2014 discharge: European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA)

2015/2175(DEC) - 07/04/2016 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Derek VAUGHAN (S&D, UK) on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Aviation Safety Agency for the financial year 2014.

The parliamentary committee calls on the European Parliament to grant the Executive Director of the Agency discharge in respect of the implementation of the agency's budget for the financial year 2014.

Noting that the Court of Auditors issued a statement of assurance as to the reliability of the accounts and the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions for the financial year 2014, Members call on Parliament to approve the closure of the Agency'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:

- **Agency's financial statements:** Members note the final budget of the Agency for the financial year 2014 was EUR 181 179 098, representing an increase of 8.47 % compared to 2013.

- **Budget and financial management:** Members note that the budget monitoring efforts during the financial year 2014 resulted in a budget implementation rate of 97.1 %, representing a decrease of 0.9 % compared to 2013.

Members also made a series of observations regarding procedures for contract awards (which need to be better planned), recruitment, internal control and audit, as well as the prevention and management of conflicts of interest. In this regard, Members note that, in 2014, the Agency adopted a Confidential Safety Reporting Procedure which addresses whistle-blower information related to **alleged malpractices and irregularities in the field of aviation safety reported by external individuals**. They observe that there were 66 cases related to this procedure in 2014 and note that the Agency has a whistle-blower procedure in place and that one case was registered in 2014 with no appeals received.

In parallel, Members note that the Agency already established and implemented **a comprehensive policy on the prevention and mitigation of conflicts of interest** as well as on "Gifts and Hospitality" in its Code of Conduct (CC) for the staff. This policy includes inter alia the establishment of an Ethical Committee to assess the completed declarations of interest and to deal with any subject related to the CC. They note that the Agency is set to review and update its policies on management of conflicts of interest and call on the Agency to report to the discharge authority on the status of the policy update.

They note with concern that, since 2004, when the Agency became operational, it has been working merely **on the basis of correspondence and exchanges with the host Member State**. They note, furthermore, that **a comprehensive headquarters agreement has not yet been signed** with the host Member State. They acknowledge that the government of the host Member State recently initiated informal discussions with the Agency on this matter. They call on the Agency and the host Member State to address this issue as a matter of the utmost urgency.

Lastly, Members highlight the Agency's vital role in ensuring the highest possible level of aviation safety throughout Europe; recognises that, due to the disappearance of MH370, the dramatic accident of MH17, the crash of Air Asia QZ8501 and the radar interferences over Central Europe.

2014 was a challenging year for the Agency and for aviation safety in general, requiring it to deal with implementing and supervising new provisions on flight time limitations. Members call for the necessary financial, material and human resources to be made available to allow the Agency to perform its regulatory and executive tasks successfully, in the fields of safety and environmental protection, without compromising its independence and impartiality.