

2016 discharge: European Asylum Support Office (EASO)

2017/2177(DEC) - 02/10/2018 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

By adopting the second report by Bart STAES (Greens/EFA, BE) on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Asylum Support Office for the financial year 2016, the Committee on Budgetary Control called on the European Parliament to:

- grants the new ad interim Executive Director of the European Asylum Support Office discharge in respect of the implementation of the Office's budget for the financial year 2016;
- approve the closure of the accounts of the European Asylum Support Office for the financial year 2016.

Members welcomed the fact that the initial decision of 18 April 2018 postponing the discharge led to the strong corrective measures taken by the Commissions Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, the Management Board and the Office's new ad interim Executive Director.

The ongoing investigation of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF): an OLAF investigation is currently ongoing concerning several former and current members of the European Asylum Support Office occupying middle or senior management positions. Members welcomed the decision of the Office's Management Board on 6 June 2018 to release the Executive Director from his duties with immediate effect. They also welcomed the designation of an ad interim Executive Director as well as measure to improve the governance structure of the Office, restore transparency and build trust.

The Office is called on to prepare a comprehensive and detailed roadmap presenting the way forward in order to counteract the previously detected deficiencies in the legality and regularity of transactions. This roadmap should include a clear plan for restoring trust in management. Basis for the qualified opinion on the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions: recalling the material findings made by the Court of Auditors in relation to two out of five significant procurement procedures from 2016 for which payments were incurred during that year, Members expect all possible actions to be taken to recover irregular payments from the budget year 2016: EUR 920 561 (procurement procedure for the provision of travel services) and EUR 592 273 (framework contract for interim services to support it in its response to the migration crisis).

The report welcomes the action plans drawn up by the Office to remedy the issues identified by the Court.

Members remained concerned by the development of travel reimbursement costs (in 2014, EUR 997 506 was reimbursed, in 2015 reimbursements amounted to EUR 987 515, and in 2016 reimbursements amounted to EUR 1 012 147).

They underlined that the increase of travel cost reimbursements and the decrease of category-A attendees may indicate an arbitrary reimbursement scheme.

The staff of the Office is urged to properly assume their responsibilities regarding administrative matters and on-the-ground work.