2015 discharge: European Environment Agency (EEA)

2016/2166(DEC) - 27/04/2017 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to **grant discharge** to the Executive Director of the European Environment Agency (EEA) in respect of the implementation of the Agency' budget for the financial year 2015.

The vote on the decision on discharge covers the closure of the accounts (in accordance with Annex IV, Article 5 (1) (a) to Parliament's Rules of Procedure).

Noting that the Court of Auditors has stated that it has obtained reasonable assurances that the Agency's annual accounts for the financial year 2015 are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular, Parliament adopted by 518 votes to 104 with 2 abstentions, a resolution containing a series of recommendations, which form an integral part of the decision on discharge and which add to the general recommendations set out in the resolution on performance, financial management and control of EU agencies.

These recommendations may be summarised as follows:

- **Agency's financial statements**: Parliament 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**: It 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, Parliament regretted that no specific initiatives have been undertaken to create or **increase transparency regarding contacts with lobbyists**. It 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.

Parliament 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**, Parliament 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. It 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.

Parliament 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. It 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.

EIONET: Parliament 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.

It recalled the importance of the on-going "Evaluation of the European Environment Agency and of its EIONET network", due for the end of 2017, in order to better assess the extent to which the Agency has achieved its objectives and implemented the tasks set out in its mandate.