2020 discharge: European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)

2021/2124(DEC) - 04/05/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to **grant discharge** to the Director of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control in respect of the implementation of the Centre's budget for the financial year 2020 and to approve the closure of the accounts for that year.

Noting that the Court of Auditors stated that it had obtained reasonable assurance that the Authority's annual accounts for the financial year 2020 were reliable and that the underlying transactions were legal and regular, Parliament adopted, by 564 votes to 75 with 2 abstentions, a resolution containing a series of recommendations which form an integral part of the discharge decision and which complement the general recommendations set out in the resolution on the performance, financial management and control of EU agencies.

Centre's financial statements

The Centre's final budget for 2020 was EUR 62 490 000, representing an increase of 5.55 % compared to 2019.

Budgetary and financial management

The budget monitoring efforts during the financial year 2020 resulted in a budget implementation rate of 96.77 %, representing a decrease of 2.46 % compared to 2019. The payment appropriations execution rate was 75.26 %, also representing a decrease of 6.15 % compared to the previous year.

Other observations

Parliament also made a number of observations concerning performance, staff policy, public procurement, conflicts of interest, internal control and Covid-19.

In particular, it noted that:

- the Covid-19 outbreak in 2020 and the subsequent pandemic have been the most serious public health event that the Centre has had to respond to since it became operational in 2005. Supporting the EU’s response to Covid-19 became the Centre’s principal activity;

- the Centre activated its public health event operations plan on 9 January 2020, which guided the organisation through the emergency situation, and allowed it to redirect the resources needed to tackle the pandemic;

- it also delivered 56 % of the outputs initially planned in its single programming document 2020–2022, and 90 % of the outputs of the Covid-19 work programme approved in May 2020. 35 % of the Centre’s initially planned outputs were postponed to 2021 or cancelled;

- the Centre found it challenging to manage the timeliness, quality and completeness of information received from Member States regarding the pandemic given that different surveillance and testing strategies are used by the Member States which make comparisons and assessments difficult, and that, more generally, the Union’s public health competences are limited, which means that the Centre is to a

considerable degree dependent on Member States for its effectiveness. Parliament noted that it took for instance almost a year after the Covid-19 outbreak in Europe before Member States used a common colour code system, and showed commitment to submitting their data to the Centre;

- the Centre is developing an entirely new European surveillance system with the aim of progressively covering Covid-19 and all other diseases and health conditions under the Union's surveillance, thus reducing the reporting burden for Member States;

- on 31 December 2020, the establishment plan was 96.1 % implemented, with 173 temporary agents appointed out of 180 temporary agents authorised under the Union budget (compared to 180 authorised posts in 2019);

- due to the pandemic, the workload in the Centre significantly increased in 2020. The Centre was provided with increased short-term capacity in 2020 and, at the end of 2020, the Centre was also granted a number of long-term staff posts to be filled during the period 2021 to 2024 due to the prolonged sanitary crisis;

- the Centre concluded a total of 130 contracts in 2020, covering 10 framework contracts, 14 direct contracts and 106 specific contracts;

- 22 potential conflicts of interest were identified and investigated in 2020;

- an internal communications policy is to be developed, including communication on the objectives and responsibilities of internal control;

- the Centre increased its outreach significantly in 2020 in connection with the pandemic. Its website had 32 million page views, compared to 9 million between 2011 and 2019 in total.