2016 discharge: European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA)

2017/2157(DEC) - 18/04/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to **grant discharge** to the Executive Director of the European Maritime Safety Agency 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 541 votes to 133 with 17 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 Agency for the financial year 2016 was EUR 70 215 156, representing an increase of 6.05 % compared to 2015.
- **Budget and financial management:** Members noted that the budget monitoring efforts during the financial year 2016 resulted in a budget implementation rate of 98.07 %, representing a decrease of 1.16 % compared to 2015. The report took note of the implementation for Budget 2016 of the final phase of a two-part **budget restructuring** in 2014 and 2015 affecting budgetary years 2015 and 2016. The new structure is intended to better support the business needs of the Agency by isolating project financed activities and the financing earmarked for those specific actions. The Agency is invited to inform the discharge authority on the practical impact and efficiencies gained with the new budget structure.
- **Commitments and carry-overs:** out of the total amount carried forward from 2015 to 2016 (EUR 36 450 711), 54 % were consumed, 43 % remained as "open amount" (amount due, not yet paid) and 2 % of the total has been cancelled.
- Carry-overs are often justified and do not necessarily indicate weaknesses in budget planning and implementation.

Members also made a series of observations regarding transfers, the prevention and management of conflicts of interests, procurement and staff policy, internal audits and controls. They regretted the **significant gender imbalance** (of 19 % women to 81 % men) within the Agency's management board, showing no improvement from last year

While welcoming the fact that the agency has adopted a policy for whistleblowers, Parliament 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.

On **performance**, Members noted that during 2016, cooperation with participating Member States and Union bodies continued, including provision of services to Frontex (border control), EFCA (fisheries monitoring), OLAF (customs and illegal cross border activities), MAOC-N (law enforcement - narcotics) and EUNAVFOR (anti-piracy and anti-people smuggling).

The proposal for a revision of the Agency's Founding Regulation for the development of European cooperation on coastguard functions had a **significant impact** on the Agency's multi-annual programming exercises, conducted in 2016.

They also noted that the European Parliament funded pilot project aiming to explore and further develop, in 2016 and 2017, inter-agency synergies between EMSA, Frontex and EFCA to enhance cooperation on coastguard functions.

Among the agency’s main achievements in 2016 was the deployment of the first operational services under the **Copernicus** maritime surveillance project were rolled out, marking the beginning of a synergy that will sustain and boost the Agency's earth observation products and services for the years to come.

Lastly, Parliament highlighted that the agency has completed the procurement of services of **Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS)** for maritime surveillance. It urged the agency to cooperate with other Union agencies in addressing the **refugee crisis**, including in the performance of critically important activities outside its original mandate, such as by contributing knowhow, operational support and staff to help to tackle the refugee crisis.