2003 discharge: European Training Foundation

2004/2058(DEC) - 12/04/2005 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by co-rapporteurs Inés AYALA SENDER (PES, ES) and Carl SCHLYTER (Greens/EFA, SE) giving discharge to the Director of the European Training Foundationin respect of the implementation of its budget for the financial year 2003. (Please see the summary of 16/03/05.)

Parliament's resolution is in two parts: the first concerns the discharge itself and the second part deals with an accompanying resolution on the management and implementation of the budget. The accompanying resolution also carries general points addressed to the Commission and the Agencies.

With regard to the Court of Auditors' observation regarding the correct presentation in the accounts of the Tempus programme, Parliament expected to be fully informed by the Foundation as to the solution to be applied concerning the way in which such funds are reflected in the Foundation's accounts for 2004.

Parliament welcomed the results of the co-operation between the Foundation and Cedefop, and expected that this would be further developed through the sharing of information and with a view to enhancing the dissemination of good practice. It regretted the absence of an equality plan and expected the Foundation not only to consider equality issues at the stage of recruitment but also to work poactively and on a long-term basis to promote gender equality. Finally, Parliament welcomed the Foundation's communication strategy commitment to informing the general public through debates and other means of communication.

Parliament went on to make some general observations common to all the agencies. The principal points may be summarized as follows:

General points addressed to the Commission and the Agencies: Parliament supported the Commission' s efforts to establish a limited number of models, at least for future 'regulatory' agencies. It took the view that the structure of current and future agencies merited in-depth consideration at inter-institutional level. Before the Commission defines the framework conditions for the use of regulatory agencies, an inter-institutional agreement should spell out common guidelines. Parliament invited the Commission to perform by the end of 2005 a cross-cutting analysis of the evaluations carried out on individual Agencies in order to:

- reach conclusions with regard to the coherence of Agency activity with EU policies in general and as regards the synergies existing or to be developed between the agencies and Commission departments and the avoidance of overlapping between them;

- make an assessment of the broader European added value of the Agencies' outputs in their respective area of activity and of the relevance and effectiveness of the Agency model in implementing or contributing to EU policies;

- determine the impact of the Agencies' actions in terms of the proximity and visibility of the EU to its citizens.

In parallel with this exercise, the Commission should present proposals for changes to be made in the existing Agencies' Constituent Acts with a view to optimising its relationship with the Agencies. Before any decision is taken to propose the creation of a new agency, the Commission must undertake a strict evaluation of the added value of the function of this agency, bearing in mind existing structures, the principles of subsidiarity, budgetary austerity and the simplification of procedures.

General points addressed to the Agencies:

Parliament wanted to receive from each of the Agencies, the report summarizing information on the audits carried out by the Internal Auditor, the recommendations made and the action taken on these recommendations in accordance with Regulation 2343/2002/EC. Agencies should also make further efforts to apply correctly the staff regulations and rules applicable to other civil servants with regard to their staff. Parliament made some remarks on the imbalance between men and women in high-grade positions in the agencies, and stated that relevant provisions on equal opportunities must be observed.

In response to the relevant observations of the Court of Auditors, the Agencies must comply fully with the budgetary principles as set out in the Financial Regulation, in particular those of unity and budgetary accuracy.

Parliament went on to encourage the Agencies to strengthen their co-operation, thus opening up opportunities for developing synergies, and avoiding duplication of work. Parliament expected to be informed regularly on this issue.

It called on the Agencies to pay special attention to procedures for the award and management of contracts, and to strengthen their internal control procedures. Parliament suggested the setting-up of specialised units entrusted with the task of advising, on the basis of risk analysis, on how best to prepare contract award procedures.

General points addressed to the European Court of Auditors and the Agencies:

Parliament asked Court of Auditors and the Agencies to strengthen their co-operation in order to enhance the procedures and technical tools to improve the sound management of all the budgetary and finance issues. They should do this in order to establish a methodology that prepares the ground for a positive budget discharge from the start of the process.