2017 discharge: SESAR Joint Undertaking

2018/2212(DEC) - 26/03/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to grant the Executive Director of the SESAR Joint Undertaking 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 489 votes to 122, with 6 abstentions, a resolution containing a series of observations which form an integral part of the discharge decision.

General

The resolution noted that the Union contribution for the deployment phase of the SESAR 2 Programme 2014 to 2024 funded by Horizon 2020 is EUR 585 000 000. Under the new Horizon 2020 Membership Agreements, the contribution from Eurocontrol is expected to be around EUR 500 000 000, and the other partners from the aviation industry will contribute with at least EUR 720 700 000, and being around 90 % the in-kind contributions from Eurocontrol and other partners.

The Joint Undertaking has presented its budget in two separate sections: (1) SESAR 1 and (2) SESAR 2020. It is recalled that SESAR 1 was co-financed from TEN-T and the Seventh Research Framework programmes and SESAR 2020 is co-financed from Horizon 2020.

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.

Parliament 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

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

Other observations

The resolution 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.