



TEXTS ADOPTED

Provisional edition

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Discharge 2016: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound)

1. European Parliament decision of 18 April 2018 on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions for the financial year 2016 (2017/2148(DEC))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the final annual accounts of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions for the financial year 2016,
- having regard to the Court of Auditors' report on the annual accounts of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions for the financial year 2016, together with the Foundation's reply¹,
- having regard to the statement of assurance² as to the reliability of the accounts and the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions provided by the Court of Auditors for the financial year 2016, pursuant to Article 287 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to the Council's recommendation of 20 February 2018 on discharge to be given to the Foundation in respect of the implementation of the budget for the financial year 2016 (05941/2018 – C8-0058/2018),
- having regard to Article 319 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002³, and in particular Article 208 thereof,

¹ OJ C 417, 6.12.2017, p. 212.

² OJ C 417, 6.12.2017, p. 212.

³ OJ L 298, 26.10.2012, p. 1.

- having regard to Regulation (EEC) No 1365/75 of the Council of 26 May 1975 on the creation of a European Foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions¹, and in particular Article 16 thereof,
 - having regard to Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1271/2013 of 30 September 2013 on the framework financial regulation for the bodies referred to in Article 208 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council², and in particular Article 108 thereof,
 - having regard to Rule 94 of and Annex IV to its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control and the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (A8-0092/2018),
1. Grants the Director of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions discharge in respect of the implementation of the Foundation's budget for the financial year 2016;
 2. Sets out its observations in the resolution below;
 3. Instructs its President to forward this decision, and the resolution forming an integral part of it, to the Director of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, the Council, the Commission and the Court of Auditors, and to arrange for their publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union* (L series).

¹ OJ L 139, 30.5.1975, p. 1.

² OJ L 328, 7.12.2013, p. 42.

2. European Parliament decision of 18 April 2018 on the closure of the accounts of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions for the financial year 2016 (2017/2148(DEC))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the final annual accounts of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions for the financial year 2016,
 - having regard to the Court of Auditors' report on the annual accounts of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions for the financial year 2016, together with the Foundation's reply¹,
 - having regard to the statement of assurance² as to the reliability of the accounts and the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions provided by the Court of Auditors for the financial year 2016, pursuant to Article 287 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
 - having regard to the Council's recommendation of 20 February 2018 on discharge to be given to the Foundation in respect of the implementation of the budget for the financial year 2016 (05941/2018 – C8-0058/2018),
 - having regard to Article 319 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
 - having regard to Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002³, and in particular Article 208 thereof,
 - having regard to Regulation (EEC) No 1365/75 of the Council of 26 May 1975 on the creation of a European Foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions⁴, and in particular Article 16 thereof,
 - having regard to Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1271/2013 of 30 September 2013 on the framework financial regulation for the bodies referred to in Article 208 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council⁵, and in particular Article 108 thereof,
 - having regard to Rule 94 of and Annex IV to its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control and the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (A8-0092/2018),
1. Approves the closure of the accounts of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions for the financial year 2016;

¹ OJ C 417, 6.12.2017, p. 212.

² OJ C 417, 6.12.2017, p. 212.

³ OJ L 298, 26.10.2012, p. 1.

⁴ OJ L 139, 30.5.1975, p. 1.

⁵ OJ L 328, 7.12.2013, p. 42.

2. Instructs its President to forward this decision to the Director of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, the Council, the Commission and the Court of Auditors, and to arrange for its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union* (L series).

3. European Parliament resolution of 18 April 2018 with observations forming an integral part of the decision on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions for the financial year 2016 (2017/2148(DEC))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its decision on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions for the financial year 2016,
 - having regard to Rule 94 of and Annex IV to its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control and the opinion of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (A8-0092/2018),
- A. whereas in the context of the discharge procedure, the discharge authority wishes to stress the particular importance of further strengthening the democratic legitimacy of the Union institutions by improving transparency and accountability, and implementing the concept of performance-based budgeting and good governance of human resources;
- B. whereas, according to its statement of revenue and expenditure¹, the final budget of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (the ‘Foundation’) for the financial year 2016 was EUR 20 789 500, representing a decrease of 1,72 % compared to 2015; whereas the Foundation’s budget derives mainly from the Union budget;
- C. whereas the Court of Auditors (the ‘Court’), in its report on the Foundation’s annual accounts for the financial year 2016 (the “Court’s report”), has stated that it has obtained reasonable assurances that the Foundation’s annual accounts are reliable and that the underlying transactions are legal and regular;

