

# 2016 discharge: European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)

2017/2159(DEC) - 18/04/2018 - Final act

**PURPOSE:** to grant discharge to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) for the 2016 financial year.

**NON-LEGISLATIVE ACT:** Decision (EU) 2018/1378 of the European Parliament on the closure of the accounts of the European Food Safety Authority for the financial year 2016.

**CONTENT:** the European Parliament has decided to grant discharge to the Executive Director of the European Food Safety Authority in respect of the implementation of the Authority'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.

In its resolution, Parliament recalled that according to its statement of revenue and expenditure, the final budget of the European Food Safety Authority for the 2016 financial year was EUR 79 492 944, which represents a decrease of 1.10%.

## ***Budgetary and financial management and staff***

The budget monitoring efforts during the financial year 2016 resulted in a budget implementation rate of 100 %, representing an increase of 0.19 % compared to 2015. The payment appropriations execution rate was at 89.66 %, representing a decrease of 0.45 % compared to 2015.

Parliament noted the following:

- the carryovers from 2016 to 2017 amount to EUR 8 200 000. They are mainly related to infrastructure and operations and do not necessarily indicate weaknesses in budget planning and execution;
- the reduction of the Authority's staff by 2% in 2016, i.e. seven posts, resulted in an increase in the Authority's efforts to put in place more efficient and effective procedures. The Authority is urged to urgently aim for a better gender balance among staff, especially at senior levels;
- the resources gap is expected to increase due to a further reduction in the establishment plan on the one hand, and the expected further increase in workload due to new tasks related to certain main activities such as novel foods, pesticides and the classification and monitoring of plant pests on the other hand;
- no cases of harassment were reported, investigated or brought to court in 2016.

## ***Prevention and management of conflicts of interest, transparency and democracy***

The Authority's Management Board has adopted a new independence policy to ensure the independence of all professionals involved in its scientific activities. It noted that the new policy includes a new definition of what constitutes a conflict of interest, a comprehensive set of 'cooling-off' rules including a

ban on consultancy contracts, a requirement that experts declare the proportion of their annual earnings received from any organisation, body or company whose activities fall within the Authority's areas of work.

Parliament considers that the independence policy remains too limited since it only takes into account interests relating to 'matters falling under the mandate of the relevant EFSA scientific group' and not 'all material interests related to the companies whose products are assessed by the Authority and to any organisations funded by them' as Parliament demanded.

Parliament noted that a group of Members of Parliament filed a lawsuit against the Authority on grounds of limiting of access to documents in the 'glyphosate' case. It expects the Authority to fully implement the court's ruling once it is known. In general, it is of the opinion that the Authority should continue to pay particular attention to public opinion and be committed to the principles of openness and transparency.

Lastly, Parliament noted that the Authority is well aware of the financial risks due to the United Kingdom's decision to leave the Union, such as a restricted budget availability, contractual issues for ongoing and new contracts and related payments, and unemployment allowances, and the operational risks such as access to United Kingdom citizens as members of staff or as experts, access to United Kingdom entities for services and information/data, change in the volumes of work and access rights to documents.