2017 discharge: SESAR Joint Undertaking

2018/2212(DEC) - 28/02/2019 - 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 SESAR 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:

Budget and financial management

In 2017, the total payment appropriations of the Joint Undertaking were EUR 191 813 383. The commitment appropriations were EUR 113 346 265. The utilisation rates for commitment and payment appropriations were 80.24 % and 67.97 % respectively. Members noted that the implementation rates for SESAR 1 commitments and payment appropriations were 11 % and 68 % respectively, with such a low rates explained by an unexpected assigned revenue of around EUR 17 million and that in December 2016, the SESAR 1 programme was formally closed and the last payment was done in December 2017.

The report noted that for SESAR 2020, the commitments and payments were 92 % and 68 % implemented respectively, being the last one low due to delays in the implementation of the Horizon 2020 projects conducted by the industry members and a rather conservative budget planning considering the risk of delayed reception of the annual financial implementation delegation agreements.

Multiannual budget implementation under Horizon 2020

Members noted that out of the EUR 639 800 000 of Horizon 2020 operational and administrative budget allocated to the Joint Undertaking for the implementation of SESAR 2020, by the end of 2017 the Joint Undertaking had made commitments of EUR 236 700 000 and payments of EUR 112 300 000. Those payments were mainly pre-financing payments for the first and second wave of SESAR 2020 projects.

They welcomed the publication by SESAR of the roadmap to ensure safe and secure drone operations across Europe.

Other observations

The report also contained a series of observations on procurement and recruitment procedures, the prevention and management of conflicts of interests and internal audits. It noted in particular:

- that the Joint Undertaking launched eight procurement procedures, leading to 14 Framework and Direct Service Contracts;

- during 2017 ten audits were carried out by a different external audit company and for one audit the Framework Contract of the Directorate-General for Budget had to be used due to an identified conflict of interest of the three firms in the Joint Undertaking Framework Contract;

- the Commission's Final Evaluation on SESAR 1 Programme (2007-2016) was carried out during 2017, showing that the Joint Undertaking is delivering on its objectives, helping to overcome fragmentation and create continuity of research goals;

- that the European airspace management remains fragmented and the Single European Sky as a concept has not yet been achieved. Members reiterated the vital role of SESAR in coordinating and implementing research into the SESAR project and meeting the project objectives;

- delays were observed in the execution of the ATM Master Plan.