

Press release – Approving most of EU’s accounts, EP requests new measures to protect EU spending



The Parliament, voting on Wednesday by 499 votes in favour, 136 against and 56 abstentions, granted discharge of the Commission’s accounts for 2018 (covering 94% of the whole EU budget). In the accompanying resolution, adopted by 514 to 95 and 84 abstentions on Thursday, MEPs ask for even stronger protection of EU spending against fraud, corruption, conflict of interest, intentional misuse and organised crime, as well as for EU money to be distributed more fairly and transparently.

The European Parliament granted discharge for the year 2018, adopting 52 discharge reports and 52 accompanying resolutions – [see vote results on reports](#) (Wednesday), [amendments](#) to discharge resolutions (Thursday 1st voting session) and final votes on discharge resolutions ([Thursday 2nd voting session](#)).

Quote

“Today, Parliament sends a strong signal for more fairness and transparency in the distribution of EU subsidies, for the rule of law to be strengthened and for small and medium-sized farmers to be protected against land-grabbing, the misconduct of national authorities or pressure from criminal structures. We need new laws that stop oligarch structures from drawing on EU funds to enrich a few individuals. EU funds are taxpayers’ money and are intended to benefit the majority of citizens. Therefore, we call for a cap on the maximum amount that one person can receive as beneficial owner in the area of agriculture and cohesion”, said the rapporteur for the Commission discharge, Monika Hohlmeier (EPP, DE), after the vote.

Subsidy ceilings and IT system to protect EU funds from oligarchs

To avoid fraud and an uneven distribution of EU subsidies, the Commission should propose a maximum amount of direct payment per natural person, making it impossible for an individual to receive subsidies of hundreds of millions of euros during one MFF-period.

MEPs also ask for a real-time IT information system on payments of the EU agriculture and cohesion funds to be established, including information on individuals who are the final beneficiaries, and, in the meantime, ask for the EP to be informed who the fifty largest EU fund recipients across the EU are.

Mechanism to help farmers fight organised crime

Quoting cases in Italy and Slovakia, the Parliament wants an EU complaint mechanism enabling farmers to inform the Commission when land-grabbing malpractice, misconduct of national authorities, pressure from organised crime and forced labour occur.

Rule out conflict of interest

MEPs ask the Commission to table guidelines to fight conflicts of interest of high-profile politicians and ask the Council to adopt common ethical standards in this regard. MEPs are especially [concerned about the situation in Czechia](#) and ask the Commission to supervise payments to companies directly and indirectly owned by the Czech Prime Minister.

Enable the EU Prosecutor to do their job

The resolution stresses that the newly created EU Public Prosecutor's Office (EPP0) needs at least 76 additional posts and EUR 8 Million in order to deal with an estimated 3000 cases per year.

No EU money if rule of law is violated

MEPs insist that the [draft regulation enabling EU funds to be restricted for EU countries where the rule of law is violated](#) should be swiftly approved. This regulation is currently blocked in the Council.

European Economic and Social Committee: address shortcomings before autumn

By 669 votes to 10 and 11 abstentions, MEPs voted to [postpone the discharge decision](#) for the European Economic and Social Committee, giving it until September 2020 to follow up on OLAF's recommendations to improve its code of conduct and to swiftly solve alleged problems related to harassment.

New initiative for cooperation on the Council discharge

For the tenth year in row, MEPs postponed discharge to the Council by 643 votes to 37 and 11 abstentions, giving it until the autumn to supply the information requested by the Parliament.

MEPs have launched a new initiative to solve issues surrounding the annual discharge for the Council, as requested by the Treaties. With an EP

negotiating team in place and the outcome of negotiations pending, MEPs postponed the discharge for the year 2018.

ESMA sees potential decoupling of financial market performance and underlying economic activity

