2020 discharge: Shift2Rail Joint Undertaking (Shift2Rail)

2021/2156(DEC) - 04/05/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to **grant discharge** to the Executive Director of the Shift2Rail Joint Undertaking (now the Europe's Rail Joint Undertaking) in respect of the implementation of the budget of the Joint Undertaking for the financial year 2020 and approve the closure of the 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 557 votes to 47 with 35 abstentions, a resolution containing a series of observations which form an integral part of the discharge decision.

General comments

The maximum EU contribution to the activities of the Joint Undertaking is EUR 450 000 000 (including EFTA contributions), to be paid from Horizon 2020. All members of the Joint Undertaking other than the Union (industry grouping) are to contribute total resources of at least EUR 470 000 000, consisting of at least EUR 350 000 000 to the operational activities of the Joint Undertaking and at least EUR 120 000 000 of in-kind contributions to the Joint Undertaking's additional activities.

In 2020, the cooperation in Member States as well as with international parties increased.

Budgetary and financial management

The final budget available in 2020 comprised commitment appropriations of EUR 89 711 000 and payment appropriations of EUR 80 289 000. The utilisation rates for the available commitment and payment appropriations were 94 % and 76 %, respectively. By the end of 2020, the Joint Undertaking implemented 100 % and 80 % respectively of the commitment appropriations and payment appropriations available for Horizon 2020 projects.

Parliament called for a harmonisation of the calculation of in-kind contributions to the Joint Undertaking.

Other comments

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

In particular, it noted the following:

- at the end of 2020, 72 projects were ongoing (36 calls for members and 36 open calls): 55 projects were distributed on the 5 innovation programmes, 9 projects on the cross cutting activities and 8 projects in Innovation Programme X;

- by the end of 2020, the Shift2Rail Programme reached pivotal milestones in term of implementation as almost all the Joint Undertaking resources are committed for the Shift2Rail Programme activities;

- the total value of the activities performed in 2020 amounts to EUR 119.4 million (of which EUR 110.3 million was delivered by the members other than the Union);

- the current activities of the Joint Undertaking are progressing towards their demonstrations in 2022 and 2023 and this will ensure a proper phasing out and phasing in between two Programmes in the Shift2Rail successor Europe's Rail Joint Undertaking;

- on 31 December 2020, considering the exceptional temporary contract agent recruitment to replace a temporary agent, 24 position were filled;

- during 2020, fraud awareness and fraud risks were covered through the staff survey, carried out following the adoption of a revised internal control framework, and the risk assessment respectively;

- persistent systemic errors were found in the personnel costs declared by beneficiaries, in particular on the part of SMEs and new beneficiaries. Parliament encouraged the Joint Undertaking to strengthen its internal control systems given that SMEs and new beneficiaries are more error-prone.