Fight against fraud and protection of the Community's financial interests. 1998 annual report

2000/2032(COS) - 19/04/2000

The committee adopted the report by Herbert BÖSCH (PES, A) on the Commission's 1998 annual report on protecting the Communities· financial interests and the fight against fraud. The committee welcomed the Commission's proposal to establish a European public prosecutor's office with far-reaching powers to protect the Union's financial interests. This was a long-standing demand of Parliament's, which had been taken up by the Committee of Independent Experts and was now on the table for the IGC as a proposal for inclusion in the revised treaty. In anticipation of the creation of this office, the committee, in line with the recommendations of the Committee of Experts, called on the Commission to submit legislative proposals by 30 June 2000 enabling a comprehensive legal and judicial framework for the protection of the Union·s financial interests to be established. Pending the treaty changes, it called for an external chamber for budgetary discipline to be set up in the Court of Auditors. The committee stressed the need for effective disciplinary procedures and rules on liability to apply to anyone working in the EU institutions who was responsible for cases of fraud or corruption. The Commission was asked, as part of its administrative reforms, to tighten up the rules in this area. The report said that OLAF must adopt transparent standard operating rules, including rules relating to the conduct of investigations, and called for closer cooperation between the Commission and the Member States to combat fraud and irregularities more effectively. The committee also wanted to see effective measures to deter pirating and counterfeiting of goods, such as exemplary damages to compensate victims of these activities. Lastly, the report called on OLAF to submit to Parliament a full list of all cases of EU staff suspected of involvement in fraud or corruption.