2015 discharge: European Railway Agency (ERA)

2016/2177(DEC) - 27/04/2017 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to **grant discharge** to the Executive Director of the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA) in respect of the implementation of the 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 stated that it has obtained reasonable assurances that the Agency's annual accounts for the financial year 20154 are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular, Parliament adopted by 501 votes to 116 with 9 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 26 345 000, representing an increase of 2.45 % compared to 2014 deriving entirely from the Union budget.
- **Budget and financial management**: Parliament 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. It noted that the Agency is establishing a **fee mechanism** and is taking into account the practices of other agencies and relevant national bodies.

Parliament 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.

It 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.

It 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.

ERTMS: Parliament highlighted the Agency's role in ensuring the safety and **interoperability of European rail system**. It 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. It noted furthermore that a review of the Agency's role and powers forms part of the Fourth Railway Package. 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.

Lastly, Parliament welcomed the launch of the ERTMS Stakeholder platform and recalled that **ERTMS is crucial for achieving a Single European Railway Area** and is a key priority for Europe.