Comments on the legality and regularity of transactions

1. Notes that, according to the Court’s report, the Court’s 2014 report noted underpayments to staff for the period 2005 to 2014 in relation to the transition to the new Staff Regulations in 2005; notes that, although the reasons for the underpayments (2014: non-respect of minimum guaranteed salaries; 2015: wrong multiplication factor on salaries) are different, the Court has again found underpayments (EUR 43 350) and some overpayments (EUR 168 930), affecting 30 active and previous staff members; notes that the Foundation corrected all underpayments, but will not recover the overpayments (in line with Article 85 of the current Staff Regulations); calls on the Foundation to analyse again any possible mistakes in relation to the transition to the 2005 Staff Regulations, carry out a full evaluation of its payroll function and report its findings to the discharge authority; acknowledges that, according to the Foundation, a comprehensive internal audit of the payroll function took place in April 2017; notes that the Foundation is awaiting the final report and due regard will be given to any recommendations made; calls on the

¹ OJ C 84, 17.3.2017, p.11.

Foundation to report to the discharge authority on the corrective measures that will be taken;

Budget and financial management

2. Notes with satisfaction that the budget monitoring efforts during the financial year 2016 resulted in a budget implementation rate of 99,99 % and that the payment appropriations execution rate was 84,80 %, representing a decrease of 2,55 % compared to 2015;
3. Expresses concern about the negative budgetary impact of the growing Irish country coefficient which increasingly risks undermining the financial capability of the Foundation to deliver on its mandate; expects action to be taken by the Institutions of the Union to offset the effects;

Commitments and carry-overs

4. Notes from the Court's report that the level of committed appropriations carried forward to 2017 was high at EUR 2 800 000 (43 %) for Title III (operational expenditure), compared to EUR 2 100 000 (31 %) in 2015, mainly in relation to projects (studies and pilot schemes) going beyond the year end; notes that the Foundation is considering the introduction of differentiated budget appropriations in order to better reflect the multiannual nature of operations and unavoidable delays between the signature of contracts, deliveries and payments;
5. Acknowledges that the Foundation, with the agreement of the Court, distinguishes between planned and unplanned carry-overs; notes that in 2016 the Foundation had planned carry-overs of EUR 3 000 000 while the actual carry-overs amounted to only EUR 2 800 000;
6. Notes that carry-overs may often be partly or fully justified by the multiannual nature of the agencies' operational programmes, do not necessarily indicate weaknesses in budget planning and implementation and are not always at odds with the budgetary principle of annuality, in particular if they are planned in advance by the Foundation and communicated to the Court;

Procurement

7. Notes that the Foundation's advisory committee on procurement and contracts (ACPC), which gives an opinion on contract proposals with a value of at least EUR 250 000, did not meet during 2016 as there were no dossiers meeting the criteria; notes in addition that the ACPC carried out an annual *ex-post* verification of three out of eleven contracts awarded in 2016; notes that the ACPC was satisfied overall that the Foundation adhered to the procurement procedures;

Staff policy

8. Notes that a job screening exercise was carried out in December 2016, which shows a relatively high level of stability over the three years in which the screening exercise took place;
9. Observes that the establishment plan and staff breakdown provides for 107 posts (officials, temporary agents and contract agents) from December 2016, compared to 108

in 2015; notes with satisfaction that by reference to the number of posts occupied on 31 December 2016, gender balance has almost been achieved, since the ratio is 55,14 % female to 44,86 % male staff;

10. Stresses that work-life balance should be a part of the Foundation's staff policy; notes that the budget spent per staff on well-being activities amounts to EUR 80,21; observes that the average number of sick days per staff is 6,5 days, which is lower than in many other Union Agencies but still worrying and worthy of examination to assess whether workplace stress is a factor, and that no member of staff was on a full-year's sick leave;
11. Appreciates the fact that there was no formal or informal harassment case reported in 2016; supports the training and information sessions organised to increase the awareness of staff;
12. Notes with satisfaction the fact that the Foundation did not receive any complaints, law-suits or reported cases linked to hiring or dismissal of staff in 2016;
13. Welcomes the Foundation's remedial actions undertaken in relation to salary corrections following the Court's reports; notes that a comprehensive internal audit of the payroll function took place in April 2017 in order to provide additional assurance that the appropriate processes and controls are in place and operating well;
14. Recalls that staffing cuts have been implemented with great difficulty and reiterates its concern towards any further cuts which would limit the agencies' ability to carry out their mandate;

Prevention and management of conflicts of interests and transparency and democracy

