Discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Union agencies for the financial year 2017: performance, financial management and control

2018/2210(DEC) - 26/03/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 489 votes to 121, with 29 abstentions, a resolution concerning the discharge in relation to the implementation of the budget of the European Union agencies for the financial year 2017: performance, financial management and control.

Members emphasised that the agencies are highly visible in the Member States and have significant influence on policy, decision making and programme implementation in areas of vital importance to European citizens, such as security, safety, health, research, economic affairs, environment, gender equality, energy, transport, freedom and justice.

They welcomed the effective overall performance of the agencies, and the progress made in enhancing their visibility to European citizens.

Parliament noted that the Court issued an unqualified opinion on the reliability of the accounts of all agencies. They noted in addition that the Court issued an unqualified opinion on the legality and regularity of the transactions underlying the accounts for all agencies, except for the European Asylum Support Office (EASO).

On a budgetary level, for the 32 decentralised Union agencies, the 2017 budgets amounted to around EUR 2.35 billion in commitment appropriations, representing an increase of approximately 13.36 % compared to 2016, and to EUR 2.24 billion in payment appropriations, showing an increase of 10.31 % in comparison to 2016.

Moreover, of the EUR 2.24 billion, some EUR 1.62 billion were financed from the general budget of the Union, representing 72.08 % of the agencies' total financing in 2017 (69.81 % in 2016). EUR 627 million were financed by fees and charges and by direct contributions from participating countries.

Once again, Members recalled their request to streamline and accelerate the discharge procedure towards deciding on granting discharge in the year immediately following the year for which the discharge is granted, closing the procedure within the year following the accounting year in question.

Budget and financial management

Parliament called on the Commission, the Network and the individual agencies to:

- work together and provide constructive feedback throughout the negotiations for the post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework, and to explore new sources of financing for the agencies in addition to the existing Union budget contributions;

- work on streamlined and harmonised indicators and to automatically provide the discharge authority with the official budget (in commitment appropriations and in payment appropriations) and staff figures (establishment plan, contract agents and seconded national experts as of 31 December of the year in question) of the 32 decentralised agencies.

The Court and the Commission are invited to propose and define a consistent formula for the calculation of cancelled carry-overs.

Staff

Parliament noted the challenge of insufficient staff some of the agencies are facing, especially when new tasks are attributed without additional personnel envisaged for their implementation. It regretted that the Commission has not taken into consideration the request of the affected agencies for increase of their staff which puts in risk their good performance.

It also regretted the gender imbalance in some agencies and called on all agencies to constantly work on a balanced distribution on all levels of staff and report to the discharge authority on implemented measures and progress.

Procurement

Again, shortcomings persist in the management of procurements, with 14 agencies showing weaknesses in this area, mostly relating to procurements of services.

Conflicts of interests and transparency

The resolution noted that 77 % of agencies had already set up and implemented internal rules or guidelines on whistleblowing and the other 23 % are in the process of adopting them. The remaining agencies are urged to set up and implement internal rules on whistleblowing without further delay.

Members recalled that a number of agencies, in particular those issuing authorisations to third parties for bringing products on the market, are vulnerable if they do not have and implement clear and effective rules to prevent conflicts of interest.

Dual headquarters

Parliament noted with concern that some agencies continue to have dual operational and administrative headquarters. It considered that dual headquarters not offering any operational added value should be done away with at the earliest opportunity.

Brexit

Members recalled that on 29 March 2017 the United Kingdom (UK) notified the European Council of its decision to withdraw from the Union. Five of the agencies did not carry out a comprehensive analysis of the likely impact of the UK’s withdrawal on their organisation, operations and accounts.