Guidelines for the 2014 budget: other sections

2013/2003(BUD) - 12/02/2013

The Council adopted conclusions in which it lays out **its priorities for the General Budget of the EU for 2014**.

These conclusions may be summarised as follows: overall, the Council insists on the need for a realistic budget respecting the principle of sound financial management.

In particular, it stresses that **establishing an accurate level of payment appropriations is very important**.

Revenue: the Council strongly believes that full transparency regarding assigned revenue and calls on all institutions, agencies and other bodies to continue providing all the relevant information promptly and frequently. It also urges the Commission to provide precise and frequent information on planned and past budget implementation and to take this into account at every stage of the budgetary procedure to avoid significant under-implementation of certain funds and unjustified carryovers.

RAL: as in previous years, the Council is concerned about the volume of outstanding commitments (at the end of 2012, these represented EUR 217 billion). It calls on the Commission to carefully monitor these amounts and to settle or decommit them in a timely manner and in line with the relevant rules. In preparing the draft budget, the Commission should take into account the current economic circumstances and the relationship between commitment and payment levels, including on the level of outstanding commitments, the absorption capacity and past implementation rates.

Administrative expenditure: as regards the budget for the institutions, the Council invites all institutions to limit their requests when preparing their estimates for 2014 and to continue to reduce in 2014 the number of posts in their establishment plans. The Council urges them to request financing only for real needs, in order to give **a positive signal to EU citizens**.

Agencies: **the Council regrets that the recurrent over-budgeting for some agencies** has led to unjustified carry-overs. It reiterates the importance of keeping their funding under firm control and limiting it to real needs. It strongly urges the Commission, when establishing its draft budget for 2014, to continue taking into account unused appropriations and excessive accumulated cash balances, in order to bring down their annual surpluses. It also urges the Commission to carefully check, and if necessary revise, the requests for funds and posts proposed by the agencies. It expects the Commission to continue providing the Council and the European Parliament with a comprehensive picture concerning agencies, **including their building policy**.

The Council recalls that the annual budgetary procedure is important for providing accountability towards EU citizens. It emphasises that the budget for 2014 should **provide the necessary resources to respect commitments already made** and to implement the Union's policy priorities for 2014. It stresses the importance of quickly taking the necessary steps to ensure that all EU programmes can commence without delay and in an efficient way.

Lastly, the Council underlines that an accurate and accountable use of Union resources is one of the essential means to reinforce the trust of EU citizens. Therefore, **the Council reiterates the great importance it attaches to these guidelines and expects them to be taken duly into account already when preparing the draft budget for 2014**. These guidelines will be forwarded to the **European Parliament** and the Commission, as well as to the other institutions. They will be used by the Irish

Presidency as the basis for negotiations with the European Parliament and the Commission on the 2014 budget.

Deficits and 2014 budget: the Council insists on the need to maintain budgetary discipline at all levels, in a context where many Member States are seeking to reduce their deficit and debt levels. They call for a balance to be struck between fiscal consolidation and the need to continue investment, in particular through the prioritisation of objectives and the allocation of resources to actions that best contribute to growth and employment.