Michael Gahler

PA\_NonLegDec

## OPINION

The Committee on Foreign Affairs calls on the Committee on Budgetary Control, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following into its motion for a resolution:

1. Points to the unprecedented challenges in the global environment, peace and geopolitical instability in the current year of audit; calls therefore for coordination among the Commission and the EEAS to be strengthened, particularly due to the lack of operational budget of the EEAS; recalls that since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the EU has provided economic, humanitarian and military support to Ukraine worth over €88 billion; emphasises the need for a rapid and substantial increase in support for Ukraine and in the light of the potential peace process in 2025, the continued importance of providing military support to Ukraine and preparing to assist with the reconstruction of the country;
2. Encourages further mobilisation of the European Peace Facility to address the pressing security challenges arising from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the ongoing hybrid threats faced by Moldova; emphasises the need to provide comprehensive support to bolster resilience, enhance defence capabilities, and counteract destabilising actions in both contexts;
3. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the full restitution of the Romanian National Treasure and the national heritage of several other Member States is on the agenda of any potential future actions regarding the Russian Federation;
4. Underlines that expenditures in heading 4 'Global Europe' are considered high-risk except for budget support payments and administrative expenditure which represent around 20%; notes that most errors found in this area concern expenditure not incurred, ineligible costs and non-compliance with public procurement rules;
5. Stresses that the Union budget must continue to provide support to build peace and stability in the Middle East region, to combat hate and fundamentalism and disinformation as well as to promote human rights, to fight impunity and strengthen adherence to the rule of law, including the rulings of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the Advisory Opinions of the International Court of Justice (ICJ); emphasises that, accordingly, EU budgets must under no circumstances support activities that work against those objectives; notes that following the heinous terror attacks of 7 October 2023 by Hamas and allegations of misuse of EU funds for terrorism, a funding review conducted by the Commission concluded that no evidence has been found to date that money has been diverted for unintended purposes and existing safeguards in place work well but certain additional measures were deemed necessary; emphasises the importance of ensuring that the EU funds are effectively allocated and managed in order to achieve their intended goals; recalls the ongoing issue of the destruction of EU-funded projects in Gaza and the West Bank and calls for greater accountability and safeguards in this context;
6. Urges to disburse in its entirety all financial commitments towards UNRWA; recalls that UNRWA is the principal humanitarian assistance structure in Gaza and the West Bank, as well as an essential service provider in the region; stresses the importance of the Southern Neighbourhood budget line in supporting political, economic and social

reforms in the region taking into consideration the increasing humanitarian needs, as well as other purposes of regional cooperation in providing assistance to refugees, in particular Syrian and Palestinian refugees;

7. Emphasise the need for the EU to increase financial and political support to strengthen the operational capacity and ensure the independence of the International Criminal Court within the framework of the "Agreement between the International Criminal Court and the European Union on cooperation and assistance," which establishes the commitment to international justice and the fight against impunity.
8. Calls on the Commission to thoroughly address the recommendations outlined in the European Court of Auditors (ECA) Special Report on the programming of the Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe; Emphasises the need to improve the methodology for allocating funding to Neighbourhood countries, ensure timely access to essential documents required for audits, simplify procedural frameworks, and clarify the methodology for assessing the impact of EU support<sup>1</sup>;
9. Underlines the extremely vulnerable situation of children in the world, specifically in armed conflict; expresses serious concern about the tens of thousands of children that were affected by armed conflict across the globe and suffered abhorrent abuses and violations of their most basic rights in 2023; urges the Commission to put children's rights at the top of the foreign affairs agenda;
10. Is deeply concerned by the proposal for a radical restructuring of the EU's presence abroad through a drastic reduction in staff numbers of EU Delegations, within the context of the abovementioned budgetary constraints; notes that, if approved, the plan will negatively impact the effectiveness of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) - Global Europe;
11. Contests the use by the European Commission of an urgent written procedure for the adoption of the Special Measure in favour of Tunisia for 2023, as part of the implementation of the contested Memorandum of Understanding signed with Tunisia in 2023, overlooking the EP's role and infringing thereof the NDICI-Global Europe Regulation (EU) 2021/947, the financial regulation and the Agreement between the European Parliament and the Commission of 10 June 2008 on procedures for implementing Council Decision 1999/468/EC laying down the procedures for the exercise of implementing powers conferred on the Commission, as amended by Decision 2006/512/EC; Recalls that a delegation from the Committee on Foreign Affairs was denied entry to Tunisia on 13 September 2023, impeding the Parliament's ability to exercise its powers of scrutiny; urges the European Commission and the EEAS to undertake all necessary initiatives towards the Tunisian authorities to allow the European Parliament exercising its legal duties;
12. Urges the Commission to enhance the rule of law conditionality-based approach of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) III funding in order for the instrument to serve its purpose of effectively preparing accession countries to fulfill the conditions of becoming EU Member States; reiterates its calls on the Commission to implement the

