

2016 discharge: European Asylum Support Office (EASO)

2017/2177(DEC) - 24/10/2018 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament decided (186 votes to 317, with 164 abstentions) to refuse to grant the Executive Director of the European Asylum Support Office discharge in respect of the implementation of the Offices budget for the financial year 2016.

In its resolution adopted by 547 votes to 108, with 14 abstentions, Parliament welcomed the fact that the initial decision of 18 April 2018 postponing the discharge led to the strong corrective measures, the corrective measures taken to date have partially responded to the reservations presented by Parliament.

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 Offices 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. They regretted, however, that the management board did not take this action on its own initiative much earlier in the process.

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 to make sure that the recruitment and training of the significant number of new staff foreseen for 2018 and 2019 is of such a level that the Office will have well-motivated and high quality personnel at its disposal and that there will be less turn-over of staff and its knowledge and experience are retained.

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, Parliament 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 resolution welcomed the action plans drawn up by the Office to remedy the issues identified by the Court, namely: (i) the procurement procedure for the provision of travel services (FCM Travel Agency) was replaced by an open tender procedure which was finalised and led to the conclusion of a new contract; (ii) the framework contract for interim services in Greece (Randstad) was replaced by an open tender procedure which was finalised and led to the conclusion of a new contract.

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.