



2023/2160(DEC)

24.1.2024

OPINION

of the Committee on Transport and Tourism

for the Committee on Budgetary Control

on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Union Agency for Railways for the financial year 2022
(2023/2160(DEC))

Rapporteur for opinion: Vlad Gheorghe

PA_NonLeg

SUGGESTIONS

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

1. Welcomes the finding of the Court of Auditors that the accounts of the European Union Agency for Railways ('the Agency') for the 2022 financial year are legal and regular in all material aspects; further notes that 28 nonconformities have been registered in 2022, showing a decline in financial nonconformities compared to previous years;
2. Notes that the Agency's final annual budget for 2022 was estimated at EUR 34.98 million (EUR 26.28 million from EU subsidy, EUR 8 million from fees and charges) and that the implementation rate was 99.95% in commitments; due to lower-than-planned fees and charges revenues, the Agency requested a budget amendment and the final budget was EUR 33.9 million;
3. Notes that out of the 207 key performance indicators, 167 were achieved, 19 partially achieved, 11 not achieved, 8 not possible to assess and 2 postponed;
4. Notes that the budget outturn in 2022 was EUR 81 821, up from EUR 69 638 in 2021;
5. Stresses that in 2022, European railway companies continued their recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic; railway sector's continuous resilience, along with its low carbon emissions are two essential contributing factors to return to pre-pandemic levels in the future;
6. Welcomes that the Railway Package Steering Group successfully continued its activities evaluating the Agency's preparedness for the 4th Railway Package;
7. Remarks that ERA has driven several initiatives aimed at boosting rail traffic (both passenger and freight), including measures to coordinate international rail traffic and the development of new technologies, such as train automation, contributing to the cohesion, boosting EU economy and green and digital transition;
8. Acknowledges the Agency's commendable performance in 2022, fulfilling its role as the EU authority responsible for issuing authorizations for placing railway vehicles on the market, single safety certificates for railway undertakings, and ERTMS trackside approvals; salutes the increase in Agency's delivery of authorisations for placing 1861 railway vehicles on the market, 66 single safety certificates for railway undertakings and 2 ERTMS trackside approvals despite the increase in the number of applications received; recalls the importance of completion of ERTMS by 2030; commends that these accomplishments represent record-breaking figures since the full implementation of the Technical Pillar of the 4th Railway Package by the Agency;
9. Welcomes the report on EU Railway safety and interoperability; acknowledges the continuous commitment to the objective of the Agency to creating a Single European Railway Area and its sustained work in key areas such as reducing national rules and ensuring the maturity of technical specifications for interoperability; notes that such an important work will support the strengthening of rail interoperability across Europe, in

line with the European Commission policy expectations;

10. Regrets that the current requirements on the reporting of railway safety accidents and incidents are fragmented across Europe, limited to an oversight function only, and not supported by an appropriate enabling tool, and calls therefore on the European Commission to address this gap and provide any necessary funding to that end;
11. Stresses that the illegal and unjustified Russian war of aggression against Ukraine has showcased the crucial role railways can play; notes that since the invasion of the Ukraine, railways have been a significant asset for the movement of people and goods, especially with the closure of Ukraine's airspace for civil aviation; points out that Ukrainian railways have transported soldiers, essential workers, residents, as well as numerous vital goods such as agricultural goods; acknowledges that the Agency contributed to EU cooperation with Ukraine on resilience and development of rail links, it supported Ukraine and the people around the world by finding additional ways to increase the volume of transport of Ukrainian food products by rail;
12. Notes that upon EU candidate countries joining the Union, they will have implemented the framework and the EU acquis; points out that this will allow EU citizens to use rail as environmentally friendly and safe mode of transport and transport their goods from/to South-Eastern Europe, as rail freight corridors are today connecting the Western Balkans with the EU; stresses the IPA and Western Balkan Project's role in supporting the Interoperability Directive and Safety Directive implementation among the project beneficiaries; also notes that this will provide the base for a market opening of rail services and seamless train rides from and to this neighbouring region;
13. Welcomes the EUMedRail project, promoting regional cooperation with the Southern Mediterranean partners under the European Neighbourhood Policy; particularly notes that, the project encourages the exchange of best practices in the field of interoperability and safety of the EU railway system and the promotion of the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS);
14. Commends the Agency's efficiency and budget execution through Strengthening Action Plan adopted as part of Single Programming Document 2023-2025; notes however that these efforts cannot compensate the insufficient budget; notes that Single Programming Document and the Consolidated Annual Activity Report are key documents ensuring an efficient governance of the Agency, in terms of planning, monitoring and reporting;
15. Commends the very high level of digitalisation achieved by the Agency, eliminating paper-processes and introducing online solutions such as e-procurement, e-invoicing, electronic travel booking; notes that the Agency has continuously cooperated with the European Commission to increase its efficiency;
16. Recalls that the Agency has the smallest budget among the transport agencies despite the outstanding environmental benefits of rail prioritized by Commission; commends the rise in the fiscal year 2022 budget, accompanied by various efforts to enhance competitiveness, improve safety, and promote cross-border interoperability; nevertheless, calls for a budget increase to ensure the Agency has essential resources to function as an efficient authority and effectively fulfil its tasks;

