1998 discharge: follow-up. Report

2000/2263(DEC) - 04/04/2001 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted the report by Mrs Gabriele STAUNER (EPP/ED, D) on the measures taken in light of the observations of the European Parliament in its 1998 discharge resolution. Overall, the Parliament welcomes efforts undertaken by the Commission to date to reform its financial management following the resignation of the old Commission. It reaffirms its call on the Commission to arrive at a positive statement of assurance (DAS) for the financial year 2003 at the latest. On the other hand, the House regrets that the Commission, although it has presented an action plan to improve financial management, has neither expressely committed itself to that objective nor formulated any verifiable intermediate objectives towards that goal. Therefore, the Commission is called upon to submit a phased plan before 1 October 2001 on realising that objective. Moreover, the House welcomes the Commission's proposals for recasting the Financial Regulation. It also welcomed the adoption by the Commission of detailed rules for the implementation of the Structural Funds to ensure better management and more stringent controls. In relation to the officials' financial liability, the Parliament believes that a credible and effective system of holding authorising officers to account must be put in place and considers that authorising officers' responsibility for financial irregularities should be assessed by a specialised financial irregularities committee, which would be empowered to refer cases to the disciplinary procedure under the Staff Regulations, in accordance with the recommendation made by the Committee of Independent Experts and without prejudice to the competences of OLAF. MEPs are anxious to see an independent system of financial control in place. The Parliament recalls its position, expressed in the report by José Javier POMES RUIZ (EPP/ED, E) on the White Paper on reforming the Commission (adopted in November 2000) in which it noted that the effectiveness of the reform proposed in the White Paper would be judged by, inter alia, the application of the relevant financial provisions being monitored and implemented with appropriate supervisory and sanction mechanisms. The Parliament noted with satisfaction the Commission's decision to decentralise financial control within each Directorate-General, subject to a number of conditions being met and it considers it essential that the Internal Audit Service be entrusted with the task of coordinating and supervising the internal audits carried out within Directorates-General and of ensuring and monitoring of professional independence of these internal audits. Furthermore, the Parliament wants action to be taken against former members of the Commission of current investigations being undertaken by OLAF find that any members breached the obligations of their office. Parliament is also calling for access to more confidential information that for example is provided to the Court of Auditors.