2019 discharge: Joint Undertaking - Aeronautics and Environment (Clean Sky)

2020/2184(DEC) - 28/04/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided by 641 votes to 54, with 3 abstentions, to **grant discharge** to the Executive Director of the Clean Sky Joint Undertaking in respect of the implementation of the budget of the Joint Undertaking for the financial year 2019 and to approve the closure of the accounts of the Joint Undertaking.

Noting that the Court of Auditors found that the annual accounts of the Joint Undertaking for the financial year 2019 present fairly the financial situation of the Joint Undertaking on 31 December 2019 and the results of its operations, Parliament adopted, by 629 votes to 57 with 5 abstentions, a resolution containing a series of observations which form an integral part of the discharge decision.

Budgetary and financial management

The final budget of the Joint Undertaking available in 2019 consisted of EUR 305 802 617 in commitment appropriations and EUR 341 424 430 in payment appropriations. The budget implementation rate was 97.98% for commitment appropriations and 94.69% for payment appropriations. For Horizon 2020 projects, the implementation rates for commitment and payment appropriations were 99.8% and 97.3% respectively.

At the end of 2019, out of the maximum EU contribution of EUR 1 755 000 000 under Horizon 2020, the total EU contribution to Horizon 2020 operational activities amounted to EUR 1 139 704 889. In addition, private members contributed EUR 18 815 677 in cash to running costs, validated EUR 273 851 600 in kind to operational costs, and also contributed EUR 899 843 302 in kind to additional activities.

Parliament called for a harmonisation of the calculation of in-kind contributions to the Joint Undertakings with a view to establishing a common procedure for establishing the real value of the contribution.

Other comments

The resolution also contains a series of observations on calls for proposals, performance, staff, procurement and internal controls.

In particular, it noted the following:

- in 2019, the Joint Undertaking launched a call for proposals on 62 topics and received 448 eligible proposals of which 114 were selected. The overall portfolio of the Joint Undertaking includes 574 projects awarded through competitive calls for proposals;

- the cumulated ten calls for proposals engaged more than 730 partners from 28 different countries with a strong small and medium-sized enterprises involvement in terms of participation and grants awarded, and approximately nearly EUR 505 000 000 in funding;

- the Joint Undertaking uses key performance indicators and its own specific performance indicators, such as success rate of calls for proposals, work plan execution and ex-post audit coverage, for monitoring performance and cross-cutting issues under Horizon 2020;

- the Joint Undertaking plays a key role in ensuring clear progress in green technologies that aim to reduce CO2 emissions and noise levels from aircraft. Its successor, Clean Aviation, will play an important role in ensuring the aviation sector's participation in the European Green Deal;

- a comprehensive performance monitoring methodology should be developed to assess the added value of the Joint Undertaking, including the social and employment impact and the market impact;

- the issue of intellectual property rights (IPR) should be addressed in all contracts which may produce an intended outcome or result of the performance;

- the participation rate of women (30%), although slightly increasing, is still rather low;

- as of 31 December 2019, 34 temporary agent posts were filled out of the 36 authorised and, in addition, six contract agents and two seconded national experts were working for the Joint Undertaking in 2019;

- the Joint Undertaking has put in place robust ex-ante control procedures based on financial and operational document reviews; it still needs to develop further relevant key control indicators to assess the effectiveness of its control activities and to identify weaknesses;

- the Joint Undertaking follows the joint anti-fraud strategy coordinated by the Commission under Horizon 2020. In 2019, the Joint Undertaking followed up on two suspected fraud cases, which were reported to the European Anti-Fraud Office in 2018;

- the Joint Undertaking received in May 2019 a new strategic audit plan from the Internal Audit Service for the years 2019 to 2021, which selected three potential audit topics of significant risk, namely operational processes (grant management), the implementation of the new internal control principles and the new data protection rules.