Discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Union agencies for the financial year 2015: performance, financial management and control

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The European Parliament adopted by 506 votes to 98 with 27 abstentions, a resolution on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Union agencies for the financial year 2015: performance, financial management and control.

Parliament emphasised that the agencies have significant influence on policy and decision-making and programme implementation in areas of vital importance to European citizens, such as health, the environment, human and social rights, migration, refugees, innovation, financial supervision, safety and security.

It insisted on the essential role that agencies have in **enhancing the visibility** of the Union in the Member States.

On a budgetary level, Parliament recalled that the agencies' 2015 budget amounted to some EUR 2.8 billion, representing an increase of about 7.7 % compared to 2014 and about 2 % of the Union's general budget. The major part of the Agency's budget is funded through Commission subsidies, whereas the rest is income from fees or other sources which amount to almost one-third. It noted with concern that Union regulatory agencies in charge of the risk assessment of regulated products, in particular the European Food Safety Authority, the European Chemicals Agency or the European Medicines Agency do not have the financial and legal resources to fulfil their mission properly.

Common approach and the Commission's Roadmap: Parliament stated that most of the Roadmap actions implemented by the agencies helped to improve their accountability and transparency, which further demonstrates the considerable efforts taken by the agencies to implement the Common Approach, despite the pressure in terms of resources, and showed that agencies are responsible, accountable and transparent. It noted with concern that the implementation of the actions had in addition a generally negative impact on the agencies' efficiency, as well as that in certain areas the implementation resulted in significant increases in costs. Parliament also acknowledged the administrative burden that the implementation of the Roadmap has caused to the agencies, as well as the "**outsourcing**" of several tasks related to collecting and consolidating agencies' data and input to the Network, in particular with regard to the budgetary and discharge procedure. The Commission and the budgetary authority are called upon to recognise these efforts, and to provide **additional resources** in the establishment plan of the agencies.

Budget and financial management: Parliament recalled that an elevated level of carry-overs of committed appropriations remains the most frequent issue of the budgetary and financial management affecting 32 agencies, compared with 28 in 2014. It noted that carry-overs may often be partly or fully justified by the multiannual nature of the agencies' operational programmes and **do not necessarily indicate weaknesses in budget planning** and implementation, nor are they always at odds with the budgetary principle of annuality.

Cooperation between agencies: Parliament highlighted the benefits of sharing services, which enable consistent application of administrative implementing rules and procedures that concern human resources and finance issues. It stated that some agencies continue to have **dual operational and administrative headquarters**. It is essential that all dual headquarters which do not offer any operational added value should be done away with at the earliest opportunity.

Members emphasised the importance of cooperation and **exchange of ideas and practices** between the agencies within the framework of the Union agencies performance development network, which contributes to more balanced governance and greater coherence between them.

Human resources management: Parliament is concerned that the Commission applied an additional levy of 5 % of staff to the agencies in order to create a redeployment pool from which it would allocate the posts to the agencies with new tasks entrusted to them or in a start-up phase. It is particularly concerned that with the additional staff reduction, fulfilment of the agencies' mandates and annual work programmes proves increasingly difficult.

Conflicts of interest and transparency: Parliament noted that all agencies already adopted generic rules on whistleblowing as part of the ethics guidelines. It noted with concern however, that only 65 % of the agencies adopted additional internal rules on whistleblowing. It called on the agencies which have still not adopted the internal **whistleblowing** rules to do so without delay.

Communication and visibility: Parliament noted that the agencies are actively promoting their work through various channels, in particular by regularly updating their websites to provide information and promote the work delivered as well as open-days to provide citizens with opportunities to learn more about the work of the agencies and the Union institutions.

Other comments: Parliament acknowledged the high number of agencies which have been set up in the area of freedom, security and justice but reiterates the importance of the missions which they carry out and their direct impact on citizens' lives. It stressed that all agencies have been set up in **response to a specific needs** and created European added value.

Lastly, Parliament requested that all justice and home affairs agencies identify financial, resource or other bottlenecks hindering their operational performance.