2017 discharge: Shift2Rail Joint Undertaking (S2R Joint Undertaking)

2018/2217(DEC) - 26/03/2019 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to grant discharge to the Executive Director of the Shift2Rail Joint Undertaking for the financial year 2017 and approve the closure of the accounts of the Joint Undertaking for the financial year in question.

Noting that the Court of Auditors has stated that it has obtained reasonable assurances that the agency's annual accounts for the financial year 2017 are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular, Parliament adopted by 449 votes to 115 with 3 abstentions, a resolution containing a series of recommendations, which form an integral part of the discharge decision.

Budget and financial management

The final 2017 budget available for implementation included commitment appropriations of EUR 68 600 000 and payment appropriations of EUR 44 100 000. The utilisation rates for commitment and payment appropriations were 94 % and 79 % respectively which represent a low level especially for payment appropriations. Most of the payments made by the Joint Undertaking in 2017 were pre-financing payments for Horizon 2020 projects selected under the 2017 calls for proposals.

Members also made a series of observations regarding procurement, recruitment, performance, internal audits and the legal framework.

They noted in particular:

- in 2017, the Joint Undertaking recruited seven members of staff in accordance with its Staff Establishment Plan: a legal officer, an administrative and finance assistant, an operation and grant support officer and four Programme managers. The JU's staff consisted of 20 members out of 23 foreseen in the Staff Establishment Plan;

- some qualitative shortcomings were observed in the Joint Undertaking's open procedure for the procurement of communication and event services of an estimated budget of EUR 1 200 000 over four years. The Joint Undertaking decided not to introduce minimum financial capacity in order not to discourage the participation of SMEs to the call for tender;

- the importance of the cooperation between the Joint Undertaking and the Union Agency for Railways (ERA);

- that the Joint Undertaking has put in place a tailor-made anti-fraud strategy complementing the Horizon 2020 strategy, including an assessment of its risks and opportunities.