2021 discharge: Clean Aviation Joint Undertaking (CAJU)

2022/2126(DEC) - 10/05/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to **grant discharge** to the Executive Director of the Clean Aviation Joint Undertaking (before 30.11.2021 the Clean Sky 2 Joint Undertaking) in respect of the implementation of the budget of the Joint Undertaking for the financial year 2021 and approve the closure of the Joint Undertaking's accounts.

Noting that the Court of Auditors found that the annual accounts of the Joint Undertaking for the financial year 2021 present fairly the financial situation of the Joint Undertaking on 31 December 2021 and the results of its operations, Parliament adopted, by 568 votes to 54 with 4 abstentions, a resolution containing a series of observations which form an integral part of the discharge decision.

Budgetary and financial management

Horizon Europe envisages ambitious goals for the Joint Undertaking, that can only be achieved if effective solutions that address the weaknesses in the internal control systems and prepare for the future challenges arising from increased responsibilities, e.g. in the area of human resources management and planning, are designed and implemented.

The Joint Undertaking's final budget available for 2021 (including re-entered unused appropriations of previous years, assigned revenues, and reallocations to the next year) comprised commitment appropriations of EUR 182.6 million and payment appropriations of EUR 189.9 million.

The budget execution was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic situation, in particular concerning payment appropriations for administrative expenditure and that nonetheless, the Joint Undertaking had a 99.6 % rate of implementation for the commitment appropriations in 2021 (excluding the unused appropriations not required in current year) and the payment appropriations were executed to 82.3 % of the available funds, excluding the unused appropriations 2021 of EUR 22.9 million (56,3 % of execution rate if the unused appropriations are included as total payment budget).

At the end of 2021, the Joint Undertaking had almost fully committed EUR 1 716 million of the maximum EU contribution for signed Horizon 2020 grant agreements. Out of this amount, around EUR 273 million (or 16 %) remains to be paid in the coming years. Private members had legally committed to provide in-kind contributions of EUR 2 113.8 million.

The implementation rate for the Joint Undertaking's 2021 commitment and payment budget available for Horizon 2020 projects was 100 % and 83 % respectively.

Other comments

The resolution also contains a series of observations on calls for proposals, performance, staff, procurement and internal controls.

In particular, it noted the following:

- the Joint Undertaking's establishment plan for 2021 contained a total of 42 statutory staff (temporary agents and contract agents) and two seconded national experts with 42 posts filled at the end of the 2021.

The Joint Undertaking launched the recruitment process of two positions (Team Leader and Project Officer);

- there was no call launched in 2021 for proposals;

- the Joint Undertaking continued to apply the decisions adopted by the Governing Board regarding the rules on the prevention and management of conflicts of interest applicable to the bodies of the Joint Undertaking and to the members of staff of the Joint Undertaking and that the related processes, for instance concerning Members of the Joint Undertaking's Governing Board, experts of evaluation procedures, panels for procurement and recruitment, applied consistently the required precautionary measures to identify potential conflicts of interest;

- the risk of fraudulent bankruptcies or other fraudulent behaviours to escape the financial problems and supply restrictions needs to be considered in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic as an additional threat for legality and regularity;

- Parliament deplored that OLAF issued the conclusions and its reports regarding two cases pertaining to grants of Clean Sky 1 and Clean Sky 2 and that the alleged fraud was confirmed in both cases.