2003 discharge: EC general budget, Council

2004/2042(DEC) - 12/04/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted the resolution drafted by Alexander **STUBB** (EPP-ED, FI) granting discharge to the Council for the 2003 financial year. (Please see the summary of 17/03/2005).

- **Increased transparency**: Parliament welcomed the introduction in the Court of Auditors' Annual Report for 2003 of a separate section for the Council, and the enhanced exchange of information between the Council and Parliament through the informal dialogue that had taken place between the two institutions as part of the discharge procedure. These elements had helped to increase transparency with regard to discharge of the Council's budget. Parliament noted the Council's intention to provide the documentation and adopt the outstanding actions needed to comply with the requirements of the new Financial Regulation, as specified in the Court of Auditors' Annual Report, by the end of 2004. It asked the Council to submit to the European Parliament a list of problems occurring with implementation of the Financial Regulation.

- **Respecting procedures**: Parliament also noted the Court's observation that the Council's legal services were contracted without any tendering procedure, although their value exceeded the threshold above which a tendering procedure was required. It noted that the Council had initiated a tendering procedure in order to establish a framework contract for the type of legal services mentioned. Parliament stressed the importance of respecting the rules on procurement set out in the Financial Regulation. It asked the Council to make available to the discharge authority, as all other institutions had done including the European Parliament, the annual activity report referred to in Article 60(7) of the Financial Regulation of 25 June 2002.

- **CFSP expenditure**: Parliament found that greater clarity with regard to the management of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) within the Council would enhance transparency. It urged the Council separately to identify CFSP preparatory costs within its budget, as recommended by the Court of Auditors. The Commission's role in the implementation of CFSP needed to be clarified.

- **Council recommendation on the discharge**: finally, Parliament regretted that due to time constraints, it was not able to give the Council's discharge recommendation the attention it deserved, and invites the Commission to forward a proposal for modification of Article 145(1) of the Financial Regulation with regard to the timescale of the discharge procedure.