1998 discharge: ECSC budget

2000/2077(DEC) - 13/04/2000 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted its decision on granting discharge to the Commission in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Coal and Steel Community for the 1998 financial year. It also adopted a decision closing the accouns in respect of the implementation of the ECSC's budget for the 1998 financial year. Parliament's rapporteur was Mr. Bashir KHANBAI (EPP/ED, UK). The Parliament proposes granting discharge to the Commission in respect of management of the ECSC for the 1998 financial year, but requires the following report to be submitted before 15/08/2000: - a report by OLAF on the follow-up to allegations of fraud communicated in November 1998 to the Commission and transmitted to the Guardia di Finanza in Italy in 1999, - an evaluation report by the Commission on buildings acquired with ECSC funds, including criteria used and explanations as to why and buildings were acquired and disposed of, - an evaluation report by the Commission on loans granted to officials from ECSC funds, including criteria use and explanations as to who decided on the granting of the loans and the category and nationality of officials who benefitted from loans. The Parliament expressed its concern that the Court of Auditors has concluded, in its special report on the management and control of interest rate subsidies by the Commission, that subsidies had almost no real impact on the creation of jobs under programmes launched under Art. 56 of the ECSC Treaty. It calls on the Commission, before the expiry of the ECSC Treaty in 2002, to appraise the impact of the ECSC in meeting the objectives of economic expansion, growth of employment and a rising standard of living laid down in the Treaty; it also notes that the Commission, in accordance with the ECSC Treaty, has individualised the social aid measures and research support measures. The EP calls on the Commission to assure it that steps have been taken to raise the solvency ratio from the level of 32.8% on 31/12/1998 to the level of 100% before 23/07/2002. It notes the strength of the ECSC's balance sheet which stood at EUR 5.027 billion at the end of 1998, but is concerned by the management of loans and the effective use of liquid assets. Given that revenues from outstanding reserves will be used for research after the expiry of the ECSC Treaty, there is a need to establish effective systems to monitor the quality of projects and contracts in the area of coal and steel with a view to the activities of the future research fund. Parliament calls on the Commission to present an independent report evaluating the ECSC's research activities with a view to the continuation of these activities after the expiry of the ECSC Treaty, using the ECSC's accumulated reserves. The Commission is called upon to publish criteria against which research projects in the coal and steel area are selected, monitored and appraised. The Parliament also calls for greater coordination between the various Directorates-General jointly managing the operating budget of the ECSC and calls for a rationalisation of the various services which will be responsible for the management of funds upon expiry of theTreaty. Lastly, parliament regrets the absence of a full reply from the Commission to the recommednations contained in its resolution of May 1999 on the discharge in respeect of the 1997 financial year, and calls on the Commission to take appropriate and vigorous measures to follow these recommendations within the shortest possible time.