2000 discharge: ECSC budget

2001/2101(DEC) - 10/04/2002 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament approved the report by Esko SEPPÄNEN (EUG/NGL, FIN) which grants the Commission a discharge in respect of the management of the budget of the ECSC for the year 2000. (Please refer to the summary dated 19 March 2002). In its resolution attached to the Parliament's opinion, the Parliament makes a certain number of observations. Firstly, the Parliament welcomes the progress made in winding up the ECSC. The ECSC Treaty expires on 23 July 2002 and its assets of more than EUR 1 billion will be absorbed by the EU's main budget with the interest going towards continuing support for research related to the coal and steel industries. Moreover, Parliament notes the forecasts of expenditure in 2000 for rehabilitation aid made on the basis of estimates provided by Member States overstated actual expenditure by 46% and that the resultant surplus has, together with the cancellation of commitments, contributed to a further improvement in the solvency ratio. The Parliament also notes that 100% of those loans outstanding after 23 July 2002 which are not guaranteed by the government of a Member State will be covered by the ECSC reserves and acknowledges the strategy of prudent financial management of the ECSC up to the expiry of the Treaty adopted by the Commission. The Commission is urged to begin negotiations with candidate countries on the conditions of their participation in the new research fund as soon as the latter has been established, and asks the Commission to inform it of progress in these negotiations. Parliament asks the Commission to explain the delays in improving the accounts relating to loans to officials, with particular reference to the presentation of the missing reports promised for the end of the year 2001. Parliament welcomes the positive assessment by the Court of Auditors of the Commission's management of the ECSC budget in the financial year 2000 and the introduction by the Commission of a performance measurement system which has revealed an average rate of yield on liquid assets of 4.72% for the financial year 2000. Parliament considers, however, that this rate of return should be accompanied by a benchmark rate of return for subsequent financial years if a meaningful assessment is to be made by the auditors. Lastly, it asks the Commission, therefore, to submit to Parliament and Council a proposal regarding investment guidelines and a target rate of return on financial assets under its management, in particular those assets currently managed for the ECSC but which will become the revenue source for the proposed Research Fund for Coal and Steel.