2020 discharge: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

2021/2145(DEC) - 04/05/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to **grant discharge** to the Director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) for the financial year 2020 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 2020 are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular, Parliament adopted by 515 votes to 87 with 36 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 Fundamental Rights for the financial year 2020 was EUR 24 167 314, representing an increase of 5.67 % compared to 2019.

Budget and financial management

Budget monitoring efforts during the financial year 2020 resulted in a budget implementation rate of 100 %, the same rate as in 2019. The payment appropriations execution rate was 70.85 %, representing a decrease of 7.85 % compared to 2019.

Parliament noted that, according to the Court´s report and the Agency's reply in the follow-up to the 2019 discharge, carry-overs of committed appropriations were high for operating expenditure, which mainly reflect the nature of the Agency's core activities, which include the financing of studies and other awareness-raising activities, spanning several months, often extending beyond the end of a year. Highlighting that structural issues are present at the Agency, the Agency should improve its budget planning and its implementation cycles.

Other observations

Parliament made a series of observations regarding performance, conflicts of interest, internal controls and Covid-19.

In particular, it noted that:

- a reform of its performance measurement framework was launched in 2020 to assess the impact of the Agency at both strategic and operational level;

- the Agency successfully implemented its annual work programme in 2020 and managed to accomplish all targets;

- on 31 December 2020, the establishment plan was 97.22 % implemented, with 70 temporary agents appointed out of 72 temporary agents authorised under the Union budget;

- working methods changed during the Covid-19 pandemic blurring the difference between working and leisure time for staff. Measures were put in place resulting in 75 % of the staff being satisfied with the flexible working arrangements and 85% feeling adequately informed on developments regarding working arrangements;

- despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, the Agency produced 163 079 materials and tools related to awareness-raising activities, which is well above the target set for 2020;

- the Agency introduced its first open call for tenders with e-submission during the first quarter of 2020;

- the Agency performed an internal assessment on the level of implementation of the new internal control framework and concluded that almost all components of the internal control framework are present and are functioning together in an integrated manner.