15. Notes with satisfaction that workshops on ethics, integrity and antifraud were delivered in November and December 2016; notes, moreover, that attendance at those workshops was mandatory for all staff and that those who were unable to attend were required to follow an online programme covering the same topics;
16. Notes with satisfaction that the Foundation has in place rules on whistleblowing and that no cases were recorded in 2016;
17. Expresses the need to establish an independent disclosure, advice and referral body with sufficient budgetary resources, in order to help whistle-blowers use the right channels to disclose their information on possible irregularities affecting the financial interests of the Union, while protecting their confidentiality and offering needed support and advice;
18. Appreciates the fact that the Foundation had no conflicts of interests case in 2016;
19. Calls on the Foundation to adopt an ethics code and to inform the discharging authority about alleged and confirmed conflicts of interests, how it has dealt with them, and how it will prevent them in the future;

Main achievements

20. Welcomes the three main achievements identified by the Foundation in 2016, namely that:

- it completed the sixth European Working Conditions Survey and presented its findings to Parliament on 17 November 2016;
- it implemented the last year of its four-year programme cycle with 100 % budget implementation and 98 % programme delivery and highest level of user satisfaction feedback registered during the four-year period;
- the European Pillar of Social Rights package makes reference to recent Eurofound findings: on pay, social benefits, inadequate housing in Europe, new forms of employments and the latest working conditions survey;

21. Welcomes the successful implementation of the Foundation's four-year work programme with a high level of organisational effectiveness, as evidenced by an overall improvement of the Foundation's key performance indicators;
22. Notes with satisfaction that the delivery of work programme outputs planned for 2016 was 97 %, largely exceeding the target of 80 %, which is a significant turn-around from the underachievement in the two previous years, and ensures that at the close of the four-year programming period, nearly all scheduled outputs for the final programme year were delivered on time;

Internal controls

23. Notes with satisfaction that the Foundation's internal control coordinator, in line with the prioritisation presented to the bureau of governing board in January 2016, focused on five internal control standards related to its mission and vision, ethics and organisational values, Staff allocation and mobility, risk management process and assessment of internal control standards;

Internal audit

24. Notes that, according to the Court's report, in its audit report dated December 2016, the internal audit service (IAS) highlighted a need to improve the Foundation's management of projects, mainly in relation to governance arrangements, monitoring and reporting; notes with satisfaction, however, that the Foundation and the IAS agreed on a plan to take corrective action;
25. Notes that the IAS carried out an audit in project management (PM) with the objective 'to assess the adequacy of the design and the effectiveness of the management and control systems put in place by the Foundation for its PM activities'; notes, in addition, that the IAS report contains four recommendations on the following topics: project management governance, project monitoring and reporting, project planning, project management information system; notes that the IAS accepted the Foundation's action plan for completion by the end of 2017; calls on the Foundation to report to the discharge authority on the progress made;
26. Notes with satisfaction that all recommendations addressed by the IAS from earlier audits prior to the reporting year are closed;

Other comments

27. Regrets the fact that Council Regulation (EEC) No 1365/75¹ does not explicitly require external evaluations of the Foundation's activities; notes, however, that the Commission's proposal for a new founding regulation includes the obligation of performing an evaluation every five years; also welcomes the fact that at the moment each of the four-year work programmes is subject to an external evaluation;
28. Acknowledges that the Foundation remained an essential contributor to policy development and that the use of its expertise in key Union policy documents remained significant;
29. Acknowledges the work of the Foundation during the four-year work programme 2013 to 2016 "From crisis to recovery: Better informed policies for a competitive and fair Europe"; welcomes the Foundation's high-quality analysis and policy input as regards living and working conditions, industrial relations and employment and labour market developments, in particular the Overview report of the sixth European Working Conditions Survey and the New Forms of Employment; underlines the importance of the tripartite management of the Foundation which enables a comprehensive overview of the economic and social reality to be conducted;
30. Stresses the necessity of maintaining strong cooperation between the Foundation and the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs in order to benefit from the Foundation's expertise and to engage in constructive and evidence-based discussions;
31. Welcomes the fact that Parliament, the Commission, and other stakeholders are the main users of knowhow provided by the Foundation, and that they are aware of its quality and interest;
32. Notes that Council Regulation (EEC) No 1365/75, which established the Foundation, is being revised and welcomes the inclusion by Parliament and the Commission of an explicit reference to the use of external audit reports and evaluations;
33. Welcomes the good cooperation between the Foundation and other Union agencies, in particular Cedefop, EU-OSHA, ETF, FRA and EIGE, during the planning and implementation of its work in order to ensure good coordination and synergies in its activities;
34. Notes how strongly the Foundation has contributed to combating poverty and fraudulent contracting of work in several actions across the Union.

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35. Refers, for other observations of a cross-cutting nature accompanying its decision on discharge, to its resolution of 18 April 2018² on the performance, financial management and control of the agencies.

¹ Regulation (EEC) No 1365/75 of the Council of 26 May 1975 on the creation of a European Foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions (OJ L 139, 30.5.1975, p. 1).

² Texts adopted, P8_TA-PROV(2018)0133.