2000 discharge: EC general budget, section III Commission

2001/2102(DEC) - 10/04/2002 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

By adopting the report by Mr John McCartin (PPE-DE, IRL) by 442 votes to 53, with 31 abstentions, the European Parliament fully endorses the position of the Committee on Budgetary Control (see summary for 26 March 2002) and grants the Commission discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2000. In the resolution annexed to the proposal for a decision granting discharge, Parliament supports the views of its lead committee and lays special emphasis on the particularly high budget surplus of EUR 11.6 billion, or 14% of the budget. Parliament regards the volume of this surplus as a failure on the part of the Commission. Parliament also endorses the position of the lead committee on other points, such as the limited effectiveness of the Commission's administrative machinery. The Commission's regulatory procedures and the system of checks must be strengthened, and budgetary priorities, particularly those defined by Parliament, must be respected. The same applies to procedures; Parliament believes that the administrative structure of the Union should be more strongly decentralised, the more so after enlargement. Contractual management procedures in particular should be given special attention, as should the procedures for granting Community subsidies. Like its Committee on Budgetary Control, Parliament notes that the complexity of Community rules makes control difficult and asks the Commission for a substantial increase in the number of clauses imposing time limits and for studies to assess the economic impact of Community aid. In particular, it makes a number of proposals designed to improve the system of control at the national level; one of these proposals is that each Member State should designate one single national ministry as the authority responsible for monitoring progress achieved by programmes financed from the Structural Funds. As regards regularity, combating fraud and protecting the Community's financial interests, Parliament recognises that the present system has to be strengthened. This applies especially to the whole question of export refunds (see the working document produced by the Committee on Budgetary Control and annexed to the McCartin report). The same also applies to the Member States' financial corrections, which keep increasing. Parliament explicitly asks the Commission to make proposals before the next discharge so that non-respect of the criteria by the paying agencies in the Member States can be properly sanctioned, particularly by the reduction of advances. Finally, Parliament reaffirms its full and unrestricted right of access to all documents in the framework of discharge procedure and announces that it will bring an action before the Court of Justice if the Council includes any provisions in the new Financial Regulation that are designed to restrict this right.