2003 discharge: European Maritime Safety Agency

2004/2057(DEC) - 30/12/2004

This report from the Court of Auditors concerns the results of the audit carried out by the Court on the annual accounts of the the European Maritime Safety Agency for the financial year ended 31 December 2003. The European Maritime Safety Agency was established by Regulation 1406/2002/EC of 27 June 2002 therefore the year 2003 was the first in which the Agency actually began to carry out its operational activities.

The Court has obtained reasonable assurance that the annual accounts for the financial year ended 31 December 2003 were reliable and that the underlying transactions, taken as a whole, were legal and regular.

The report states that the revenue entered in the final budget of the Agency amount to EUR 4.5 million. However, the final budget appropriations entered amounted only to EUR 2. 6 million with EUR 1.4 million committed and EUR 898 000 paid. EUR 536 000 was carried over to the 2004 financial year and EUR 1.2 million was cancelled.

In its report, the Court states that the Executive Director, who is the authorising officer, is also empowered to sign banking instructions, which is contrary to Article 37 of the Agency's financial regulation.

The Court also notes the lack of consistency of the accounting officer to validate systems or justify accounting information. The Agency should also carry out systematic checks on salary payments made to its employees. An analysis of the computer system control environment showed that it requires strengthening in view of the forecast increase in the Agency's activities.

The Agency responds point by point to the observations made by the Court. It states that it was not possible to ensure the separation of duties due to the Agency's insufficient human resources. Since January 2004, following the recruitment of other members of staff, internal controls have been strengthened and the separation of duties ensured. Further to the Court's observations, the accounting officer validated the accounting and budgetary systems in March 2004.

The Commission's Paymaster's Office (PMO) is in charge of calculating EMSA employee salaries. Following an increase in staff numbers in the Human Resources department, checks on payments have been strengthened. The Agency has strengthened its IT team considerably, and staff numbers should increase from one (end 2003) to five (end 2004). This will allow for a better division of tasks and

responsibilities and thus improve control of the computer system.