

2009 discharge: European Food Safety Authority EFSA

2010/2178(DEC) - 11/04/2011

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Georgios STAVRAKAKIS (S&D, EL) on discharge to be granted to the Executive Director of the European Food Safety Authority for implementation of the Authority's budget for the financial year 2009.

Noting that the Authority's annual accounts for the financial year 2009 are reliable, and the underlying transactions are legal and regular, MEPs approve the closure of the Authority's accounts. However, they make 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 [DEC/2010/2271](#)):

- **performance:** Members note that the Authority's 2009 budget amounted to EUR 71.4 million compared to EUR 66.4 million in 2008. They recall that an overall reserve of EUR 4.546 million was introduced by the budgetary authority to the Authority's budget and that EUR 2 million of the reserve was released in November 2009 to implement the IT development and infrastructure projects of the Authority once it had clarified some issues relating to the budget reserve. They note that the other part of the reserve has been allocated to the same policy area in order to contribute to effective response measures against the H1N1 pandemic. They stress the need for the Authority to ensure its advice is of a high quality and is independent, in order to guarantee compliance with Union safety standards, scientific excellence and independence on all matters with a direct or indirect impact on food and feed safety, and plant protection. They recommend, particularly in the interests of transparency, measures to further foster and monitor internal rules on declarations of interest of staff of the Authority and of experts working for it;
- **budgetary and financial management:** Members call on the Authority to strengthen the budget processes related to its differentiated appropriations and the planning and monitoring of its multiannual implementation. They note that the Court of Auditors reported that EUR 6 million (75 %) of the differentiated appropriations for science grants and scientific cooperation projects had to be cancelled, of which EUR 3.1 million were funds allocated in excess of the needs identified by the Authority. They urge the Authority to improve its budget management in order to reduce its high carryover amounts. They stress that, for the fourth successive year, the Court of Auditors has flagged up carryovers of appropriations to the following year and that this situation demonstrates weaknesses in the Authority's contract management. They also regret that certain commitments for operational activities carried over from the previous year had to be cancelled and urge the Authority to change this situation;
- **internal audit:** Members are concerned that there were 48 recommendations made by the Internal Audit Service (IAS), of which one is considered "critical" (on grant management). Noting the lack of information on these matters, Members call on the Authority to provide information concerning the recommendations. Members reiterate their demand on the Authority to take appropriate measures in case of conflicts of interest; invites the Authority to initiate a survey on potential conflicts of interest of its leading scientists, board and panel members, so that possible omissions in the declarations of interest can be detected and followed by action in a timely manner.