2012 discharge: European Medicines Agency (EMA)

2013/2215(DEC) - 03/04/2014 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a decision concerning the discharge to be granted to the Executive Director of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) in respect of the implementation of the Agency's budget for the financial year 2012. The vote on the discharge decision approved the closure of the accounts (in accordance with Annex VI, Article 5(1) of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament.

Noting that the Court of Auditors stated that it has obtained reasonable assurances that the annual accounts of the Agency for the financial year 2012 are reliable, and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular, Parliament adopted by 493 votes to 65, with 20 abstentions, a resolution containing a series of recommendations that form an integral part of the discharge decision and as well as the general recommendations that appear in the draft resolution on performance, financial management and control of EU agencies.

These recommendations are summarised as follows:

- **Reliability of the accounts - legality and regularity of transactions**: Parliament noted that the Agency applies differing recognition criteria for fee revenues and associated expenditure and that the revenue from application fees is recognised on a straight-line basis over a set time period. It also regretted that the Agency has not yet validated its accounting system in the area of intangible fixed assets, which, given the considerable investment in the development of information and communications technology (ICT), is a crucial part of the whole accounting system. It called on the Agency to inform the discharge authority on progress in this regard within the framework of the 2012 discharge follow-up. Parliament also noted with concern that in order to cover higher school fees, the Agency grants staff whose children attend primary or secondary school a top-up allowance, which amounted to some EUR 389 000 in 2012, allowances that may be considered irregular. They acknowledged that this situation is due to the lack of European Schools in the city where the Agency is based.
- **Budget and financial management**: Parliament noted that the rate of committed appropriations carried over was high for operating expenses at 27% even though it acknowledged that this relates primarily to the Agency’s planned move to a new premises in 2014 (EUR 4 million) and to the development of ICT systems (EUR 1.6 million).
- **Commitments and carryovers**: Parliament took note that the reduced amount carried over to 2013 in comparison with 2010 and 2011 and stated that this is partly related to the new building project. They reminded the Agency of the importance of respecting the budgetary principle of annuality.
- **Prevention and management of conflicts of interests and transparency**: Parliament welcomed the fact that for the second year in a row, the Agency held a public workshop on conflicts of interests, aimed at defining the right balance between ensuring the impartiality and independence of experts involved in the Agency's work and securing the best possible scientific expertise. It stated that the Agency revised its policy on the handling of conflicts of interests by the Scientific Committees' members and experts which is expected for endorsement by the Management Board in March 2014. It called on the Agency to present that revised policy to the discharge authority once adopted. Parliament also noted that the Agency works together closely with a variety of patient, healthcare and consumer organisations in order to take their opinions into account; calls on the

Agency to request public disclosure regarding the funding of any patient, consumer and healthcare organisation it works with, and to carry out a conflict of interests check regarding those organisations.

- **Performance**: Parliament requested that the Agency communicate the results and impact its work has on European citizens in an accessible way, mainly through its website.

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