Fight against fraud and protection of the Communities' financial interests. Annual report 1999

2001/2036(COS) - 27/02/2001

The committee adopted the report by Herbert BÖSCH (PES, A) on the Commission's 1999 annual report. The committee stressed that some very serious cases of fraud came to light in 1999, the complete clearing-up of which would constitute a test case for the effectiveness of the EU's anti-fraud office (OLAF) and for the Commission's credibility. The Commission now had to demonstrate that it intended to follow up its declarations about combating fraud and corruption. The committee also highlighted the case of irregular payments at the Commission's office in Stockholm. The amounts involved were admittedly small but the case had done enormous damage to the EU's standing. According to the OLAF Supervisory Committee, the organisation of the protection of the EU's financial interests had not yet noticeably improved, which was partly due to the fact that OLAF was being prevented from recruiting qualified staff. The committee repeated its view that OLAF and its director must be made independent of the Commission for the purpose of conducting its investigations. OLAF must also obtain the wholehearted cooperation of the staff of the Community institutions as well as the police and judicial authorities in the Member States. Lastly, on the need for Parliament to be kept informed, the committee stressed that in order to exercise its powers of scrutiny, Parliament needed unobstructed access to the reports drawn up by OLAF. In addition, the Director of OLAF should submit a full list of all cases under investigation involving fraud, corruption or other unlawful activities against the Community budget, a list which would have to be updated quarterly.