RESOLUTION (EU) 2020/1951 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 Agency for Safety and Health at Work (now European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA)) 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 Agency for Safety and Health at Work 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 Employment and Social Affairs,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A9-0033/2020),

A. whereas, according to its statement of revenue and expenditure [1], the final budget of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (the 'Agency') for the financial year 2018 was EUR 15 425 700, representing a decrease of 1,47 % 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'), states that it has obtained reasonable assurances that the Agency's annual accounts are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular;

Budget and financial management

1. Notes with satisfaction that the budget monitoring efforts during the financial year 2018 resulted in a budget implementation rate of 99,58 %, representing an increase of 3,55 % compared to 2017; notes with concern that the payment appropriations execution rate was at 67,81 %, representing a decrease of 4,42 % compared to 2017;

Performance

2. Notes that the Agency uses certain key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure its performance and to enhance its budget management; notes, furthermore, that the Agency adopted in 2018 a new framework for its KPIs; notes that during 2019 the Agency has undertaken together with the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound), the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) and the European Training Foundation (ETF) a review of the methodology for administrative indicators with a view to look into possible streamlining; encourages the Agency to further explore the possibilities of interinstitutional collaboration and streamlining of best practices;

3. Notes that the EU-OSHA multi-annual strategic Programme 2014-2020 has been extended to 2023; appreciates the Agency's progress in achieving its strategic objectives and notes that these are aligned to wider Union policy objectives on occupational safety and health (OSH); notes, furthermore, that the Agency has implemented 93 % of its annual work programme;

4. Welcomes the fact that in 2018 the Agency initiated an *ex post* evaluation for its activity 'large-scale foresight'; recognises that the outcome of this evaluation will be particularly useful to feed in the new foresight cycle and the 2022 to 2024/5 Healthy Workplaces Campaign on OSH and Digitalisation; encourages the Agency to continue exploring possible ways of task-sharing among other agencies, with a particular emphasis on sharing of resources on overlapping tasks among other agencies with similar activities;

[1] OJ C 120, 29.3.2019, p. 191.
[2] OJ C 120, 29.3.2019, p. 192.

5. Welcomes the fact that the Agency proactively shares tasks with other agencies in subjects such as security, facilities management or banking services, and that it joined an inter-institutional call for tender for evaluation and stakeholders' feedback services launched by Eurofound;

6. Acknowledges the Agency's contributions to the fight against occupational cancer and in running the world's largest occupational safety and health campaign and welcomes the initial success of the 'Healthy Workplaces Campaign on Dangerous Substances' launched in 2018 and already running in over 30 countries;

7. Welcomes the Agency's work on its 'Rehabilitation and return to work after cancer' project, which was completed in 2018 with the aim of giving recommendations to address the difficulties that cancer survivors face when returning to work after completing cancer treatment and the OSH challenges that their employers can encounter;

8. Appreciates the Agency's contributions in the consultation meetings on the revision of the carcinogens and mutagens directives and for its membership of the advisory group set up by the Commission in view of the establishment of the European Labour Authority;

9. Notes with regret that, according to the Court's report, the carry-overs to 2019 for Title II (administrative expenditure) stood at 35 % (compared to 40 % in 2017), while for Title III (operational expenditure) they were as high as 46 % (compared to 40 % in 2017), which was in contradiction with the budgetary principle of annuality; recalls that such high carry-overs were also reported for the financial years 2016 and 2017 and calls on the Agency to analyse the underlying reasons and to improve the budget planning accordingly; notes the Agency's reply specifying the possibility of adding and justifying a list of potential additional IT purchases regarding carry-overs for Title II and pointing to the planned nature of carry-overs regarding the programming of large-scale research projects, running over two years, for Title III in order to achieve more significant impact for the given resources;

10. Highlights that transparency and citizens' awareness of the existence of the agencies are essential for their democratic accountability; considers that usability and ease of use of agency resources and data are of paramount importance; calls therefore for an assessment of how data and resources are currently presented and made available and of the degree to which Union citizens find them easy to identify, recognise and use; recalls that public awareness in this respect can be raised by Member States through the development of a comprehensive plan to reach out to more Union citizens;

11. Supports the Agency's policies in ensuring cost-effective and environmentally friendly measures to reduce its carbon footprint at the workplace through its public procurement procedures and the implementation of teleworking and the e-culture awareness and development;

Staff policy

12. Notes that, on 31 December 2018, the establishment plan was 100 % executed, with 40 temporary agents (TAs) appointed out of 40 TAs authorised under the Union budget (compared to 40 authorised posts in 2017); notes that, in addition, 25 contract agents worked for the Agency in 2018;

13. Notes that further efforts are needed to achieve a gender balance among senior managers (three men and one woman) and on the management board (42 men and 35 women);

14. Notes that the Agency has a policy on the protection of the dignity of the person and the prevention of harassment in place; notes that following the case of the investigation of harassment initiated in 2016 and concluded in 2017, the Agency has implemented several actions including, in particular, regular awareness-raising sessions for its staff and the establishment of a confidential counsellors network, as mitigating measures;

Procurement

15. Notes that the Agency is embracing digitalisation in procurement and started implementing e-procurement in November 2018 with the launch of its first e-tender and that during 2019, the Agency has also started to use a new module of the e-procurement suite, e-submission; also notes that the Agency intends to explore further use of the whole e-procurement suite during the course of 2019 and 2020;

16. Notes that, following the Court's report, the Agency signed a framework contract for the provision of IT consultancy services from 2014 to 2017 for which prices were set contingent to the time spent on the projects and not linked to the delivery, and over which the Agency has limited monitoring possibilities, the Agency has been applying the Court's advice to its current ICT and consultancy framework contracts by making use of quoted times and means-specific contracts when appropriate;

Prevention and management of conflicts of interests and transparency

17. Acknowledges the Agency's existing measures and ongoing efforts to secure transparency and the prevention and management of conflicts of interest; notes furthermore that the Agency has adopted both the model decision on whistleblowing for which the Commission has given an *ex ante* agreement in 2018 and also, by analogy in 2019, the Commission decision on outside activities and assignment and on occupational activities after leaving the service;

Internal control

18. Notes that the Agency is preparing an action plan to address some potential areas for improvement addressed in the 2018 Commission's internal audit service (IAS) audit report on 'Healthy Workplaces Campaigns and IT support in EU-OSHA'; notes that in this regard, the IAS issued four recommendations, none of them critical or very important, and that at the end of 2018, the IAS had closed three recommendations with the fourth on track for being completed in 2019;

19. Notes that an external evaluation of the Union agencies under the remit of the Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (EU-OSHA, Eurofound, Cedefop and ETF) was carried out in 2018 on behalf of the Commission on the Agency's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence andadded value for the Union; notes that the overall stakeholders' feedback collected confirmed the Agency's responsiveness to the general and specific needs of the partners and its intermediaries and a near consensus that its communication, networking and stakeholders' engagement activities are highly effective, efficient and coherent;

20. Calls on 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;

21. Notes that with the proclamation of the European pillar on social rights at the end of 2017, the Agency is given an important role in implementing its principles;

Other comments

22. Notes that the Agency carried out an analysis of the likely impact of the United Kingdom's withdrawal of the Union on its organisation, operations and accounts and that a thorough analysis has been conducted on all key functions of the Agency; notes furthermore that the result of the analysis has shown a low impact on Agency's operations irrespective of the type of future agreement between the United Kingdom and the Union;

23. 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.