



2021/2157(DEC)

2.2.2022

OPINION

of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

for the Committee on Budgetary Control

on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Union Agencies for the financial year 2020: performance, financial management and control
(2021/2157(DEC))

Rapporteur for opinion: Romana Tomc

PA_NonLeg

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Employment and Social Affairs calls on the Committee on Budgetary Control, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Stresses the valuable role played by Union agencies in helping Union institutions to design and implement policies, especially for specific technical, scientific, operational or regulatory tasks; appreciates the high quality work performed by the agencies working in the area of employment, social affairs and inclusion; appreciates the importance of and the high quality work performed by CEDEFOP, Eurofound, EU-OSHA, ETF and ELA, the agencies working in the area of employment, social affairs and inclusion; reiterates in this regard the need to ensure adequate human and financial resources allowing them to continue implementing their work programmes with a very high activity completion rate; stresses the importance and added value of each agency in their field of expertise and their autonomy;
2. Notes that EU agencies have a crucial role in ensuring social dialogue within their own organisations and calls on the Commission to ensure funding supporting the EU agencies in securing social dialogue;
3. Welcomes the fact that in its Annual report on Union agencies for the financial year 2020, the Court of Auditors issued unqualified audit opinions on the reliability of all agencies' accounts; notes that the Court issued unqualified audit opinions on the legality and regularity of the revenue underlying all agencies' accounts; notes further that the Court issued unqualified audit opinions on the legality and regularity of the payments underlying the accounts of the agencies working in the area of employment, social affairs and inclusion;
4. Recalls that the yearly exchange of views in the EMPL committees regarding the annual work programmes and the multiannual strategies of the agencies is instrumental in ensuring that the programmes and strategies are aligned to the actual political priorities, especially in the context of the implementation of the principles enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights and contribute to the success of the Action Plan on the Implementation of the EPSR;
5. Notes that, in its report for the 2019 financial audit, the Court for the first time also issued an overall assessment of the conditions put in place by the Union to enable the agencies to deliver its policies for the public good and recommended to the Commission to ensure the relevance, coherence and flexibility of the set-up of agencies, allocate resources in a more flexible manner, improvement of governance, accountability and better reporting on performance;
6. Welcomes, therefore, the deepened cooperation between the agencies within the framework of the European Union Agencies Network (EUAN) which is an important inter-agency cooperation platform to enhance agencies' visibility, identify and promote possible efficiency gains, add value and ensure efficient communication between the agencies and relevant stakeholders with a focus on sharing services, knowledge and expertise, and calls for regular consultations between all agencies coordinated by the

EUAN;

7. Particularly appreciates and encourages the close collaboration among the agencies under the remit of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs in order to ensure synergies, complementarity and sharing resources;
8. Calls to develop a general policy preventing to replace permanent staff in Agencies by more expensive external consultants, in order to guarantee quality working conditions, and to prevent knowledge and experience from being lost;
9. Welcomes the EUAN endorsement of its second multiannual strategy (2021-2027) in 2020;
10. Notes with concern that in 2020 only 35,8 % of members of the highest decision-making bodies of all Union agencies were women and regrets the fact that gender equality is absent in the multiannual strategy 2021-2027 for the EUAN;
11. Recalls that gender balance must be ensured within the Union agencies in accordance with the basic regulations establishing them; asks, therefore, that the Union agencies collect and present data on gender balance for all categories of management staff (from the lowest to the highest level);
12. Calls on the agencies and the EUAN to integrate gender equality in their strategies, to align the ambition of agencies with the aim of the Commission to reach a gender balance of 50 % at all levels of its management by the end of 2024 and to pursue gender mainstreaming in all fields;
13. Highlights that transparency and citizens' awareness of the existence of the agencies are essential for their democratic accountability;
14. Notes that shortcomings in public procurement procedures remain the main source of irregular payments; notes in particular that two observations regarding budget management and one regarding procurement procedures were made to Cedefop; notes that two observations regarding internal controls and one on procurement procedures were made to Eurofound; notes that one observation on internal controls was made to ETF;
15. Encourages the agencies to further improve their public procurement procedures, ensuring full compliance with the applicable rules, the principles of transparency, proportionality, equal treatment and non-discrimination and best value for money procurements;
16. Notes that internal controls are the most error prone area; encourages the agencies to conduct effective and efficient internal controls, including ex-ante/ex-post controls, market research prior to any order form and the adoption of internal rules to provide a sound contribution to the management control systems, to transparency and accountability;
17. Welcomes that agencies activated business continuity plans in good time to ensure the continuation of key governance processes and the well-being of staff during the COVID-

