2015 discharge: European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)

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The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Inés AYALA SENDER (S&D, ES) on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Centre for disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) for the financial year 2015.

The committee called on the European Parliament to grant the Executive Director of the Centre discharge in respect of the implementation of the agency's budget for the financial year 2015.

Noting that the Court of Auditors stated that it had obtained reasonable assurance that the annual accounts of the Centre for the financial year 2015 were reliable and that the underlying transactions were legal and regular, Members called on Parliament to approve the closure of the Centre'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:

- **Centre's financial statements**: the final budget of the Centre for the financial year 2015 was EUR 58 451 950 representing a decrease of 3.36 % compared to 2014.
- **Legality and regularity of transactions**: Members noted that various weaknesses were found affecting the transparency of the Centre's procurement procedures, including a lack of a clear link with the Centre's annual work programme, insufficient substantiation of the estimated contract value or absence of a financial benchmark to assess the tenderer's financial capacity. They acknowledged that prior to the launch of any procurement procedure above EUR 25 000, the Centre now requests a substantiation of estimated contract values.
- **Procurement and recruitment procedures**: the Centre's revised procedure on procurement, contracts and grants is providing an additional quality control mechanism. The Centre was called upon to carry out careful checks on conflicts of interest in relation to tenders, procurement, recruitment and contracts in order to strengthen transparency. The Centre was asked to apply strictly the measures pertaining to discretion and exclusion in public procurement, with proper background checks being carried out in every instance, and to apply the exclusion criteria so as to debar companies in the event of any conflict of interest.

Members also made a series of observations regarding commitments and the budgetary and financial management, commitments and carry-overs, the prevention and management of conflicts of interests and internal audits and controls.

Members stressed that the **Ebola epidemic** provided a test case for the Union's preparedness arrangements and legal framework and that the Health Security Committee met regularly to discuss appropriate measures based on rapid risk assessments and guidance from the Centre. They recalled that the Decision No 1082/2013/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council provides the framework to address, coordinate and manage serious cross-border health threats in cooperation with Member States, the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Centre and other international partners.

They also noted that in 2015, there were 88 notifications, which resulted in 280 messages and information exchanges, and **37 different events were addressed**, for example, the Ebola epidemic, the influx of refugees, the Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV), poliomyelitis, the shortage of medical countermeasures, the Zika virus, and the explosion of a chemical factory in China.