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DRAFT OPINION

of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

for the Committee on Budgetary Control

on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2016, Section III - Commission and executive agencies
(2017/2136(DEC))

Rapporteur: Adina-Ioana Vălean

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety calls on the Committee on Budgetary Control, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Is satisfied with the overall implementation by the Commission of the budgetary headings for environment, climate action, public health and food safety in 2016;
2. Is satisfied with the work carried out by the five decentralised agencies which are under its remit and which carry out technical, scientific or managerial tasks that help the Union institutions elaborate and implement policies in the area of environment, climate, public health and food safety, as well as with the way those agencies' budgets are implemented;
3. With respect to the overall error rate of the section "Rural Development, fisheries, environment and climate", notes a slight reduction of the error rate in the report of the Court of Auditors ('the Court') for 2016, with 4,9 % against 5,3 % in 2015 and 6,2 % in 2014; notes that, for the environment, climate action and fisheries, the three quantifiable errors identified in the transactions examined by the Court were due to ineligible expenditure;

Environment and Climate Action

4. Underlines that the budget of DG ENV is mainly implemented through direct centralised management, and that in 2016 commitments and payment appropriations amounted to EUR 438,31 million and EUR 357,62 million respectively; stresses that it is satisfactory that the implementation rates of commitment appropriations reached 98,95 % and that those of payment appropriations reached 99,17 % at year end;
5. Notes that in 2016 the LIFE programme provided EUR 315 million to co-finance 157 new projects across 23 Member States, which spurred additional EUR 236 million investments;
6. Stresses that an action plan was set up in 2016, following comments from the Court, in order to ensure improvements on payments delays under the LIFE programme; notes that the rate of delayed payments for 2016 reached 3,9 %;
7. Notes that internal audits carried out in 2016 showed that in DG ENV improvements in human resources management were possible as this DG was not able to effectively monitor and compare workload within the DG;
8. Stresses that internal audits also showed that there were delays in the implementation of one very important IT security related recommendation (on the management of the security of the EU ETS IT system), which exposes the DG to the risk of security breaches;
9. Highlights that the budget of DG CLIMA is mainly implemented through direct centralised management, and that the 2016 commitments and payment appropriations amounted to EUR 118,1 million and EUR 59,25 million respectively; highlights that

while the implementation rate of commitment appropriations amounted to 99,72 %, it was only 70,49 % for payment appropriations, due to the signature only at the end of December 2016 of three new operations under the financial instrument Private Finance for Energy Efficiency (PF4EE);

Public Health

10. Notes that DG SANTE was responsible, in 2016, for implementing EUR 184,40 million on public health budget lines, of which 89,88 % have been committed satisfactorily; takes note that the level of execution of payments is at 89,86 %;
11. Notes that the ex-post evaluation of the second Health Programme, finalised in July 2016, found that while the Programme delivered valuable outputs with a clear link to Union and national health policy priorities, there was still room for improvement concerning the dissemination of action outputs and synergies with other Union funding instruments such as the structural funds;

Food Safety, animal health and welfare and plant health

12. Notes that DG SANTE was responsible, in 2016, for implementing EUR 240,5 million on food and feed safety, animal health, animal welfare and plant health budget lines, of which 98,37 % have been committed satisfactorily; takes note that the level of execution of payments is at 98,00 %;
13. Notes that the Court published a Special Report on a performance audit on animal disease eradication programmes covering the period 2009-2014, which concluded that the approach taken by the Commission was sound and acknowledged some notable successes, such as the decrease in the cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in cattle, salmonella in poultry, and rabies in wildlife;
14. Notes that in 2016 DG SANTE launched the first product of the ‘State of Health in the EU’ initiative, the joint OECD-Commission report ‘Health at a Glance: Europe 2016’, created 23 European Reference Networks on rare diseases, set up a task force on antimicrobial resistance and established a new EU platform on food losses and food waste;
15. Is of the opinion, on the basis of the data available and the implementation report, that discharge can be granted to the Commission with respect to expenditure in the areas of environmental and climate policy, public health and food safety for the financial year 2016.