2017 discharge: European Environment Agency (EEA)

2018/2182(DEC) - 18/09/2018

PURPOSE: presentation of the EU Court of Auditors' report on the annual accounts of the European Environment Agency for the financial year 2017, together with the Agency's replies.

CONTENT: the Court of Auditors carried out the audit on the annual accounts of the European Environment Agency (EEA).

In brief, this Agency is responsible for setting up an observation network to provide the Commission, the Parliament, the Member States and, more generally, the public with reliable information on the state of the environment.

Statement of assurance and reliability of the accounts

The Court considered that:

- the Agency's annual accounts present fairly, in all material respects, its financial position as at 31 December 2017 and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended, in accordance with the provisions of its Financial Regulation and the accounting rules adopted by the Commission's accounting officer;

- the transactions underlying the annual accounts for the year ended 31 December 2017 are legal and regular in all material respects.

The report also makes a series of observations on the budgetary and financial management of the Agency, accompanied by the latter's response. The main observations may be summarised as follows:

The Court's observations

Procurement

Some weaknesses were identified in several public procurement procedures. The tender specifications used by the Agency for different calls for tenders did not specify any minimum requirements for the selection criteria with respect to economic and financial capacity. Framework contracts were signed with one tenderer only whereas a reopening of competition between different tenderers would lead to better results for the specific contracts.

Financial management

Agencies should introduce a single solution for the electronic exchange and storage of information with third parties participating in public procurement procedures (e-procurement). As the same requirement exists for all EU Institutions, the Commission is developing a comprehensive IT solution covering all phases of public procurement procedures. The Commission launched tools for electronic invoicing (e-invoicing), for the electronic publication of documents related to contract notices (e-tendering) and for the electronic submission of tenders (e-submission). By the end of 2017, the Agency had introduced e-invoicing and e-tendering for certain procedures, but not e-submission.

Recruitment

Several weaknesses were noted in the recruitment procedures organised by the Agency. There is a need to better define the criteria used at each stage of the selection procedure and the role of each member of the selection committee, in order to strengthen transparency and equal treatment of candidates.

The Agency's replies

Procurement

The Agency reiterates that the choice of awarding framework contracts to single contractors is deliberate and with due consideration to the limited competition prevailing on the relevant markets as well as the nature and the complexity of the services to be procured.

Financial management

The Agency introduced e-invoicing for certain procedures in the course of 2014 and is now in the process of extending it to all its procedures, whereas e-Tendering is been implemented since 1 January 2015 for all open calls for tenders.

Recruitment

The Agency takes note of the Court's observation and confirms that it is in the process of adapting its selection/recruitment procedures.

Lastly, the Court of Auditors' report contains a summary of the Agency's key figures in 2017:

Budget

EUR 70 million.

Staff

212 including officials, temporary and contract staff and seconded national experts.