2017 discharge: Bio-based Industries Joint Undertaking (BBI Joint Undertaking)

2018/2214(DEC) - 27/02/2019 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Martina DLABAJOVÁ (ALDE, CZ) on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the bio-based industries (BBI) Joint Undertaking for the financial year 2017.

The committee called on the European Parliament to grant the joint undertaking's Executive Director discharge in respect of the implementation of the Joint Undertaking's budget for the financial year 2017.

Noting that the Court of Auditors issued a statement of assurance as to the reliability of the accounts and the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions for the financial year 2017, Members called on Parliament to approve the closure of the joint undertaking's accounts.

They made, however, a number of recommendations that need to be taken into account when the discharge is granted. They may be summarised as follows:

General

Members noted that the maximum Union contribution to the activities of the Joint Undertaking is EUR 975 000 000, to be paid from Horizon 2020. The industry members of the Joint Undertaking are to contribute resources of at least EUR 2 730 000 000 over the period of the Joint Undertaking, consisting of at least EUR 975 000 000 of in-kind and cash contributions to the Joint Undertaking's operational activities and at least EUR 1 755 000 000 of in-kind contributions to implement additional activities outside the work plan of the Joint Undertaking.

They noted that 17 out of 82 retained proposals from the 2017 call for proposals were at the grant agreement preparation stage by the end of 2017. By early 2017, the Joint Undertaking programme will have a portfolio of 82 ongoing projects with a total of 932 participants from 30 countries with a total grant value of EUR 414 000 000.

Budget and financial management

The Joint Undertaking's annual accounts provide that the final 2017 budget is to be available for implementation and include commitment appropriations of EUR 92 900 000 and payment appropriations of EUR 91 600 000, the utilisation rates for commitment and payment appropriations of which were 97 % and 95 %, respectively. The payment appropriations were used mainly for the pre-financing of grant agreements resulting from the 2016 calls for proposals.

Members regretted that out of the minimum EUR 182 500 000 of cash contributions to be made by the industry members to the Joint Undertaking's operational cost, only EUR 800 000 were paid by the end of 2017, having suspended the Commission EUR 50 000 000 of its cash contributions as a consequence.

Other observations

The report also contained a series of observations on procurement, recruitment, performance, internal audits and the legal framework. It noted in particular:

- by the end of 2017, the Joint Undertaking’s staff was almost complete, with 20 posts filled out of a total of 22 posts allocated to the Joint Undertaking by the staff establishment plan;

- that in 2017, the human resources unit continued to strengthen the legal framework paying particular attention to the application of the implementing rules of the Commission to the Joint Undertaking. Seven new implementing rules have been adopted by the governing board in 2017;

- the fact that the Joint Undertaking, together with six other joint undertakings, launched a common joint-undertaking call for expression of interest to select up to seven confidential counsellors that will set up a network of confidential counsellors.