MED programmes. Special report 1/96 Court of Auditors

1996/2108(COS) - 17/07/1997 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mr Juan Manuel FABRA VALLES (PPE, E) on Court of Auditors Special report No 1/96 on the MED programmes, the European Parliament observed that, although the Commission and its services had gone to considerable lengths to follow the Court of Auditor's special report through to its logical conclusions (reorganization of Directorate-General IB, revision of management methods, approval of four contract models, etc.), there had been a lack of coherence and coordination in decisive areas. Parliament drew attention to regulatory and organizational shortcomings on the part of the Commission, and called on it to forward to the Member States concerned all the details of the case for consideration of any possible legal implications. The Commission was also called upon to bring any disciplinary action against the Community officials responsible which might prove necessary in the light of the administrative inquiry which had been initiated, and asked the Commission to inform it immediately of the measures adopted. Parliament deplored the fact that when the Commission had decided to halt the current decentralized cooperation programmes, it did not immediately investigate all the contracts concluded by the companies concerned. It called on the Commission, accordingly, to instruct its Financial Control to re-examine systematically all contracts concluded directly or indirectly with the technical assistance bureaux involved with the decentralized Mediterranean programmes. It called on the Commission to draw up a proposal with a view to extending to this sector the regulation establishing a black list of persons and firms to be ineligible for Community funding. It also called for standardization of the rules governing Commission contracts with external consultants and for clauses prohibiting situations characterized by a conflict of interests and interference, and administrative penalties. Parliament called for the anti-fraud unit (UCLAF) to become independent, pending the establishment of a European court to try fraud and corruption cases involving the Community budget. It would liaise with national courts and inform them of the facts concerning offences discovered in the course of its inquiries. In parallel, and subject to certain conditions, particularly regarding revision of the management system, Parliament approved resumption of 75 projects under the MED programmes. The others were to remain blocked until the contract verification procedure had been completed. Before any extension of the contracts for longer than two years, an interim report must be submitted to Parliament. Lastly, Parliament called on the Commission: - to consider, within the framework of the SEM 2000 programme, measures designed to avoid any conflict of interests between the external consultancies and applicants for funding, and to prevent those consultancies from having any influence on the selection of contractors, - to submit those measures to it within six months in a report including a list of the external consultancies currently working on contract for the Commission. Finally, it pointed out to the Commission that it would be looking at the matter again in the context of the discharge procedure.