



2023/2150(DEC)

25.1.2024

OPINION

of the Committee on Fisheries

for the Committee on Budgetary Control

on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) for the financial year 2022

(2023/2150(DEC))

Rapporteur for opinion: Pierre Karleskind

PA_NonLeg

SUGGESTIONS

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

1. Takes note of the report of the Court of Auditors (the ‘Court’) on the annual accounts of the European Fisheries Control Agency (the ‘Agency’) for the financial year 2022, the Agency’s 2022 annual activity report and the analysis and assessment of that report by the Agency’s Administrative Board;
2. Expresses its satisfaction with the Court’s statement that the Agency’s accounts for the year ended 31 December 2021 are in compliance with the Union’s Financial Regulation and with the accounting rules adopted by the Commission’s accounting officer; acknowledges ECA’s observations regarding public procurement, management and control systems and the use of carry-overs;
3. Notes that the financial year 2022 was marked by a recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic impacts on the previous two financial years, while at the same time EFCA’s budget and resources continued to grow for additional tasks and projects as foreseen in its Single Programming Document for 2022; points out that the war in Ukraine could have an impact on the recognition and measurement of some assets and liabilities on the balance sheet and also on some revenue and expenses recognised in the statement of financial performance for subsequent reporting periods;
4. Notes that the Agency received a EUR 29,34 million contribution under the general budget of the Union in 2022, representing an increase of 40 % in respect of 2021; points out that both the Agency’s annual budget and its complement of staff are among the lowest among Union agencies, even with the increased staff establishment plan;
5. Acknowledges that in the financial year 2022 the Agency was able to implement 95,4% of its annual work programme; notes that the Agency was able to carry out its operations and implement its budget as planned, with an overall budget implementation of 99,4 % in terms of commitments and 57,8 % in terms of payments, a figure which is considerably lower than the previous year; takes note of the Agency’s explanation that this reduction stems mainly from the time-gap to have three offshore fisheries patrol vessels operational;
6. Recalls the Agency’s vital contribution in the implementation of the common fisheries policy (CFP), in particular of fisheries control and the fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing welcomes the strengthening of the Agency’s chartered offshore patrol vessel (OPV) to carry out fisheries controls and inspections in Union and international waters and to support national authorities; underlines the participation of the Agency in major international coalitions against illegal fishing, like the PESCAO operation;
7. Stresses that it is the Member States that are primarily responsible for the control of fishing activities, while the Agency’s tasks are supportive in nature; stresses that the newly adopted revision of the Fisheries Control Regulations will increase the Agency’s supportive workload; emphasises the importance that growing obligations without

sufficient resources to do so would be incoherent; stresses, therefore, that the financial and human resources available to the Agency need to be sufficient in the coming years;

8. Notes that, in 2022, the Agency reported 47 592 inspections (at sea and ashore), which led to the detection of 5167 suspected infringements, representing a decrease in the inspections of 11 % and an increase in the suspected infringements of 28 % on the 2021 figures, respectively; points out that that observed decrease is not necessarily linked to decrease in Member States control efforts; invites the Agency to provide more detailed information on the reasons for these changes; points out that inspections and other follow-up activities play a key role not only in the proper management of fish stocks but also in ensuring a level playing field for Union fishers;
9. Highlights, in relation to the fight against IUU fishing, that the agency has an important role to encourage an increased and harmonised application of the EU control systems in place to combat illegal fishing;
10. Takes note of the Agency's continued cooperation with the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) and the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) to support national authorities carrying out coastguard functions in line with Article 8 of Regulation (EU) 2019/473; considers that cooperation to be an example of synergy between Union agencies that should inspire agencies in other areas; calls on the Agency to continue its efforts in that regard and considers it appropriate also to increase the cooperation between the Agency and the European Environment Agency;
11. Highlights the role of the Agency in offering capacity-building and training to third countries and the Agency's crucial role in securing a level playing field with all coastal states;
12. Notes that, on 31 December 2022, the establishment plan was fully filled, with 74 temporary agents appointed out of 77 temporary agents authorised under the Union budget; takes note of the increase of staff expenses by EUR 2,1 million in comparison with 2021;
13. Takes note of the Agency's policy of promoting equal treatment of staff and of its goal of gender equality in terms both of numbers and of grades and responsibility levels; deplores the fact that women account for only 38 % of staff employed at grade AD 8 or higher, with no change compared to 2021; notes that more must be done in order to attain parity at management level; reiterates its call on the Agency to step up its efforts with regard to its gender parity policy with a view to making progress towards parity at management level as well;
14. Underlines as well the importance of a balanced geographical representation among staff in order to meet one of the Commission's fundamental goals, i.e. to be close to the citizens and to reflect the diversity of Member States;
15. Calls on the Agency to continue to regularly update and make publicly available the information on relevant executive director and staff meetings with organisations or self-employed individuals engaged in Union policy-making and policy implementation so as to ensure full transparency and trust in the Agency's activity;

16. Proposes that discharge be granted to the Executive Director of the Agency in respect of the implementation of the Agency's budget for the financial year 2022.

**ANNEX: ENTITIES OR PERSONS
FROM WHOM THE RAPPORTEUR HAS RECEIVED INPUT**

The rapporteur declares under his exclusive responsibility that he did not receive input from any entity or person to be mentioned in this Annex pursuant to Article 8 of Annex I to the Rules of Procedure.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	23.1.2024
Result of final vote	+ : 24 - : 1 0 : 1
Members present for the final vote	Clara Aguilera, João Albuquerque, Pietro Bartolo, Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Isabel Carvalhais, Maria da Graça Carvalho, Asger Christensen, Rosanna Conte, Rosa D'Amato, Francisco Guerreiro, Anja Haga, Anja Hazekamp, Jan Huitema, Ladislav Ilčić, Pierre Karleskind, Predrag Fred Matić, Francisco José Millán Mon, João Pimenta Lopes, Caroline Roose, Bert-Jan Ruissen, Marc Tarabella, Theodoros Zagorakis
Substitutes present for the final vote	Gabriel Mato, Cláudia Monteiro de Aguiar, Grace O'Sullivan
Substitutes under Rule 209(7) present for the final vote	Christian Doleschal

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

24	+
ECR	Ladislav Ilčić, Bert-Jan Ruissen
NI	Marc Tarabella
PPE	Maria da Graça Carvalho, Christian Doleschal, Anja Haga, Gabriel Mato, Francisco José Millán Mon, Cláudia Monteiro de Aguiar, Theodoros Zagorakis
Renew	Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Asger Christensen, Jan Huitema, Pierre Karleskind
S&D	Clara Aguilera, João Albuquerque, Pietro Bartolo, Isabel Carvalhais, Predrag Fred Matić
The Left	Anja Hazekamp
Verts/ALE	Rosa D'Amato, Francisco Guerreiro, Grace O'Sullivan, Caroline Roose

1	-
The Left	João Pimenta Lopes

1	0
ID	Rosanna Conte

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention