2002 discharge: ECSC budget

2003/2218(DEC) - 21/04/2004 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted the report by Heide RüHLE (Greens/EFA, D) and has given discharge to the Commission for the financial management of the ECSC for the financial year ended 23 July 2002. In an accompanying resolution, Parliament acknowledges the achievements of all those who instituted and shaped the European Coal and Steel Community and who in so doing have a made a major contribution to the peaceful unification of Europe. Parliament calls, therefore, on the Commission, as it has done in previous years, to publish in the official languages an overview suitable for the general public of the work undertaken by the ECSC since it was established and acknowledges that the Commission has made a start on groundwork in this connection which must however promptly be taken further. Overall, Parliament welcomes the progress made in connection with the cessation of ECSC activities. The Parliament urges the Commission, as it has already done in previous years, to carry out without delay an overall assessment of research originally funded by the ECSC, in particular an assessment of the coal research programme and of the criteria proposed for the selection of new coal research projects, as has already been done for the steel sector and regards such assessments as an important basis for the activities of the new Research Fund for Coal and Steel. It is noted that, over the last 15 years, the ECSC has disbursed some EUR 800 million to firms and institutes for applied research in the steel sector alone without, as a rule, and contrary to what is expressly provided for in ECSC research contracts, receiving its contractual share of proceeds from the patents this has made possible. It calls on the Commission to enforce its legal claim to its share of proceeds from research funding by means of a registration procedure for patents and other suitable measures. In addition, Parliament acknowledges a measure of progress in overcoming the security problems affecting the IT system used for ECSC research management; expects the Commission, however, to comply immediately with all the Court of Auditors" and external auditors" observations on the reliability of the IT system. Parliament notes that all the loans outstanding after 23 July 2002 which are not covered by guarantees from a Member State are covered in full by the ECSC reserves and acknowledges the strategy adopted by the Commission for prudent financial management of the ECSC, and the "ECSC in liquidation". Progress made in reducing administrative costs reported in the document entitled "Expiry of the ECSC Treaty: Impact on Administrative Costs of the Commission (submitted to the Committee on Budgetary Control by DG BUDG on 30 January 2004) has been noted. Parliament calls on the Commission to inform Parliament at regular intervals of the outcome of its Annual Policy Strategy with regard to redeployment of staff members involved in administering the "ECSC in liquidation". Parliament welcomes the progress made in transferring the ECSC Consultative Committee's acquired knowledge to the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and, in particular, the fact that the EESC'S new Consultative Commission on Industrial Change (CCIC), which comprises members of the ESC and delegates from the professional organisations representing the coal and steel sectorand related sectors, was established on 24 October 2002 and held its inaugural meeting on 28 November 2002. It invites the CCIC to publish the findings of its deliberations on a regular basis in the official languages. It welcomes the successful conclusion of the negotiations with the accession countries on the conditions for their participation in the new Research Fund for Coal and Steel, whereby the payment of their contributions, determined in accordance with the size of their mineral resources, will be staggered to take account of their respective economic situations, and calls on the Commission to give it regular progress reports on the implementation of the decisions taken as a result of those negotiations. Parliament calls on the Commission to continue to conduct a regular review of all outstanding dormant commitments and to cancel only amounts in respect of which it is unlikely that there will be any movement in the future. Parliament notes that the financial statements for the ECSC in liquidation as at 31 December 2002 were not published in the Official Journal until 11 October 2003, nonetheless, Parliament welcomes the detailed and informative way in which they are set out, which should be the benchmark for subsequently published financial statements for the ECSC in liquidation, and calls on the Commission to ensure maximum transparency with regard to figures on trends in, and use of, ECSC assets and on revenue from them. It expects the Court of Auditors, which has submitted no specific report on the financial statements for the

ECSC in liquidation as at 31 December 2002, to carry out the necessary audits each year and to publish the results in the Official Journal. Parliament stresses that it will continue to keep an eye on the mandatory use of revenues from ECSC assets for the benefit of research in the coal and steel sector.