2010 discharge: European Railway Agency (ERA)

2011/2229(DEC) - 06/09/2011 - Court of Auditors: opinion, report

PURPOSE: presentation of the EU Court of Auditors' report on the annual accounts of the European Railway Agency (ERA), together with the Agency's reply.

CONTENT: in accordance with the tasks conferred on the Court of Auditors by the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the Court presents to the European Parliament and to the Council, in the context of the discharge procedure, a Statement of Assurance as to the reliability of the annual accounts of each institution, body or agency of the EU, and the legality and regularity of the transactions underlying them, on the basis of an independent external audit.

This audit concerned, amongst others, the annual accounts of the European Railway Agency (ERA).

In the Court's opinion, **the Agcncy's Annual Accounts fairly present, in all material respects, its financial position as of 31 December 2010** and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended, in accordance with the provisions of its Financial Regulation.

The Court also considers that **the transactions underlying the annual accounts** of the Agency for the financial year ended 31 December 2010 are, in all material respects, **legal and regular.**

The report confirms that the Agency's 2010 budget amounted to EUR 24.1 million, and that the number of staff employed by the Agency at the end of the year was 142.

The report also makes a series of observations on the budgetary and financial management of the ERA, accompanied by the latter's response. The main observations may be summarised as follows:

The Court's observations:

- budgetary and financial management: the appropriations carried forward to 2011 amounted to 5.5 million euro, of which 4.3 million euro (78%) are related to goods and services to be provided in 2011. This level of carryover is excessive and at odds with the principle of annuality.

The Agency's reply:

- the Agency is analysing the possibility to conclude framework contracts for studies, enabling it to sign specific contracts much sooner after the adoption of the budget. Furthermore, for the years 2011 and 2012, the Agency is reviewing its budget forecasts to better align them to its real needs and to optimise the use of its budgetary resources.

Lastly the Court of Auditors' report contains a **summary of the Agency's activities** in 2010. Its main tasks may be described as follows:

- a series of recommendations concerning rail transport safety;
- recommendations regarding technical specifications in respect of interoperability;
- publication of a report on rail safety;
- provision of technical opinions;

- other activities designed to: i) set up and maintains a series of registers for interoperability; ii) acting as the system authority and change control manager for ERTMS (European Railway Traffic Management System); iii) drawing up of the reference document of national rules for vehicle authorisation.