2010 budget: other sections

2009/2002B(BUD) - 22/10/2009 - Budgetary text adopted by Parliament

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the other sections of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2010 (all except the Commission).

On a general note, Parliament recalls 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. It reiterates its 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.

Parliament stresses that any expenditure related specifically to the potential entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon is not included in the proposals. It states that in the event of the treaty entering into force, existing budgetary instruments, such as an amending letter or amending budget, may have to be used if necessary. It recalls 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** and in particular in the field of language services could provide some margin for savings. To this end, Parliament decides to introduce a **cross-cutting reserve of 5% for external translation services** and stresses that this amendment is targeted towards all institutions with their own translation departments. It also takes note of the fact that this reserve can thus be released when a concrete proposal for a system of internal translation resource sharing has been presented by the institutions and considered by the budgetary authority.

Parliament believes that the EU budget system must develop in a way that rewards resourcefulness and innovative solutions. It highlights, in this regard, and as an incentive, 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. It stresses, 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: Parliament underlines 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. It points out that the overall level of its budget amounts to 19.87 % of the authorised expenditure under heading 5 (administrative appropriations) of the multi-annual financial framework, i.e. it has been maintained below the self-imposed limit of 20%. It reiterates, however, that this figure does not include any possible adaptations that might become necessary should the Treaty of Lisbon enter into force, particularly in the legislative area, and maintains its position that a considerable margin is essential. It acknowledges that, due to the current limited margin, further savings and redeployment will be required to enable additional requirements to be fulfilled. Parliament considers 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. It also considers 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. It considers that this will allow the Parliament's budget to reflect only real needs and will increase its transparency, budget accuracy and efficiency.

Parliament also concentrated on the following issues:

- **New statute for Members' parliamentary assistants**: 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. Parliament welcomes the agreement reached at the end of 2008 on the new statute for Members' parliamentary assistants and has included the budgetary provisions for the first full year of application in 2010. It also welcomes the establishment of the Temporary Evaluation Group to examine any practical problems arising from the introduction of the Members' and Assistants' Statutes and looks forward to receiving its conclusions as soon as possible, in any case no later than the Bureau's presentation of the 2011 Estimates. Parliament notes that the additional amounts included compared to 2009 (a year of partial application) can be estimated at some EUR 40 million and, compared to previous years, at some EUR 113 million. However, it considers that these figures, however, should be differentiated into what are effectively unavoidable consequences of a legal and budgetary nature and those for which the actual implementation of the system can make a difference. From a budgetary point of view, Parliament therefore calls for a report on the application of the system for travel reimbursements, based on accurate and objective data, to be presented before 30 June 2010.
- **Human resources**: welcoming the agreement concerning staff resources for the 2010 budget, Parliament authorises the appropriations for 54 new posts (permanent and temporary) and to upgrade a number of administrative positions. Efforts are needed as regards the organisation of Parliament work and the structure of services in order to maximise the results and, from a budgetary point of view, reduce the cost impact. In this respect, it is crucial to optimally balance the distribution of human resources between core legislative activities, direct services to Members and administrative support functions. Parliament also supports 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, Parliament welcomes the targeted additional funding for this area. It believes that assuming Parliament's increased legislative responsibilities is an ongoing process and requires full assistance to Members to fulfil their legislative work. It reiterates 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**. It considers it essential that Parliament should examine and vote on final, correct texts in all languages. Parliament is willing to reconsider the system and accessibility of translations of plenary speeches, the so-called verbatim reports.
- **Buildings policy**: once again, Parliament requests 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, Parliament notes 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.
- **Communication and information policy**: Parliament welcomes 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. It also takes note of the agreement reached between its Bureau and Committee on Budgets concerning the House of European History and makes available the requested EUR 1.5 million in order to carry out this project. Stressing the importance it attaches to an effective organisation of the many information sources, Parliament suggests the creation of a Directorate for Library and Document Management under its Presidency services.

As regards the other sections of the budget, Parliament sets out the following:

- **Section IV - Court of Justice**: Parliament is 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, it proposes re-reinstating the PDB on a number of lines. High building costs have also been noted.

- **Section V - Court of Auditors**: Parliament accepts 12 new auditor posts, as a result of increasing demands, particularly from the budget discharge authority. It notes the planned progression of the costs for the K3 building extension and reiterates 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. Parliament proposes to increase a limited number of expenditure items relating to the Court's dissemination of reports.
- **Section VI - European Economic and Social Committee**: Parliament takes a compromise position between the Committee's original requests and the Council's draft budget. It decided to approve the creation of 6 additional posts. Furthermore, it asks the Committee to present a succinct explanation on how the travel reimbursements and allowances are calculated.
- **Section VII - Committee of the Regions**: Parliament regrets the Council's abolition of all 10 additional posts requested for the Committee and reinstates four of them as priority posts linked to its political work. It introduces a general abatement rate of 5% after hearing the Committee's arguments as regards recruitment levels and vacancy rates. Parliament also adopts a compromise position between the Committee's requests and the Council's reductions on various operational lines.
- **Section VIII - European Ombudsman**: Parliament partially reinstates the PDB for this institution and adopts a compromise position between the Ombudsman and the Council as concerns appropriations needed 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), Parliament suggests making some adjustments to the draft budget suggested by the Council. It proposes the creation of two additional posts as well as reinforcing some specific budget lines.