Press release | 10.05.2012

EU budget discharge

EP votes to tackle conflicts of interest at EU agencies

The European Parliament today voted on the discharge of the EU budget for 2010, with MEPs voting to withhold giving clearance to the budgets of certain EU agencies and the EU Council's budget (1). Commenting on the outcome, and the decision to refuse to discharge the budgets of the European Food Safety Agency and the European Medicines Agency, Green MEP and budget control spokesperson **Bart Staes** stated:

"By withholding discharge, the EP is putting pressure on these agencies to finally get their houses in order and to root out the recurring conflicts of interest. The European Food Safety Agency and the European Medicines Agency are repeat offenders in this regard.

"Agencies like EFSA and the EMA, which deal with the authorisation of goods and items that have direct implications for public health and safety, must act completely independently. Given the sensitive nature of their work, any possible conflict of interests with industry must be ruled out. This is both in the public interest and in the interest of the agencies themselves, and the credibility of their work. EFSA took an important step in the right direction this week, with the resignation of its controversial chair Diána Bánáti (2), but it still has further issues to address with other conflicts of interest and the practise of 'revolving doors' between industry and the agency. The same is true of the EMA.

"It is also essential that the European Court of Auditors stop delaying the publication of its report on conflicts of interest at EU agencies. It is in the public interest that this report is published and the ECA must stop sitting on it."

(1) The agencies and institutions whose budgets have not been discharged will now have to respond, with a final decision of the EP on these specific budgets postponed until October.

(2) See yesterday's Green statement on the EFSA announcement: http://www.greens-efa.eu/eu-agencies-conflicts-of-interest-7147.html

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Bart Staes

Member

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