2014 discharge: European Environment Agency (EEA)

2015/2168(DEC) - 28/04/2016 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to grant discharge to the Executive Director of the European Environment Agency (EEA) 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 514 votes to 119 with 6 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 that the EEA's final budget for the financial year 2014 was EUR 52 573 071, representing an increase of 6.70 % compared to 2013. 76.81 % of the Agency's budget derives from the Union budget. This increase is mostly related to operating expenditure for strategic actions.
- **Comments on the legality and regularity of transactions**: Parliament noted that in 2014 the Agency launched a call to procure IT and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) consultancy services for the implementation of the Reference Data Access (RDA) component and for the purpose of supporting the Agency in other Copernicus-related activities.

Parliament also made a series of observations regarding budgetary and financial management, commitment and carryovers, contract award, recruitment, control and internal audit procedures.

It noted that the Agency's anti-fraud strategy was adopted by its Management Board in November 2014, with the aim of ensuring proper handling of **conflict of interest issues** and of developing anti-fraud activities especially through prevention, detection, awareness-raising and closer cooperation with the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). It took note that in line with OLAF's "Methodology and guidance for anti-fraud strategies for EU decentralised Agencies", the Agency conducted a fraud risk assessment of its activities based on the estimated likelihood and possible impact of fraud.

Parliament also noted that the Agency contracted IT backup services, including email services, with a cloud services provider using an interinstitutional contract provided by the Commission. It noted that the conditions of the contract do not adequately define the location of the Agency's data, which means that there is a **risk that the privileges and immunities of the European Communities, to which the Agency is subject, are not guaranteed**, and that the service provider does not fully respect the privacy guarantees granted by Article 7 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. It acknowledged from the Agency that further to receiving clarifications and guarantees from the service provider, it considered the identified residual risks as acceptable and adequately addressed by the agreed contractual clauses.

Parliament called for an overall improvement in the prevention of, and the fight against, corruption through a holistic approach, commencing with better public access to documents and more stringent rules on conflicts of interest.

Lastly, it noted that the Agency will nevertheless undertake periodic reviews of the contract implementation with a view to re-assessing the risks and adopting appropriate measures and remedial actions if deemed necessary.