



2023/2129(DEC)

31.1.2024

OPINION

of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

for the Committee on Budgetary Control

on 2022 discharge: General budget of the EU - Commission
(2023/2129(DEC))

Rapporteur for opinion: Katalin Cseh

PA_NonLeg

SUGGESTIONS

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

1. Calls attention to the fact that the current year of audit is the one during which Russia launched its full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine, the worldwide effects of which have dramatically increased pressure on many EU partners and increased the need for investments in sustainable development and humanitarian assistance; expresses satisfaction that the flexibility of the Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe of the Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-GE) allowed the Union to quickly adapt to the extraordinary set of circumstances; urges, however, the Commission and the EEAS to take further measures to ensure that the cushion of the Instrument in the future is used more as intended, since its excessive early use has resulted in its being depleted very quickly and used beyond its core purpose of responding to emerging challenges and priorities; recalls Parliament's standing position that new priorities should be financed with additional resources;
2. Reiterates commitment to the goals of the NDICI-GE instrument namely eradicating poverty, combating climate change, addressing food insecurity and promoting sustainable human development; recalls that the EU and Member States' commitment to increase Official Development Assistance (ODA) to 0.7% of the gross national income by 2030, allocating at least 20% under the Instrument to social inclusion and human development, including inequalities, gender equality, education and women's empowerment;
3. Recalls that the rule of law, the EU's fundamental values and the respect for human rights in recipient countries are embedded in the basic acts of IPA III and of NDICI-GE; calls on the Commission to modify assistance should threats to democracy, the rule of law, human rights of fundamental freedoms so require;
4. Stresses the need for the EFSD+ to support investments for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); highlights the importance of a holistic approach to human security; calls accordingly for full implementation of the EU Gender Action Plan III, operationalising the EU Global Health Strategy and Youth Action Plan in external action; emphasises the need to enhance the EU's efforts in promoting and protecting human rights, welcoming the mid-term review of the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy; strongly supports the Council conclusions of May 4, 2023, on corruption as an obstacle to development;
5. Calls on the Commission to send clear signals to those candidate countries in which a backlash against rule of law standards - including limitations on the freedom of expression, the freedom of press, women's and minority rights, the harassment of NGOs and human rights defenders - is jeopardising or delaying their accession to the EU; invites the Commission to examine the efficiency of the funds spent on the improvement of the state of the Rule of Law in the accession countries and report back to the AFET and CONT committees;

6. Takes note of the European Court of Auditors' Special Report regarding the programming which concluded that it was comprehensively designed, addressing a broad range of partner country needs and EU priorities; highlights the identified deficiencies in the methodologies used for allocating funding to countries and in the setup of the monitoring framework; recommends therefore that the Commission and the EEAS improve the methodology for allocating funding and the assessment of the impact of EU support, focus the scope of the programming process, simplify and consistently use the indicators in the multiannual indicative programmes; suggests, in the framework of the mid term evaluation of the Instrument that the nomenclature be revised introducing a higher level of detail for transparency, predictability, accountability, scrutiny, and to enhance the budgetary authority's capacity to make choices reflecting political priorities; regrets the two different approaches applied by the Commission and EEAS within the Instrument for the allocation of funding to Neighbourhood and non-Neighbourhood countries and asks that they be standardised, comparable and transparent in order to facilitate the audit trail;
7. Emphasises the significance of meeting all spending and program-related targets outlined in the NDICI-GE instrument and calls for comprehensive information to be provided on the progress achieved; expresses regret over the significant shortfalls in reaching the Instrument's 30% climate target, in contributing to the 10% biodiversity target in the MFF for 2026 and 2027, and in ensuring that the EU's global financial commitments under the UN framework are fulfilled, in particular as regards the contribution to the Loss and Damage Fund; highlights the increasing pressure climate change puts on food production and access, particularly in vulnerable regions, impacting food security and nutrition; reminds that biodiversity is key in combating climate change, and its loss undermines progress on approximately 80% of the assessed targets for the SDGs; calls on the Commission for a detailed plan outlining how it intends to meet spending and gender targets by the end of the MFF;
8. Reiterates its call on the Commission to implement the 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 the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) III;
9. Encourages further mobilisation of the European Peace Facility in response to Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, which sends a clear signal of a paradigm shift for EU foreign and security policy; notes the Special Report of the European Court of Auditors which recommends sequencing of existing EU defence planning and cooperation tools to assess how to further develop planning for EU defence funding;
10. Welcomes the Commission's revised Code of Practice on Disinformation, adopted in 2022; calls for the established Task Force which meets on a regular basis to monitor and adapt the commitments in view of technological, societal, market and legislative developments; stresses the need for the EU to increase the visibility of its actions through a better, more strategic communication of its external actions towards its own citizens and beyond;

