

2016 discharge: European Asylum Support Office (EASO)

2017/2177(DEC) - 24/10/2018 - Final act

PURPOSE: to grant discharge to the European Asylum Support Office for the 2016 financial year.

NON-LEGISLATIVE ACT: Decision (EU) 2018/1358 of the European Parliament on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Asylum Support Office for the financial year 2016.

CONTENT: the European Parliament has refused to grant discharge to the Executive Director of the European Asylum Support Office in respect of the implementation of the Office's budget for the 2016 financial year.

The decision is accompanied by a resolution of the European Parliament containing the observations which form an integral part of the decision on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the 2016 financial year.

Ongoing investigations

In its resolution, Parliament recalled that OLAF was currently investigating several former and current members of the Office in middle and senior management positions. It welcomed the decision taken by the Management Board on 6 June 2018 to release the Executive Director of his duties with immediate effect.

While welcoming the appointment of an interim Executive Director (who is not the subject of OLAF's investigation), it regretted that the Management Board had not taken this measure earlier on its own initiative, which would have avoided delaying the discharge procedure.

Parliament welcomed the measures already taken by the acting Executive Director to improve the governance structure of the Office, restore transparency and build trust. It stressed the importance of addressing the deficiencies previously identified in the legality and regularity of transactions and invited the Bureau to prepare a comprehensive and detailed roadmap outlining the way forward. It asked OLAF to inform the discharge authority of the outcome of the investigation as soon as it is closed.

Basis for the qualified opinion on the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions

Parliament expects that every effort will be made to recover the amount of the following irregular payments made in respect of the 2016 financial year in respect of two of the five major procurement procedures in 2016: (a) EUR 920 561 (tender procedure for the provision of travel services) and (b) EUR 592 273 (framework contract for recruiting temporary support staff as part of its response to the migration crisis). It recalls that only full transparency of tendering procedures can guarantee effective control.

Parliament also continues to be concerned about the trend in the reimbursement of transport costs; it notes that the amount of reimbursements amounted to EUR 997 506 in 2014, EUR 987 515 in 2015 and EUR 1 012 147 in 2016.

Lastly, it underlines the importance of the operational support operations carried out by the Office in the hotspots of some Member States being properly planned, managed and implemented.