2008 discharge: EU general budget, European Parliament

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PURPOSE: to present the final annual accounts of the European Communities for the financial year 2007 – Other institutions: section I – European Parliament.

Note: this summary provides a general overview of the main trends in terms of the European Parliament's expenditure for the financial year 2008. It provides an overview of the budgetary and financial management of the budget of the institution, as well as of its main expenditures. The amounts presented below are taken from the Report on the budgetary and financial management of the European Parliament in 2008.

CONTENT:

1) European Parliament expenditure appropriations 2008:

- **authorised final appropriations:** EUR 1 452 517 167;
- **commitments**: EUR 1 401 962 800;
- **outturn rate:** 97%;
- **cancelled appropriations:** EUR 42 238 638
- **payments:** EUR 1 205 829 062
- **utilisation rate**: 86%.

2) Main axes of expenditure and main activities of the European Parliament for 2008: this report presents the budgetary and financial management by the European Parliament during financial year 2008. It outlines the financial situation and the events which have had a significant influence on activities and gives a synthetic account of the achievement of the objectives for the year. These may be summarised as follows:

- **preparing for application of the Lisbon Treaty:** this objective concerned preparation for changes in legislative and budgetary procedures, strengthening Parliament's role in EU external relations and the in-house reform. A technical-administrative Task-Force was set up by the Secretary-General to prepare the Secretariat for entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. The Task Force dealt with consequences of procedural changes (legislative procedures, comitology), adaptation of the Rules of Procedure, impact of the subsidiarity check by national parliaments and global logistical issues. Nonetheless, following the 'no' vote in Ireland, preparations for implementation of the Lisbon Treaty were placed on hold. Parliament also participated in election observation missions;
- **preparing for the 2009 European elections so as to help reverse the voter turnout trend:** in this regard, a large number of initiatives were undertaken in order to provide information to citizens about Parliament's activity and achievements: i) production and installation of Multimedia Blue Box, billboards and external installations in three dimensions; ii) the projects: Pan European Countdown, Unusual Polling Stations, online communication campaign, TV and radio spots, production of PR material and purchase of space for online, radio and outdoor campaigns were prepared. The Parliament also organised and participated in several events such as the 9th Energy Globe Awards (which reward local and regional projects that contribute to energy conservation, environmental protection, or the supply of basic resources such as water and electricity to remote and poor communities) and participated in a second citizens' Agora on climate change with an exhibition of Yann Arthus-Bertrand photographs. Also worthy of mention were events such as the

Lux Prize for Cinema, the Journalism Prize, the Charlemagne Prize, and the European Media Days, as well as the launch of EuroparlTV, which operates 24 hours a day in 20 languages;

- **stepping up services for Members:** this objective relates to the new Statute for Members, filling vacant posts for staff from the new Member States, language services, the analytical service within the Library, individual interpretation for Members and better provision of information on the various services available to them;
- **reforming and consolidating the General Secretariat of Parliament:** this objective included major restructuring of the EP General Secretariat, applying the staff consolidation plan, promoting Parliament as an open and inclusive institution, simplifying administration, pursuing the property policy, improving budgetary forecasts, complying with Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) and reducing emissions of carbon dioxide (CO2). Following the restructuring of the General Secretariat, various IT applications were adapted. Moreover, multi-DG support (MUST) replaced a single-DG support to achieve a synergy effect;
- **property policy:** Parliament pursued its property policy in 2008. The policy for the establishment of information offices is that the European Parliament's and the European Commission's offices should be together in 'Europe Houses' and that, where possible, the opportunities to buy rather than rent should be exploited. In 2008 the building for a Europe House in London was purchased. It was one of the two remaining capital cities where no Europe House had been established;
- **environmental strategy:** Parliament was awarded an EN/ISO 14001:2004 certificate for its three main working sites in 2007. It is the first European institution to have received the certificate. The institution reduced its gas and fuel consumption by almost 25% over the last three years. It decided to use 100% green electricity in its three main places of work, while more than 50% of all waste is recycled, composted, or reused. The EP's decision to use green electricity at all three of its main places of work made it possible to cut carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions by 17%.

In conclusion, the European Parliament can be seen to have achieved the main objectives set by its Secretary-General for 2008.

3) Highlights of the 2008 budget implementation: the report analyses the proportion of total expenditure by Parliament by comparison with the planned spending. This comparison leads to the following main conclusions:

Title I: (*Persons working with the institution*): overall, this budget heading has been in line with estimates with only two exceptions:

- **the chapter on "Other staff and outside services"** was marked by a decrease of 18% in spending between 2007 and 2008. This decrease is largely explained by lower demand for "Conference interpreters, interpreters and conference technicians" for the translation of verbatims of debates and for the Interpretation ad Personam service;
- **the chapter on "Other expenditure relating to persons working with the institution"**, up by 23% compared to 2007 owing to an increase on the item "Current operating expenditure for restaurants and canteens".

Title II:*(Current administrative expenditur*e): the 14% decrease in this chapter between 2007 and 2008 was mainly due to lower spending for "Stationery, office supplies and miscellaneous consumables" and "Telecommunications", mostly concerning charges for telematic services. The decrease was partly compensated by an increase on "Legal costs and damages";

Title III: (*Expenditure resulting from the exercise of the institution's tasks*): this heading saw an increase of 38% compared to 2007 in the cost of "Expertise and information: acquisition, archiving, production and dissemination" due to the marked increase in "expenditure on publication, information and participation in public events" (+139%) and costs related to the "Parliamentary television channel (Web TV)" (+614 %) in connection with the organisation of European elections in 2009.

Title IV: (*Expenditure relating to certain institutions and bodies*): this chapter was marked by an increase of 19% compared to 2007. This mainly related to the heading “current administrative expenditure and expenditure relating to the political and information activities of the Political Groups and non-attached members” (+14%). The Bureau also assigned an additional amount of EUR 6 000 000 to finance the Political Groups and non-attached Members for the information campaign for the 2009 European elections.