1998 discharge: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions EFILWC budget (Dublin)

2000/2094(DEC) - 22/03/2000

The committee adopted the report by Heide RÜHLE (Greens/EFA, D) on granting discharge in respect of the financial management of various EU institutions and decentralised agencies for 1998. The committee decided to recommend that the decision on discharge be postponed in two cases and that discharge be granted in the other five cases. As regards the 6th, 7th and 8th European Development Funds, the committee recommended postponing discharge because of instances of fraudulent use of Community funds, particularly in Ivory Coast, Tanzania and Togo, and called on the Commission to launch immediate disciplinary action against officials suspected of having committed or covered up such offences. While acknowledging that the new Commission had inherited considerable problems from its predecessor which needed to be solved as a matter of priority, the committee nevertheless expressed concern that Parliament had not been granted full access to all documents, including cases under investigation. The Commission was invited to ensure that staff with the appropriate qualifications and experience were assigned to the management of projects so as to combat corruption more effectively. As far as the Economic and Social Committee (EcoSoc) was concerned, the report recommended that discharge be postponed until it had received the conclusions of an inquiry into the serious irregularities that had been noted in the Court of Auditors' Annual Report for 1996. In order to grant discharge for 1996, Parliament had wanted the Community's Anti-Fraud Unit to conduct a full inquiry. That condition had still not been met at the time of the 1997 discharge, which Parliament again decided to postpone. The report regretted that EcoSoc had only referred the matter to OLAF (the Community's Anti-Fraud Office) in January 2000 and decided to postpone discharge for 1998 pending the conclusions of the OLAF inquiry. The committee recommended granting discharge in respect of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Dublin) and the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Thessaloniki), the Community's two oldest decentralised agencies. The committee also recommended that discharge be granted for 1998 in respect of the Court of Justice, the Court of Auditors and the Committee of the Regions.