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.eca.europa.eu/ECAPublications/SR-2023-14/SR-2023-14\\_EN.pdf](https://www.eca.europa.eu/ECAPublications/SR-2023-14/SR-2023-14_EN.pdf)

recommendations of the European Court of Auditors Special Report 01/2022 in order to ensure an effective impact of EU financial assistance in support for the rule of law in the Western Balkans, in particular by developing guidelines on the application of the provisions on modulation and conditionality under IPA III;

13. Recalls the dire situation of women's rights and LGBTQI+ rights in many parts of the world; stresses the urgent need to better protect these rights and to ensure that EU funds and policies actively promote, gender equality, combat discrimination, and uphold the rights of LGBTQI+ individuals;
14. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the Palestinian Authority immediately removes all educational materials and content that fail to comply with UNESCO standards, particularly those promoting anti-Semitism, incitement to violence, hate speech, and the glorification of terrorism.
15. Expresses its concerns about the conclusions of the special report "The EU trust fund for Africa: despite new approaches, support remained unfocused", highlighting that the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa does not enough focus on the key priorities to address the deep causes of instability, displacement and irregular migration and most importantly notes with grave concerns that human rights risks were not comprehensively addressed. Recalls to the European Commission the EP concerns on the alleged violations of Human Rights in the framework of the migration management and on the European Commission's willingness to outsource the management of its external borders to neighbouring countries, such as Tunisia or Lybia.
16. Calls on the Commission to set a clear and transparent accountability mechanism of implementation of the Global Gateway strategy and to demonstrate a clear rationale for the use of development finance for the projects branded under the Global Gateway strategy and its equal benefits to recipient countries' public and private sector;
17. Recognises the multiple roles that civil society organisations play; recalls the EU's commitment to support civil society organisations in all external instruments and programmes and in all areas of cooperation, including through a flexible and tailor-made approach to funding in order to reach all types of civil society organisations; calls on the Commission to involve civil society organisations more systematically in Global Gateway and Team Europe Initiatives;
18. Sees electoral observation mission as a practical and effective foreign policy instrument that remains central to the EU's democracy support policies and strategies; calls on the EU to ensure adequate resources to the EU electoral observation missions, in view also of extending them to elections in candidate and neighbouring countries.
19. Regrets the fact that the CFSP budget for civilian CSDP missions has only marginally increased from the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2014-2020 to the MFF 2021-2027 (from a starting point of approximately EUR 350 million per year), while at the same time the number and tasks of missions has increased, the security environment has become more challenging, the cost of operations has increased, inflation has grown and the number of contracted personnel has increased, therefore limiting the potential for expanding the current missions' mandates or possibly establishing new missions in response to urgent security needs; calls for a substantive increase of funding for the

CFSP budget, while at the same time ensuring the efficient use of the funds allocated to the CSDP civilian missions, in order to make sure that they effectively respond to crisis situations and unforeseen events, and to actively identify where complementary projects and programmes could be funded from other relevant EU budgets, ensuring sound financial management and the careful prioritisation of existing resources; calls also for the structure of the CFSP budget to be changed and for the generation of one budget line per civilian CSDP mission, in order to allow for better scrutiny and increased transparency;

20. Stresses that, ahead of increasing geopolitical challenges and crisis worldwide, the EU needs to be able to rely on necessary first-hand information on global issues occurring outside its borders; calls, in this regard, for strengthening the EU INTCEN, the EEAS Crisis Response Center and the SatCen by enhancing its staff and financial resources, as well as its capabilities Considers it essential for the EU to increase its investment in public and cultural diplomacy and communication efforts, particularly ahead of the active engagement of authoritarian and illiberal regimes; stresses, therefore, the need to allocate the necessary resources to the Strategic Communication and Foresight division of the EEAS; Highlights the EEAS and Commission's efforts to fight disinformation and foreign interference, and welcomes the announcement of the creation of the Task Force for Strategic Communication and Countering Information Manipulation in DG COMM; stresses the need to ensure adequate resources for the EEAS and the Commission in this regard;
21. Recalls that in line with Article 11.2 TEU, EU institutions should maintain an open, transparent and structured dialogue with civil society organisations and representative associations; in this regard, stresses that success to structural funding is a prerequisite to ensure public participation; highlights that without structural funding, it would not be possible for citizens to have their voice channelled at the EU level through their representative associations, as well as to sustain a regular dialogue with EU institutions contributing to democratic participation in policy making and to an open and wide-ranging dialogue, ensuring that the diversity of views and concerns are taken into account with equal access for public interest as compared to commercial interest; stresses that civil society organisations exercise a monitoring role on the implementation of EU policies and legislation, including the use of EU funds, and act as checks and balances in areas such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law; recalls the commitment of the Commission in its political guidelines to step up its engagement with civil society organisations that have expertise and play an important in upholding human rights, including in third countries; in this context, highlights that while the Commission should not mandate NGOs to pursue certain activities or support specific positions or policies, it remains fundamental that civil society organisations, through EU funding can engage in an "open, transparent and structured dialogue with EU institutions" as enshrined in Article 11 TEU through activities such as advocacy activities, demonstrations or judicial actions and these should remain eligible in the relevant funding programs and have sufficient dedicated funding available;

