2018 discharge: SESAR Joint Undertaking

2019/2100(DEC) - 14/05/2020 - 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 2018 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 2018 accurately reflected the financial position of the Joint Undertaking as at 31 December 2018, as well as the results of its operations, Parliament adopted by 605 votes to 84, with 4 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 2020 (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 were to contribute with at least EUR 500 000 000, and being around 90 % the in-kind contributions from Eurocontrol and other partners.

It was also noted that in December 2016, the SESAR 1 was formally closed and the last final grant payment was made in December 2017, and unused payment appropriations of EUR 40 000 000 from previous years were carried over to 2018 for the reimbursement of cash contributions received in excess from the SESAR 1 industry members and for the payment of delayed but still justified cost claims for the Seventh Framework Programme and the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) projects. At the end of 2018, only EUR 1 800 000 (5 %) of these appropriations could be used for the corrective payments, EUR 20 000 000 (50 %) had to be cancelled, and EUR 18 200 000 (45 %) were carried over to 2019. Parliament regretted that at the end of 2018 in the closing phase of the SESAR 1, the Joint Undertaking still showed a large amount of open commitments of EUR 61 400 000, and these resources allocated to the Joint Undertaking will not be fully used.

Budget and financial management

In 2018, budget in payment appropriations was EUR 94 800 000 and EUR 129 517 762 in commitment appropriations. Including the unused appropriations of previous years, which the Joint Undertaking re-entered in the budget of the current year, and assigned revenues, the total available payment budget was EUR 166 465 000, and the total available commitment budget was EUR 175 918 000.

Multiannual budget implementation under Horizon 2020

For SESAR 2020, at the end of 2018, the Joint Undertaking implemented 81 % and 61 % respectively of the commitment and payment appropriations available for Horizon 2020 projects, and cancelled around EUR 44 600 000 (35 %) of the available Horizon 2020 payment appropriations (the utilisation rates for commitment and payment appropriations in 2017 were respectively 80.24 % and 67.97 %). The low implementation and high cancellation rates for Horizon 2020 payment appropriations available in 2018 were mainly due to the Joint Undertaking 's conservative budget planning, and not fully taking account of the amount of unused payment appropriations from previous years in its budget planning and monitoring.

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:

- the SESAR Joint Undertaking is one among several Joint Undertakings which saw more operational synergies with Union decentralised agencies operating in their respective areas of research and innovation, in particular, the Joint Undertaking and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency collaborated on drones;

- the Joint Undertaking has conducted three major initiatives that have been key in setting the vision for the future of Air Traffic Management (ATM) in Europe in 2018 and that the results of these achievements, recognised by the whole ATM community, have been transferred to the Commission that will take the next steps for their inclusion in the aviation legislative and policy framework;

- at 31 December 2018, the Joint Undertaking employed 42 staff and signed 48 contracts;

- an open call for proposals was launched for studies and demonstrations on drone traffic management in Europe (U-Space Call), the maximum grant amount of EUR 9 500 000 being funded through the Commission’s Connect Europe Facility (CEF) fund.