2016 discharge: European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)

2017/2159(DEC) - 18/04/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to **grant discharge** to the Executive Director of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in regard to the implementation of the authority'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 authority's annual accounts for the financial year 2016 are reliable and that the underlying transactions are **legal and regular**, Parliament adopted by 552 votes to 40 with 8 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:

- **Authority's financial statements:** the final budget of the European Food Safety Authority for the financial year 2016 was EUR 79 492 944, representing a decrease of 1.10 %. The entire budget derived from the Union budget.

- **Budget and financial management:** Members noted with satisfaction that the budget monitoring efforts during the financial year 2016 resulted in a budget implementation rate of 100 %, representing an increase of 0.19 % compared to 2015.

- **Commitments and carry-overs:** carry-overs from 2016 to 2017 were at EUR 8.2 million and predominantly related to infrastructure and operations.

Members also made a series of observations regarding staff policy, as well as internal audits and controls. In particular, they called on the authority as a matter of urgency to aim for a more **gender-balanced staff composition**, especially at the senior post level.

Members also expressed their concern over the fact that the scope of the authority's **new policy on independence** remains too narrow, underlining that the authority ignored the repeated calls of Parliament to include research funding in the list of interests to be covered by the two-year cooling-off period.

The authority should continue paying special attention to public opinion and commit itself to **openness and transparency**. Members recalled that a group of Members of Parliament filed a lawsuit against the authority on grounds of limiting of access to documents in the "glyphosate" case. They expect the authority to fully implement the court's ruling once it is known.

Parliament noted that close cooperation with the Commission's DG SANTE is well on track towards its preparation related to the **United Kingdom's decision to leave the Union.** It noted however that a critical uncertainty remains on the future availability of resources hampering thereby the thorough preparation of the authority for its programming after 2020. It called on the authority to remain proactive on this issue, anticipating and planning for any likely problems.

Members noted that the authority adopted in 2016 the strategy called **'EFSA Strategy 2020: trusted science for safe food'**, based on five strategic objectives: (i) prioritising public and stakeholder engagement in the process of scientific assessment, (ii) widening the authority's evidence base and

optimise access to its data, (iii) building the Union's scientific assessment capacity and knowledge community, (iv) preparing for future risk assessment challenges and (v) creating an environment and culture that reflects the authority's values.