2014 discharge: European Railway Agency (ERA)

2015/2179(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 Railway 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 noted the final budget of the European Railway Agency for the financial year 2014 was EUR 25 715 600, representing a decrease of 0.55 % compared to 2013 and that the entire budget of the Agency derives from the Union budget.

- **Budget and financial management:** Members note that the budget monitoring efforts during the financial year 2014 resulted in a high budget implementation rate of 97.34 %, representing a decrease of 0.53 % compared with 2013.

Members also made a series of observations regarding commitments and carryovers, the management and prevention of conflicts of interest, as well as contract award, recruitment and internal audit and control procedures.

Members noted the fact that the Agency shares its Accounting Officer with the European Securities and Markets Authority and certain facilities with the Translation Centre for the Bodies of the European Union in order to create synergies and achieve cost-effectiveness.

They note that, although the Agency became operational in 2005, it has been working on the basis of correspondence and exchanges with the host Member State since a **comprehensive headquarters agreement** between the Agency and the host Member State was not signed. They call on the Agency and the host Member State to address this issue as a matter of urgency and to inform the discharge authority on the progress of the negotiations.

Lastly, Members point out that the Agency's role is ensuring the safety and interoperability of European rail system. They note that a review of the Agency's role (e.g. one-stop-shop for vehicle authorisation and safety certification) and powers forms part of the Fourth Railway Package and that if it receives further responsibilities it will need to be **given the necessary financial, material and human resources to perform its new and additional tasks effectively and efficiently**.

They encourage the Agency to collaborate with Member States in order to increase the number and quality of railway projects, especially ERTMS projects, proposed under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) transport programme. They recall Parliament's position in budgetary procedure for **recovering of total amounts relocated from the CEF to the European Fund for Strategic Investments.**