2014 discharge: European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA)

2015/2175(DEC) - 28/04/2016 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to grant discharge to the Executive Director of the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) in respect of the implementation of the agency's budget for the financial year 2014. The vote on the decision on discharge covers the closure of the accounts (in accordance with Annex V, Article 5 (1)(a) to Parliament's Rules of Procedure.

Noting that the Court of Auditors has stated that it has obtained reasonable assurances that the Agency's annual accounts for the financial year 2014 are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular, Parliament adopted by 521 votes to 111 with 8 abstentions, a resolution containing a series of recommendations, which form an integral part of the decision on discharge and which add to the general recommendations set out in the resolution on performance, financial management and control of EU agencies:

- **Agency's financial statements**: Parliament noted 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**: Parliament noted 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.

Parliament 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, Parliament noted 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**. It observed that there were 66 cases related to this procedure in 2014 and noted that the Agency has a whistle-blower procedure in place and that one case was registered in 2014 with no appeals received.

In parallel, Parliament noted 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. It noted 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.

Parliament also noted 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**. It noted, furthermore, that **a comprehensive headquarters agreement has not yet been signed** with the host Member State. It acknowledged that the government of the host Member State recently initiated informal discussions with the Agency on this matter. It called on the Agency and the host Member State to address this issue as a matter of the utmost urgency.

Performance: Parliament noted that, in 2014, the Agency has initiated fundamental changes in the way it operates in order to allow for a more proportionate and performance-based approach to safety and that it has reviewed its organisational structure to prepare itself for the many challenges it will face in the immediate coming years.

Lastly, Parliament highlighted 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. Parliament called 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.