

2012 discharge: European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)

2013/2220(DEC) - 21/03/2014 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Petri SARVAMAA (EPP, FI) in which it recommended the European Parliament to grant discharge to the Executive Director of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in respect of the implementation of the Authority's budget for the financial year 2012.

Noting that the Court of Auditors stated that it has obtained reasonable assurances that the annual accounts of the Authority for the financial year 2012 are reliable, and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular, Members approved the closure of EFSA's accounts. They made, however, a number of recommendations that needed to be taken into account when the discharge is granted, in addition to the general recommendations that appear in the [draft resolution on performance, financial management and control of EU agencies](#).

- **Budget and financial management:** Members noted that budget monitoring efforts during the financial year 2012 resulted in a budget implementation rate of 99.30% and that the payment appropriations execution rate was 88%. They acknowledged that the relocation of the Authority to its new premises generated savings amounting to EUR 3.94 million and that that amount was reallocated to operational activities.
- **Commitments and carryovers:** Members noted that carryovers were high. They acknowledged that a high amount of carry-overs were made for reasons beyond the Authority's control. They recalled that the Authority should respect the principle of annuality.
- **Prevention and management of conflicts of interests and transparency:** Members believed that the procedure for assessing possible conflicts of interest at the Authority, where declarations of interest are screened by Heads of Unit and are generally assessed on a case by case basis, is burdensome and is subject to criticism, raising questions about its credibility and effectiveness. They called on the Authority to come up with a simplified procedure with less uncertainty which would validate and streamline the process and save both human resources and money without, however, jeopardising the newly set standards for the detection and prevention of conflicts of interests. Members noted with concern that the Authority applies a less stringent conflicts of interest policy to experts from food safety organisations (FSOs), as the list which the Authority uses to indicate these FSOs includes institutes that are nominated by Member States and cofinanced by private or undisclosed partners, creating a possible loophole. They considered that the **Authority should apply a two-year cooling-off period to all material interests related to the commercial agrifood sector**, including research funding, consultancy contracts and decision-making positions in industry-captured organisations. The Authority should ask experts to declare whether their interests were remunerated or not. Current practice of experts anonymising their interests, for instance by using the expression "private company", should not be accepted by the Authority. They stated that the current declarations of interests forms could be further improved.

Lastly, Members also made a series of observations on transfers, procurement and recruitment procedures as well as comments on internal controls.