


Procedure file

Basic information		
DEC - Discharge procedure	2000/2263(DEC)	Procedure completed
1998 discharge: follow-up. Report		
Subject 8.70.03.07 Previous discharges		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	CONT Budgetary Control	PPE-DE STAUNER Gabriele	05/12/2000
Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	Economic and Financial Affairs ECOFIN	2335	12/03/2001
European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	Budget		

Key events			
27/10/2000	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(2000)0558	Summary
13/11/2000	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
12/03/2001	Debate in Council	2335	Summary
27/03/2001	Vote in committee		Summary
27/03/2001	Committee report tabled for plenary	A5-0112/2001	
03/04/2001	Debate in Parliament		
04/04/2001	Decision by Parliament	T5-0176/2001	Summary
04/04/2001	End of procedure in Parliament		
24/01/2002	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2000/2263(DEC)
Procedure type	DEC - Discharge procedure
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 100

Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	CONT/5/13934

Documentation gateway					
Non-legislative basic document		COM(2000)0558	27/10/2000	EC	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A5-0112/2001	27/03/2001	EP	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T5-0176/2001 OJ C 021 24.01.2002, p. 0130-0193 E	04/04/2001	EP	Summary

1998 discharge: follow-up. Report

PURPOSE: to present a follow-up report from the Commission on the 1998 financial year. **CONTENT:** The objective of the Commission's follow-up report is to set out the measures it has taken in response to the observations accompanying the decisions giving discharge and other observations by the European Parliament concerning the implementation of expenditure, and to the comments accompanying the recommendations on discharge adopted by the Council. The report is divided into several parts. Part One of this report is addressed to the Council, following its recommendation with a view to the European Parliament's vote on discharge. The aim here is to set out the measures it has taken in response to the observations by the European Parliament concerning the implementation of expenditure, and to the comments accompanying the recommendations on discharge adopted by the Council. In addition, there are two annexes. The first annex, addressed to the Council, is a response to its Recommendation with a view to the European Parliament's vote on discharge. It has been drafted against the general background of the implementation of Agenda 2000 and the reforms at the Commission and therefore places special emphasis on measures already taken and projects under consideration. Also, for the first time, the report includes a Commission Action Plan, which has been welcomed by the Council. The second annex of the report sets out the Member States' replies to the observations in the Court of Auditors' annual report for 1998, in accordance with Article 274 of the Treaty, as amended by the Amsterdam Treaty. The quality of these replies varies. One factor detracting from their quality is that they generally relate to specific points and do not cover all of the Court's observations. Thus, certain Member States have failed to reply to observations on structural measures or fraud prevention. In some cases, the Member States contest the Court's remarks.?

1998 discharge: follow-up. Report

The Council takes note of the Commission's report on the actions undertaken in response to the comments of the Council on the discharge procedure in 1998. In general, the Council is aware of the fact that the process of overall reform which the Commission has been undertaking since September 1999 will have effects on a progressive basis. In this respect, it underlines the usefulness of a detailed follow-up by the Council of the different sectoral measures taken, most notably in the present follow-up. The Council takes note of the Commission's presentation of 19 October 2000 which proposed an altered financial regulation. In anticipation of the implementation of this regulation, the Council considers it imperative that the Commission continue its reform. In particular, in relation to the follow-up to the discharge for the implementation of the 1998 budget, the Council made some comments in relation to the following sectors: own resources, Common Agricultural Policy, structural measures, internal policies and external actions, administrative expenditure, financial instruments and banking activities.?

1998 discharge: follow-up. Report

The committee adopted the report by Gabriele STAUNER (EPP-ED, D) on the measures taken in the light of the observations of the European Parliament in its 1998 discharge resolution. The report recalled that the Commission had been asked to obtain a positive Statement of Assurance from the Court of Auditors for the 2003 financial year at the latest and regretted that it had not expressly committed itself to achieving that objective - by substantially reducing the error rate - nor formulated any verifiable intermediate objectives towards that goal. The Commission was therefore asked to submit a "phased plan" by 1 October 2001 for reaching this goal. The report said that the Commission's proposals for recasting the Financial Regulation were a step in the right direction. It welcomed the adoption by the Commission of detailed rules for the implementation of the Structural Funds to ensure better management and more stringent controls. It also approved the Commission's proposals on reform of the disciplinary procedure, in particular the involvement in the procedure of an independent assessor. The committee welcomed the decentralisation of financial control within each directorate-general and also underlined the importance of coordinating internal audits, which would be a responsibility of the Internal Audit Service. It also welcomed the announcement by the Commission that an administrative enquiry had been set in train to clarify the circumstances which had led to an acquaintance of a former Commissioner being given contracts as a special adviser. However, it deplored the fact that no action had been taken against those who had prepared, authorised and signed contracts with another special adviser to the same former Commissioner (this case having already been the subject of an investigation by OLAF). Lastly, the committee regretted that, even after the conclusion of the Parliament/Commission framework agreement on the provision of information to Parliament, the Commission was not forwarding confidential information in a way that would allow Parliament to meet in full its verification obligations under the discharge procedure. The report restated Parliament's demand to be given as much access to confidential documents and information as the Court of Auditors. ?

1998 discharge: follow-up. Report

The European Parliament adopted the report by Mrs Gabriele STAUNER (EPP/ED, D) on the measures taken in light of the observations of the European Parliament in its 1998 discharge resolution. Overall, the Parliament welcomes efforts undertaken by the Commission to date to reform its financial management following the resignation of the old Commission. It reaffirms its call on the Commission to arrive at a positive statement of assurance (DAS) for the financial year 2003 at the latest. On the other hand, the House regrets that the Commission, although it has presented an action plan to improve financial management, has neither expressly committed itself to that objective nor formulated any verifiable intermediate objectives towards that goal. Therefore, the Commission is called upon to submit a phased plan before 1 October 2001 on realising that objective. Moreover, the House welcomes the Commission's proposals for recasting the Financial Regulation. It also welcomed the adoption by the Commission of detailed rules for the implementation of the Structural Funds to ensure better management and more stringent controls. In relation to the officials' financial liability, the Parliament believes that a credible and effective system of holding authorising officers to account must be put in place and considers that authorising officers' responsibility for financial irregularities should be assessed by a specialised financial irregularities committee, which would be empowered to refer cases to the disciplinary procedure under the Staff Regulations, in accordance with the recommendation made by the Committee of Independent Experts and without prejudice to the competences of OLAF. MEPs are anxious to see an independent system of financial control in place. The Parliament recalls its position, expressed in the report by José Javier POMES RUIZ (EPP/ED, E) on the White Paper on reforming the Commission (adopted in November 2000) in which it noted that the effectiveness of the reform proposed in the White Paper would be judged by, inter alia, the application of the relevant financial provisions being monitored and implemented with appropriate supervisory and sanction mechanisms. The Parliament noted with satisfaction the Commission's decision to decentralise financial control within each Directorate-General, subject to a number of conditions being met and it considers it essential that the Internal Audit Service be entrusted with the task of coordinating and supervising the internal audits carried out within Directorates-General and of ensuring and monitoring of professional independence of these internal audits. Furthermore, the Parliament wants action to be taken against former members of the Commission of current investigations being undertaken by OLAF find that any members breached the obligations of their office. Parliament is also calling for access to more confidential information that for example is provided to the Court of Auditors. ?