2014 discharge: European Railway Agency (ERA)

2015/2179(DEC) - 28/04/2016 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to grant discharge to the Executive Director of the European Railway Agency (ERA) in respect of the implementation of its 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 511 votes to 115 with 11 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 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**: Parliament noted 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.

Parliament 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.

Performance: Parliament noted the high number of outputs (240) and key performance indicators (41) in the Agency's work programme 2014 and annual report. It supported the view that a reporting system based on the Agency's impact on the railway sector would enhance transparency and visibility on mission delivery by the Agency.

Parliament also 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.

Headquarters and double location: Parliament noted 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. It called 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.

It deplored the fact that using two locations to carry out its activities exposes the Agency to additional costs and represents a waste of the European taxpayer's money. It demanded that this issue be addressed in order to restore value for taxpayer's money and operational efficiency while also avoiding needless indirect cost such as "wasted" working hours due to travelling or additional administrative work.

Lastly, Parliament pointed out that the Agency's role is ensuring the safety and interoperability of European rail system. It noted 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**.

It encouraged 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. It recalled Parliament's position in budgetary procedure for **recovering of total amounts relocated from the CEF to the European Fund for Strategic Investments.**