1998 discharge: follow-up. Report

2000/2263(DEC) - 27/03/2001

The committee adopted the report by Gabriele STAUNER (EPP-ED, D) on the measures taken in the light of the observations of the European Parliament in its 1998 discharge resolution. The report recalled that the Commission had been asked to obtain a positive Statement of Assurance from the Court of Auditors for the 2003 financial year at the latest and regretted that it had not expressly committed itself to achieving that objective - by substantially reducing the error rate - nor formulated any verifiable intermediate objectives towards that goal. The Commission was therefore asked to submit a "phased plan" by 1 October 2001 for reaching this goal. The report said that the Commission's proposals for recasting the Financial Regulation were a step in the right direction. It welcomed the adoption by the Commission of detailed rules for the implementation of the Structural Funds to ensure better management and more stringent controls. It also approved the Commission's proposals on reform of the disciplinary procedure, in particular the involvement in the procedure of an independent assessor. The committee welcomed the decentralisation of financial control within each directorate-general and also underlined the importance of coordinating internal audits, which would be a responsibility of the Internal Audit Service. It also welcomed the announcement by the Commission that an administrative enquiry had been set in train to clarify the circumstances which had led to an acquaintance of a former Commissioner being given contracts as a special adviser. However, it deplored the fact that no action had been taken against those who had prepared, authorised and signed contracts with another special adviser to the same former Commissioner (this case having already been the subject of an investigation by OLAF). Lastly, the committee regretted that, even after the conclusion of the Parliament/Commission framework agreement on the provision of information to Parliament, the Commission was not forwarding confidential information in a way that would allow Parliament to meet in full its verification obligations under the discharge procedure. The report restated Parliament's demand to be given as much access to confidential documents and information as the Court of Auditors.