2011 discharge: European Railway Agency (ERA)

2012/2198(DEC) - 11/09/2012 - Court of Auditors: opinion, report

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

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 **Agency's Annual Accounts fairly present, in all material respects, its financial position as of 31 December 2011** 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 Authority for the financial year ended 31 December 2011 are, in all material respects, **legal and regular**.

The report confirms that the Agency's 2011 budget amounted to EUR 26 million. The number of staff employed by the Authority at the end of the year was 154.

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

Court's comments:

- implementation rate: the Court states that the level of payments against budget appropriations remained low, which is at odds with the budgetary principle of annuality;
- recruitment: the Court considers that the Agency's vacancy notices did not provide information on the required minimum number of years of post-secondary or university studies which, however, was used as a selection criterion.

Agency's replies:

- the Agency states that a major effort was made to reduce payment times in order to better respect the principle of annuality;
- it states that it shall, for future vacancy notices, provide information on required minimum years of post-secondary or university studies. However, the Agency thinks that the other elements brought by the Court do not jeopardize the impartiality of the selection procedure.

Lastly, the Court of Auditors' report contains a summary of the **Agency's activities in 2011**. This is focused on the following:

- series of recommendations in several areas including on Safety Certification ;
- reports on railway safety and interoperability ;
- technical Opinions on national rules and monitor the work of Notified Bodies ;
- set up and maintenance of a series of registers for safety and interoperability ;
-

act as the System Authority and Change Control Manager for ERTMS (European Railway Traffic Management System) assisting the Commission in evaluating ERTMS projects;

- definition and compilation of the Reference Document of national rules for vehicle authorisation.