2002 Discharge: European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction

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The European Parliament adopted the report by Jan MULDER (ELDR, NL) concerning the granting of discharge to the Director of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction in respect of the implementation of its budget for the financial year 2002. The Parliament records its comments in the accompanying resolution. Firstly, as regards the implementation of the budget, Parliament notes the Centre's reply to the questionnaire concerning the trend in carry-overs. It welcomes the downward trend that emerges, which suggests that measures taken with a view to better planning, implementing and monitoring of the Centre's activities resulted in a reduction of carry-overs and it encourages the Centre to continue its efforts in this regard. The Centre is expected to indicate whether the framework of the new Financial Regulation might offer further opportunities for reducing carry-overs. Parliament acknowledges the Centre's undertaking that operations such as the one criticised by the ECA, where appropriations were unduly transferred with a view to having the amount carried over, will not happen again. As regards the legality and regularity of the underlying transaction, Parliament notes the Centre's position that it will henceforth fully observe the principle of the separation of duties as between authorising officer and accounting officer. Concerning personnel management, it expresses deep concern over the way in which selection procedures were carried out by the Centre and on the serious anomalies detected in the process of an internal competition. It notes the Centre's reply that the shortcomings identified were of a procedural nature and did not undermine the validity of the procedure or its outcome. It expects the Centre to fully inform Parliament of any complaints lodged with the Court of Justice in this connection and on their outcome. Lastly, the Parliament takes the view that transparency, compliance with specified procedures and equal treatment in the recruitment process reflect on the credibility of Community institutions and bodies and expects the Centre therefore to make every effort to prevent such phenomena occurring in future recruitment procedures. It notes the Centre's position that in future it will call upon the services of EPSO to organise competitions. In parallel, the Parliament has made a series of horizontal points on all of the Agencies' discharges which can be summarised as follows: - Internal audit and control measures : Parliament reiterates the position taken in its resolutions 2003 accompanying the discharge given to the Agencies for 2001 as regards the implementation of the new Financial Regulation and invites the Commission and the Agencies to continue their cooperation, in particular in the areas of accounting, internal audit, management and control procedures, so as to ensure that a coherent harmonised framework for the functioning of the Agencies is established. It recalls that it expressed concern in the discharge resolution for 2001 concerning the lack of controls on the agencies carried out by the internal audit service of the Commission (IAS). Parliament expresses grave concern that such controls do not seem to have been carried out this year. It stresses that it is essential thatthe Agencies be required to submit to the investigative powers of OLAF under the same conditions as the other institutions. - Financial Management : Parliament invites the Agencies to better explain their analysis and to indicate in particular which of their activities of a multi-annual nature might be financed by such appropriations. The Commission is invited to present its position on such a solution and, should it consider that this solution is not feasible, to outline alternatives allowing for a substantial reduction in carry-overs. - Review of the agencies : the Parliament states that that, prior to any decision to set up an agency, the Commission must make a rigorous analysis of the need for and added value of the functions that the agency will perform, with an eye to the principles of subsidiarity, budgetary rigour and procedural simplification. Like last year, the Commission is called upon to make a general study of activities currently carried out by various Community bodies that might overlap or serve the same goals, and to propose appropriate solutions, including the possible mergers of agencies. Parliament is concerned by the fact that there is an imbalance between administrative and operational expenditure in many Agencies, with administrative expenditure exceeding expenditure for operational purposes. The Commission and the Agencies are called upon to set targets and a timetable to reduce the level of administrative expenditure as a proportion of total

expenditure. The Agencies are encouraged to : - improve cooperation between themselves in order to meet their needs in specific areas (for example, software development) and reduce costs, rather than adopt solutions which were initially designed for the purposes of the Commission but which often prove to be too cumbersome and complicated for the Agencies' specific needs; - organise and develop a close working relationship with the competent parliamentary committees; invites its standing committees with competence in the areas of activity of each of the Agencies to co-ordinate their action with the Committees of Budgets and Budgetary Control, with a view to ensuring efficient monitoring of the activity of the Agencies. - New sources of financing : Parliament calls on the Commission and the Agencies to come forward with constructive proposals with regard to further development of new sources of additional financing, which would increase the level of self-financing. It welcomes the financial contributions of some Member States and regions to the agencies located on their area and considers it important for Council and the Commission to demand such contributions, especially when new agencies are set up. - Harmonised operating framework : Parliament recalls its that the multitude of different forms in the existing agencies' structures was thought to be "neither transparent nor comprehensible. Therefore, it has invited the Commission to present appropriate proposals, aimed at creating such a harmonised framework for the agencies, prior to or at least in parallel with the presentation of the legislative proposals for the new agencies; insists that an interinstitutional agreement spelling out common guidelines is a pre-condition for creating the harmonised framework. - Staff policy : the Parliament considers that the staff policy of the Agencies should comply with the Financial Regulation, the Staff Regulations and the best practice generally followed by theInstitutions. The Parliament recalls the principle that the Agencies should as far as possible employ staff on temporary contracts, in order to maintain flexibility and efficiency. In this respect, it is concerned about the serious anomalies detected in connection with the selection procedures of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction and that selection procedures organised by the Agencies should meet the same standards as those organised by the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO) and that they should not be perceived as a backdoor for easy entry into the European civil service. Lastly, the Commission is invited to make proposals in order to ensure that the Agencies benefit from appropriate support from the EPSO when organising selection procedures and that there is a mechanism in place to validate the outcome of such procedures externally before recruitment takes place.