Specific research programme RDT: stimulation of the training and mobility of researchers (1994-1998)

1994/0094(CNS) - 19/07/2001

PURPOSE: An audit of the training and mobility of researchers under the fourth framework programme.
CONTENT: The Court of Auditors assessment of the training and mobility of researchers organised under the fourth framework programme (1994-1998) found a number of shortcomings in the management and the running of the scheme. Specifically, the Report was critical of the selection of proposals and the control of contracts and its accompanying management structure. Concerning the selection of proposals the audit expressed misgivings over the allocation of proposals to evaluators where a potential conflict of interest may arise. Additionally derided is the absence of detailed records of the deliberations. It therefore advocates a system whereby no cause for conflict should arise. Thus, those evaluators short-listed to assess proposals should not cover applications from home institutes, where there is a common membership of associations, and/or to some extent, shared nationality. Further, no evaluator should be allowed to attend an evaluation where his/her organisation has submitted a proposal. The Report also recommends that the Commission should make a more thorough evaluation of the results to ensure that proposals are properly ranked. Lastly, to ensure transparency, full minutes should be taken of all meetings and the discussions behind all decisions should be produced. Concerning criticism of contracts and management control, the Report recommends procedures should be put in place to ensure participants in research networks adhere to the eligibility criteria. In particular, Commission officials should make a point of cross-checking data to ensure that previous participants to the scheme to not re-apply. In terms of the Marie Curie Fellowships, the Court suggest that it be retained in the department responsible for the TMR programme. Further, should the Commission decide to continue funding the Marie Curie Fellowship then it should ensure that adequate management controls have been put in place as well as providing the Association with strong guidance on how to spend the money. Where euroconferences, practical training course and summer schools are to be used, the audit advocates a greater use of documentation from the contractor to ensure that the criteria for those hosting the events have been met. Lastly, in terms of the "Improving Human Potential" (IHP) programme the audit suggest the Commission should take steps to ensure on-the-spot audits are carried out as soon as possible.