- 19 pandemic; expresses satisfaction that agencies rapidly adapted their work to the pandemic through accelerated digitalisation measures, collaborated better, and improved the way they exchanged information to remain operational; recommends regular surveys on staff satisfaction with and evaluation of teleworking arrangements;
18. Recalls that the European Labour Authority (ELA) was created in March 2018 and started its operation in October 2019; welcomes that ELA premises were inaugurated last 9 November 2021;
 19. Points out that the ELA will help ensure that Union rules on labour mobility and social security coordination are enforced effectively and fairly, will assist national authorities in cooperating to enforce these rules, and make it easier for citizens and businesses to benefit from the internal market;
 20. Recalls that ELA was not audited in 2020 because, according to ECA, it did not reach its financial autonomy;
 21. Highlights the importance of making the ELA fully operational without undue delay and stresses the need to ensure sufficient financial resources in this regard;
 22. Underlines the need to avoid digital overload and emphasizes that staff should only work within working hours; welcomes the (ETF) European Training Foundation's new tools that were recently uploaded for the delivery of messages within working hours; calls on other agencies to follow the European's Training foundation as a good practice;
 23. Is very concerned about the fact that some agencies, such as CEDEFOP, are not part of the crisis management team; stresses the importance of involving staff in crisis management; recommends, therefore, to start from the example of the ETF as a good practice and giving employees the chance to flag up issues and be in contact with management, especially during times of Covid-19-related teleworking;
 24. Calls for more support to staff members who move to the country where the agency is located; suggests in this context establishing a liaison person who ensures, among other things, the connection between the staff and local authorities;
 25. Calls on the EUAN to establish clear rules on staff member affiliation to the national health care system; recommends that these explicitly state mention the extent and duration of coverage;
 26. Emphasizes the importance of health protocols for all agencies, including internal health and safety committees, proper ventilation and pandemic security protocols, to be collectively discussed and implemented with staff.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	1.2.2022
Result of final vote	+: 47 -: 7 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Atidzhe Alieva-Veli, Marc Angel, Dominique Bilde, Gabriele Bischoff, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Milan Brglez, Sylvie Brunet, Jordi Cañas, David Casa, Ilan De Basso, Margarita de la Pisa Carrión, Özlem Demirel, Klára Dobrev, Jarosław Duda, Estrella Durá Ferrandis, Lucia Ďuriš Nicholsonová, Rosa Estaràs Ferragut, Nicolaus Fest, Loucas Fourlas, Cindy Franssen, Helmut Geuking, Elisabetta Gualmini, Alicia Homs Ginel, France Jamet, Agnes Jongerius, Radan Kanev, Adam Kósa, Stelios Kympouropoulos, Katrin Langensiepen, Miriam Lexmann, Elena Lizzi, Giuseppe Milazzo, Dragoş Pîslaru, Manuel Pizarro, Dennis Radtke, Elżbieta Rafalska, Daniela Rondinelli, Mounir Satouri, Monica Semedo, Michal Šimečka, Beata Szydło, Eugen Tomac, Romana Tomc, Nikolaj Villumsen, Marianne Vind, Maria Walsh, Stefania Zambelli, Tatjana Ždanoka, Tomáš Zdechovský
Substitutes present for the final vote	Marc Botenga, Peter Lundgren, Eugenia Rodríguez Palop, Véronique Trillet-Lenoir, Kim Van Sparrentak

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

47	+
ECR	Giuseppe Milazzo, Elżbieta Rafalska, Beata Szydło
NI	Ádám Kósa, Daniela Rondinelli
PPE	David Casa, Jarosław Duda, Rosa Estaràs Ferragut, Loucas Fourlas, Cindy Franssen, Helmut Geuking, Radan Kanev, Stelios Kypourouopoulos, Miriam Lexmann, Dennis Radtke, Eugen Tomac, Romana Tomc, Maria Walsh, Tomáš Zdechovský
Renew	Atidzhe Alieva-Veli, Sylvie Brunet, Jordi Cañas, Lucia Ďuriš Nicholsonová, Dragoş Pîslaru, Monica Semedo, Michal Šimečka, Véronique Trillet-Lenoir
S&D	Marc Angel, Gabriele Bischoff, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Milan Brglez, Ilan De Basso, Klára Dobrev, Estrella Durá Ferrandis, Elisabetta Gualmini, Alicia Homs Ginel, Agnes Jongerius, Manuel Pizarro, Marianne Vind
The Left	Marc Botenga, Özlem Demirel, Eugenia Rodríguez Palop, Nikolaj Villumsen
Verts/ALE	Katrin Langensiepen, Mounir Satouri, Kim Van Sparrentak, Tatjana Ždanoka

7	-
ECR	Peter Lundgren, Margarita de la Pisa Carrión
ID	Dominique Bilde, Nicolaus Fest, France Jamet, Elena Lizzi, Stefania Zambelli

0	0

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention