2021 discharge: European Union Agency for the Space Programme (EUSPA)

2022/2122(DEC) - 10/05/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to **grant discharge** to the Executive Director of the European Union Agency for the Space Programme (before 12 May 2021: European GNSS Agency) for the financial year 2021 and to approve the closure of the accounts for that year.

Noting that the Court of Auditors has stated that it has obtained reasonable assurance that the Agency's annual accounts for the financial year 2021 are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular, Parliament adopted, by 597 votes to 16 with 11 abstentions, a resolution containing a series of recommendations which form an integral part of the discharge decision and which complement the general recommendations set out in the resolution on the performance, financial management and control of EU agencies.

Agency's financial statements

The Agency's final budget for the financial year 2021 was EUR 57 130 215.17, representing an increase of 61.16 % compared to 2020, due to Agency's enlarged mandate based on the new EU Space Programme. Parliament noted that the Court presents an emphasis of matters paragraph in relation to the impact of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine in the Agency's statement of financial performance and balance sheet.

Budgetary and financial management

Budget monitoring efforts during the financial year 2021 resulted in a budget implementation rate of current year commitment appropriations of 100 %, representing the same rate as in 2020. The execution rate of payment appropriations was 74.78 %, representing a decrease of 8.60 % compared to 2020. In addition to its core budget, the Agency continued to manage a large amount of delegated budget (earmarked appropriations), in particular under the exploitation of the European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service (EGNOS) and Galileo, as well as Horizon 2020 Delegation Agreements. In 2021, the Agency signed a contribution agreement with the Commission entrusting the Agency with additional components of the Horizon Europe programme, Copernicus, the European Union Governmental Satellite Communications (GOVSATCOM) and Space Situational Awareness (SSA). A total of EUR 6 361 705 119 was committed under the delegated budget in 2021 and EUR 1 574 943 399 was made in payments.

Other comments

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

In particular, it noted that:

- the Agency performed well during the transition. It adopted a financial framework partnership agreement (FFPA) and a contribution agreement (CA), allowing it to carry out the space programme in an efficient and effective manner;

- on 31 December 2021, the establishment plan was 100 % implemented, with 191 temporary agents appointed out of 191 temporary agents authorised under the Union budget (compared to 150 authorised

posts in 2020). Once again, the lack of gender balance within the Agency's senior management is regrettable;

- a number of procedural deficiencies in two audited recruitment procedures were highlighted which undermine the principles of transparency and equal treatment;

- the Agency continues to implement e-procurement whenever possible considering the selected procurement procedure, the nature of the documentation to be exchanged and the protection of the security interest of the Union;

- more systematic rules on transparency, incompatibilities, conflict of interests, illegal lobbying and revolving doors should be put in place. The Agency should also strengthen its internal control mechanisms, including the setting up of an internal anticorruption mechanism;

- the digitalisation of procedures should be accelerated.