1996 discharge: EC general budget

1997/2075(DEC) - 31/03/1998 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mr James ELLES (EPP, UK) on the discharge for the 1996 budget, Parliament decided to postpone its decision on the discharge to 15 September 1998 when the Commission will have taken all the steps needed to remove the obstacles outlined in the resolution. Parliament justified its refusal to grant a discharge for a series of reasons, including: - the non-execution of the recommendations of Parliament's Committee of Inquiry into the Transit System, especially regarding the computerised control system; - the lack of democratic accountability in the fight against fraud inside the European Institutions (Parliament referred in particular to the alleged frauds and irregularities in the tourism sector and the fraud associated with the implementation of the MED programmes and on which Parliament requested clarification before 31 July 1998). Parliament called in particular for a strengthening of the role of UCLAF, the Commission's internal anti-fraud unit; - the lack of coherence and sound financial management which led to a low level of execution of foreign policy programmes: . Bosnia-Herzegovina: Parliament called for a small parliamentary delegation to carry out on-the-spot inspections during summer 1998. It also suggested in the interests of effectiveness to concentrate on- the-spot decision-making powers in Sarajevo in the hands of a Director-General, . PHARE: Parliament called for increased local responsibility for activities implemented in the beneficiary countries, . TACIS: this programme, which was heavily criticized, should increase its degree of success with regard to nuclear aspects in Ukraine, . MED: Parliament called for the full recovery of amounts incorrectly paid; - regarding the agricultural sector, the delay in the implementation of the integrated control system and the large number of recommendations from the BSE committee still not implemented; - the lack of any precise information as to the results of the proposed measures for job creation in SMEs through the Structural Funds (Parliament was concerned in particular by the Court of Auditors' revelation that while Funds have been made available in the Community budget for a virtually unmanageable number of measures to promote SMEs, only very few of the appropriations have been utilized). Lastly, Parliament called on the Commission to redefine its staff policy by submitting realistic estimates of its needs to the budgetary authority in the light of policy priorities and the requirements of enlargement.