2016 discharge: European Police Office (Europol)

2017/2169(DEC) - 18/04/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to **grant discharge** to the Executive Director of the European Police Office (Europol) in respect of the implementation of the Agency's budget for the financial year 2016, 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 559 votes to 122 with 16 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:

- **Financial statements of Europol**: the final budget of the European Police Office for the financial year 2016 was EUR 104 274 784, representing an increase of 9.27 % compared to 2015. This increase was due to new or additional tasks that expanded the mandate of Europol.
- **Budget and financial management**: the budget monitoring efforts during the financial year 2016 resulted in a high budget implementation rate of 99.75 %. The payment appropriations execution rate was 90.98 %, indicating an increase of 1.98 % compared to 2015;
- **Commitments and carry-overs**: the carry-overs of committed appropriations for administrative expenditure reached EUR 3.5 million (39 %), compared to EUR 4.2 million (41 %) in 2015. Members noted that these carry-overs mainly concerned Europol's headquarters, which were only invoiced by the host state in 2017 (EUR 2 million). These carry-overs may be justified and do not necessarily indicate weaknesses in budget planning and implementation.

Members also made a series of observations regarding procurement and staff policy, internal audits and controls. They deeply regretted that having regard to the total number of posts occupied on 31 December 2016, **gender balance has not been achieved** since the ratio is more than two to one – 32.4 % female to 67.6 % male. On the other hand, they noted with satisfaction that Europol has established a network of 10 confidential counsellors as a part of the policy on protecting the dignity of the person and preventing psychological and sexual **harassment.**

They stressed the need to establish an independent body with sufficient budgetary resources to help **whistleblowers** to disclose information about possible irregularities affecting the Union's financial interests, while protecting their confidentiality.

Parliament welcomed the establishment of the **European Counter Terrorism Centre** and the European Migrant Smuggling Centre, including the on-the-spot deployment of staff to perform over 4 800 secondary security checks in migration hotspots by the end of 2016.

Lastly, Members noted that, according to Europol, there are substantial financial and operational risks due to the **Brexit.** Europol was called on to remain proactive in identifying and addressing those risks and to keep the discharge authority fully informed of the future impact of Brexit on Europol.