2020 discharge: European Chemicals Agency (ECHA)

2021/2125(DEC) - 04/05/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to **grant discharge** to the Executive Director of the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) 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 552 votes to 68 with 18 abstentions, a resolution containing a series of recommendations which form an integral part of the discharge decision and which complement the general recommendations contained 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 109 362 158 representing a decrease of 3.08 % compared to 2019. Approximately 29.41% of the Agency's budget derives from fees and charges and 67.48% from the Union and third countries (in 2019 39.51 % from fees and charges and 57.61 % from the Union and third countries).

Budgetary and financial management

In 2020, the Agency collected fee income totalling EUR 32.293 million (EUR 44.85 million in 2019) while the Union subsidy amounted to EUR 73.796 million (EUR 64.503 million in 2019) including contributions from third countries of EUR 1.851 million (EUR 1.615 million in 2019). Parliament stressed the need to ensure that the Agency is able to fulfil its mandate in the long term. In this it called for the lack of predictability of the Agency's budget income to be addressed. Noting the declining trend in fee income, Parliament considered that a new stable financing model should be developed and introduced without delay.

Budgetary resources are needed to pursue closer cooperation to consolidate a unique Union chemical database.

Budget monitoring efforts during the financial year 2020 resulted in a budget implementation rate of 98.48 %, representing a slight decrease of 0.30 % compared to 2019 and that the payment appropriations execution rate was 94.16 %, representing an increase of 8.07 % in comparison to 2019.

Other observations

Parliament also made a series of observations concerning performance and staff policy.

In particular, it noted that:

- one of the Agency's fundamental tasks for the period ahead will continue to be implementation of the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability;

- the Agency adopted a programming document for 2020-2023 which sets out the objectives for the Agency, in line with the strategic plan for that four-year period, and which was accompanied by the resource planning until 2023 and the 2020 work programme;

- 194 out of 210 actions and outputs set in the 2020 work programme were achieved; 16 actions and outputs were not met mainly due to the Covid-19 pandemic;

- the 271 full compliance checks covered 258 substances and that 76 targeted checks concerning 44 substances were carried out in 2020;

- on 31 December 2019, the establishment plan was 97.41 % executed, with 451 temporary agents appointed out of 463 temporary agents authorised under the Union budget (compared to 461 authorised posts in 2019). There is a continued gender imbalance which must be resolved. The Agency is urged to pursue the development of a long-term human resources policy framework that addresses work-life balance, lifelong guidance and career development, gender balance, teleworking, the right to disconnect while respecting the balance between professional and private life, geographical balance and the recruitment and integration of people with disabilities;

- the Agency moved to new premises in early 2020;

- the Agency has not yet acted last year’s recommendations to reduce the number of animal tests and to replace such tests by new approach methodology, or to establish a team exclusively dedicated to animal protection and the promotion of non-animal test methods;

- in order to avoid any risk to the online security of the information processed, the Agency should develop its cybersecurity policy more swiftly.