

2009 budget: guidelines, other sections

2008/2021(BUD) - 27/03/2008

The Committee of Budgets unanimously adopted the report by **Janusz LEWANDOWSKI** (EPP-ED, PL), concerning the guidelines for the 2009 budget procedure of the “other institutions”, namely the European Parliament, the Council, the Court of Justice, the Court of Auditors, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions, the European Ombudsman and the European Data Protection Supervisor.

Firstly, the committee recalls that the 2009 budget of heading 5 (administration) of the financial perspective amounts to EUR 7.777 billion, an increase of 4.3% compared to 2008. In this context, it recalls the ceiling of 20% on budgetary expenditure that the Parliament set itself, even though its powers and legislative activities of the Parliament have continued to increase and the challenges facing the institution in 2009, in particular the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, the new MEPs’ Statute (which transfers to the Parliament most of the financial burden of MEPs’ allowances) and the 2009 European elections, will have an impact on the Institution’s budget. However, MEPs believe that it will be possible to meet these needs without exceeding the 20% limit, and they are subsequently involved in reviewing all expenditure items while respecting the 20% ceiling, since a tendency towards temperance will send a good message to EU taxpayers.

MEPs then return to the main challenges which the Parliament will face in 2009.

Main challenges for the EP for 2009: knowing that 2009 will be a year of far-reaching change for the Parliament, MEPs believe that this should be reflected in its budget procedure and that political priorities should be properly financed:

1. **Entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon:** MEPs consider that the Parliament's increased responsibilities, following a ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon, should be taken into account regarding the formulation of the 2009 budget. It is necessary that MEPs be assisted in fulfilling their responsibilities, even if such changes are not new to the Parliament and growing co-decision powers have already been smoothly integrated into its structures following previous treaty changes. For MEPs, the key will be to find new, more economic ways of working, without automatically increasing financial resources. Therefore, they suggest the redeployment of staff as well as a better evaluation of requirements. Furthermore, MEPs welcome the pilot project on individual interpretation for Members and look forward to its rapid launch. MEPs point out that a sum of EUR 2 million was entered in reserve during the 2008 budget procedure in order to encourage administration to give priority to linguistic support for MEPs;
2. **European elections:** reiterating their conviction that European citizens must be adequately informed of the work carried out by their elected representatives, MEPs expect measures to be taken to strengthen decentralised communication in particular. However, these changes will not automatically necessitate additional expenditure. MEPs will monitor the financing of three major information-related projects directed towards citizens: the visitors’ centre, the audiovisual centre and the web-TV project. Regarding the proposal to earmark funds for a "House of European History" project, MEPs note that it is not the primary responsibility of the Parliament to finance a museum via its administrative budget. Therefore, they trust that the Commission will also support this project;
3. **Entry into force of the new Statute for MEPs:** MEPs call on the Secretary-General of the Parliament to provide an updated budgetary estimate for the expenses linked to the entry into force

of the new Statute. In the meantime, they await proposals to be submitted by the Bureau on the Statutes of assistants of Members, so that it is adopted during the French Presidency to enter into force at the same time as the Statute for MEPs.

MEPs also refer to the Parliament's **building policy**. The Parliament welcomes the considerable savings that have been achieved due to the advance payments made on buildings over the last ten years, enabling costs linked to the Statute to be absorbed smoothly. They insist that environmental concerns should be a key element of the policy, in order to make energy efficiency the centre of future measures in this area. The use of environmentally friendly cars and the installation of solar panels on roofs are, among others, considered as possible measures. However, MEPs hope that efforts to limit the energy bill do not jeopardise the effective functioning of the Institution. Furthermore, they regret the amount of unnecessarily high maintenance costs for European Parliament buildings and await a detailed report on the matter.

In terms of **personnel**, MEPs consider that staffing levels have now entered a phase of consolidation following the increases made with the last enlargements. They call on all services and the political groups to present a detailed analysis of the deployment of personnel before requesting positions to be filled. They are therefore prepared to consider reasonable requests for new posts after the administration has presented a clear analysis of needs, particularly concerning the challenges that the European Parliament will face in 2009.

Other institutions: concerning all the other institutions, MEPs call on each one to present realistic and cost-based budget requests that take full account of the general context of financial rigour. They point out that the evolution of the financial ceiling must continue to be monitored carefully over the period 2009-2013, especially as the annual adjustment of the budgets of the institutions is done according to a fixed rate (+2%) and any divergence in real inflation will have an impact on the margin. It is therefore necessary for all institutions to thoroughly assess their budget needs in light of the means available. MEPs also note with concern the significant increases in building expenditure and invite all institutions to present all financing plans in an open and easily understandable format.

Lastly, MEPs note that they are very interested in how a future European External Action Service would be integrated into the EU budget overall.