2020 discharge: European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA)

2021/2127(DEC) - 04/05/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to **grant discharge** to the Executive Director of the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) for the financial year 2020 and to approve the closure of the accounts for that year.

Noting that the Court of Auditors has stated that it has obtained reasonable assurance 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 545 votes to 78 with 14 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.

Agency's financial statements

The Agency's final budget for the financial year 2020 was EUR 17 580 000.

Budgetary and financial management

The budget monitoring efforts during the financial year 2020 resulted in a budget implementation rate of 97.27 %, representing a slight reduction of 2.61 % compared to 2019. The payment appropriations execution rate was at 81.18 %, representing a decrease of 4.51 % compared to 2019.

The Agency received a EUR 16.9 million contribution under the general budget of the Union in 2020, representing an increase of 1.2 % in respect of 2019. Both the Agency's annual budget and its total number of staff are among the lowest amongst Union agencies.

Other observations

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

In particular, it noted that:

- the Agency implemented 90 % of its activities on time following its Annual Work Programme. Implementation in 2020 was higher than expected given the special circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic;

- the Agency coordinated 38 452 fishing vessel inspections, which led to the detection of 1 682 suspected infringements, representing an increase, respectively, of 18.75 % and 44.25 % on the 2019 figures. This increase conceals disparities between areas, with an increase in Western Waters (+27 %) and in the Mediterranean Sea (+141 %) and a decrease in the Baltic Sea (-20 %), the North Sea (-49 %), the Black Sea (-11 %) and NAFO-NEAFC (-36%). Parliament called for more detailed information on the reasons for those changes and pointed out that inspections and other follow-up activities play a key role, not only in the proper management of fish stocks, but also in ensuring a level playing field for Union fishers;

- important preparatory work was carried out to face the possible consequences for fisheries control resulting from the UK's withdrawal from the Union in the North Sea and in the Western Waters of the Atlantic;

- on 31 December 2020, the establishment plan was 98.36 % implemented, with 60 officials and temporary agents appointed out of 61 temporary agents authorised under the Union budget (61 authorised posts in 2019);

- the percentage of planned procurement procedures launched by the Agency surpassed the 80 % target and reached 83 % in 2020. The main procurement activity in 2020 was focused on signing three framework contracts as a result of open procedures launched for maritime legal assistance, cleaning services and interim staff;

- the CVs and the declarations of interest of all the administrative board members should be published to ensure transparency;

- the Agency did not implement 90 % of the meetings and missions budgeted in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, however, it was well-prepared to continue its operations reliably by means of teleworking;

- the generalised teleworking conditions of the Agency led to a reduction of the overall CO2 emissions for the Agency's headquarters of 67 %, however, that reduction has been outweighed by the need for the Agency's offshore patrol vessel 'Lundy Sentinel' to use the port of Vigo as point of departure and return for its missions in the North and Western Atlantic. This practice has ultimately resulted in an increase in fuel consumption of 25 % and an increase of 28 % in CO2 emissions compared to 2019.