1999 discharge: follow-up. Report

2001/2123(DEC) - 23/01/2002

The committee adopted the report by Freddy BLAK (PES, DK) on the action taken by the Commission in response to Parliament's comments in its discharge decision for 1999. It felt that the Commission's follow-up report was generally adequate and satisfactory, but highlighted a number of points on which further information or other forms of follow-up were needed. Chief among these was the question of access to information. The committee pointed out that it was up to the discharge authority, and not the Commission, to decide whether the information provided was sufficient. Parliament, as the discharge authority, should have the same access to the Commission's documents as the Court of Auditors. The report also reiterated Parliament's criticism of the framework agreement and called for it to be revised. Still on the subject of information, the committee called for Parliament, and not just the Commission, to be informed of the establishment of OLAF's communication policy and to be kept adequately informed of developments in a number of cases under investigation. On reporting and evaluation, the committee wanted to see more 'customer-oriented' reporting on budget implementation, including information on the value-for-money aspect. It welcomed the Commission's intention to transmit evaluation reports to Parliament. Another of the committee's key concerns was to ensure that the applicant countries introduced proper control systems in areas of shared management of EU funds. Parliament should be regularly informed of progress in the financial control chapter of the accession negotiations. Turning to the question of improving audit quality, which had been mentioned in the discharge resolution, the report said that the Commission's reply was somewhat unsatisfactory. It urged the Commission to explain the principles governing the conduct and follow-up of audits. Other issues taken up in the report included a call for the disciplinary procedure to be reformed as soon as possible, with a greater emphasis on the external element, and for a more effective system of debt recovery.