2013 discharge: Fuel Cells and Hydrogen Joint Undertaking (FCH Joint Undertaking)

2014/2134(DEC) - 29/04/2015 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided by 559 votes to 126, with 3 abstentions, to grant discharge to the Executive Director of the **Fuel Cells and Hydrogen Joint Undertaking (FCH2)** 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 FCH2 Joint Undertaking for the financial year 2013 are reliable, and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular, Parliament adopted by 575 votes to 99, 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:

- **Budgetary and financial management**: Parliament noted that the Joint Undertaking's final budget for the financial year 2013 included commitment appropriations of EUR 74.5 million and payment appropriations of EUR 69.7 million. It observed moreover, that the utilisation rates for commitment and payment appropriations were 98.9% and 56.7% respectively. The level of payment appropriations is lower than the previous year was due to the postponement of funding of three projects.
- **Conflicts of interests**: other than the weaknesses noted by the Court, Parliament remarked that FCH2 had put in place specific measures in order to prevent conflicts of interest in respect of its three key stakeholders - Governing Board members, experts and employees - such as a **clear definition of conflict of interest** with a database of all related information and process for managing them. It noted that the written procedure regarding the specific measures was submitted to the Governing Board in November 2014.

Other observations: Parliament also made a series of observations on the legal framework of the Joint Undertaking, and the current call for proposals. It took note that the Joint Undertaking, along with ARTEMIS, Clean Sky, Eniac and IMI Joint Undertakings, was the subject of an IT risk assessment of the common IT infrastructure performed by the Commission's Internal Audit Service.

Members observed that FCH 2 had introduced a **new IT tool** which helped with the **analysis and synthesis of the results of finished projects** and reporting the first public foreground deliverables arising from complex projects. They called on the Joint Undertaking to submit a report to the discharge authority on the social-economic benefits of the projects already completed and called for this report to be accompanied by an assessment carried out by the Commission.

Parliament acknowledged the Joint Undertaking's efforts to examine the possibility of using the Commission's IT system for monitoring purposes related to the protection, dissemination and transfer of research results as well as to develop its reporting on results. Lastly, it recalled that the discharge authority had previously requested the Court to draw up a special report on the capacity of the joint undertakings, together with their private partners, to ensure **added value and efficient execution** of Union research, technological development and demonstration programmes.