

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

1999



2004

Session document

20 April 2004

B5-0220/2004

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to the Commission statement

pursuant to Rule 37(2) of the Rules of Procedure

by Jan Mulder and Ole Sørensen

on behalf of the ELDR Group

on Eurostat

European Parliament resolution on Eurostat

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its report on OLAF activities (Bösch report) of 4 December 2003, its report on the 2001 discharge follow-up (Casaca report) of 29 January 2004 and its report on the 2002 Commission discharge (Bayona report) of 21 April 2004,
 - having regard to Rule 37(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas it highlighted a number of concerns on financial management at Eurostat in its April 2003 discharge resolution on the financial year 2001,
- B. whereas, as a result of Parliament's insistence and several press reports in the Spring of 2003, the Commission launched an internal investigation into Eurostat, the results of which were communicated to Parliament on 8 July, together with a number of emergency measures, including the suspension of contracts and senior management pending further examination,
- C. whereas three parallel investigations were launched by an internal Commission task force, the Internal Audit Service and OLAF, which were submitted to Parliament at the end of October 2003,
- D. whereas President Prodi announced an action plan to Parliament in December 2003 in the context of the annual debate on the Commission's legislative programme, which was further detailed by Commissioner Solbes in February 2004,
- E. whereas OLAF has so far concluded a number of investigations into specific aspects of the Eurostat case and forwarded some files to public prosecutors in Luxembourg and France, whilst several dossiers still remain under examination,
1. Recalls the conclusions and recommendations contained in the Casaca report of 29 January 2004 dealing principally with the follow-up to the Eurostat affair, and in particular paragraphs 16, 25, 32 and 46 thereof on the positive role of whistleblowers in raising concerns, the existence of internal audit reports detailing irregular financial practices and the poor communication and treatment of such information within and across Commission departments resulting in the problem remaining unaddressed for several years;
 2. Points in particular to the issues of political responsibility that this raises in matters of financial and managerial governance and the weaknesses of the control environment in some departments; believes that the revised code of conduct for Commissioners and their departments should enshrine the principle of individual political responsibility for portfolios;

3. Recognises that the problems originated prior to 1999, but maintains that action to identify and remedy the situation was not taken swiftly enough by the present Commission; reiterates its belief that Commissioners must have a more direct and proactive role in overseeing the work of their departments and taking responsibility for the failings as much as for the successes; intends therefore to hold the future Commission to account for its omissions as well as its actions;
4. Welcomes the Action Plan for the restructuring and reorientation of Eurostat, including cancellation of all contracts with parties involved, improved training in financial management, the reduction of dependency on external contractors, the free publication of statistics via its internet site and reinforced collaboration with national statistical bodies; urges the Commission, in addition, to address the situation of the small sub-contracting firms unintentionally caught up in the affair;
5. Underlines the importance of a fully-functioning and independent anti-fraud body for handling complex and sensitive investigations; reiterates its position that OLAF must have institutional independence from the Commission and be accompanied by a body providing proper legal oversight of its operations and ensuring confidentiality and protection of those under investigation;
6. Admits that the Eurostat affair represents a serious set-back for public appreciation of the Commission's administrative reform process; recognises, nevertheless, that all of the specific actions from the March 2000 White Paper have been approved; urges the Commission to ensure full and thorough implementation throughout its services, agencies and satellite bodies so that similar circumstances to that of Eurostat can never be repeated;
7. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council and the Court of Auditors.