2019 discharge: Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI) Joint Undertaking

2020/2186(DEC) - 28/04/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided by 488 votes to 176, with 34 abstentions, to **grant discharge** to the Executive Director of the Innovative Medicines Initiative 2 Joint Undertaking in respect of the implementation of its budget 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, as well as the results of its operations, Parliament adopted, by 606 votes to 53 with 32 abstentions, a resolution containing a series of observations which form an integral part of the discharge decision.

Budgetary and financial management

The final 2019 available budget, including re-entered unused appropriations of previous years, assigned revenues, and reallocations to the next year was EUR 261 371 750 in commitment appropriations (of which EUR 255 561 977 from the Union budget) and EUR 231 316 906 in payment appropriations (of which EUR 221 519 271 from the Union budget). The execution of the commitment appropriations and the payment appropriations reached 99.17 % and 96.33 % respectively.

Members noted that of the total of EUR 1 billion in contributions that private sector members were expected to have made to the Joint Undertaking's operational activities by the end of 2019, the Joint Undertaking had validated contributions in kind and in cash amounting to EUR 710 478 000. By the end of 2019, the total contributions from industry and associated partners to the activities of the Joint Undertaking under the Horizon 2020 programme amounted to EUR 232 017 000, while the total EU cash contribution was EUR 423 743 000.

Parliament called for harmonising 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, as well as setting up a legal framework to ensure that the required financial contribution will be achieved by the end of the Joint Undertakings. Improved planning and monitoring of payment and commitment appropriations must also continue.

Members expressed concern that industry has exclusive control over the priorities of the Joint Undertaking, that industry alone develops the strategic programmes and annual work plans and that it privatises the results and data of publicly funded projects. They expressed outrage that industry had blocked the Commission's 2018 proposal to include epidemiological preparedness (i.e. anticipating and preparing for outbreaks such as those caused by COVID-19) in the scope of the Joint Undertaking.

Other observations

The resolution also contains a series of observations on performance, staff and recruitment, internal control, prevention, management of conflicts of interest and transparency.

In particular, it noted the following:

- the Joint Undertaking uses 10 key performance indicators, the analysis of which shows that projects are now on track to meet their objective and are able to generate innovation and detectable impact. The Joint Undertaking should also address the environmental impact of its projects;

- the interim evaluation carried out by the Commission in 2017 concluded that, to date, "it cannot be said that IMI brings new, safer and more effective therapies or products to patients" and that, in this respect, "the added value of IMI for patients and society in general is difficult to demonstrate". The Joint Undertaking should focus on major health needs and priorities in its strategic research agenda;

- IMI2's leverage in 2019 was 1.03, which is lower than expected. The Joint Undertaking should take action accordingly;

- the Commission and the Court should put in place a thorough performance monitoring methodology to assess the added value of IMI2 and to evaluate 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 total number of filled posts was 53 (48 in 2018) out of the 56 on the establishment plan. The Joint Undertaking has clearly stabilised the situation with regard to its staff. 51% of all staff working in the projects were women;

- IMI2 has put in place robust ex-ante control procedures based on financial and operational desk reviews. It has adopted conflict of interest rules and has a strong ethical framework in place.