2018 discharge: Shift2Rail Joint Undertaking (S2R Joint Undertaking)

2019/2105(DEC) - 13/05/2020 - 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 2018 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 2018 are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular, Parliament adopted by 598 votes to 87 with 8 abstentions, a resolution containing a series of recommendations, which form an integral part of the discharge decision.

Budget and financial management

The final 2018 budget available for implementation included commitment appropriations of EUR 84 756 000 and payment appropriations of EUR 71 890 204. The utilisation rates for commitment and payment appropriations were 100 % and 82.3 % respectively which represent a low level, especially for payment appropriations. The lower than expected payment appropriations' implementation is due to a pending legal decision concerning the membership of the Joint Undertaking.

Other observations

Members also made a series of observations regarding performance, recruitment and internal control.

They noted in particular:

- that in 2018, the Joint Undertaking signed 17 grant agreements resulting from the calls for proposals of 2018. They noted with regret that only 76 SMEs participated to the 2018 call and only 40 of these were retained for funding;

- that at the end of 2018, the Joint Undertaking's staff consisted of 22 members out of the 23 who were foreseen in the Staff Establishment Plan; - the importance of the cooperation between the Joint Undertaking and the Union Agency for Railways (ERA). The Joint Undertaking assessed the requests for research and innovation coming from ERA in order to avoid overlapping activities and to maximise the efficiency of use of the public funding;

- that the Joint Undertaking needs to be given the necessary financial, material and human resources to contribute to a real modal shift from road to rail and for the attractiveness of this shift to be increased;

- that the continued implementation of the Joint Undertaking's anti-fraud strategy 2017 - 2020, which did not result in any cases of 'close monitoring due to an assessment of high risk of fraud' or in any files being sent to OLAF for investigation.