2005 discharge: European Environment Agency

2006/2158(DEC) - 24/04/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by Edit **HERCZOG** (PSE, HU), and granted the executive director of the European Environment Agency discharge for the implementation of the Agency's budget for the financial year 2005. It then approved closing the accounts of the Agency for the financial year 2005.

The Parliamentary resolution is divided into two parts. The first contained general points, and concerned the majority of EU Agencies requiring individual discharge. The second part contained specific points relating to the Agency.

General points: Parliament considers that the ever-growing number of Community Agencies and the activities of certain of them do not seem to form part of an overall policy framework, and that the remits of some Agencies do not always reflect the real needs of the Union. Accordingly, it invites the Commission to define an overall policy framework for the setting up of new Community Agencies and to present a cost-benefit study before the setting up of any new agency, while being careful to avoid any overlap of activities between Agencies or with the remits of other European organisations. Parliament calls on the Court of Auditors to give its opinion on this cost-benefit study before Parliament takes its decision, and it asks the Commission to present every five years a study on the added value of every existing Agency. ; invites all relevant institutions In the case of a negative evaluation of the added value of an Agency, all relevant institutions are asked to take the necessary steps by reformulating the mandate of that Agency or by closing it.

In view of the constantly increasing number of Agencies, Parliament feels that the Directorates-General of the Commission charged with the setting up and monitoring of Agencies must develop a common approach to the Agencies. It also asks the Commission to improve administrative and technical support to the Agencies. Parliament regretted that the negotiations on the draft interinstitutional agreement on the operating framework for the European regulatory agencies have not yet been concluded, and calls on the Commission, in consultation with the Court of Auditors, to do their utmost to ensure that the agreement is brought to a rapid conclusion. Noting that the Commission's budgetary responsibility calls for closer linking of the Agencies to the Commission, Parliament calls on the Commission and the Council to take all necessary steps to give the Commission a blocking minority in the supervisory bodies of the regulatory Agencies by 31 December 2007 and to provide for such a minority from the outset when new Agencies are set up. It invites the Court of Auditors to create an additional chapter in its Annual Report, devoted to all Agencies to be discharged under the Commission's accounts in order to have a much clearer picture of the use of EU funds by Agencies.

Parliament goes on to ask the Commission to come up with a proposal to harmonise the format of the annual reporting by the Agencies and to develop performance indicators which would allow a comparison of their efficiency. The Commission is urged to monitor and direct the management of the Agencies, especially in relation to the proper application of tender procedures, transparency of recruitment procedures, sound financial management and, most importantly, the proper application of the rules concerning the internal control framework.

Specific points concerning theEuropean Environment Agency: Parliament notes that the carry-over rate for commitments for its operating activities remained high, at 30%, and called for this to be reduced given the difficulties it created for the management of the following year’s appropriations. The Agency was asked to improve the internal control systems, noting that the authorising officers have not provided a formal description of the systems that they use for supplying and substantiating accounts information and

the accounting officer has therefore still not been able to validate them. There are still shortcomings in the authorising officer's annual activity report which does not supply adequate information on the results of the year's activities in relation to the objectives established, the associated risks, the use of resources and the functioning of the internal control systems. Parliament asks the Agency to respect procedures for recruitment, as well as the evaluation criteria in procurement procedures. It considers the Agency to be a source of important environmental information for all EU institutions and policy-making, noting with satisfaction that the Agency has been able to transform some complicated data into clear conclusions and to communicate them to the public. Parliament acknowledges, in particular, the importance of the report 'The European environment - State and outlook 2005' in providing user-friendly information on the environment and pinpointing the key challenges facing the EU and Member States.

Lastly, Parliament asks that, before 1 January 2010 and every five years thereafter, the Agency commission an independent external evaluation of its achievements and work programmes. The Agency should examine the conclusions of the evaluation and draft such recommendations to the Commission and Parliament as may be necessary regarding changes in the Agency, its working practices and programmes. The evaluation and the recommendations should be made public.