



2023/2150(DEC)

8.11.2023

DRAFT OPINION

of the Committee on Fisheries

for the Committee on Budgets

on European Commission: Consolidated annual accounts of the European Union - Financial year 2022 - European Fisheries Control Agency (2023/2150(DEC))

Rapporteur for opinion: Pierre Karleskind

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Fisheries calls on the Committee on Budgets, 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 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;
4. 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;
5. 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;
6. 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;
7. Notes that, in 2022, the Agency reported 47 592 inspections (at sea and ashore), which led to the detection of 4854 suspected infringements, representing an decrease, respectively, of 11 % and 1, 5 % on the 2021 figures, mainly driven by a decrease on the reported land-based inspections, but still is the second record figure in number of inspections by year; points out that that observed decreases are 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;

8. 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;
9. 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;
10. 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;
11. 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;
12. 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; calls 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;
13. 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;
14. 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.