2020 discharge: Fuel Cells and Hydrogen Joint Undertaking (FCH)

2021/2153(DEC) - 04/05/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to **grant discharge** to the Executive Director of the Fuel Cells and Hydrogen 2 Joint Undertaking (now the Clean Hydrogen Joint Undertaking) in respect of the implementation of the budget of the Joint Undertaking for the financial year 2020 and approve the closure of Joint Undertaking's accounts.

Noting that the Court of Auditors considered that the annual accounts of the Joint Undertaking for the financial year 2020 present fairly the financial situation of the Joint Undertaking on 31 December 2020, as well as the results of its operations, Parliament adopted, by 574 votes to 22 with 40 abstentions, a resolution containing a series of observations which form an integral part of the discharge decision.

Budgetary and financial management

The FCH2´s final available budget, which includes re-entered unused appropriations of previous years, assigned revenues and reallocations to the following year, for the financial year 2020 included commitment appropriations of EUR 104 231 642 and payment appropriations of EUR 103 779 004. The overall 2020 budget execution of commitment and payment appropriations reached 94.4 % and 95.3 % respectively.

Out of the maximum contribution of EUR 470 000 000, the Union contributed a total of EUR 426 127 000 in cash and in-kind from the Seventh Framework programme and the members from the Industry Grouping and the Research Grouping contributed a total of validated resources of EUR 458 275 000, comprising EUR 440 391 000 in-kind validated contributions in the Seventh Framework projects.

Parliament noted that for the whole Seventh Framework programme, at the end of 2020, the FCH2 had committed EUR 428 477 494 for signed Seventh Framework grant agreements, of which around EUR 7 062 748 (or 2 %) remain to be paid in the coming years, and that regarding the FCH2's 2020 payment budget available for Seventh Framework projects, the implementation rate for payment appropriations was 89 %.

By the end of 2020, the total EU contribution was EUR 498 577 000 from Horizon 2020. Industry Grouping and Research Grouping together contributed a total of EUR 20 630 000 in validated in-kind contributions.

The low level of in-kind contributions from industry members for operational activities is due to the fact that the Joint Undertaking certifies them at the time of the final cost claims. Parliament called for harmonisation of the calculation of in-kind contributions to the Joint Undertaking.

Other observations

The resolution also contains a series of observations on performance, staff, internal control and fraud prevention.

In particular, it noted the following:

- 2020 was a key year for the FCH2 in the context of the Commission's adoption on 8 July of the Union's Hydrogen Strategy in line with the NextGenerationEU recovery package and the European Green Deal and that that was marked by the first European Hydrogen Week;

- one call for proposal was published covering 24 topics and the Undertaking received 71 proposals and following that 22 of the 23 grant agreements were signed in 2020;

- by the end of 2020 the FCH 2's global portfolio was 131 projects signed under the Horizon 2020 programme of which 26 were closed and 105 open;

- the public launch of the Fuel Cells and Hydrogen Observatory took place in collaboration with DG R&I, which is expected to be an important tool for all policymakers and other stakeholders;

- at the end of 2020, the FCH2 had 27 members of staff and two seconded national experts from 10 Member States and is pleased to note that there is gender balance among staff (56 % men and 44 % women);

- the FCH2 has set up an efficient and effective internal control system for the implementation and closing of grant agreements under the Horizon 2020 programme and it has re-enforced ex-ante controls;

- a common research anti-fraud strategy was set up and internal training sessions were organised on the early detection and exclusion system and on the anti-plagiarism tool.