2005 discharge: European Food Safety Authority

2006/2166(DEC) - 24/04/2007 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by Edit **HERCZOG** (PSE, HU), by 604 votes for, 23 against and 50 abstentions, and granted the executive director of the European Food Safety Authority discharge for the implementation of the Authority's budget for the financial year 2005. It then approved the closing of the accounts of the Authority 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 EFSA: Parliament noted that the financial year 2005 was marked by a significant under-implementation of the budget, with only 80 % of commitment and payment appropriations being used. It felt that the Authority should make a serious effort to improve the use it makes of the appropriations with which it is entrusted. Parliament strongly deplored the fact that the changes it made to the establishment plan were not respected and that the Authority restored the grades

initially provided for in the draft budget in respect of 19 posts without informing Parliament. It noted the failure to introduce activity-based management, and regretted the fact that the Authority did not carry out a risk analysis or formally lay down internal control systems and procedures.

Parliament went on to note with regard to recruitment that the Authority rejected candidates on the basis of criteria other than those provided for in the vacancy notices and, in addition, did not observe the regulatory provisions concerning the grades of selection board members in relation to the posts to be filled. It insisted on the strict application of the relevant criteria and on an effective check as to whether the documents submitted by candidates in support of their applications actually offer genuine proof. It was noted that the Authority had difficulties in recruiting highly skilled scientific staff in Parma.

Parliament regretted that a considerable number of anomalies were revealed during the audits carried out on the award and conclusion of contracts.

Lastly, the buildings intended to house the Authority permanently are still not available and the Authority was obliged to rent and fit out temporary premises (cost in 2005: approximately EUR 3 500 000). Parliament invited the Authority, together with the Commission, to clarify this situation with the national authorities, in particular with a view to any financial compensation.