2021 discharge: European Foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions (Eurofound)

2022/2119(DEC) - 10/05/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to **grant discharge** to the Executive Director of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) for the financial year 2021 and to approve the closure of the accounts for the financial year in question.

Noting that the Court of Auditors has stated that it has obtained reasonable assurances that the Foundation' s annual accounts for the financial year 2021 are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular, Parliament adopted by 554 votes to 57 with 24 abstentions, a resolution containing a series of recommendations, which form an integral part of the decision on discharge and which add to the general recommendations set out in the resolution on performance, financial management and control of EU agencies:

Foundation's financial statements

The final budget of Eurofound for the financial year 2021 was EUR 21 757 000 representing an increase of 1.69 % compared to 2020.

Budget and financial management

The budget monitoring efforts during 2021 resulted in a budget implementation rate of 99.98 %, representing a slight increase of 0.06 %. Payment appropriations execution rate was 83.56 %, representing an increase of 3.12 % compared to 2020. It was noted with concern that due to the increased costs of living in Ireland, the share of the operating budget of the Foundation is constantly shrinking from 37.6 % in 2012 to 26.4 % in 2021. The continuation of this trend will put at risk the ability of the Foundation to preserve and further improve the quality of its work.

Other observations

Parliament also made a series of observations regarding performance, staff policy, procurement, internal control and digitalisation.

In particular, it noted that:

- the delivery of work programme outputs planned for 2021 reached 93 % of achievement, with 38 out of 41 deliverables achieved in 2021;

- the focus of the Foundation's COVID-19 EU PolicyWatch has been expanded to investigate policies related to several (crisis) contexts, including the war in Ukraine, the increase in inflation and the temporary protection of refugees, the greening and the digital agenda, and it has thus been renamed into the EU PolicyWatch database;

- on 31 December 2021, the establishment plan was only 89 % completed (compared to 95 % in 2020), with nine officials and 74 temporary agents appointed out of 91 authorised under the Union budget (91 authorised posts in 2020);

- there was geographical underrepresentation of staff from Cyprus, Estonia, Malta and Slovenia; both gender and geographical balance should be ensured;

- on procurement, the Foundation launched seven open tenders resulting in contracts with a value of EUR 1 942 570;

- the Foundation was commended on the rollout in 2021 of the anti-fraud strategy 2021-2023 and the access provided to all the Foundation's staff to an anti-fraud roadmap and infographic with steps to take in cases where fraud is suspected;

- the Foundation put measures in place in 2021 with regard to the Foundation's cybersecurity;

- the rollout of the qualified electronic signature was welcomed as well as the Foundation's consistent implementation of its 'digital first' approach in different areas of its work. Parliament urged the Foundation to ensure greater transparency and public accountability by better-utilising media and social media channels.