2021 discharge: Europe’s Rail Joint Undertaking (EU-Rail)

2022/2133(DEC) - 10/05/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided to **grant discharge** to the Executive Director *ad interim* of Europe’s Rail Joint Undertaking (before 30.11.2021 the Shift2Rail 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 considered 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, as well as the results of its operations, Parliament adopted, by 549 votes to 41 with 34 abstentions, a resolution containing a series of observations which form an integral part of the discharge decision.

General comments

Parliament welcomed the efforts of the Joint Undertaking to further develop synergies between the new partnership and existing funding mechanisms of the Union, including projects funded under Union programmes such as the Connecting Europe Facility, the Digital Europe Plan, the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund, as well as InvestEU.

Members stressed that the Horizon Europe programme should contribute to a 50% increase in high-speed rail traffic by 2030. They added that planned collective journeys of less than 500 km should be carbon-neutral within the Union, that automated mobility should be deployed on a large scale and that, by 2050, rail freight traffic should double. They pointed out that high-speed rail traffic should triple and the Trans-European Multimodal Transport Network (TEN-T), equipped for sustainable and intelligent transport with high-speed connectivity, should be operational for the global network by 2030. Full deployment of ERTMS by 2030 is a major priority.

Parliament called for more advanced automation, faster and more reliable connectivity, and a profound transformation of mobility service management through IT.

Budgetary and financial management

The 2021 Joint Undertaking budget does not include any revenue or commitment/payment appropriations in relation with Joint Undertaking’s resources coming from Horizon Europe or its private members and that it consists only of appropriations related to Shift2Rail Joint Undertaking and Shift2Rail Joint Undertaking members.

In 2021, the Joint Undertaking budget, as finally adopted, including unused appropriations of previous years, which the Joint Undertaking re-entered in the budget of the current year, assigned revenues and reallocations to the next year, amounted to EUR 13.625 million (EUR 84.1 million in 2020) in commitment appropriations and EUR 68.440 million (EUR 75.8 million in 2020) in terms of payment appropriations.

By the end of the year, the Joint Undertaking had implemented 100 % of its commitment appropriations made available in its active budget, which include staff and administrative expenditure and that the payment appropriations were implemented up to 85 % of the active funds.

Other comments

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

In particular, it noted the following:

- during 2021, the Joint Undertaking further progressed in delivering the Shift2Rail Programme, although operational activities were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic;

- due to ongoing/pending recruitments, on 31 December 2021 there were 19 staff members including 1 seconded national expert available;

- the average annual rate of interim staff remained high, representing 18 % of statutory staff. Staff turnover also continued to be high;

- the Joint Undertaking played an active role for the visibility of the sector during the Year of Rail 2021;

- in 2020, the Joint Undertaking adopted a revised internal control framework and a first annual self-assessment of the revised internal control framework was performed in Q1 2021 in order to evaluate the compliance and effectiveness of internal controls.