2015 discharge: European Environment Agency (EEA)

2016/2166(DEC) - 28/03/2017 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

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 Environment Agency for the financial year 2015.

The committee called 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 2015.

Noting that the Court of Auditors stated that it had obtained reasonable assurance that the annual accounts of the Agency 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 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 that the final budget of the Agency for the financial year 2015 was EUR 49 156 474, representing a decrease of 6.5 % compared to 2014.
- **Prevention and management of conflicts of interest and transparency**: Members noted that the anti-fraud strategy of the Agency 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). However, Members regretted that no specific initiatives have been undertaken to create or **increase transparency regarding contacts with lobbyists**.

They encouraged the Agency further to raise awareness of the conflict-of-interest policy among its staff, alongside ongoing awareness-raising activities and the inclusion of integrity and transparency as an obligatory item to be discussed during recruitment procedures and performance reviews.

Members also made a series of observations regarding the budgetary and financial management, commitments and carry-overs, procurement and recruitment procedures and internal audits and controls.

As regards **communication**, Members noted that the Agency invested in better design, data visualisation and infographics and **updated its corporate identity** to this effect, as well as that more efforts were put into social media and media relations. They underlined that the Agency should continue promoting dialogue with stakeholders and citizens and incorporate it as part of the priorities and activities to be implemented.

Members took note that the audited procurement procedures showed that the Agency signed framework contracts with a single contractor which were used for various services under fixed-price specific contracts .They noted with concern that, as a consequence of requesting a fixed-price offer from a single contractor under those contracts, competition on price was neutralised and dependence upon the contractor was increased.

Lastly, they recalled that, since its creation, the Agency, together with its European Environment Information and Observation Network (EIONET), has been an information source for those involved in developing, adopting, **implementing and evaluating Union environment and climate policies**, as well as sustainable development policies, and also been an information source for the general public.