Forward policy planning and long-term trends: budgetary implications for capacity-building

2012/2290(INI) - 08/10/2013 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 604 votes to 59, with 6 abstentions, a resolution on forward policy planning and long-term trends: budgetary implications for capacity-building.

Parliament recalled that the 2010 EU budget provided, on Parliament's initiative, for the Commission to undertake a pilot project over two years with the aim of exploring the possibility of establishing an 'interinstitutional system identifying long-terms trends on major policy issues facing the EU'. The 2012 EU budget authorised the project to go to the next phase as a preparatory action for the three years from 2012 to 2014, with the aim of putting in place, by the end of 2014, **a fully functioning 'European Strategy and Policy Analysis System' (ESPAS)** involving all relevant EU institutions, by developing closer working cooperation between the research departments of the various EU institutions and bodies which are devoted to the analysis of medium- and long-term policy trends.

For the Parliament, the establishment of such a system would assist and support the EU institutions in preparing and responding to challenges and defining coherent strategic options for the years ahead and would provide a basis for reflection in the context of preparing the EU budget and establishing political priorities on an annual and multiannual basis and linking financial resources more directly to political objectives.

Parliament urged the four institutions and bodies currently involved in the ESPAS process – the Commission, Parliament, the Council and the European External Action Service – to elaborate and sign some form of **interinstitutional agreement**, ideally to be concluded in the spring of 2014, with each partner undertaking to maintain and participate in the agreement on a continuing basis.

Parliament stressed the need for the participating institutions and bodies to devote the necessary staff and financial resources to the ESPAS system through each of their respective budgets, in the context of the annual budgetary procedure, so as to ensure that this capability can be developed in a **budgetarily neutral way** in future years.

Analysis of trends: Parliament highlighted the importance of monitoring and analysing long-term trends, as well as cooperating and networking with other actors, including the wider research community, who are interested in similar issues in third countries. It pointed out that, in line with the principle of subsidiarity, the development of long-term socio-economic strategies and the implementation of policies in the EU is **the responsibility of a variety of public organisations**, such as the European institutions, government ministries, regional or local authority departments and specific agencies but that the economic and social partners, non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders also play an important role.

ESPAS: Parliament welcomed specifically the outcome so far of the administrative-level pilot project (2010-2011) and preparatory action (2012-2014) designed to develop a European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS), and strongly recommended that this process continue with **the involvement of all relevant interest groups**. Such a system should involve staff from all the relevant EU institutions and bodies, including the Committee of the Regions.

In parallel, Parliament called for the resources to implement this initiative as well as the governance rules for its management (they insisted that ESPAS be steered and overseen by an interinstitutional board which would comprise designated members and on which the **European Parliament would be represented**).

The work of ESPAS should be carried out on an independent basis.

Strategic report: lastly, Parliament considered that a permanent system – aiming to provide regular analysis of medium- and long-term trends for the EU institutions in order to encourage a more strategic approach to decision-making – should include provisions for the submission of an **annual strategic trends report** to the institutions, in advance of the State of the Union debate, and the publication of the Commission's annual work programme in order to track and assess the changing pattern of long-term trends, and also to provide specific input to the budgetary authority in the run-up to the negotiation of a post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), as well as for any mid-term revision of the 2014-2020 MFF.