



2017/2151(DEC)

13.11.2017

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 budget of the European Environment Agency for the financial year 2016
(2017/2151(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. Notes that in 2016, the total budget of the European Environment Agency ('the Agency'), was of EUR 50 487 497 (+2,7% compared to 2015), of which EUR 36 309 240 (71,9 %) had been made available through the general budget of the European Union; notes that the Union subsidy was the same in 2016 as in 2015, and that the budget growth was due to an increase in earmarked funds;
2. Welcomes the Agency's budget monitoring efforts resulting in a 99,9 % budget execution rate of the available core-budget appropriations (Union subsidy and contributions from other member countries);
3. Recalls that, since its creation, the Agency, together with its European Environment Information and Observation Network (EIONET), has been an information source for those involved in developing, adopting, implementing and evaluating Union environment and climate policies, as well as sustainable development policies, and also been an information source for the general public;
4. Highlights that the continuing staff reduction poses a risk for the Agency to deliver its multiannual work programme for 2014-2020 to the full, and limits its capacity to respond to policy developments; stresses that it has become increasingly difficult for the Agency to manage the risks associated with the decrease in resources; notes that the limitation of staff resources contributed to the lower delivery rate observed in some strategic areas;
5. Welcomes the fact that approximately 77 % of all staff are dedicated to operational activities; takes note of the Agency's occupancy rate for temporary agents of 99,2 % with 129 staff against 130 posts available, the last post being reserved for a known reduction in the establishment plan in 2017;
6. Welcomes the conclusions of the audit on the preparation process of the State of the Environment Report 2015 in the Agency that determined that the audited processes were generally fit for purpose;
7. Takes note of the adoption of the Agency's guidelines on whistleblowing;
8. Notes that, following observations from the discharge authority, the Agency improved the verification methods by providing guidelines and training to the European Topic Centres partners regarding criteria for eligibility of costs;
9. Stresses that the Commission, in line with the Better Regulation Agenda, initiated in 2016 an evaluation of the Agency and the EIONET, covering the period between mid-2012 and end 2016, the findings of which will be used to assess how well the Agency is performing;

10. Welcomes that the Court of Auditors has announced that the transactions underlying the annual accounts of the Agency for the financial year 2016 were legal and regular in all material respects;
11. Recommends, based on the facts available, that discharge be granted to the Executive Director of the European Environment Agency with respect to the implementation of the Agency's budget for the financial year 2016.