

2017 discharge: European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)

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PURPOSE: presentation of the EU Court of Auditors' report on the annual accounts of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) for the year 2017, together with the Authority's reply.

CONTENT: the Court of Auditors carried out the audit on the annual accounts of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

In brief, the Authority's main tasks are to supply the scientific information needed for Union legislation to be drawn up concerning food and food safety, to collect and analyse data that allow risks to be identified and monitored and to provide independent information on these risks.

Statement of assurance and reliability of the accounts

The Court considered that:

- the Authority'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 Authority, accompanied by the latter's response. The main observations may be summarised as follows:

The Court's observations

Financial management

In May 2017, the Authority awarded, on behalf of nine agencies participating in the open call for tender, three framework contracts in cascade, covering a wide range of audit services. While inter-agency procurements provide a good opportunity to improve administrative efficiency, framework contracts with reopening of competition for each specific contract are more appropriate than cascades to support good value for money for procurements where the concrete services to be delivered are not known when the call is launched.

The Authority's reply

Financial management

As for reopening versus cascading mechanisms in framework contracts, there is no obligation to use the reopening model and both models can be fit for purpose depending on the specific scenario. In the EFSA's view, reopening competition is more appropriate for standardised services and is used in EFSA contracts covering statistical services, systematic literature review and audience research. EFSA uses the cascading model in a context where a long term contractual relationship is more important.

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

Budget

EUR 81 million.

Staff

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