

2010 discharge: European Environment Agency (EEA)

2011/2217(DEC) - 04/04/2012 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Monica Luisa MACOVEI (EPP, RO) on discharge to be granted in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Environment Agency for the financial year 2010. The committee calls on the Parliament to **postpone** its decision on granting the Executive Director of the European Environment Agency discharge in respect of the implementation of the Agency's budget for the financial year 2010. However, they make a number of recommendations, in addition to the general recommendations that appear in the [draft resolution](#) on performance, financial management and control of EU agencies:

- **Carryover appropriations:** Members take note from the Agency's Final Accounts that EUR 12 809 551,05 of the 2010 appropriations have been carried forward to 2011 and that cancellation of unused payment appropriations carried over from the previous year amounted to EUR 585 282,87. They regret that the Court of Auditors did not consider the level of the Agency's appropriations carried forward and cancelled to be sufficiently high to warrant a mention in its report;
- **Procurement Procedures:** Members call on the Internal Audit Service (IAS) to **audit the Agency's contracts** in the area of canteen services, cleaning services, security services and furniture to establish whether the call preparation, publication, evaluation and contract management phases respect the two following principles: maximum competition and value-for-money, and to inform the discharge authority in due course of its findings;
- **Human Resources:** Members take note that, for the last five years, the Agency hosted 12 guest scientists working at its premises. For the sake of transparency, they call on the Agency to complete publishing the
 - curriculum vitae – including at least the educational and work background – of the guest scientists, in order to increase transparency;
- **Conflict of interest:** Members note that, from June 2010 until April 2011, the Executive Director of the Agency was a trustee and a member of the International Advisory Board of Earthwatch – an international environmental charity engaging people in scientific field research and education - and was reported to be a member of the European Advisory Board of Worldwatch Europe. They are seriously concerned that in 2010, while the Executive Director was directly involved with Earthwatch, 29 staff members of the Agency, including the Executive Director, went for up to 10 days of research on different biodiversity projects in the Caribbean or Mediterranean managed by Earthwatch and that the Agency paid a total of EUR 33 791,28, to the NGO as stated by the Agency's Executive Director. Commending the cooperation between the Agency and NGOs working in the environmental area, **Members recalls that even the mere appearance of conflict of interest is damaging trust in the institutions and raises concerns of taxpayers.** They call on the Agency to adopt immediately an action plan to publish on its website the declarations of interest and, when they are not available, the curriculum vitae – including at least the educational and work background – for the management staff, etc.
- **Performance:** Members acknowledge from comments in the Agency's Annual Management Plan, the Agency's efforts with various international and Union bodies, Eionet and the Scientific Committee to establish a networking structure in order to be able to maintain links to the research and scientific community, disseminate and utilise the results, particularly information and data, from research activities at European and national levels, in a more systematic way. They call on the Agency to inform in detail the budget authority, in particular the Budget Control Authority, of the

evidence of the possible added value brought by the Agency's reports compared with other bodies' reports on environmental matters. They encourage the Agency to continue its efforts to further develop its communication methods in order to attract more media coverage for its findings;

- **Internal audit:** Members call on the Agency to adopt without further delay measures to **address the weaknesses found by the IAS** in its previous audits on quality management and on grant management in order to assure supervision of quality controls and to realise on-the-spot controls and verification of grants.