# 2001 discharge: European Center for the Development of Vocational Training ECDVT, Thessalonica

2002/2186(DEC) - 08/04/2003 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted the report by Freddy BLAK (EUL/NGL, DK) granting discharge to the Management Board of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP) for the financial year 2001. The Parliament also presented a series of comments in a resolution accompanying the discharge decision which aims to request the improvement of the financial management of the Centre. Firstly, concerning the budgetary implementation, the Parliament regrets that the Centre did not depreciate its fixed assets in order for the book values to reflect the real value of the goods which form part of the Centre's assets. It expects the Centre to comply with the Court's observation. It equally regrets that the Centre, despite the criticism of the Court, has kept an imprest account with too high a ceiling. The Centre is expected to be more receptive to observations made by the Court in order to avoid such criticism in the future. Parliament deplores the fact that, despite repeated criticism by the Court, the Centre has not fully respected the tendering procedures for the awarding of contracts. Parliament recalls that this is not only a violation of the principle of equal treatment but could also result in legal action against the Centre by disadvantaged tenderers. It will continue to monitor such cases and expects the Centre to proceed with its efforts towards better programming of its work in order to avoid urgencies, which have in the past resulted in non-observance of the rules for public tender procedures. Parliament notes that the Court of Auditors takes the view that the carry-over rate for operating appropriations remains too high (2,8 million) and that the Centre should pursue its efforts to increase the quality and monitoring of the planning of its activities; notes that the new Financial Regulation will provide an improved legal base for carry-overs. It welcomes however the assurance by the Centre to try and improve the quality, and to follow up the programming of its activities. As regards the follow-up to external evaluation, Parliament takes the view that the Centre should follow to a greater degree the recommendations contained in the 2001 external evaluation report in order to ensure the consistency required between the tasks assigned to it and the organisation of its financial and human resources. It expects, therefore, the Centre to respond positively to the Court of Auditors criticism in order for it to achieve a better balance between its administrative expenditure and its operating expenditure arising from its activity programme so as to remedy the inconsistencies between its tasks and the distribution of its financial and human resources. Concerning the cooperation with the European Training Foundation (ETF), Parliament notes in this respect the joint efforts undertaken by the Centre and the ETF, as they appear in the Joint Progress Report of September 2002, in implementing the framework cooperation between the two bodies during the enlargement process and the preparation of the candidate countries. It considers that in the light of the conclusions of the Copenhagen European Council a detailed analysis of the impact of the transfer of competence in respect of the accession countries from the ETF to Cedefop is needed. Parliament calls on the Commission, therefore,together with the agencies concerned, to carry out such an assessment and, if necessary, to submit proposals relating to the transfer of expertise and of human and financial resources. Parliament suggests that its committees responsible monitor the results of this cooperation in order to evaluate the possibility of further enhancing such cooperation without prejudice to solutions entailing the merger of activities where appropriate. The resolution also includes general points concerning the bodies referred to in Article 185 of the Financial Regulation. These Agencies should have more operational tasks and they could for example be entrusted with executing Community programmes in the field of education or health thereby avoiding the creation of further executive agencies by the Commission. The Commission is asked to make proposals in this respect by 30 June 2003 at the latest and before creating any further executive agencies. Parliament recalls that independent ex-ante control of the Agencies by the Financial Controller of the Commission has ceased to exist and is worried that the absence of outside ex-ante verifications of financial operations might increase the risk of irregularities and mismanagement. It invites the Court of Auditors to increase

the number of checks carried out by its auditors and the Agencies to review and modify thoroughly their procedures for implementing their budget in order to counter this risk. Equally, the Agencies are asked to bring their procedures for implementing the budget in line with the requirements of the new Framework Financial Regulation as soon as possible and by 1 July 2003 at the latest. It recalls that the Agencies shall adopt their own financial rules, which may not depart from the Framework Financial Regulation except where their specific operating needs so require and with the Commission's prior consent. The Court of Auditors is asked to give an opinion on all financial provisions adopted by the Agencies which depart from the Framework Financial Regulation. Parliament also states that non-respect of public procurement rules is not only potentially detrimental to the financial interests of the Agencies but can also be a criminal offence under the law of Member States. The Court of Auditors is asked to report at the next opportunity on whether the Community bodies duly cooperate with the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and apply the Interinstitutional Agreement of 25 May 1999 concerning internal investigations by the OLAF unreservedly. The Commission is invited, with a view to accelerating the efforts towards preparing integration of the future Member States, to make proposals to foster better functioning of these Community bodies, ensuring better value for money through a cost/ benefit analysis, and avoiding any unnecessary proliferation of agencies; such proposals may provide, for bodies entrusted with similar tasks, for the setting-up of common boards.