

2018 discharge – EESC reiterates its commitment to fighting harassment and misconduct in the workplace



The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) takes careful note of the European Parliament's vote not to grant the 2018 budget discharge and, whilst regretting the situation that led to this refusal, reiterates its firm commitment to fighting harassment and misconduct in the workplace.

The EESC attaches great importance to the discharge procedure and is taking this strong signal from the European Parliament very seriously. The EESC is aware that the discharge has been refused for reasons that are not directly linked to the implementation of its 2018 budget. Indeed, the EESC is pleased to see that the EP welcomes its overall prudent and sound financial management as well as the good collaboration between the two institutions.

The Committee regrets the findings of the OLAF investigation, with which it fully cooperated. The OLAF report in this respect was very clear and its recommendations have been accepted in their entirety by the EESC bureau in a specific decision on 9 June 2020.

The Committee continues to work on a zero-tolerance policy towards any behaviour that is likely to undermine human dignity, and is strongly committed to remedying any shortcomings that may still exist in the current system. The EESC is aware of the suffering and distress experienced by the victims and is therefore keen to continue offering them all possible support (both in terms of legal assistance and in the workplace) in full confidentiality, as provided for by the rules.

In addition, the EESC has initiated a revision package concerning the decisions on harassment, whistleblowing and disciplinary procedures in order to improve the robustness of the legal and administrative tools where necessary, to increase synergies between these instruments and to reinforce the Committee's ethics and integrity framework. The new political leadership of the EESC is fully committed to this process and will devote all the time and resources necessary to ensuring that the incidents of the past cannot take place again.

The next steps will be the revision of the Members' Code of Conduct, with a view to establishing harsher sanctions in the event of any breaches. This is a top priority of the EESC's new political leadership and will be actively reported on to all stakeholders involved.