2000 discharge: follow-up on the European Parliament's resolution. Report

2002/2189(DEC) - 30/01/2003 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

In adopting the report by Mr John McCARTIN (EPP-ED, IRL), the European Parliament followed closely the position of the committee responsible (please refer to the summary dated 19 January 2003). The House welcomes the Commission's follow-up report and acknowledges that the Commission has had to make efforts, in a relatively short period, in order to reply to, and comment on, the questions put and the observations made by Parliament in its above-mentioned resolution concerning discharge for the 2000 financial year. Parliament considers that transparency should be the guiding principle in deciding on access to documents and it believes that certain provisions laid down in Annex III to the Framework Agreement on relations between the European Parliament and Commission are nevertheless too restrictive. It recalls that in its discharge resolutions for the financial years 1999 and 2000, it already requested that the provisions of the Framework Agreement be reviewed. On the other hand, as regards the management, the Parliament considers that the budget surplus (14% of the budget in 2000) is becoming a recurrent problem (16% of the budget in 2001) and still needs to be addressed. As regards the issue of unduly paid funds, the Parliament deplores the fact that EUR 2.245 billion have still not been recovered; takes into account the communication from the Commission of 3 December 2002 (COM(2002) 671) and expects the Commission to take the appropriate steps until the end of 2003 for the recovery of unduly paid funds; also awaits the results of the internal audit of this new system of recovery. Concerning the procedures, the Parliament recognises the complexities of the new provisions of the Structural Funds and it considers it necessary to set a timetable for the introduction of a single audit system which also involves the candidate countries, therefore it asks both the Commission and the Court of Auditors to assess regularly the existing Community Agencies on the basis of their cost-benefit ratio and their added value when compared with other alternatives. Furthermore, the Commission is asked, at the earliest possible opportunity, to add to the legal basis the explicit possibility of abolishing these Agencies. Concerned by the adulteration of agricultural products with a direct or indirect impact on the EU budget, for example in the olive oil and butter sector, Parliament finds this unacceptable and asks the Commission to employ all available scientific measures in order to combat this type of fraud; requests that the precise cost to the budget of these abuses be established and asks the Commission to set up a strategy to minimise the opportunities for fraud involving the misleading marketing of products. It draws attention to the fact that the milk quota regime, which has been in existence for 17 years, is still not being correctly applied, especially in Greece, Italy and Spain; supports the Commission's initiative to open infringement proceedings against these Member States. As regards feed and food controls, the Parliament states that it is still awaiting a proposal for a regulation from the Commission on Feed and Food Control and expects that such a proposal will not only have a positive impact on the health and confidence ofconsumers, but will also contribute to the protection of the Community's financial interests. Lastly, Parliament cannot understand why the Commission and the Council refuse to end the payment of export refunds for live animal transports despite Parliament's request, which it reiterated in resolutions in 2001 and 2002.