

2003 discharge: EC general budget, European Parliament

2004/2041(DEC) - 16/03/2005

The committee adopted the report by Ona JUKNEVICIENE (ALDE, LT) recommending that the President of Parliament be granted the budgetary discharge for 2003. In its accompanying comments, the committee noted that, "as in previous years a very high level of budget implementation was achieved". This was due largely to Parliament's consistent policy of buying rather than renting its buildings. MEPs said that, of the smaller institutions, Parliament was one of the few to have implemented the new Financial Regulation in good time, although they queried "whether the degree of scrutiny and the complexity of the control apparatus currently in place is wholly proportionate", given that Parliament's budget is essentially administrative.

The committee also argued that Parliament had the right to decide on its own seat, which - on logical cost-effective grounds - should be in Brussels, where "the vast majority of parliamentary activity already takes place" and where the other main EU institutions are based.

On the subject of Members' pay and expenses, the committee supported "the initiative undertaken by the current presidency of the European Union to reach agreement on the Members' Statute introducing a single remuneration for Members of the European Parliament" because of the discrepancy between Members' salaries since enlargement. However, it believed that, "even in the absence of a common statute, it should be possible to devise a system that is clear, transparent and fair". The report added that, as soon as the statute was approved, a new and separate pension instrument should be set up and that from that date all contributions from Parliament's budget to a voluntary pension fund should stop.

MEPs also made a list of recommendations to Parliament's Bureau. They deplored the lack of clarity regarding social security obligations of parliamentary assistants. They also said it was unacceptable that smoking was allowed in Parliament's offices and demanded "urgent action to reduce the level of smoke on its premises".