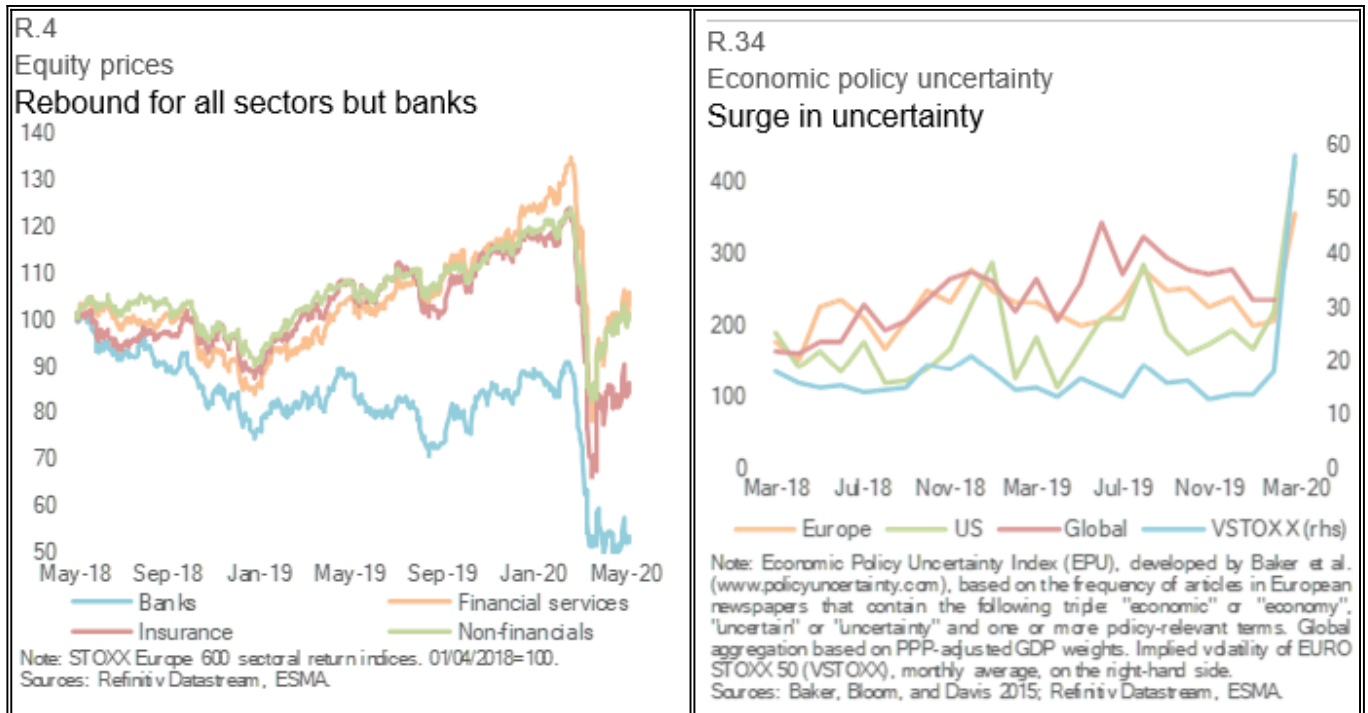
The European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA), the EU securities markets regulator, today publishes the first complete [risk dashboard](#) for 2020, and highlights the very high risks in all areas of ESMA's remit. The assessment remains at the same level as the separate risk update published on 2 April.

ESMA remit	Level Outlook	Risk categories	Level Outlook	Risk drivers	Outlook
Overall ESMA remit		Liquidity		Macroeconomic environment	
Securities markets		Market		Interest-rate environment	
Infrastructures and services		Contagion		Sovereign and private debt markets	
Asset management		Credit		Infrastructure disruptions	
Consumers		Operational		Political and event risks	

Note: Assessment of the main risks by risk segments for markets under ESMA's remit since the last assessment, and outlook for the forthcoming quarter. Assessment of the main risks by risk categories and sources for markets under ESMA's remit since the last assessment, and outlook for the forthcoming quarter. Risk assessment based on categorisation of the European Supervisory Authorities (ESA) Joint Committee. Colours indicate current risk intensity. Coding: green=potential risk, yellow=elevated risk, orange=high risk, red=very high risk. Upward arrows indicate an increase in risk intensities, downward arrows a decrease and horizontal arrows no change. Change is measured with respect to the previous quarter; the outlook refers to the forthcoming quarter. ESMA risk assessment based on quantitative indicators and analyst judgement.

During the first quarter of 2020, the equity markets saw very large corrections due to a combination of the Covid-19 pandemic and existing valuation risks. Since then, and despite the high uncertainty and worsening economic outlook, markets have seen a remarkable rebound. This should also be viewed in light of massive public policy interventions in the EU and elsewhere.

This potential decoupling of financial market performance and underlying economic activity leads ESMA to see a prolonged period of risk to institutional and retail investors of further – possibly significant – market corrections and very high risks across the whole of the ESMA remit. The extent to which these risks may materialise will critically depend on two drivers: the economic impact of the pandemic, and any occurrence of additional external events in an already fragile global economic environment.



[ESMA supports ESRB actions to address COVID-related systemic vulnerabilities](#)

The European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA), the EU securities markets regulator, has published [a statement](#) supporting [the recommendations](#) issued by the General Board of the European Systemic Risk Board (ESRB). These recommendations are part of a set of actions to address the Coronavirus emergency from a macroprudential perspective.

ESMA expresses its support to the ESRB Recommendation, which suggests that relevant NCAs across the European Union (EU), coordinated by ESMA, undertake focused supervisory engagement with investment funds that have significant exposures to less liquid assets, focusing on corporate debt and real estate. In this context, ESMA also welcomes the ESRB public communication around the importance of the timely use of liquidity management tools by investment funds and insurers with exposures to less liquid assets.

