

2005 discharge: EC general budget, section III, Commission

2006/2070(DEC) - 26/03/2007

The committee adopted the report by Salvador GARRIGA POLLEDO (EPP-ED, ES) recommending that Parliament should grant discharge to the Commission for its 2005 budget.

In its accompanying remarks, the committee relaunched the idea, first mooted in the 2003 discharge procedure, of "national declarations at an appropriate political level", which would provide an assurance from Member States that effective auditing systems for Community spending exist on their territory. These national declarations could be multiple, so as to reflect the realities of the Member States' differing political systems. They would also help to "improve the quality of the relevant national supervisory and control systems".

The Commission was therefore urged to submit to the Council a proposal for a national management declaration covering all Community funds under shared management, based on sub-declarations by the various national bodies responsible for the management of expenditure, with, if possible, the participation of national audit bodies.

The report pointed out that national statements could make a very useful contribution to the Community's auditing arrangements, given that, in very large areas of Community budget management (CAP spending that is not subject to the IACS integrated administration and control system, structural funds, internal policies, external actions, SAPARD programme), the Court of Auditors had found that the effectiveness of supervisory and control systems should be improved. The committee noted that these deficiencies prevented a positive statement of assurance (DAS) being given in those areas.

The report also expressed "grave concern" at the large number of errors detected by the Court of Auditors in transactions at final beneficiary level. It urged the Commission to further improve its effective supervision of controls delegated to Member States. Should Member States' control systems still prove insufficient, the Commission should impose clear deadlines and apply sanctions where those deadlines are not met.

The committee said that effective recovery rate could also be improved, but only via the Member States' enforcement agencies. An improvement could be achieved by revealing the identities of debtors who have been found guilty by the courts but are unwilling to make payment. Improved recovery would also boost the European institutions' credibility.

Amongst its other recommendations, the committee said that the Commission should simplify the rules and apply existing legislation on suspension of payments where necessary and act when Member States fail to comply with basic requirements.

With regard to transparency, the report welcomed the Commission's European Transparency Initiative but also called on the Commission to do everything in its power to persuade Member States to allow the public access to information - via a website - on projects and the beneficiaries of various Community shared-management funds.

Lastly, the Commission was asked to publish information on the expert groups upon which it calls in its work, including the names and fields of expertise of the groups' members.

