2015 discharge: European Police Office (Europol)

2016/2184(DEC) - 29/03/2017 - 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 Police Office (Europol) for the financial year 2015.

The committee called on the European Parliament to grant the Director of Europol discharge in respect of the implementation of the Europol'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 Office 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 Europol'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:

- **Financial statements of Europol**: Members note that the final budget of the European Police Office for the financial year 2015 was EUR 94 926 894, representing an increase of 12.55 % compared to 2014.
- **Commitments and carry-overs**: Members took note of the carry-overs of committed appropriations for administrative expenditure reached EUR 42 million (41 %), compared to EUR 1.9 million (27 %) in 2014. They noted that these carry-overs mainly concerned building works for which the invoices had not been received or were still ongoing by the end of 2015. The Office stated that it will continue its efforts to ensure efficient and compliant budget implementation.

Members also made a series of observations regarding budgetary and financial management, procurement and recruitment procedures, the prevention and management of conflicts of interests and internal audits and controls.

They observed that the competent authorities of the Netherlands, where the headquarters of the Office are based, have assessed the **current threat as substantial** (level 4 out of 5). They acknowledged that the Office is in close contact with the competent authorities of the Netherlands with a view to continuously assessing the related implications for the Office, including situational security measures as well as the adjustment of business continuity arrangements.

They also noted that the Office's evolving capabilities, in particular the European Cybercrime Centre and, since 2016, the European Counter Terrorism Centre, have increased its **cyber threat profile**.

As regards **IT security**, Members noted that in 2016 the Office updated its ICT network architecture with a view to strengthening the protection of its core business data and related systems, including information exchange capabilities with the Member States and third parties. They noted in addition that, as part of these measures, the network hosting core business data and systems was classified at the level CONFIDENTIEL UE/EU CONFIDENTIAL. They also noted with satisfaction that the Office's new legal framework, which will become applicable in May 2017, provides for additional measures in terms of providing the discharge authority with dedicated information about the Office's work, including **sensitive operational matters**.

Lastly, Members noted with concern the use by the Office of the controversial private database **WorldCheck**, which often links individuals and organisations to terrorism only on the basis of public resources, without any proper investigation, transparency or provision of effective means of redress. They called on the Office to explain to the committee the way it uses this private database in its work in order to assess the relevance of the use of public funds for acquiring licences for WorldCheck.