

2021 discharge: European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX)

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The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted the report by Ramona STRUGARIU (Renew Europe, RO) on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency for the financial year 2021.

The committee responsible recommended that the European Parliament **give discharge** to the European Border and Coast Guard Agency in respect of the implementation of the Agency's budget for the financial year 2021.

Budgetary and financial management

Since December 2019 the Agency has been implementing a new mandate with a scale-up that is significant in terms of missions and staff, that requires an adequate budget. Therefore, the final budget of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency for the financial year 2021 was EUR 535 245 042, representing an increase of 46.87% compared to 2020.

The budget-monitoring efforts during the financial year 2021 resulted in a budget implementation rate of 94.70%, representing a decrease of 4.27% compared to 2020. The report regrets that, in spite of the Agency's financial unit having put in place certain mechanisms to improve budget execution, in 2021 the payment appropriations execution rate was only 50.42%, representing a decrease of 4.90% compared to 2020.

Performance

In 2021, the Agency implemented a new organisational structure, a major endeavour for effectively addressing its extended mandate. Members commend the Agency's strategy for efficiency gains through the digitalisation, automation or simplification of rules and procedures applied in certain areas.

Operational activities conducted on land borders in 2021 resulted in 3 546 incidents reported, involving 16 304 apprehended irregular migrants, 6 461 irregular migrants and 368 arrested smugglers. The Agency's efforts led to the return by air of 18 301 non-EU nationals, of which 10 193 were persons on 337 operations by charter flights to 33 countries of return and 8 108 persons by scheduled flights to 107 countries of return.

Members stress that every operational plan should include a **transparent reporting mechanism** ensuring that every incident in the operational area is reported and properly followed up.

Staff policy

In 2021, the establishment plan was 82% executed, with 861 temporary agents appointed out of 1050 temporary agents authorised under the Union budget. In addition, 506 contract agents and 187 seconded national experts worked for the Agency (with 730 contract agents and 220 seconded national experts authorised for the Agency in 2021).

The Agency's gender breakdown reported for 2021 at senior management level with 15 men (68.18%) and 7 women (31.82%), at the level of the management board with 55 men (83.3%) and 11 women (16.7%),

and for the Agency's staff overall, with 1116 men (71.8%) and 438 women (28.2%). The responsibility to ensure gender balance within the management board lies with the Member States.

Moreover, the report welcomes the Agency's extensive anti-harassment measures and policies put in place.

Procurement

In 2021, the Agency launched 36 open tenders, with 18 resulting in signed contracts for a total value of EUR 218 400 000, and that 18 of these are still ongoing, with an estimated value of EUR 241 000 000. Members commend the Agency's efforts in 2021 to secure strategically important contracts in areas such as surveillance aircraft support, the provision of personal protective equipment and sanitary supplies, the supply of four-wheel drive off-road vehicles, the supply of service weapons, satellite imagery provisioning, the delivery of map production services, the provision of meteorological and oceanographic information services or the purchase of drones and payloads.

Internal control

The report takes note of the Agency's assessment of the internal control system being partially effective in 2021. Weaknesses are to be found in the areas of recruitment procedures, procurement procedures and with regard to the delegation of powers to authorising officers by delegation or sub-delegation.

Digitalisation and green transition

The Agency put in place various measures to reduce the environmental impact of its activities, including through digital solutions for paperless document circulation, paperless workflow for financial transactions, e-learning tools for training activities or remote meetings.

Lastly, Members remind the Agency of the fact it is accountable to the Parliament, and that the Parliament is resolved to ensure that the Agency contributes to the continuous and uniform application of Union law, including the Union acquis on fundamental rights, in particular the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. To achieve this goal, an enhanced cooperation with the Agency's management board by strengthening the transparency, accountability and democratic oversight of the Agency is needed. The Agency should ensure greater transparency and public accountability by utilizing media and social media channels.