

2010 budget: other sections: guidelines

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The Committee on Budgets adopted a report by Vladimír **MANKA** (PES, SK) on the guidelines for the 2010 budget procedure, other sections.

It points out that at this stage of the annual procedure, the European Parliament is awaiting the other institutions' estimates and its own Bureau's proposals for the 2010 budget. The ceiling of heading 5 in 2010 is EUR 8 088 000 000 representing an increase of EUR 311 000 000 or + 4% compared to 2009, including 2% for inflation). The European Parliament's budget for 2009 amounts to EUR 1 529 970 930, representing 19.67 % of heading 5 this year.

The committee states that it cannot stress enough the fundamental principle that all Members should be equally provided with quality services allowing them to work and express themselves and to receive documents in their native language in order to be able to act on behalf of their electors in the best way possible. The new parliamentary term is an opportunity to make sure this is the case and in this sense, "optimal and equal access to language facilities for Members" will be one of the crucial guidelines for the 2010 budget.

Equal emphasis should be given to all aspects relating to Parliament's legislative role, in particular, the priority alignment of staff and resources relating to decision-making in the area of co-decision. The financial ceiling of heading 5, administrative expenditure, will theoretically allow for an increase of 4% or EUR 311 000 000. As a yardstick, the voluntary 20% share of the Parliament would still imply an "automatic" additional room for manoeuvre of EUR 62 000 000 calculated on the ceilings and EUR 87 000 000 compared to the real budget adopted for 2009. There are, nevertheless, uncertainties as to the evolution of the EU-GNI and the circumstances in which the European Parliament has to operate.

Members take the view that a significant margin should be kept in the budget estimates, rather than creating a specific reserve, in order to safeguard the possibility for the new Parliament to set its own priorities. They request a detailed overview of those budget lines that were under-implemented in 2008 and an account of all carry-overs and their use in 2008, as well as an update on the final assigned revenues compared to the amounts that were budgeted.

Equal access to language facilities for MEPs: the report states that 2010 should be a year when the utmost effort must be made so that Members of all nationalities and languages are treated equally in terms of their ability to carry out their duties and in their own language if they so choose. It takes a keen interest in the question of multilingualism and asks the services for a presentation of the current situation.

Optimal use of resources to improve the European Parliament's legislative work: maximum care should be taken to ensure that the overall budgetary and staffing resources at the Parliament's disposal are used in the most cost-efficient way possible which implies, whenever possible, the pooling together of functions and structures.

Dissemination of information to Members: the committee notes projects to provide information as complete as possible in relation to parliamentary work, including the policy departments of committees, the analytical service of the library, a knowledge management system in order to facilitate access to these, and a number of other sources in the Parliament, such as, the "legislative observatory". It warmly welcomes these efforts but considers that functional and budgetary stocktaking is necessary. The 2010 procedure should clarify the situation, including those dealing with the budgetary aspects.

Communicating Parliament to citizens: Members note the Bureau's reference to the three major projects in the field of communication policy - europarlTV, the Visitors' Centre and the new audiovisual centre in the JAN building, and renews its commitment to maximise the real impact on public opinion. They also note of the Bureau's decision concerning the "House of European History" and emphasises the need for a full consultation with the competent Committees on its concept, contents and budgetary aspects.

Buildings: Members reiterate its call to see a report and any possible recommendations concerning unnecessarily high maintenance, renovation and purchase costs relating to EU buildings, including the Parliament's. This should be a cross-cutting effort in order to establish the root causes. The committee requests confirmation that the rule requiring the blacklisting of firms that have put forward unnecessarily high costs should be enforced.

Continuation of aspects from the 2009 procedure: the committee agrees that the implementation in the first year of the new Statute for Members and the Statute for Assistants will need to be closely followed and considers that they must be consolidated in the best possible way. On the IT sector, it asks for a report clarifying the current situation and prospects regarding the internalization of ICT experts and appropriate governance.

Other institutions: Members welcome the constructive co-operation with the other institutions during the last procedure and, as last year, urges them to present realistic and cost-based budget requests that take full account of the need to manage scarce resources in an optimal way. It wishes to explore still further the possibility of better sharing the available resources between all Institutions.