2013 discharge: European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)

2014/2108(DEC) - 29/04/2015 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 560 votes to 130, with 8 abstentions, a decision to grant discharge to the Executive Director of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) for the financial year 2013. 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 Authority for the financial year 2013 are reliable, and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular, Parliament adopted by 572 votes to 108, with 9 abstentions, a resolution containing a number of recommendations that form an integral part of the discharge decision and as well as the general recommendations that appear in the resolution on performance, financial management and control of EU agencies:

- **Authority's financial statements**: Parliament noted that the final budget of the Authority for the financial year 2013 was EUR 78.051 million, representing a decrease of 0.31% compared to 2012.
- **Commitments and carry-overs**: Parliament noted that budget monitoring efforts during the financial year 2013 resulted in a budget implementation rate of 98.08% and that the payment appropriations execution rate was 90.80%. It acknowledged that the committed appropriations carried forward to 2014 amounted to EUR 6 431 431, showing a decrease compared to the previous year, this being mostly related to the centralisation of expert payments leading to higher efficiency in payment processing, as well as the IT operational budget not having been increased by transfers from other areas at the end of 2013.

Parliament also made a series of observations on transfers, procurement and recruitment procedures, internal controls and internal audits and the prevention and management of conflicts of interest.

Prevention of conflict of interests: Parliament went on to note with concern the recent European Ombudsman's ruling concluding that the Authority should revise its **conflict of interest rules**, and the related instructions and forms it uses for declarations of interests to ensure that those experts who work in academia declare all relevant information to it. It called on the Authority to have **scientists on its panels and working groups disclose the financial arrangements** between the departments of the universities they work for and commercial companies when they are in the Authority's remit. It noted the **clarification of the scope of conflicts of interests** with new definitions regarding, inter alia, the obligation to declare even the smallest economic interest or the practice of allowing experts' interests to be anonymised only on an exceptional basis solely to ensure compliance with rules on data protection.

Lastly, Parliament reiterated its call that the Authority should apply a two-year cooling-off period to all material interests related to the commercial agri-food sector, including research funding, consultancy contracts and decision-making positions in industry-captured organisations.