17. Welcomes the increase of the ceiling of permanent agents to 154 individuals, compared to 151 agents in 2021; further acknowledges the Agency's efforts towards gender parity; notes that there is significant room for improvement; currently, the overall staff distribution stands at 65% men and 35% women and this gender gap is even more pronounced in management roles; urges the Agency to intensify its commitment to achieving a truly balanced gender representation, given the findings of the 2022 gender audit;
18. Commends the Agency's proactive response to the recommendations put forth in the previous year's observation, urging the Agency to introduce effective checks for verifying SME status of applicants; welcomes the implementation of enhanced controls for verifying the SMEs status for Single Safety Certificates and Vehicle Authorizations applications;
19. Proposes that Parliament grants discharge 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	+: 31 -: 2 0: 1
Members present for the final vote	Magdalena Adamowicz, Andris Ameriks, Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Ciarán Cuffe, Karima Delli, Carlo Fidanza, Isabel García Muñoz, Elsi Katainen, Kateřina Konečná, Bogusław Liberadzki, Peter Lundgren, Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska, Marian-Jean Marinescu, Tilly Metz, Cláudia Monteiro de Aguiar, Caroline Nagtegaal, Philippe Olivier, Tomasz Piotr Poręba, Bergur Løkke Rasmussen, Dominique Riquet, Thomas Rudner, Achille Variati, Petar Vitanov, Elissavet Vozemberg-Vrionidi, Lucia Vuolo
Substitutes present for the final vote	Markus Ferber, Vlad Gheorghe, Roman Haider, Pär Holmgren, Ljudmila Novak, Rovana Plumb, Dorien Rookmaker, Vera Tax
Substitutes under Rule 209(7) present for the final vote	Viola von Cramon-Taubadel

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

31	+
ECR	Carlo Fidanza, Tomasz Piotr Poręba, Dorien Rookmaker
PPE	Magdalena Adamowicz, Markus Ferber, Elzbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska, Marian-Jean Marinescu, Cláudia Monteiro de Aguiar, Ljudmila Novak, Elissavet Vozemberg-Vrionidi, Lucia Vuolo
Renew	Izaskun Bilbao Barandica, Vlad Gheorghe, Elsi Katainen, Caroline Nagtegaal, Bergur Løkke Rasmussen, Dominique Riquet
S&D	Andris Ameriks, Isabel García Muñoz, Bogusław Liberadzki, Rovana Plumb, Thomas Rudner, Vera Tax, Achille Variati, Petar Vitanov
The Left	Kateřina Konečná
Verts/ALE	Ciarán Cuffe, Karima Delli, Pär Holmgren, Tilly Metz, Viola von Cramon-Taubadel

2	-
ECR	Peter Lundgren
ID	Philippe Olivier

1	0
ID	Roman Haider

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention