2019 discharge: European Asylum Support Office (EASO)

2020/2180(DEC) - 28/04/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided by 569 votes to 78, with 51 abstentions, 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 financial year 2019 and to approve the closure of the accounts for that year.

The Court issued a qualified opinion on its findings for the financial years 2016, 2017 and 2018 in respect of the legality and regularity of payments. For the financial year 2019, the Court's audit found another error and associated payments.

Except for the effects of the qualified opinion on the legality and regularity of the payments for the financial years 2016, 2017 and 2018, amounting to EUR 13 868 576, and the error found in 2019, amounting to EUR 111 304, the payments underlying the annual accounts for the financial year ended 31 December 2019 are, in all material respects, legal and regular.

Parliament adopted, by 561 votes to 86 with 44 abstentions, a resolution containing a series of recommendations which form an integral part of the discharge decision and which complement the general recommendations contained in the resolution on the performance, financial management and control of EU agencies.

Agency's financial statements

The final budget of the Office for the financial year 2019 was EUR 102 936 916.68, which represents an increase of 5.40% compared to 2018.

Follow-up to the 2018 discharge report

Parliament welcomed the appointment of a new Executive Director on 16 June 2019 and the steps taken in the area of public procurement, with the successful conclusion of the framework contract for temporary agency workers in Italy, which was awarded in 2019, and its full compliance with EU public procurement rules. It welcomed the fact that the Office has continued to make progress towards a fully effective internal control system.

Following the receipt of a report from the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) at the end of 2018, the Office initiated three disciplinary proceedings, which are currently ongoing. The Office is invited to inform the Discharge Authority of the outcome of these disciplinary proceedings once completed.

Budgetary and financial management

The budget monitoring efforts during the financial year 2019 resulted in a budget implementation rate of 95.22%, which is close to the level recorded in 2018 (95.02%). The execution rate of payment appropriations amounted to 89.86% and was thus up by 1.78% compared to the previous year (88.08%).

Parliament stressed the importance of the Office for the establishment of the Common European Asylum System. Recalling that in 2019 about 17 700 applications for international protection were made by unaccompanied minors in EU+ countries, it stressed the importance of providing minors with a specific reception system that guarantees their protection.

Other comments

Members also made a series of observations concerning performance, staff policy, public procurement, conflicts of interest and internal controls.

In particular, they noted that:

- the Office successfully achieved 82% of the 347 pre-established annual targets, exceeded expectations on 43% of the key performance indicators (KPIs), achieved 31% of the KPIs, almost achieved 8% of the KPIs and did not achieve 8% of the KPIs;

- performance in paying invoices on time needs to be improved;

- at the end of 2019, the establishment plan was 75.35 % executed, with 214 temporary agents appointed out of 284 temporary agents authorised under the EU budget. There were 8 male and 3 female senior managers. A good gender balance was achieved in the Administrative Board;

- the Office plans to establish a pool of 500 asylum experts from Member States in 2020. Member States and the Commission need to assess and address this issue as a matter of urgency, to enable the Office to fully implement its mandate;

- the Office adopted a policy on the protection of human dignity and prevention of harassment in 2019;

- standard operating procedures on procurement rules and contract management have been adopted, as well as training and communication with local offices on public procurement;

- the Office should publish the declarations of interest and CVs of senior staff on its website as a matter of urgency and inform the discharge authority of the measures taken. These declarations must be drawn up independently and must not be based solely on declarations of honour.

Parliament welcomed the Bureau's decision, following the letter sent by the European Data Protection Supervisor, to halt its social media monitoring activities indefinitely.