2017 discharge: Fusion for Energy Joint Undertaking (F4E)

2018/2211(DEC) - 26/03/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to grant the Director of the European Joint Undertaking for ITER and the Development of Fusion Energy discharge in respect of the implementation of the joint undertaking's budget for the financial year 2017 and to approve the closure of the joint undertaking's accounts.

Noting that the Court of Auditors considered that the annual accounts of the Joint Undertaking for the financial year 2017 accurately reflected the financial position of the Joint Undertaking as at 31 December 2017, as well as the results of its operations, Parliament adopted by 439 votes to 175, with 12 abstentions, a resolution containing a series of observations which form an integral part of the discharge decision.

General

Parliament noted the fact that in addition to the construction phase, the Joint Undertaking will have to contribute to the ITER operational phase and to the subsequent ITER deactivation and decommissioning phases. It took note that the contribution to the deactivation and the decommissioning phases were estimated at EUR 95 540 000 (in 2001 values) and EUR 180 200 000 (in 2001 values). It is concerned that the contribution for the operational phase after 2035 has not yet been estimated in financial terms and called on the Joint Undertaking to estimate the cost of the operational phase after 2035 as soon as possible.

Members also expressed concerned that while positive steps have been taken to improve the management and control of the ITER project construction phase, there remains an ongoing risk of further cost increases and delays in project implementation compared to the new proposed baseline. They called on the Joint Undertaking and indeed all parties of the project to take appropriate action to identify and analyse all potential risks and set up an Action Plan that will also include a further analysis on the impact of Brexit.

Budget and financial management

The final 2017 budget available for implementation included commitment appropriations of EUR 588 916 058 and payment appropriations of EUR 864 914 263. The utilisation rates for commitment and payment appropriations were 99.9 % and 96.3 % respectively.

Parliament regretted that, due to serious shortcomings in the budget planning process coupled with the acceleration of some contracts, the Joint Undertaking has estimated a lack of payment appropriations of about EUR 150 000 000 for the 2018 budget.

Other observations

The resolution also contained a series of observations on the prevention and management of conflicts of interests, personal selection and recruitment, internal control measures, operational procurements and grants. It noted in particular:

- the overall ITER Project level, 30 out of 32 ITER Council milestones were achieved;

- significant shortcomings in relation to the recruitment of key management staff. Improvements should be made in this regard;

- 83 operational procurement procedures were launched, and 69 operational procurement contracts were signed.