

2009 budget: guidelines, other sections

2008/2021(BUD) - 10/04/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 539 votes in favour to 38, with 61 abstentions, a resolution on the 2009 budget guidelines of the “other institutions”, namely the European Parliament, the Council, the Court of Justice, the Court of Auditors, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, the European Ombudsman and the European Data Protection Supervisor.

The report was drafted by Janusz **LEWANDOWSKI**(EPP-ED, PL) on behalf of the Committee on Budgets.

First of all, the Parliament 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 in spite of the fact that its powers and legislative activities have continued to increase and many challenges face the institution in 2009. However, the Parliament believes that it will be possible to meet these needs without exceeding the 20% limit, and it is subsequently involved in reviewing all expenditure items to restrict its budget within this margin. It also recalls that its 2008 budget is EUR 1.453 billion, that is 19.7% of heading 5, and thus under the planned ceiling of 20%.

MEPs then return to the **main challenges** that the Parliament will face in 2009. These can be summarised as follows:

1. **Entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon:** the Parliament considers that every effort should be made so that the Parliament's increased responsibilities, following the ratification of the Treaty of Lisbon, should be taken into account in the budget. However, it points out that such changes are not new to the Parliament and that growing co-decision powers have already been smoothly integrated into its structures following previous treaty changes. It looks forward to the conclusions of the Working Party on Human and Financial resources, set up by the Secretary-General, to assess the enhanced legislative role of parliamentary committees and the other new responsibilities of Parliament. Considering that the Parliament should be able to fulfil all of its responsibilities, the plenary emphasises that a significant part of the additional work could be assured due to new, more economic ways of working, without automatically increasing financial resources. Therefore, the Parliament suggests the redeployment of staff as well as a better evaluation of requirements. Furthermore, Parliament welcomes the pilot project on individual interpretation for MEPs and looks forward to its rapid launch. The Parliament points out that a sum of EUR 2 million was entered in reserve during the 2008 budget procedure in order to encourage the administration to give priority to linguistic support for MEPs. Moreover, the Parliament strongly wishes to put in place a single point access system for both Members and staff;
2. **European elections:** reiterating its conviction that European citizens must be adequately informed of the work carried out by their elected representatives, the Parliament expects measures to be taken to strengthen decentralised communication in particular. However, these changes will not automatically necessitate additional expenditure. The Parliament will monitor the financing of three major information-related projects targeting 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, the Parliament notes that it is not its primary responsibility to finance a museum via its administrative budget. Therefore, the Parliament trusts that the Commission will also support this project;
3. **Entry into force of the new Statute for MEPs:** the Parliament calls on the Secretary-General to provide an updated budgetary estimate for the expenses linked to the entry into force of the new

Statute. In the meantime, Members await proposals to be submitted by the Bureau on the Statute for Members' assistants so that it is adopted during the French Presidency to enter into force at the same time as the Statute for MEPs. It believes that this proposed statute would ensure the equal treatment of Members' assistants that is also transparent, and help ensure that tax and social obligations, such as salaries and social security rights, are fulfilled. It calls on its administration to provide an account on the progress made on this issue in due course before the first reading of the draft. The plenary stresses that the Parliament must make every effort to ensure the consistent implementation of its internal rules on the reimbursement of parliamentary assistants' expenses and to assess, as a matter of urgency, the operation of the existing rules before submitting new proposals.

The Parliament also refers to its **buildings policy**. It recognises that considerable savings were achieved due to the advance payments made on buildings over the last ten years and that its acquisition policy, in the longer term, needs to be assessed in the light of the limits of the financial ceiling and the particular needs in its three places of work. The Parliament believes that further improvements in terms of energy efficiency are necessary, as well as a further shift towards the use of green energy sources in all its premises. It awaits more detailed information on the use of solar panels and the possibility of renewing its car fleet (with environmentally friendly cars). At the same time, the Parliament wishes to see a report on the constraints, both regulatory and practical, which may have led to unnecessarily high maintenance costs for EU buildings, including the Parliament's. It also considers that the rule requiring the blacklisting of firms that have put forward unnecessarily high costs should be enforced.

In terms of **personnel**, MEPs consider that staffing levels have now entered a phase of consolidation following the increases made with the most recent 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.