2002 discharge: EC general budget, European Parliament

2003/2211(DEC) - 17/03/2004

The committee adopted the report by Michiel VAN HULTEN (PES, NL) proposing tha Parliament grant discharge to its secretary-general for the execution of the EP budget in 2002. MEPs made a number of recommendations in the accompanying resolution, as follows: - Parliament's Bureau should bring the rules governing the utilisation of money intended to cover the expenditure by political groups more closely into line with the provisions of the Financial Regulation. Any derogations from the Financial Regulation should be based on sound legal and practical considerations. MEPs also called for accountability to be tightened up in cases where Parliament's political authorities take decisions with significant financial consequences; - as regards MEPs' allowances, the committee regretted the failure by the Council to approve a Statute for Members, but said this did not relieve Parliament of its responsibility for ensuring that EU funds are spent in a honest and transparent manner. It referred to the recommendations made by the Court of Auditors that there should be no difference between the travel expenses paid out by Parliament and actual costs incurred by a Member. At the same time, the Bureau should devise a system that would be fair to members who are paid less than the average salaries of MEPs from the current 15 Member States; - the report noted that the annual cost to the Parliament of maintaining three places of work (Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg) amounted to EUR 185 million, which could go up to EUR 203 million after enlargement. MEPs therefore advocated amending the EU Treaty so that Parliament and its Members can themselves decide where the seat of Parliament should be. They instructed Parliament's President to convey this message to the intergovernmental conference which is negotiating on the constitutional treaty. Given that the vast majority of parliamentary activity already takes place in Brussels, MEPs said that the most logical location for a single seat would be Brussels; - lastly, the committee called on Parliament's administration and the College of Quaestors to institute a ban on smoking throughout the public spaces in Parliament's buildings with effect from 1 May 2004.