2020 discharge: European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (EUROPOL)

2021/2144(DEC) - 04/05/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to **grant discharge** to the Executive Director of the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol) 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 Agency's annual accounts for the financial year 2020 were reliable and that the underlying transactions were legal and regular, Parliament adopted, by 506 votes to 27 with 94 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.

Europol's financial statements

The Agency's final budget for the financial year 2020 was EUR 158 619 073, representing an increase of 12 % compared to 2019.

Budget and financial management

The budget monitoring efforts during the financial year 2020 resulted in a budget implementation rate of 99.44 %, representing an increase of 0.02 % compared to 2019. The payment appropriations execution rate was 85.09 %, indicating a decrease of 1.52 % compared to 2019.

The Agency made 33 % of its payments late and, as a consequence, paid interest amounting to EUR 12 000. Similar levels of delay were observed in 2019, 2018 and 2017, which exposes the Agency to financial and reputational risks. The Agency stated that the delays were due to staffing issues, the Covid-19 pandemic and a backlog in invoices for travel services.

Other observations

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

In particular, it noted that:

- the number of operations grew from 1 921 in 2019 to 2 315 in 2020 (an increase of 24 %) and that operational meetings funded by the Agency decreased from over 500 in 2019 to 280 in 2020 (a decrease of 44 %), which underlines the impact of COVID-19 on the Agency’s work;

- on 31 December 2020, the establishment plan of the Agency was 93.50 % implemented, with 575 temporary agents appointed out of 615 temporary agents authorised under the establishment plan, compared to 591 authorised posts in 2019. Due to the continuous increase in workload and demand by the Member States’ authorities needs to be met by adequate levels of staff, Parliament noted that the Agency’s establishment plan was increased by an additional 14 temporary agent positions. There is a gender imbalance reported in 2020 with 82.2 % of senior and middle management being men;

- the overall number of operations supported by the Agency increased by 24 % in 2020;

- the Agency implemented 86 % of the critical or very important recommendations planned to be implemented during 2020;

- the Agency reacted swiftly to the Covid-19 outbreak and implemented several new actions in order to manage the crisis with as little impact on the Agency’s work as possible, while keeping health and safety as its first priority;

- efforts were made to increase its cyber security.