1999 discharge: EC general budget, section III Commission

2000/2155(DEC) - 12/03/2001

PURPOSE: presentation of the Council recommendation on the discharge to be granted to the Commission on the implementation of the Communities' budget for the 1999 financial year (Commission section). CONTENT: The Council recommendation recalls the main figures for the financial year in question: - revenues of EUR 86,908,069,717.84; - expenditure of EUR 84,268,265,870.26; - balance of EUR 3,219,889,970.85. Based on the observations contained in the Court of Auditors' report concerning the 1999 financial year, the Council calls on the European Parliament to grant the discharge of the budget for 1999. However, the implementation of the budget by the Commission calls for a number of comments from the Council which need to be fully taken into account by the Commission without delay. It awaits that the Commission provides a regular report on the progress made, in particular, with respect to its plan of action on financial management. Welcoming the implementation of the programme on the reform of the Commission one of the objectives of which is the review of the institution's financial procedures, the Council invites the Commission to ensure the development and the implementation of the financial control structure and financial audit systems, in light of the Court's recommendations. Welcoming the improvement of the Statement of Assurance in the perspective of becoming an analysis tool for management and control systems, the Council deplores the fact that yet again the Court was not able to issue a positive statement of assurance to the Commission on the budget for the 1999 financial year because of the unacceptably high level of errors in the operations underlying payments, while noting that the Court gave a positive appreciation as regards the own resources and administrative expenditures. It would like a higher number of sectors to benefit from a positive appreciation in the future. The Council, furthermore, examined the report on the first stage of the action plan that the Commission had launched and awaits new developments in this regard. It invited the Member States once again to complete the ratification procedures of the Convention on the protection of the Community's financial interests. In conclusion, bearing in mind the various remarks made and the fact that the Commission is involved in a reform process and in the introduction of an action plan to reform financial management which echoes the observations and recommendations made in previous discharge procedures, and conscious that the process requires a reasonable time to bear results, the Council recommends the granting of the discharge to the Commission for the implementation of the 1999 budget.