2016 discharge: European Environment Agency (EEA)

2017/2151(DEC) - 18/04/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to **grant discharge** to the Executive Director of the European Environment Agency (EEA) in regard to the implementation of the agency's budget for the 2016 financial year and to approve the closure of the accounts for the financial year in question.

Noting that the Court of Auditors has stated that it has obtained reasonable assurances that the agency's annual accounts for the financial year 2016 are reliable and that the underlying transactions are **legal and regular**, Parliament adopted by 562 votes to 128 with 4 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:

- **Agency's financial statements:** the final budget of the European Environment Agency for the financial year 2016 was EUR 50 509 265, representing an increase of 2.75 % compared to 2015. The Agency's budget derives mainly from the Union budget.
- **Budget and financial management:** the budget monitoring efforts during the financial year 2016 resulted in a budget implementation rate of 99.9 % and that the payment appropriations execution rate was 89.8 %.
- **Commitments and carry-overs:** Members took note that the carry-overs from 2016 to 2017 were at EUR 4 203 111, representing a decrease of EUR 741 628 compared to the previous year (EUR 4 944 739 in 2015). Carry-overs may often be justified and do not necessarily indicate weaknesses in budget planning and implementation.

Members also made a series of observations regarding procurement, staff policy and internal audits and controls.

They emphasised the fact that the continuing **staff reduction** poses a risk for the Agency in limiting its capacity to respond to policy developments, underlining that the limitation of staff resources contributed to the lower delivery rate observed in some strategic areas.

With regard to **preventing conflicts of interest**, Parliament welcomed the implementation of agency's guidelines on whistleblowing. However, it emphasised the need to establish an independent body with sufficient budgetary resources to support **whistleblowers** wishing to disclose information on possible irregularities negatively impacting on the Union's financial interests, while ensuring their confidentiality is protected.

Lastly, it recalled that, according to the Court's report, in 2014, the Commission had signed, on behalf of more than 50 EU institutions and bodies a **framework contract (FWC)** with one contractor for the acquisition of software, licences and the provision of related IT maintenance and consultancy services. Members expressed their concern that, in this specific instance, there was no justification for the use of the FWC which resulted in an unnecessary uplift cost.