

RESOLUTION (EU) 2020/1939 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 Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) 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 Institute for Gender Equality 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 Women's Rights and Gender Equality,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A9-0058/2020),
- A. whereas, according to its statement of revenue and expenditure ⁽¹⁾, the final budget of the European Institute for Gender Equality (the 'Institute') for the financial year 2018 was EUR 7 981 001,45, representing an increase of 3,34 % compared to 2017; whereas the entire budget of the Institute derives from the Union budget ⁽²⁾;
- B. whereas the Court of Auditors (the 'Court'), in its report on the annual accounts of the Institute for the financial year 2018 (the 'Court's report'), states that it has obtained reasonable assurances that the Institute's annual accounts are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular;

Budget and financial management

1. Notes with appreciation that the budget monitoring efforts during the financial year 2018 resulted in a budget implementation rate of 99,38 %, representing an increase of 0,46 % compared to 2017; notes that the payment appropriations execution rate was 81,15 %, representing an increase of 0,20 % compared to the previous year;

Performance

2. Notes the fact that the Institute uses certain key performance indicators in relation to operational objectives and management of financial and human resources to assess the added value provided by its activities and to improve its budget management; further notes that the Institute completed 98,80 % of the single programming document activities in 2018;
3. Notes that the Institute chaired the Justice and Home Affairs agencies' network and coordinated regular updates and information sharing among agencies; notes that at the end of 2018 the Institute, with other agencies, agreed to explore possibilities for enhanced interagency cooperation in implementing joint capacity-building projects with third countries; commends this cooperation as an example for other agencies worth following; encourages the Institute to seek further and broader cooperation with Union agencies; encourages the Institute to initiate discussions on the topic of resource sharing on overlapping tasks among other agencies with similar activities;
4. Calls on the Commission to conduct a feasibility study in order to assess the possibility of, at the very, least setting up shared synergies with the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), if not fully merging them; calls on the Commission to evaluate two scenarios: the transfer of the Institute to FRA' headquarters in Vienna and the transfer of FRA's headquarters to the Institute's headquarters in Vilnius; notes that such an act would mean sharing corporate and support services and the management of the common premises, as well as shared ICT, telecommunications and internet-based infrastructures, saving huge amounts of money which would be used to fund the Institution and FRA further;
5. Encourages the Institute to implement the Court's recommendations;
6. Encourages the Institute to pursue the digitalisation of its services;

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 128, 5.4.2019, p. 16.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 128, 5.4.2019, p. 18.

7. Recalls that the Institute was established in order to contribute and to strengthen the promotion of gender equality in the Union, including gender mainstreaming in all Union policies and the resulting national policies, the fight against discrimination based on gender, and raising Union citizens' awareness of gender equality;
8. Welcomes the ongoing cooperation between the Institute and Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (the 'FEMM Committee') and welcomes the Institute's contribution to the ongoing efforts of the FEMM Committee, including on the issues of the gender digital gap, work-life balance, the gender pay and pension gap, gender budgeting, combating violence against women, women's health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, women's rights and the development of a gender-sensitive parliament tool; notes the valuable contribution the Institute can make to all of Parliament's committees in order to better integrate the gender perspective horizontally and better realise gender mainstreaming in policies and actions in Union policy making by, for example, providing other committees with training and data;
9. Notes the new Knowledge Management and Communication Strategy 2019-2021, which is aimed at engaging gender equality stakeholders and monitoring the Institute's communication channels;
10. Strongly supports the work of the Institute, which, by means of studies and research, enables the FEMM Committee to obtain data that is indispensable in order for it to do its work properly by providing official, high-quality and objective data;
11. Welcomes the Institute's achievements in 2018 and asks it to update the Gender Equality Index 2017 on an annual basis from 2020 onwards; calls for more methodological tools to be developed to better ensure gender mainstreaming in all policies and actions;
12. Insists on the role of the Institute, as the Union centre of expertise on gender equality, to monitor the implementation of the Istanbul Convention;
13. Raises concerns over claims made by former temporary agency workers and over the rulings of the Vilnius City District Court and Vilnius Regional Court; calls for a clear process of recruitment and asks the Institute to adopt measures to solve the situation.

Staff policy

14. Notes that, on 31 December 2018, the establishment plan was 100 % executed, with 27 temporary agents appointed out of 27 temporary agents authorised under the Union budget (compared with 27 authorised posts in 2017); notes that, in addition, 14 contract agents and four seconded national experts worked for the Institute in 2018;
15. Notes the ruling of the Vilnius City District Court in February 2019 in favour of five former employees of the Institute who had accused the Institute of exploiting the 'temporary employee' status for a period of five years in order to pay them less than staff with long-term employment statuses; calls on the Commission to carry out an overview analysis of the ways in which agencies employ their staff and of the Institute itself and to inform the discharge authority of the final outcome of the analysis;
16. Notes that, according to the Court's report, as one of the main obligation under Directive 2008/104/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council ⁽³⁾ and Lithuanian labour law, interim workers should work under the same working conditions as workers employed directly by the user undertaking; notes, however, that the contracts did not require the temporary work agencies explicitly to respect those conditions and that there is no evidence that the Institute itself carried out any comparison between the working conditions for its own and interim staff, which causes litigation and reputational risks; calls on the Institute to analyse the working conditions of its interim workers and ensure they are in line with Union and national labour law;
17. Notes with concern the unbalanced representation of men (seven members) and women (23 members) on the management board;
18. Notes that the Institute publishes vacancy notices on its own website and social media in order to increase publicity, but not on the website of the European Personnel Selection Office;

⁽³⁾ Directive 2008/104/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 November 2008 on temporary agency work (OJ L 327, 5.12.2008, p. 9).

Procurement

19. Notes with concern that, at the end of 2017, the Institute was a defendant in four cases related to three procurement procedures which were brought before the Court of Justice of the European Union (the 'Court of Justice') by unsuccessful tenderers; notes that in 2018 the Court of Justice ruled on two of the four cases and dismissed the actions of the claimants, finding that the Institute was not liable, and that in 2019 the Court of Justice ruled on the two remaining cases linked to the same award decision and contract; notes that, according to the Institute's reply, it further improved procurement procedures in order to minimise the risk of potential dissatisfaction among unsuccessful tenderers and of future legal cases;

Prevention and management of conflicts of interests and transparency

20. Notes the Institute's existing measures and ongoing efforts to secure transparency, prevention and management of conflicts of interests, and whistleblower protection; welcomes the publication of the CVs of the Institute's senior management on its website;

Internal audit

21. Notes that the final audit report, issued on 17 October 2017, of the Internal Audit Service audit on stakeholder management and external communication did not identify any critical or very important issues; notes, however, that the audit report recommended further improvements in a number of areas including knowledge management and communication strategy, key performance indicators, monitoring and reporting, management of main stakeholder projects and external communication; notes that the Institute developed an action plan on all recommendations and sub-recommendations to be implemented during 2017-2018 and that several sub-recommendations were implemented in 2017 and the rest during 2018;
22. Notes the Institute's efforts to ensure a cost-effective and environmentally friendly working place; observes that while the Institute does not have any specific measures in place to reduce or offset CO₂ emissions, it participates in meetings, consultations and presentations to that end and that it also has parking spaces for bicycles;
23. Calls on the Institute to focus on disseminating the results of its research to the public and to reach out to the public via social media and other media outlets;
24. Refers, for other observations of a cross-cutting nature accompanying its decision on discharge, to its resolution of 14 May 2020 ⁽⁴⁾ on the performance, financial management and control of the agencies.

⁽⁴⁾ Texts Adopted, P9_TA(2020)0121.