2008 discharge: European Food Safety Authority EFSA

2009/2123(DEC) - 05/05/2010 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 547 votes to 40, with 53 abstentions, a decision on discharge to be granted to the Executive Director of the European Food Safety Authority, in respect of the implementation of its budget for the financial year 2008.

Furthermore, Parliament adopted a resolution with observations which are an integral part of the decision to grant discharge.

The main points are as follows:

- **performance and budgetary and financial management:** Parliament notes that the Authority has steadily improved its performance and notes that this performance improvement is offset by an increase in staffing. It also notes that the Authority reached a high level of budget execution for both commitment and payment credits. Nonetheless, it notes that for the third successive year the Court of Auditors has flagged up carryovers of appropriations to the following year (23% of the 2008 budget was carried over to 2009; 16% of the 2007 budget was carried over to 2008; 20% of the 2006 budget was carried over to 2007). It encourages the Authority to improve its budget management in order to reduce such high carry-over amounts. It deplores the fact that commitments for operational activities carried over from the previous year had to be cancelled and are consequently concerned that this situation is at odds with the principle of annuality and shows weaknesses in programming, monitoring contractual deadlines, and the Authority's budget. It stresses that, in future, the Authority needs to accord greater importance in its grant agreement procedures to assessing the complexity of the service involved, with a view to setting better deadlines for the submission of tenders. It stresses, furthermore, that the Authority should take greater care in ensuring that contractual deadlines laid down in grant agreements are met. It notes the enormously high cash reserves as of 31 December 2008 (almost EUR 20 million). The Commission is called upon to examine ways of ensuring that the principle of needs-based cash management is implemented to the full and what changes in approach are needed to ensure that the Authority’s cash reserves are kept as low as possible on a long-term basis;
- **internal audit:** Parliament considers that the audit committee (AC), created by the Authority in 2006, plays an important role in assisting the Management Board by ensuring that the work of the Internal Audit Services (IAS) of the Commission and of the internal audit capabilities (IAC) of the Authority is properly carried. It believes that this AC within the Authority might serve as an example to other agencies;
- **human resources:** Parliament welcomes the staff increase in spite of having had difficulties in recruiting highly skilled scientific staff in Parma. It urges the Authority to ensure that all former officials inform the Authority when they take up new positions outside the institutions; if such activities could lead to a conflict with the legitimate interests of the institutions, the Authority should take the appropriate measures.

Noting that the Agency’s annual accounts for the financial year 2008 are reliable, and the underlying transactions are legal and regular, Parliament approves the closure of the Centre’s accounts. However, it makes a number of recommendations that need to be taken into account when the discharge is granted, in addition to the general recommendations that appear in the draft resolution on financial management and control of EU agencies (see 2010/2007(INI) adopted in parallel).