2017 discharge: European Asylum Support Office (EASO)

2018/2208(DEC) - 30/09/2019 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the second report by Petri SARVAMAA (EPP, FI) on the discharge for the implementation of the budget of the European Asylum Support Office for the 2017 financial year.

The committee called on the European Parliament to refuse to grant discharge to the Executive Director of the European Asylum Support Office in respect of the implementation of the Office's budget for the 2017 financial year. It also pointed out that a proposal for the closure of the accounts of the European Asylum Support Office for the 2017 financial year would be presented at a subsequent part-session.

Basis for an adverse opinion on the legality and regularity of the payments underlying the accounts for the financial year 2017

Stressing the importance of acting in an accountable and transparent manner with regard to the implementation of the Union's budget, the committee justified its opinion by recalling that, according to the Court of Auditors' report, the material and systematic instances of non-compliance of payments with the EASO Financial Regulation and other applicable rules and provisions mainly relate to public procurement and recruitment procedures underlying payments.

The committee deeply regretted that the combined error from non-compliant payments amounts to at least EUR 7.7 million or 10.3 % of the total payments made by the European Asylum Support Office (the “Office”) in 2017.

The outcome of the investigation of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF)

Members deplored the findings of OLAF as regards irregularities surrounding the breach of procurement procedures, misappropriation of Union funds, mismanagement, abuse of position in human resources issues, breaches of data protection rules, harassment and inappropriate behaviour towards staff in 2017. The Office is called on to report to the discharge authority on the follow-up of the measures proposed by OLAF.

Members recognised the commitment of the new Executive Director appointed on 16 June 2019 to deliver significant reforms ensuring solid governance and his intention for future close cooperation with the Parliament in the future.

Follow-up to the 2016 discharge and to the 2017 first discharge report

The committee recalled the European Parliament reasoned decision of 24 October 2018 refusing to grant the Office’s Executive Director discharge for the 2016 financial year, as well as the European Parliament decision to postpone the decision on the 2017 discharge of the Office.

Members welcomed the follow-up report by the Office on the observations of Parliament for the 2017 financial year, in particular corrective measures taken by the Office’s Management Board, the ad interim Executive Director and the new Executive Director in order to improve the governance structure and efficiency of the Office, restore transparency and build trust. The Office is urged to regularly and publicly report to the discharge authority on the implementation of that Action Plan.

Members noted with satisfaction the implementation of two thirds of the corrective actions by the Office regarding procurement procedures, in particular regarding the payments under irregular procurement processes, and the completion of new open procedures, which were audited by the Court without raising any comments.