EP Rules of Procedure: amending provisions concerning the discharge procedure

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The committee adopted the report by Hans-Peter MARTIN (PES, A) proposing to amend Parliament's Rules of Procedure concerning the budget discharge. Amongst its recommendations, the committee wanted the Rules of Procedure to lay down a deadline for completing the procedure to ensure that the discharge did not drag on over several financial years. Thus, under the proposed changes, a discharge procedure could take place in two stages, in April and October. At the April part-session, the discharge report would propose either to grant or to postpone discharge. In each case, the proposal would need to be approved by a majority. If a proposal to grant discharge failed to secure a majority, then discharge would be deemed to be postponed. Conversely, if a proposal to postpone discharge failed to secure a majority, then discharge would be deemed to be granted. Depending on the results of the vote, therefore, two scenarios would be possible at the April part-session: either (1) discharge would be granted at this stage and the accounts would be closed; or (2) discharge would be postponed, in which case the committee responsible would table a new report within six months, which would be put to the vote in the October part-session. In this instance, the discharge report would propose either to grant or to refuse to grant discharge. No further postponement would be possible, meaning that, whatever the outcome of the vote, the procedure would be wound up in October. The committee also took account of the recommendations made by the Budgetary Control Committee with a view to closing the existing loopholes regarding the implementation of the individual budgets of Community bodies. It therefore proposed to add a new rule laying down provisions for other discharge procedures, which included providing for Parliament to be able to scrutinise the Council's "activity as executive". Lastly, the committee also took account of the Budgetary Control Committee's suggestions concerning the information that should appear in a discharge report's motion for a resolution. This should include a list of the documents received from the Commission and those requested but not received and, in the case of a report proposing postponement of the discharge decision, the reasons for postponement, the further action that the Commission is requested to take and deadlines for doing so and the documents that are required for Parliament to make an informed decision.