EC own resources: improvement of the collection system

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The Commission unanimously adopted the draft legislative resolution containing a series of amendments to the basic proposal amending Regulation (EEC, EURATOM) no. 1552/89 on the system of the Communities' own resources. The rapporteur, Mr Otto Bardong (PPE, D) referred to certain weaknesses in the management of the mechanism for collecting traditional own resources and stressed that, although the proposal aimed to strengthen the regulatory framework for collecting own resources, it also made it more complex. He therefore suggested that the relevant texts should be recast to render them more readable and their application more coherent. Referring specifically to the "writing off" procedure introduced in Regulation no. 1552/89, Mr Bardong asked first that this approach be set on a clear legal basis. He then mentioned that, in his discharge resolution for the Commission in relation to the 1995 financial year, he encouraged transparency in the management of own resources entered in separate accounts by recommending that amounts not recovered by the Community by a certain date be published by Member State in an annex to the annual financial statements. As for the procedure to be applied, the rapporteur felt that it was premature to increase the threshold at which the Commission applied the notification and approval procedure from ECU 10 000 to 50 000; nor did he subscribe to the Executive's proposed system of tacit approval of writing off which would automatically exempt Member States from making the sums affected available; on the contrary, decisions such as these needed to be explicit, otherwise there would be grounds for pleading incompatibility with the objectives of proper financial management and the protection of the EU's financial interests. Finally, Mr Bardong asked the Executive to file an annual report summarizing communications from member states and to submit a one-off report by 30 September this year summarizing the last five years.