2010 budget: other sections

2009/2002B(BUD) - 08/10/2009

The Committee on Budgets adopted the report drawn up by Vladimír MAKA (S-D, SK) on the other sections of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2010 (all except the Commission).

General Framework: MEPs recall that the EU institutions must establish their budgets in the context of the difficult economic and financial situation facing Europe. The budgets must reflect the efforts to achieve political objectives with as effective a use of resources as possible. MEPs reiterate their conviction that budget requests must be fully cost-based and only reflect real needs to achieve the tasks entrusted to each institution, while making every effort to identify savings, including through better organisation of work, redeployment of existing resources toward priorities and less bureaucracy, in order to make the best possible use of scarce financial resources.

MEPs stress that any expenditure related specifically to the potential entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon is not included in the proposals. They state that in the event of this treaty entering into force, existing budgetary instruments, such as an amending letter or amending budget, may have to be used if necessary. They recall that there is still room for improvement and more effective use of budget resources in a number of areas, such as in the **area of inter-institutional cooperation**. The report stipulates that increased cooperation in the field of language services could provide some margin for savings. To this end, MEPs decide to introduce a **cross-cutting reserve of 5% for external translation services**. MEPs stress their wish that the possibility of 'tele-working' for translators should be re-examined by the institutions.

Overall, MEPs believe that the EU budget system must develop in a way that rewards resourcefulness and innovative solutions. In this regard, they consider that efficiency gains and savings that are the result of such measures on the part of the institutions could be used for other priorities they might have. They stress, however, that unused funds that result simply from slow implementation or unexpected events should as a general rule be returned to the taxpayer.

Section 1 - European Parliament: MEPs welcome the good spirit and constructive nature of the budgetary conciliation meetings. They stress the need for the Parliament, as is the case for all institutions, to provide as complete a preliminary budget proposal as possible in the spring and early summer. They emphasise that the use of an amending letter should truly be limited to unforeseen events and technical updates. MEPs underline that the overall level of its budget amounts to 19% of the authorised expenditure under heading 5 of the multi-annual financial framework, i.e. **it has been maintained below the self-imposed limit of 20%**. This amount may be insufficient if the Lisbon Treaty enters into force. It is for this reason that they suggest maintaining their position that a considerable margin is essential. In addition, they consider that a distinction between the Parliament's fixed and variable costs would facilitate decisions on the overall level of its budget and the appropriate follow-up for maintaining a sustainable budget. They consider that this distinction, the long-term strategies on buildings, communication and information policies as well as a cost-benefit analysis of the various activities of Parliament will enable the construction of a zero-based budget in the coming years.

MEPs also concentrated on the following issues:

New statute for Members' parliamentary assistants: MEPs point out that 2010 is the first year of full application of the new Statute for Members and that this is having a significant impact on its budget. They call on the Parliament to introduce a reserve of 20% on the salary line for Parliament's staff while

requesting a significant reduction in bureaucracy and improvement of the implementation of the assistant's statute.

Human resources: welcoming the agreement concerning staff resources for the 2010 budget, MEPs call on the Parliament to authorise the appropriations for 54 new posts (permanent and temporary) and to upgrade a number of administrative positions. They consider it right to adapt its organisation of work and structure of services to the political priorities in order to maximise the results and, from a budgetary point of view, reduce the cost impact. In this respect, MEPs recall their request from last year that it is crucial to optimally balance the distribution of human resources between core legislative activities, direct services to Members and administrative support functions. MEPs also support the creation of 49 new posts over three years to this end.

Legislative work and multilingualism: recalling that multilingualism has been a crucial feature of the 2010 budget, MEPs welcome the targeted additional funding for this area in the budget proposal and call on the Parliament to approve it. They believe that assuming Parliament's increased legislative responsibilities is an ongoing process and requires full assistance to Members to fulfil their legislative work. They consider that attention must now also be turned to the later stages of the legislative procedures and deems it essential that Members have access to correct texts in **all official languages**. The report recalls that Parliament regularly votes on agreed legislative acts in the form of early political compromises, whereas the Council adopts such acts only after they have been finalised. It considers it essential that Parliament should examine and vote on final, correct texts in all languages. MEPs are willing to reconsider the system and accessibility of translations of plenary speeches, the so-called verbatim reports.

Buildings policy: once again, MEPs request that the Bureau should present a coherent and responsible long-term strategy in the area of property and buildings, which also takes into account the particular problem of increasing maintenance costs, renovation needs and security costs. Parliament considers the reply received following the 2009 budget resolution to be insufficient. It reiterates the importance it attaches to security issues, closely linked to its building policy, and considers that an effective and balanced approach is necessary in this area. It underlines in particular the specific character of a parliament and the need for openness and accessibility alongside security. Lastly, MEPs note that the reason why the Bureau is contemplating acquiring a new building close to its current facilities in Brussels, while reckoning that it no longer needs another one of its buildings for parliamentary work, remains to be clearly explained.

Communication and information policy: MEPs welcome the agreement on financing of European political parties and foundations as well as the final decision by the Bureau on the management model for the new Visitor's Centre. They also take note of the agreement reached between its Bureau and Committee on Budgets concerning the House of European History and they call on the European Parliament to make available the requested EUR 1.5 million in order to carry out this project. They stress the importance it attaches to an effective organisation of the many information sources and services available to Members and staff within the Parliament. In this respect, they suggest the creation of a Directorate for Library and Document Management under its Presidency services.

As regards the other sections of the budget:

- **Section IV - Court of Justice**: MEPs are not convinced that the Council's cuts on foreseen remunerations and abatement rates are correct given the actual rate of recruitment and staffing level. Therefore, they propose re-reinstating the PDB on a number of lines. They also note the high building costs.
- **Section V - Court of Auditors**: MEPs call on the Parliament to accept 12 new auditor posts, as a result of increasing demands, particularly from the budget discharge authority. They note the planned progression of the costs for the K3 building extension and reiterate that, compared to a

lease-purchase option, the decision to finance this directly from the budget will keep this project at the lowest level possible for the tax-payer. MEPs propose to increase a limited number of expenditure items relating to the Court's dissemination of reports.

- **Section VI - European Economic and Social Committee**: MEPs decide to take a compromise position between the Committee's original requests and the Council's draft budget. They decided to approve the creation of 6 additional posts. Furthermore, they ask the Committee to present a succinct explanation on how the travel reimbursements and allowances are calculated.
- **Section VII - Committee of the Regions**: MEPs do not agree with the Council's abolition of all ten additional posts requested for the Committee and decides to reinstate four of them as priority posts linked to its political work and, particularly, the regional assembly. They call on the Parliament to introduce a general abatement rate of 5% after hearing the Committee's arguments as regards recruitment levels and vacancy rates. The committee also takes a compromise position between the Committee's requests and the Council's reductions on various operational lines.
- **Section VIII - European Ombudsman**: MEPs call on the Parliament to partially reinstate the PDB for this institution. They also suggest the adoption of a compromise position between the Ombudsman and the Council as concerns needed appropriations for salaries and allowances.
- **Section IX - European Data Protection Supervisor**: acknowledging that the Supervisor is increasingly being called on to give opinions on legislation (with an impact on data protection issues), MEPs suggest making some adjustments to the draft budget suggested by the Council. They propose the creation of two additional posts as well as reinforcing some specific budget lines.