2005 discharge: European Maritime Safety Agency

2006/2164(DEC) - 24/04/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by Edit **HERCZOG** (PSE, HU), by 587 votes for, 49 against and 22 abstentions, and granted to the executive director of the European Maritime Safety Agency discharge for the implementation of the Agency's budget for the financial year 2005. It then approved the closing of 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 the EMSA: Parliament noted that the implementation of the budget for the financial year 2005 was affected by delays in staff recruitment and that this situation had repercussions on the utilisation of appropriations for administrative expenditure. It also noted that activity-based management was not brought in, and that there were problems in its system of internal accounting.

Parliament insisted that the register of liabilities to be entered in the balance sheet should be checked more carefully as liabilities are actually overestimated by at least EUR 92 000 (i.e. almost 10 % of current liabilities), corresponding to goods and services not yet received as at 31 December 2005. It also insisted that that the system of control must be tightened up, beginning with the adoption of minimum standards for administrative and control procedures, including the nature and organisation of data. It noted that contract clauses which provide for pre-financing were not standardised with regard to the provision of bank guarantees, and invited the Agency to solve this problem immediately.

Lastly, Parliament noted various shortcomings in public procurement management and insisted that the Agency has to comply with the regulatory requirements.