The ESRB action complements the ongoing ESMA coordination role in this area which has intensified in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Together with the ESAs and the NCAs, ESMA monitors developments in financial markets and is prepared to use its powers to ensure the orderly functioning of EU markets so that they benefit investors and support stability

[Press release – EU-wide survey on LGBTI people: press conference on Friday at 9.30](#)



EP [Vice-President Fabio Castaldo](#) (NI, IT), Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee Chair [Evelyn Regner](#) (S&D, AT), and Michael O'Flaherty, Director of the EU [Fundamental Rights Agency](#) (FRA), will be participating in this press briefing (remotely from Vienna for the latter).

Mr. O'Flaherty will present the main findings of the FRA's [second EU-wide LGBTI survey](#), published on Thursday, seven years after the first one. This study collects the experiences of discrimination and hate crime as well as the views and challenges faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and, for the first time, intersex people across the EU, North Macedonia and Serbia. It reveals that 40 percent of LGBTI people suffered from harassment in the last 12 months and highlights striking disparities between countries.

The press briefing will be held in the Anna Politkovskaya press conference room and via Skype.

How to follow the briefing online

Parliament will be using an interactive virtual press environment (with interpretation in EN/FR/DE/IT) based on Skype TX, in conjunction with the traditional EbS and web-streaming services.

You can follow the briefing LIVE on [EP MMC](#) or [EbS](#).

If you wish to ask a question remotely:

- You will need a SKYPE account.
- Connect to VOXBOXEP and write your name and media organisation in the

chat box

Please use headphones and a microphone for better sound quality.

The system will be managed by Parliament's media services and you will be placed in a queue (virtual waiting room) before being invited to ask your question(s).

If you have any trouble connecting, you can contact: +32 22834220.

After asking a question / listening to the reply (and any follow-up), you should then disconnect from Skype so that the next journalist in line can be connected to the press briefing room.

REMINDER: working conditions in Parliament for journalists in light of COVID-19

It is mandatory as of 13 May to wear a community mask that covers mouth and nose at all times while in Parliament's buildings. This is to continue to ensure Parliament's operational capacity, while at the same time avoiding health risks for Members, staff and other persons working in and visiting the European Parliament.

Journalists, who have to come to Parliament in person, are therefore asked to bring a mask and wear it in order to access Parliament's premises. There is no requirement as to the type of mask, as long as it covers both nose and mouth.

The wearing of a mask for journalists is now compulsory and necessary at all times. However, journalists could exceptionally and for the limited duration of a recording (stand-ups, interviews, studio recordings) remove their mask, if the social distancing measures are respected. This exception also applies to taking the floor in press conferences. Please note that masks should be put on again immediately after the recording. The exceptions do not apply to bilateral conversations or interviews that are not recorded.

To allow for this exception, journalists are required to keep a distance of 2 meters preventively.

Please refrain from coming to EP premises if you present any symptoms of a respiratory infection, if you have knowingly been in contact with an infected person in the last 14 days or if you have been to regions with very high transmission rates.

[Press release – COVID-19 tracing apps:](#)

MEPs stress the need to preserve citizens' privacy



In a plenary debate on Thursday, MEPs noted that, together with other COVID-19 related measures such as social distancing, masks and testing, contact tracing apps can help to manage the spread of the pandemic. However, most MEPs highlighted that the safety of citizens' personal data and privacy need to be guaranteed when it comes to the use of these apps. Most EU countries have already launched or intend to launch a mobile tracing app designed to track individuals who are infected or at risk of contracting the virus.

MEPs highlighted that the tracing apps must be truly voluntary, non-discriminatory and transparent. The use of the application must be strictly limited to contact tracing and the data must be deleted as soon as the situation allows. MEPs also emphasized the need for a coordinated approach in developing and using the apps to ensure their cross-border interoperability.

Commissioner Didier Reynders and Croatian State Secretary Nikolina Brnjac shared the MEPs' views on the need to ensure that citizens can trust the safety of the apps. Reynders responded to MEPs' concerns by highlighting that national authorities will work together with the EU data protection authorities to ensure that the tracing apps comply with EU privacy and data protection laws in place. He also stressed that the Commission strives to ensure a common approach between EU countries so that the apps are

interoperable.

You can watch the debate via [video on demand](#).

Background

In a plenary resolution adopted on 17 April, [Parliament stressed](#) that national and EU authorities must fully comply with data protection and privacy legislation. “Mobile location data can only be processed in compliance with the ePrivacy Directive and the GDPR”, says the resolution.

On 16 April, the Commission published an [EU toolbox for the use of mobile applications for contact tracing and warning](#) and on 13 May [interoperability guidelines](#) for approved contact tracing mobile applications.