2015 discharge: European Railway Agency (ERA)

2016/2177(DEC) - 30/03/2017 - 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 Railway Agency (ERA) 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. 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 26 345 000, representing an increase of 2.45 % compared to 2014 deriving entirely from the Union budget.
- **Budget and financial management**: Members noted that, in accordance with the provisions of the new Agency Regulation that entered into force in June 2016, the Agency is authorised to charge fees for some of its new competences including the issuing of safety certificates, vehicle authorisations and pre-approval of ERTMS trackside projects. They noted that the Agency is establishing a **fee mechanism** and is taking into account the practices of other agencies and relevant national bodies.

Members also made a series of observations regarding commitment and carry-overs, the prevention and management of conflicts of interests, procurement and recruitment procedures and internal audits and controls.

They noted that, in 2015, the Agency adopted a **communication strategy** that aimed to increase social media activities, to re-launch its public newsletter and its corporate design. It will present a new public website by early 2017.

They also noted with satisfaction that in 2016 the Agency undertook several actions in order to **communicate its activities**, achievements and added value to the outside world through several public events, including the InnoTrans fair in September 2016, a forum on digitalisation of railways in Florence, a celebration on the occasion of the positive vote on the 4th Railway Package and its subsequent name change and numerous workshops organised by its operational units across Europe.

Lastly, Members highlighted the Agency's role in ensuring the safety and **interoperability of European rail system**. They welcomed the Agency's role in the follow-up of the development, testing and implementation of European Railway Traffic Management System (ERTMS), as well as in evaluating the specific ERTMS projects. They stressed that, as the Agency receives greater responsibilities, it will need to be given the necessary **financial, material and human resources** to perform its new and additional tasks effectively and efficiently.