2013 discharge: European Railway Agency (ERA)

2014/2111(DEC) - 29/04/2015 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 550 votes to 131, with 4 abstentions, a decision to grant discharge to the Executive Director of the European Railway Agency (ERA) 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 Agency for the financial year 2013 are reliable, and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular, Parliament adopted by 563 votes to 107, with 15 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:

- **Centre's financial statements**: Parliament noted that the final budget of the Agency for the financial year 2013 was EUR 25 858 799 representing an increase of 0.23% compared to 2012.
- **Commitments and carry-overs**: Parliament also noted that budget monitoring efforts during the financial year 2013 resulted in a budget implementation rate of 97.87% and that the payment appropriations execution rate was 88.12%. It pointed out, however, that the level of committed appropriations carried over to 2013 was EUR 2 398 742, and committed appropriations carried over to 2014 amounted to EUR 2 221 816. The decrease in the accrued amount carried over in comparison to the previous year occurred because of the underestimation/overestimation of the 2013 budgetary expenses.

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

It expressed its deep disappointment that the Agency had still not adopted a clear, comprehensive and objective policy for the prevention and management of conflicts of interests, despite the discharge authority and the Court's special recommendations for consecutive years.

Parliament deplored the fact that the use of two locations (Lille and Valenciennes) to carry out its activities exposed the Agency to additional costs. It acknowledged the efforts made by the Agency to minimise the negative impact of the decision on its seat but called for **a single location for the Agency**, in a place easily accessible by public transport in order to save scarce resources.

Additional funding: lastly, Parliament stated that if the Agency is to receive new powers as a result of the extension of its tasks as a certifying agency for railway material, **part of the funding for the Agency should come from fees and charges levied on the railway industry** which must, in all circumstances, be appropriate to the level of expenses incurred by the Agency and must not represent a disproportionate cost for the railway industry.