RESOLUTION

of the European Parliament containing the comments accompanying the decision concerning discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the 2002 financial year — Section VI — European Economic and Social Committee

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT,

— having regard to the revenue and expenditure account and balance sheet for the 2002 financial year (I5-0034/2003 — C5-0088/2004),

— having regard to the annual report of the European Court of Auditors for the 2002 financial year, together with the replies of the institutions (C5-0583/2003) [1],

— having regard to the statement of assurance by the European Court of Auditors, pursuant to Article 248 of the EC Treaty, as to the reliability of the accounts and the legality and regularity of the underlying transactions (C5-0583/2003),

— having regard to the Council's recommendation of 9 March 2004 (C5-0145/2004),

— having regard to Article 272(10) and Article 275 of the EC Treaty,

— having regard to Article 22(2) and (3) of the Financial Regulation of 21 December 1977 [2] and Article 50 of the Financial Regulation of 25 June 2002 [3],

— having regard to Rule 93 *a* of and Annex V to its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (A5-0228/2004),

1. Notes the replies given by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on 17 December 2003 to the questionnaire sent by the Committee on Budgetary Control on 26 November 2003;

2. Thanks the EESC for forwarding its internal rules governing budget implementation and the charter of the internal auditor;

3. Notes the EESC's assurance that there have been no further irregularities whatever with regard to the settlement of travel expenses;

4. Notes that, on 10 December 2003, the EESC adopted a statute for its Members; asks the Court of Auditors for an opinion on the financial implications of the provisions thereof; asks the Court of Auditors to submit that opinion no later than in the context of its annual report for 2003;

5. Welcomes the fact that the EESC has given an account of the extent to which the objectives it set itself for the period 1998 to 2002 were met [4]; is convinced that a critical evaluation of activities can be the basis for better public awareness of the EESC's work;

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(1) OJ C 286, 28.11.2003, p. 1.

(2) OJ L 356, 31.12.1977, p. 1.

(3) OJ L 248, 16.9.2002, p. 1.

(4) The EESC Secretariat's activities in the 1998-2002 period. Report presented to the Bureau on 17 September 2002.

6. Thanks the EESC for the progress report of 26 June 2003 [1] on renovating the Belliard Building, according to which it will be handed over on 31 May 2004; asks, however, for an explanation of the Financial Controller's comment on 2002 budget implementation that 'Shortcomings in the management of the "Belliard" dossier, meaning that the Committees had a lack of oversight of certain aspects, were noted and pointed out.' [2];

7. Welcomes the fact that the two committees have managed to make early payments to the owner of the Belliard Building, Cofinimmo, so as to reduce liabilities more quickly;

8. Asks the EESC whether it updated the inventory in 2002 and whether, as Parliament insisted [3], the Court of Auditors has verified the inventory.

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[1] Note to the Committee on Budgetary Control, Belliard building progress report, 26 June 2003.

[2] Reply to questionnaire, question 4, general section.

[3] Resolution of 8 April 2003, paragraph 8 (OJ L 148, 16.6.2003, p. 55).