Commission's progress report on the European Anti-Fraud Office OLAF activities

2002/2237(INI) - 04/12/2003 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution based on the own-initiative report drafted by Herbert BöSCH (PES, A) on OLAF. (Please refer to the summary dated 03/11/03.) The vote was adopted with 381 votes in favour, 88 against and 18 abstentions. Parliament noted that the progress report has already been overtaken by events, because it provided no answers to serious problems in the Office's investigative activities which have now become obvious as a result of the Eurostat case. This is further proof that it was a mistake to concentrate the competences for drawing up the budget and keeping accounts and for combating fraud in the hands of one Member of the Commission, because this inevitably creates a conflict of interest. On the matter of internal investigations, Parliament came to the following conclusions on the basis of the internal investigations carried out in the European Parliament: - OLAF must inform the European Parliament if an investigation takes more than nine months. It must also contact the European Parliament at any time if parliamentary measures seem necessary to protect the rights of the parties concerned, the financial interests of the institution, or the investigation; - final reports which are forwarded to the European Parliament should also take account of which information needs to be available to whom; - the European Parliament should establish rules in collaboration with OLAF as to how final reports on internal investigations should be handled in the European Parliament. On external investigations, Parliament stressed the importance of OLAF's acting when the Member States have no opportunity to intervene or do not want to take action, e.g. in the case of direct expenditure. It asked OLAF to clarify by May 2004 how its cooperation with the Member States operates and how it could be improved (e.g. by a service platform). In particular, national authorities should take on a greater role in investigations of fraud and other illegal activities (e.g. by on-site checks), in accordance with the subsidiarity principle.