2003 discharge: EC general budget, Court of Justice

2004/2043(DEC) - 17/03/2005

EP: decision of committee responsible, 1st reading/single reading

The committee adopted the report by Alexander STUBB (EPP-ED, FI) granting discharge to the European Court of Justice (ECJ) for the 2003 financial year. In its accompanying remarks, the committee voiced concern about the lack of suitably experienced staff available to the Court to apply the new provisions of the Financial Regulation and the fact that the internal auditor could not carry out his work programme in 2003 due to a lack of staff. The Court was urged "to remedy this staff shortage without delay and within the assigned budgetary means".

Commenting on the follow-up of the 2002 discharge procedure, MEPs remained alarmed about the growing backlog of cases in 2003, despite a slight improvement indicated for 2004. They welcomed certain improvements, such as the creation of a Civil Service Tribunal (26% of the cases before the Court of First Instance) and the introduction of selective publication of ECJ judgments and orders. The ECJ was urged to set performance targets and establish action plans aimed at reducing the time-span needed to draw pending cases to a close for the years to come.

The committee welcomed the steps taken by the Court on the use of official cars for members, and recognised that "the new provisions are transparent and represent an improvement of the situation". It nevertheless felt that the private use of official cars, which the new provisions still allowed, represented "an undisclosed benefit-in-kind" which was inappropriate.

Lastly, the committee asked the ECJ to evaluate the implications of the new Financial Regulation for its administrative and judicial work in time for its review in 2005/2006.