

2003 discharge: EC general budget, Committee of the Regions

2004/2046(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 Committee of the Regions (CoR) for the 2003 financial year. In its accompanying remarks, the committee noted that the CoR did not comply with a number of rules concerning the supervisory system and controls, although some delays in implementing the financial regulation could be explained by the need to assist OLAF in an internal investigation in 2003. The CoR was urged inter alia to "systematically verify the entitlements of officials".

The committee referred to the remarks in the 2001 discharge highlighting evidence of "systemic incompetence and disregard for the essential rules of tendering procedures and financial management". It once more emphasised its support for the Internal Auditor, who drew Parliament's attention to irregularities occurring in the CoR, and "its confidence in his personal and professional integrity". MEPs also noted that the former Secretary-General of the CoR was initially granted unpaid leave and then early retirement as from September 2004 "against the express wish of the European Parliament".

The report acknowledged that, under the new Secretary-General, the CoR had made "strenuous efforts to bring its administration up to speed" and had kept Parliament informed. It noted however that the position of Internal Auditor was not occupied during the latter half of 2004 and asked to be informed about the outcome of the recruitment procedure for this post.

The committee remained concerned about the system of political control in the CoR and called on it to look into setting up a Conference of (Group) Presidents, as the political steering committee, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the Bureau (which has more than 50 members).

Lastly, the CoR was urged to evaluate the implications of the new Financial Regulation for its administrative and political work in time for its review in 2005/2006.