2018 discharge: European Union Agency for Railways (ERA)

2019/2081(DEC) - 13/05/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to **grant discharge** to the Executive Director of the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA) in regard to the implementation of the agency's budget for the 2018 financial year and to approve the closure of the accounts 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 602 votes to 87 with 4 abstentions, a resolution containing a series of recommendations, which form an integral part of the decision on discharge and which add to the general recommendations set out in the resolution on performance, financial management and control of EU agencies:

Agency's financial statements

The final budget of the European Union Agency for Railways for the financial year 2018 was EUR 28 793 243, representing a decrease of 6.31 % compared to 2017.

Budget and financial management

The budget monitoring efforts during the financial year 2018 resulted in a budget implementation rate of 99.98 %, representing a slight decrease of 0.02 % compared to 2017. The payment appropriations execution rate was 88.96 %, representing an increase of 1.66 % compared to 2017.

Parliament noted, following the Agency's enlarged mandate, in 2019 the Agency will start to collect fees and charges for certification tasks, taking into account the specific needs of medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It called on the Agency to report to the discharge authority on the implementation of this new system and to take into account the specific needs of SMEs during the certification process, in particular by reducing their administrative and financial burdens.

Other observations

Members also made a series of observations regarding performance, procurement, staff policy and internal controls.

In particular, they noted that:

- the objective set by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission of establishing a single European railway market has not been achieved. They called on the Agency to focus its efforts and publications on this area and to draw up a set of measures designed to ensure that in future, rail transport can be incorporated into modern logistics chains;

- the next five years will be crucial for the future of the rail sector and that the Agency must be provided with the funding and staff it needs in order to meet the coming challenges;

- the Agency shall take up, in June 2019, its role as the EU authority responsible for issuing authorisations for placing railway vehicles on the market, single safety certificates for railway undertakings and ERTMS trackside approvals;

- as regards both infrastructure and rolling stock, far too little progress has been made in introducing the equipment required for the ERTMS in Europe;

- on 31 December 2018, the establishment plan was 89.19 % executed, with 132 temporary agents appointed out of 148 temporary agents authorised under the Union budget;

- the Agency has adopted a policy on protecting the dignity of persons and preventing harassment, confidential counsellors are promoted and staff is encouraged to address their issues to them;

- on 15 April 2019, the Agency signed the headquarter agreement with the French authorities. It acknowledged that the decision for the double seat is a Council decision that the Agency must apply.