11. Commends the Commission's adoption of the EUR 25 million assistance program "EU4Belarus: Supporting societal resilience and human capital development" which further strengthens the resilience and capacity of the Belarusian people to promote democratic changes in Belarus at the time of political crisis;
12. Underlines 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 to promote human rights; awaits the review the Commission is conducting on the use of Union funds; underlines the interlinkages between stability and sustainable development, particularly in fragile countries and regions;
13. Notes the conclusion of the Commission's internal review regarding the Union funds for Palestine, which concluded that the Commission controls and existing safeguards in place work well and found no evidence that money has been diverted for unintended purposes; calls on to the Commission to duly disburse the EU funds to Palestine, notably to Palestinian civil society, which plays a pivotal role in promoting human rights and secular values, as well as the fight against radicalisation;
14. Underlines that the EU's budget should be managed in compliance with the Treaties and EU acquis, including provisions related to fundamental rights compliance, transparency and accountability towards the European Parliament and EU citizens; regrets, against that backdrop, the modus operandi of the Commission in its management of the external migration budget lines, notably the absence of fundamental rights impact assessments prior to migration projects in third countries, absence of publicly available overviews of budgets and projects and the Commission's systematic refusal to provide Parliament with budgetary migration related spending overviews per country and MOCADDEM related documentation, despite several formal requests and commitments under the Framework Agreement on relations between the European Parliament and the Commission: urges the Commission to significantly improve these practices with immediate effect, notably by performing ex ante human rights impact assessments before projects, creating a public overview of all migration related projects in third countries and systematically putting Parliament on equal footing with the Council in terms of the level of information provided;
15. Stresses the importance of education and the critical need to denounce and eradicate all manifestations of hate speech and violent actions on both sides; underscores that the suspension of funding should not occur arbitrarily or without transparent and independent evidence of misuse; commends the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) for its indispensable humanitarian endeavours in Gaza and its pivotal role in delivering quality education, with a specific emphasis on fostering a human rights culture, even in challenging times;
16. Urges the Commission to enhance the Rule of Law conditionality based approach of IPA III funding, in order for the instrument to serve its' purpose of effectively preparing accession countries to fulfil the conditions of becoming EU Member States, considers a particular emphasis on the Rule of Law and democracy related conditions to be of importance in this regard;
17. Highlights the importance of the Global Gateway strategy which can significantly

contribute to initiatives on connectivity, green and digital cooperation and that it needs to be focused and clearly structured in order to deliver transformational impact in partner countries while promoting universal values and using resources in the best way possible; strongly supports leveraging the EU budget and private sector involvement for contributing to Agenda 2030; calls on the Commission to set a clear and transparent accountability mechanism for implementation of the strategy and to demonstrate 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 sectors;

18. Recognises the multiple roles that Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) play; recalls the EU's commitment to support CSOs 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 CSOs; calls on the Commission to involve CSOs more systematically in the Global Gateway and Team Europe Initiatives;
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 the missions have increased, the security environment has become more challenging, the cost of operations has increased, inflation has risen 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;
20. 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.

**ANNEX: ENTITIES OR PERSONS
FROM WHOM THE RAPPORTEUR HAS RECEIVED INPUT**

The rapporteur declares under her exclusive responsibility that she 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 IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	23.1.2024
Result of final vote	+: 48 -: 2 0: 9
Members present for the final vote	Alexander Alexandrov Yordanov, Maria Arena, Petras Auštrevičius, Krzysztof Brejza, Reinhard Bütikofer, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Anna Fotyga, Michael Gahler, Giorgos Georgiou, Sunčana Glavak, Raphaël Glucksmann, Klemen Grošelj, Bernard Guetta, Márton Gyöngyösi, Dietmar Köster, Andrius Kubilius, Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Jean-Lin Lacapelle, Miriam Lexmann, Nathalie Loiseau, Leopoldo López Gil, Antonio López-Istúriz White, Thierry Mariani, David McAllister, Vangelis Meimarakis, Francisco José Millán Mon, Alessandra Moretti, Javier Nart, Matjaž Nemeč, Demetris Papadakis, Kostas Papadakis, Tonino Picula, Thijs Reuten, Nacho Sánchez Amor, Mounir Satouri, Jordi Solé, Tineke Strik, Dominik Tarczyński, Hermann Tertsch, Viola von Cramon-Taubadel, Thomas Waitz, Isabel Wiseler-Lima, Tomáš Zdechovský, Bernhard Zimniok, Željana Zovko
Substitutes present for the final vote	Attila Ara-Kovács, Adam Bielan, Özlem Demirel, Christophe Grudler, Arba Kokalari, Georgios Kyrtos, Katrin Langensiepen, Karsten Lucke, Erik Marquardt, Juozas Olekas, Bert-Jan Ruissen, Christian Sagartz, Mick Wallace
Substitutes under Rule 209(7) present for the final vote	Theresa Bielowski

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

48	+
ECR	Adam Bielan
NI	Márton Gyöngyösi
PPE	Alexander Alexandrov Yordanov, Krzysztof Brejza, Michael Gahler, Sunčana Glavak, Arba Kokalari, Andrius Kubilius, Miriam Lexmann, Leopoldo López Gil, Antonio López-Istúriz White, David McAllister, Vangelis Meimarakis, Francisco José Millán Mon, Christian Sagartz, Isabel Wiseler-Lima, Tomáš Zdechovský, Željana Zovko
Renew	Petras Auštrevičius, Klemen Grošelj, Christophe Grudler, Bernard Guetta, Georgios Kyrtos, Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Nathalie Loiseau, Javier Nart
S&D	Attila Ara-Kovács, Maria Arena, Theresa Bielowski, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Raphaël Glucksmann, Dietmar Köster, Karsten Lucke, Alessandra Moretti, Matjaž Nemeč, Juozas Olekas, Demetris Papadakis, Tonino Picula, Thijs Reuten, Nacho Sánchez Amor
Verts/ALE	Reinhard Bütikofer, Katrin Langensiepen, Erik Marquardt, Mounir Satouri, Jordi Solé, Tineke Strik, Viola von Cramon-Taubadel, Thomas Waitz

2	-
ID	Bernhard Zimniok
NI	Kostas Papadakis

9	0
ECR	Anna Fotyga, Bert-Jan Ruissen, Dominik Tarczyński, Hermann Tertsch
ID	Jean-Lin Lacapelle, Thierry Mariani
The Left	Özlem Demirel, Giorgos Georgiou, Mick Wallace

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention