Improvement of the Institutions without amending the Treaty

1998/2098(INI) - 15/04/1999 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The Parliament adopted a resolution, drafted by Mr. F. HERMAN (EPP, B) concerning improvements in the functioning of the institutions. It welcomes the internal management reviews that have been initiated within the Commission, but considers that the reform process needs to be reinforced and accelerated. It makes a number of recommendations with regard to the reduction and rationalisation of Commission portfolios and better co-ordination of the Commission's work. It emphasises the continued improtance of collective responsibility for the general political actions of the Commission, but believes that this should not exempt individual Commissioners from the consequences not only of any personal misconduct, but also of any incompetent or negligent management of their own areas of responsibility. It calls for ability and relevant experience to play a greater role in the appointments process and for cabinets to have no more than six members, and with only one or at most two members from outside the Commission. It also believes that cabinet members from outside the Commission should be put on the same footing as normal applicants to the Commission before moving on elsewhere within the Commission and that those who are Commission officials should have a normal career progression when leaving the cabinet, and should not be able to jump more than one grade. It considers that the widespread use of temporary staff on secondment or leave from national civil services or from industry should be very carefully monitored to ensure that the advantages of flexibility and introduction of new expertise outweigh the risks of conflict between the Commission requirement of independence and national and sectoral interests. Given the Commission's reliance on outside consultants and agents, it recommends the establishment of more appropriate and transparent mechanisms for choosing and supervising such persons. It points out that the proliferation of decentralised EU agencies and bodies may give rise to fragmentation and difficulties of ensuring accountability to the centre and calls for the establishment of a coherent overall institutional framework and more consistent rules on accounting obligations to the EP. In terms of its own workings, the EP believes that a number of measures should be taken. There needs to be greater concentration on core tasks and it calls for more attention to be devoted to scrutinising and control of Community policy programme implementation and management. It also proposes that voting procedures be streamlined. It calls for the Bureau's new decision on staff mobility to be complemented by greater flexibility between Parliament's directorates-general, so that staff working in its committees, research and information services work more closely together in the future. It also calls for ability and expertise to be given more emphasis in future staff promotions than political or nationality considerations. It also called for various improvements to be made in terms of public presentation of its activities (better equipped and more accessible visitors' centre, improved Website, etc.). The EP also believes that inter-institutional co-operation needs to be steeped up not only in the field of information policy, but also in a number of functional areas such as data bases, computer policy, the electronic transmission of EU documents, and buildings policy. It considers that the annual legislative programme should become a more important instrument of inter-institutional co-operation and for enhanced co-operation between the EP and the Commission in the field of commitology in order to ensure more satisfactory improvement of existing agreements and to obtain a common numbering system for implementing measures transmitted by the Commission to the Parliament and also more direct transmission of texts.