2021 discharge: European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA)

2022/2103(DEC) - 10/05/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to **grant discharge** to the Executive Director of the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) 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 552 votes to 73 with 1 abstention, 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 21 621 000, representing an increase of 22.99 % compared to 2020 due to additional activities assigned to the Agency in the framework of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) with the United Kingdom.

Budgetary and financial management

Budget monitoring efforts during the financial year 2021 resulted in a budget implementation of current year commitment appropriation rate of 99.07 %, representing a slight increase of 1.80 % compared to 2020. Payment appropriations execution rate was at 74.48 %, representing a decrease of 6.70 % compared to 2020.

The Agency received a EUR 21 million contribution under the general budget of the Union in 2021, representing an increase of 24.3 % in respect of 2020. Both the Agency's annual budget and its complement of staff are among the lowest among Union agencies.

Parliament welcomed the additional EUR 4 million subsidy from the Commission in the framework of the TCA with the United Kingdom through an amended budget allocated to the Agency with a view to handling the increased workload caused by the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the Union and any potential consequences of the new relationship for the fisheries control framework.

Other observations

Parliament also made a series of observations concerning performance, staff policy, public procurement.

In particular, it noted that:

- the Agency implemented 98.6 % of the Annual Work Programme, despite the challenges still caused by the COVID-19 pandemic;

- the Agency reported 53 567 inspections (at sea and ashore), which led to the detection of 4 928 suspected infringements, representing an increase, respectively, of 39 % and 109 % on the 2020 figures. This increase conceals disparities between areas, with a decrease in the North Sea (-67 %) and the Black

Sea (-1 %) and an increase in Western Waters (+24 %), the Mediterranean Sea (+82 %), the Baltic Sea (+14 %) and NAFO-NEAFC (+163 %). The significant decrease in the North Sea is mainly driven by the absence of inspections that were previously conducted by the United Kingdom, which constituted 70 % of inspections in 2020;

- on 31 December 2021, the establishment plan was 100 % filled, with 65 temporary agents appointed as authorised under the Union budget (61 authorised posts in 2020);

- the Agency was granted additional budget in the MFF 2021-2027 (increase of EUR 12 million in 2022), which includes 16 new establishment plan posts (four already granted under the 2021 budget) and six external staff (two already granted in 2021);

- the Agency's main procurement efforts in 2021 were targeted towards the launch of an open procedure in the field of chartering of three offshore patrol vessels;

- 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.