

Adjustment of the system of the control of own resources following establishment of the internal market

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The European Parliament approved the final own initiative report by Mr Otto BARDONG (PPE, D) on the control of own resources. In his report, Mr BARDONG points out that Community own resources totaled 66,858 million ecus in 1993. They are divided into four categories: traditional own resources (agricultural and sugar levies and customs duty), VAT resources, a GDP-based financial contribution and miscellaneous receipts. In the basket of receipts, VAT accounted for 53.5% in 1993, GDP-based resources accounted for 26.4% and customs duty accounted for 18.1%. In his report, Mr BARDONG deplores the lack of harmonization in controls after customs clearance, disparities in the powers of the respective administrations, the lack of a proper computerized system with data on external and intra-Community trade, the disappointing results in the recovery of duty defrauded or evaded and the inadequacy of the guarantee mechanisms put in place. He highlights the risk of the collapse of the Community transit procedure for which, he points out, the Commission has taken insufficient action to combat fraud. Finally, he deplores the fact that certain Member States continue to include customs duty in their budgetary receipts (despite the fact that they belong exclusively to the Community) and certain national parliaments have voted on VAT and GDP contribution levels despite the fact that they have no authority to do so. The lacunae and weaknesses highlighted have resulted in a worrying increase in fraudulent practices which seriously damage the financial interests of the Community. In order to remedy this situation, the Committee on Budgetary Control calls on the Commission in its draft resolution to propose a range of measures to: - harmonize controls at the Union's external borders both quantitatively (by harmonizing the rates of controls) and qualitatively (by generalizing targeting or risk analysis techniques); - finalize a real policy for ex-post controls on transnational enterprises; - strengthen partnership between the Member States with a view to introducing mutual assistance procedures in order to make it easier to detect and recover subsidy dues defrauded or collected in error; - guarantee supervision of national controls; - study the disparities between the powers of customs officials with a view to harmonization; - develop the computing tool with a view to: * enabling control services to access information on Community receipts and expenditure contained in the Member States' databases; * computerizing the Community transit procedure and setting realistic guarantee ceilings; * ensuring that data collected from the Member States are integrated into a single database; - strengthen its powers to verify the collection of VAT; - improve and harmonize the GDP bases and ensure that they are controlled. Finally, the European Parliament called on the Commission to present proposals by 1999 to adapt the mechanism granting the United Kingdom a reduction in VAT payments in order to correct apparent budgetary imbalances.