

2016 discharge: SESAR Joint Undertaking

2017/2181(DEC) - 23/03/2018 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Brian HAYES (EPP, IE) on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the SESAR Joint Undertaking for the financial year 2016.

The committee called on the European Parliament to **grant the joint undertaking's Executive Director discharge** in respect of the implementation of the joint undertaking's budget for the financial year 2016.

Noting that the Court of Auditors issued a statement of assurance as to the reliability of the accounts and the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions for the financial year 2016, Members called on Parliament to **approve the closure of the joint undertaking's accounts**.

They made, however, a number of recommendations that need to be taken into account when the discharge is granted. They may be summarised as follows:

Budget and financial management: in 2016, the payment budget of the Joint Undertaking was EUR 157 100 000 (2015: EUR 136 900 000). The final 2016 budget available from the Seventh Framework Programme ("FP7") and Horizon 2020 included commitment appropriations of EUR 101 400 000 and payment appropriations of EUR 162 800 000.

The utilisation rates for commitment and payment appropriations were 95.7 % and 63.2 % respectively. The low implementation rate for payment appropriations was caused by delays in the implementation of the studies and developments conducted by the members of the Joint Undertaking. One of the main reasons for the delay in implementation of payments for member studies and developments has been difficulties in adapting the common Horizon 2020 IT tools to the special needs of the Joint Undertaking; however prioritisation should be given to ensure these issues do not arise again in the future.

Members deplored that EUR 14.5 million payment appropriations – related to SESAR 2020 calls for proposals and activities initially budgeted in 2016 – had to be cancelled by an amended budget for 2016 due to external factors beyond control of the Joint Undertaking. They are concerned about the continuing rising trend for outstanding commitments (RAL), which increased from EUR 72.1 million to EUR 83.8 million during 2016, and called for this trend to be reversed following transition to SESAR 2020.

The report also highlighted the signing of the renewed Eurocontrol/SESAR Joint Undertaking agreement in 2016, which outlines the new role of Eurocontrol as a co-founder of SESAR and includes a series of commitments and engagements regarding the implementation of SESAR 2020. Members welcomed the expansion of membership to 19 members, representing over 100 companies across the industry, who will participate in the industrial research, validation and demonstration activities of SESAR 2020.

Other observations: the report also contained a series of observations on procurement and recruitment procedures, the prevention and management of conflicts of interests, calls for proposal, internal audits and control systems.

Members noted that all SESAR 1 projects were closed from an operational standpoint at the end of 2016 and that 61 solutions which are ready for industrialisation and deployment, contained in the first edition of the SESAR Solution Catalogue, have been delivered to the aviation community. 54 solutions initiated in SESAR 1 will be further developed in SESAR 2020, **exemplifying the efforts to ensure an effective transition** between the two programmes.

Lastly, Members drew attention to the importance of resolving the problem of the fragmentation of the European sky, as at present the European Single Market is not exploiting to the full the advantages offered by the Single European Sky. They reiterated the vital role of the Joint Undertaking in coordinating and implementing research into the SESAR project, which is a pillar project of the Single European Sky, although the deadline for meeting the SESAR project objectives has been deferred from the original date of 2020 to 2035.