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Press release | 28.04.2021

EU Budget: Lack of transparency around agricultural spending & conflicts of interest damage confidence in EU decision making

This week, MEPs are voting on 52 separate 'discharge reports' on the various EU institutions and agencies for 2019. The Discharge procedure is a chance to examine EU spending and verify whether the EU budget has been used efficiently and legally. The votes on the Discharge reports come days after the Commission released its long awaited audit report into the conflicts of interest around the Czech Prime Minister, Andrej Babiš and his Agrofert group of companies.

Viola von Cramon MEP, Greens/EFA Member of the Budgetary Control Committee and shadow rapporteur on the Commission Discharge for 2019, comments:

"EU spending must be accountable to European citizens and the Common Agricultural Policy is the second biggest chunk of the EU budget, yet we still don't know who receives this money. The Commission is unable to provide a list of the top 50 beneficiaries of EU Agricultural Funds, which inspires little confidence in the current model for the CAP that is being negotiated. The current CAP proposal repeats the mistakes of the past and will be disastrous for sustainable farmers, the environment and animal welfare, and must be reworked.

"However, we do know that one recipient of extremely large amounts of EU agricultural subsidies is the sitting Czech Prime Minister, Andrej Babiš. The Commission has clearly identified how his conflict of interest breach both EU and Czech law. His private company 'Agrofert,' must pay back the funds after February 2017, which are deemed irregular by the Commission in their audit, and have its EU funding cut until this conflict is resolved. It should not be up to Czech or European taxpayers to foot the bill for the questionable ethics of one man. Now, the Council needs to set out how it will address a situation where one of the members of the Council will be deciding on funds that could benefit him personally. Massive conflicts of interest at the highest level seriously damage confidence in the European decision making process.

"It's clear from the 2019 reports that the EU's budgetary backlog is piling up and now stands at two years' worth of EU expenditure, or €297 billion. With the recovery fund coming up and the backlog getting bigger, the Commission urgently needs to address this, or the EU could genuinely face insolvency soon."

More:
Greens/EFA MEPs from the Budgetary Control Committee that work on the discharge are: Viola von

Cramon (European Commssion), Daniel Freund (European Parliament), Mikuláš Peksa (Other Institutions), Bas Eickhout (EU Agencies), Michele Rivasi (European Development Fund & Joint undertakings). Should you wish to arrange interviews with one of MEPs on these areas, please do not hesitate to get in touch.
The 2019 Discharge for Frontex will be postponed due to MEPs' concerns over human rights abuses, lobbying and spending by the border agency.

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Responsible MEPs



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