

European Parliament Resolution on the financial management of the Commission (14 January 1999)

Caption: European Parliament Resolution of 14 January 1999 on improving the financial management of the Commission.

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European Parliament Resolution on improving the financial management of the Commission (14 January 1999)

B4-0065, 0109 and 0110/99

The European Parliament,

— having regard to the Commission's statements to Parliament of 14 December 1998 (general discharge 1996) and 11 January 1999,

— having regard to its report on the general discharge 1996 (A4-0502/98) and its decision thereon ⁽¹⁾,

A. recalling that the explicit provisions in the Treaty of Amsterdam require the Commission to ensure greater openness *vis-à-vis* citizens,

1. Calls for a committee of independent experts to be convened under the auspices of the Parliament and the Commission with a mandate to examine the way in which the Commission detects and deals with fraud, mismanagement and nepotism, including a fundamental review of Commission practices in the awarding of all financial contracts, to report by 15 March 1999 on their assessment in the first instance on the College of Commissioners;

2. Underlines the Commission's belated recognition of the crisis facing it regarding the financial management of the Community budget and its lack of transparency and accountability;

3. Calls on the Commission to throw full and unrestricted light on supposed cases of fraud; expects, if responsibility is proved at any level whatsoever, that it will act immediately, as its President has undertaken to do, to take whatever measures may be necessary, and calls for Articles 159 and 160 of the EC Treaty to be applied to that effect;

4. Underlines the unique constitutional situation of the Commission and its need for democratic legitimacy and accountability; believes that its remote situation from European citizens demands a heightened commitment to transparency, and accountability to the democratic parliament in every aspect of its day-to-day administration;

5. Draws attention to the statements made in January 1995 by the President of the Commission, who, in his investiture speech, advocated the introduction of a genuine culture of financial management;

6. Refuses to accept that culpability for fraud, nepotism or mismanagement for Commissioners or other individuals be determined by media rumour and speculation, and urges that all press allegations be formally investigated through appropriate administrative and judicial procedures;

7. Looks forward to the report that the President of the Commission is preparing for the Cologne summit on the internal reform of the Commission and plans to hold a major debate in its May 1999 part-session on this report and the Commission's set of specific proposals to Parliament;

8. Is aware that a review of the European Institutions' staff establishment plans will be necessary, in particular for accomplishing the new tasks now facing the European Union: implementing Agenda 2000, enlarging the Union to include the applicant countries, strengthening transparency, combating fraud, etc.; considers, in that connection, that the zero-growth limit to the Institutions' establishment plans laid down by the Budget Authority must immediately be submitted to an objective reappraisal;

9. Calls for concrete proposals to achieve a far-reaching reform of the administrative culture of the Commission; demands that, by no later than 15 March 1999, the Commission submit to Parliament a set of detailed proposals, including the mechanisms by which Parliament's active control shall be ensured, together with a precise timetable, to:

- implement the proposal by the President of the European Council that a high-level group of representatives of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission be set up to consider and agree the proposals for the urgent establishment of a new anti-fraud agency to be run independently of the Commission's political control;
 - publish the full text of the Declaration of Interests by all Commissioners immediately, to be updated annually;
 - forward to Parliament the three codes of conduct concerning the work of the Commissioners, relations between them, their offices and their staff and the principles applicable to officials, to include the issue of professional involvement of relatives and personal acquaintances;
 - establish a formal agreement on confidential procedures (taking full account of all sub-judice issues) to facilitate Parliament's right to any necessary information from the Commission to inform the discharge procedure and other aspects of management and administrative accountability and take forward an interinstitutional agreement to formalise and widen these arrangements; give consideration to the inclusion of this matter in the reform of the Financial Regulation;
 - reform the Staff Regulations to ensure swift and appropriate disciplinary action, including dismissal, where fraud, or serious negligence of duties leading to mismanagement, is proved;
10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council and the Court of Auditors.

(¹) Minutes of 17.12.1998, Part I, Item 7.