

RESOLUTION (EU) 2020/1901 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**of 14 May 2020****with observations forming an integral part of the decision on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) for the financial year 2018**

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT,

- having regard to its decision on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Fisheries Control Agency for the financial year 2018,
- having regard to Rule 100 of and Annex V to its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the opinion of the Committee on Fisheries,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A9-0041/2020),

- A. whereas, according to its statement of revenue and expenditure ⁽¹⁾, the final budget of the European Fisheries Control Agency (the 'Agency') for the financial year 2018 was EUR 17 408 849, representing an increase of 1,73 % compared to 2017; whereas the budget of the Agency derives mainly from the Union budget ⁽²⁾;
- B. whereas the Court of Auditors (the 'Court'), in its report on the Agency's annual accounts for the financial year 2018 (the 'Court's report'), stated that it had obtained reasonable assurances that the Agency's annual accounts for the financial year 2018 are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular;

Budget and financial management

1. Notes with satisfaction that budget monitoring efforts during the financial year 2018 resulted in a budget implementation rate of 99,74 %, representing a slight increase of 0,83 % compared to 2017; notes with satisfaction that the payment appropriations execution rate was at 87,62 %, representing an increase of 13,81 % compared to 2017;

Performance

2. Notes that the Agency uses a number of key performance indicators to support its multiannual strategic objectives and to assess the added value provided by its activities;
3. Notes that the Agency implemented 98 % of its activities on time and that it implemented 100 % of its annual communication strategy plan;
4. Notes that the Agency, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and the European Maritime Safety Agency adopted a tripartite working arrangement defining the cooperation between those agencies and the cooperation with national authorities carrying out coast guard functions by providing services, information, equipment and training, as well as by coordinating multipurpose operations;
5. Encourages the Agency to pursue the digitalisation of its services
6. Takes note of the fact that the results of the second Five Year Independent External Evaluation of the Agency for the period 2012 to 2016 were presented in 2017; notes with satisfaction that, at the end of 2018, one recommendation was closed and ten recommendations were progressing in line with the roadmap presented to the administrative board;

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 416, 15.11.2018, p. 42.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 416, 15.11.2018, p. 43.

7. Considers that the role of the Agency in promoting the creation of Frontex should not undermine the Agency's core activity as the Union body responsible for organising operational coordination of fisheries control activities and providing assistance in that area to the Member States and the Commission, as this could lead to the weakening of fisheries surveillance and an increase in illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing; therefore stresses the need to provide the Agency with adequate financial and human resources commensurate with its growing tasks;
8. Highlights the fact that the Agency adopted, in June 2018, a decision on the publication of information on meetings with organisations or self-employed individuals and that, following the agreement between Parliament and the Commission on the transparency register, the Agency will publish the relevant executive director and staff meetings with lobbyists on the Agency's website;
9. Notes that, following preparatory work in 2017, the Agency implemented in 2018 an information security management system based on the international standard ISO 27001 aiming to protect the Agency from technology-based risks and preserving the confidentiality, integrity and availability of information;
10. Highlights the active role and added value provided by the Agency in the improved regional fisheries governance in western Africa (PESCAO) project to develop capacities to combat IUU fishing activities and to improve the management of fisheries resources in West Africa; highlights the three operations carried out in 2018, involving Senegal, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea-Conakry, Sierra Leone, Cape Verde and Mauritania;
11. Stresses the importance of the Agency's role in the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy and the achievement of its objectives, in particular with regard to the landing obligation, as Member States are facing difficulties in complying with this obligation;

Staff policy

12. Notes that, on 31 December 2018, the establishment plan was 98,36 % executed, with 60 Temporary Agents (TAs) appointed out of 61 TAs authorised under the Union budget (compared to 61 authorised posts in 2017); notes that in addition 11 contract agents and six seconded national experts have been working for the Agency in 2018;
13. Encourages the Agency to develop a long term human resources policy framework which addresses the work-life balance of its staff, the lifelong guidance and career development, the gender balance, the teleworking, the non-discrimination, the geographical balance and the recruitment and integration of people with disabilities;
14. Notes with concern the lack of gender balance on the management board (47 men and 21 women);

Procurement

15. Highlights that the main procurement activity in 2018 was focused on launching the two open calls respectively to acquire travel agency and event organisation services for the Agency and for the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work;
16. Welcomes that, following the objective of Union agencies of sharing procurement efforts, the Agency launched its second inter-institutional open call for tender in 2018 and that two other agencies joined that procurement procedure; calls on the Agency to report to the discharge authority on future developments regarding its joint procurement procedures; regards this practise as an example worth following; encourages the Agency to further explore possibilities of streamlining procedures with other institutions;

17. Notes from the Court's report that the Agency did not systematically check prices and uplifts charged with supplier's quotes and invoices issued to the framework contractor for the acquisition of software licences; notes from the Agency's reply that it has no possibility to change the conditions and provisions of the framework contract signed by the Commission and that it will implement the new framework contract to address the issues raised concerning the old contract;

Prevention and management of conflicts of interests and transparency

18. Acknowledges the Agency's existing measures and ongoing efforts to secure transparency, prevention and management of conflicts of interests, and whistleblower protection; notes with satisfaction that experts who do not sign a declaration of interests are not permitted to work under a specific contract and that the Agency monitors regularly the submission of the declarations;
19. Notes that in 2018, the Commission's internal audit service issued an audit report on "Planning, Budgeting and Monitoring in the Agency" and that an action plan for potential areas of improvement was agreed; calls on the Agency to report to the discharge authority on the measures taken;

Other comments

20. Notes that the Agency has initiated a process in order to be certified in EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme and has taken a series of measures aiming to reduce its overall impact on the environment; points out, however, that the Agency does not have any additional measures in place to reduce or offset CO₂ emissions;
21. Calls upon the Agency to focus on disseminating the results of its research to the general public, and to reach out to public via the social media and other media outlets;
22. Refers, for other observations of a cross-cutting nature accompanying its decision on discharge, to its resolution of 14 May 2020 ⁽³⁾ on the performance, financial management and control of the agencies.

⁽³⁾ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0121.