1998 discharge: EC general budget, Parliament

1999/2051(DEC) - 26/06/2000

The committee adopted the report by Helmut KUHNE (PES, D) recommending that Parliament's Secretary-General be granted the discharge for the 1998 budget. In its resolution of 13 April Parliament had decided to postpone a decision on the discharge. As regards the follow-up to the measures which Parliament had asked the Secretary-General to take at that time, the committee's report noted that an action plan to facilitate competitive tendering had been drawn up. It asked for "optimal planning" of the award of contracts" and expected such planning to be strictly monitored and the necessary administrative measures introduced. Parliament should set a good example in this field and therefore contracts must be awarded by private treaty only in exceptional cases. To ensure that the new system for the management of Parliament's property was operated properly and effectively, the report argued that the Budgetary Control Committee itself should continue to monitor the inventory process closely. In addition, rules should be adopted governing inventory management on an interinstitutional basis. The committee also welcomed the timetable submitted for internal administrative reforms and asked that Parliament's relevant committees be kept abreast of the implementation of these reforms, a process in which staff must be actively involved. On buildings policy, the report regretted the geographical dispersion of Parliament's places of work but stressed that this was a consequence of decisions made by the governments of the Member States. It emphasised the need, with a view to enlargement, to minimise logistical inconveniences in the institution's future building arrangements. The committee also repeated its call for a common buildings budget and common buildings management for all the EU institutions. On the financing arrangements for political groups and parties, the report stressed that the political groups had sole responsibility for the use of funds provided from Parliament's budget. It welcomed Parliament's replies to the preliminary observations of the Court of Auditors and expected measures to reform the relevant legal framework to be taken rapidly. The committee regretted the Court of Auditors' unwillingness to explicitly name those groups whose questionable financial practices were mentioned in its report. Lastly, in the light of the Court's findings, the committee made a number of demands for reforms to ensure transparency in the funding of the political groups.