2017 budget: estimates of revenue and expenditure, Section I – Parliament

2016/2019(BUD) - 12/04/2016 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Budgets adopted the report by Indrek TARAND (Greens/EFA, EE) on Parliament's estimates of revenue and expenditure for the financial year 2017.

Members stress that the share of Parliament's budget in 2017 should be maintained under 20% of heading V. They note that the level of preliminary draft estimates for 2017, as adopted by the Bureau on 7 March 2016, corresponds to 19.26%, which is lower than that achieved in 2016 (19.39%) and the second lowest part of heading V in the past eight years. **They reduce further its share of heading V to 19.17 % for 2017**.

They consider, however, that, taking into account the economic slowdown experienced by the Member States, the forecast level of inflation for 2017 **should not be considered as the main benchmark for the increases of the ordinary expenditure**.

Strengthened security: Members observe the **increase of 2.6% for security and cybersecurity which would more than double the resources allocated in 2016**.

They call on Parliament to approve the envelope of extraordinary expenditure for security investments in 2017 following the analysis presented in February 2016 to the Bureau and supplemented by the screening made following the events of 22 March 2016 (**EUR 47.6 million**) and the envelope of extraordinary expenditure linked to the phasing out of the temporary derogation for the use of the Irish language (EUR 3.7 million).

2017 figures: Members call on Parliament to set the overall level of its estimates for 2017 to **EUR 1 900 873 000**, corresponding to a total increase of 3.4 % compared to the 2016 budget. They underline that Parliament should be provided with sufficient resources needed to comply with its core function as a legislative body and budgetary authority. While stressing that the need for budgetary rigour, ensuring a proper level of financing for the Parliament is appropriate for the exercise of European democracy.

Transparency, accessibility and readability: Members consider that, as for the budgetary process, any relevant information should be presented to Members of the Bureau and the Committee on Budgets at every stage of the procedure in a timely and intelligible manner and with the necessary level of detail and breakdowns in order to enable the Bureau, the Committee on Budgets and the political groups to conduct proper deliberations and base decisions on a comprehensive picture of the state and needs of Parliament's budget. They also underline the need for precision and transparency in the evolution of the budget from one year to the other.

Members reiterate their call for a medium and long term budgetary planning, including a clear distinction between investments and operational expenditure relating to the functioning of Parliament as well as its statutory obligations (including on rents and acquisitions).

Security and cybersecurity: Members call for a medium and long term budgetary planning, including clear information with regard to expenditure relating to security and cybersecurity. They invite the Bureau to update the Global Security Concept and communicate it, as fast as possible and at the latest by June 2016. They consider that **any measure in this field should be based on a clear evaluation of Parliament's needs and proportionality with the incurred risks**. They call for information on the

financial consequences of the interinstitutional administrative cooperation arrangements in the field of security.

They also consider that the security system outside the Parliament's premises should continue to be guaranteed by the Belgian authorities.

Empowering Members' mandate: Members note the ongoing measures to empower Members in their mandate. They welcome the extension of the Members' Digital Portal (e-Portal) and the increasing quality of advice and research provided to Members and committees. They are of the opinion that Members' need in their constituencies should be evaluated, also taking into account differences between constituencies. In the interests of efficiency, Members request that the possibility of **signing internal documents digitally** should be made commonplace, across all instances, such as signing forms, written declarations etc., while ensuring reliability and security.

Members consider it appropriate to maintain the appropriations for the envelope of the expenditure regarding **parliamentary assistance for 2017 at same level as for 2016**, subject to legally binding indexation applicable under the Staff Regulation. They believe that the current depiction of Members' parliamentary activities on Parliament's website is not accurate and does not reflect the real activities and involvement of Members. They suggest that the current use of ranking websites is scrapped while improving the information regarding the activities of individual Members on the official Parliament website.

Buildings policy: Members recall that the mid-term building strategy, which was adopted by the Bureau in 2010, is currently under revision. They call on the Bureau to present a **long term strategy for Parliament buildings**. They reiterate that long-term investments, such as Parliament's building projects, need to be handled prudently and transparently. They reiterate their call for a transparent decision-making process in the field of buildings policy, based on early information and believe that a report on the reasons of the delay and the higher costs of the House of European History should feed into the long term building strategy.

They call for the position with regard to Parliament's buildings stock to be faithfully reflected in the budget. Accordingly, they also call for the cost of the Konrad Adenauer Building to be clearly set out in Parliament's definitive budget, and for property-related investment to be incorporated into the budget, in future, so as to obviate the need for mopping-up transfers.

They propose therefore to introduce, as of 2018, **a specific line for investments in building constructions** which would use as a basis for funding in 2018 the funds which are proposed in 2017 for extraordinary expenditure. Considering the extraordinary circumstances in 2017, which require high investment in the security infrastructure, they propose to use any funds not used by the end of 2017 to pay for the construction expenses for the Adenauer building in order to avoid a maximum of interest rate payments to banks for loans which have to be contracted in order to finance the construction.

One place of work: Members consider that the structural and organisational reforms aimed at achieving greater efficiency, environmental sustainability, and effectiveness should continue through the thorough examination of possible synergies and savings. **They recall the substantial savings that could be made by having only one place of work instead of three** (Brussels, Strasbourg, Luxembourg). They underline that this process should be led without endangering Parliament's legislative excellence, its budgetary powers and powers of scrutiny, or the quality of working conditions for Members, assistants, and staff.

Members also make a series of observations on the questions of the institution's internal staff, mobility (ensuring easy access and overall best use of the new direct train connection between Brussels-Luxembourg train station and Zaventem airport), and communication on the visibility of Parliament's work, as well as on environment-related issues.