## **ANNEX: ENTITIES OR PERSONS**

## **FROM WHOM THE RAPPORTEUR FOR THE OPINION HAS RECEIVED INPUT**

The rapporteur for opinion declares under his exclusive responsibility that he did not receive input from any entity or person to be mentioned in this Annex pursuant to Article 8 of Annex I to the Rules of Procedure.

## INFORMATION ON ADOPTION BY COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

<b>Date adopted</b>	30.1.2025
<b>Result of final vote</b>	+: 52 -: 20 0: 2
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Mika Aaltola, Lucia Annunziata, Petras Auštrevičius, Jordan Bardella, Dan Barna, Wouter Beke, Robert Biedroń, Ioan-Rareș Bogdan, Marc Botenga, Grzegorz Braun, Sebastião Bugalho, Danilo Della Valle, Özlem Demirel, Elio Di Rupo, Michael Gahler, Geadis Gadi, Giorgos Georgiou, Raphaël Glucksmann, Bernard Guetta, Rima Hassan, Rasa Juknevičienė, Sandra Kalniete, Łukasz Kohut, Rihards Kols, Andrey Kovatchev, Vilis Krištopans, Nathalie Loiseau, Claudiu Manda, David McAllister, Vangelis Meimarakis, Sven Mikser, Francisco José Millán Mon, Arkadiusz Mularczyk, Leoluca Orlando, Kostas Papadakis, Tonino Picula, Thijs Reuten, Nacho Sánchez Amor, Andreas Schieder, Alexander Sell, Villy Søvndal, Davor Ivo Stier, Sebastiaan Stöteler, Stanislav Stoyanov, Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, Michał Szczerba, António Tânger Corrêa, Marta Temido, Cristian Terheș, Riho Terras, Hermann Tertsch, Pierre-Romain Thionnet, Sebastian Tynkkynen, Reinier Van Lanschot, Roberto Vannacci, Hilde Vautmans, Harald Vilimsky, Željana Zovko
<b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>	Jaume Asens Llodrà, Malik Azmani, Engin Eroglu, Sandra Gómez López, Evin Incir, András László, Ana Catarina Mendes, Hans Neuhoff, Nicolás Pascual de la Parte, Chloé Ridet, Tineke Strik, Șerban Dimitrie Sturdza, Ingeborg Ter Laak, Matej Tonin, Ivaylo Valchev, Isabel Wiseler-Lima
<b>Members under Rule 216(7) present for the final vote</b>	Catarina Vieira



## FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

52	+
ECR	Rihards Kols, Arkadiusz Mularczyk, Cristian Terheş, Ivaylo Valchev
PPE	Mika Aaltola, Wouter Beke, Ioan-Rareş Bogdan, Sebastião Bugalho, Michael Gahler, Sandra Kalniete, Łukasz Kohut, Andrey Kovatchev, David McAllister, Vangelis Meimarakis, Francisco José Millán Mon, Nicolás Pascual de la Parte, Davor Ivo Stier, Michał Szczerba, Ingeborg Ter Laak, Riho Terras, Matej Tonin, Isabel Wiseler-Lima, Željana Zovko
Renew	Petras Auštrevičius, Malik Azmani, Dan Barna, Engin Eroglu, Bernard Guetta, Nathalie Loiseau, Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann, Hilde Vautmans
S&D	Lucia Annunziata, Robert Biedroń, Elio Di Rupo, Raphaël Glucksmann, Sandra Gómez López, Evin Incir, Claudiu Manda, Ana Catarina Mendes, Sven Mikser, Tonino Picula, Thijs Reuten, Chloé Ridet, Nacho Sánchez Amor, Andreas Schieder, Marta Temido
Verts/ALE	Jaume Asens Llodrà, Leoluca Orlando, Villy Søvndal, Tineke Strik, Reinier Van Lanschot, Catarina Vieira

20	-
ECR	Geadis Geadí
ESN	Hans Neuhoff, Alexander Sell, Stanislav Stoyanov
NI	Grzegorz Braun, Kostas Papadakis
PfE	Jordan Bardella, Vilis Krištopans, András László, Sebastiaan Stöteler, António Tänger Corrêa, Hermann Tertsch, Pierre-Romain Thionnet, Roberto Vannacci, Harald Vilimsky
The Left	Marc Botenga, Danilo Della Valle, Özlem Demirel, Giorgos Georgiou, Rima Hassan

2	0
ECR	Șerban Dimitrie Sturdza, Sebastian Tynkkynen

### Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention