2021 budget: estimates of revenue and expenditure, Section I – European Parliament

2019/2214(BUD) - 13/05/2020 - Parliament's opinion on budgetary estimates/guidelines

The European Parliament adopted by 542 votes to 94, with 56 abstentions, a resolution on the estimates of revenue and expenditure of the European Parliament for the financial year 2021.

Parliament approved the agreement reached during the conciliation between the Bureau and the Committee on Budgets on 28 April 2020 to set the increase over the 2020 budget at 2.54%, bringing the overall level of its estimates for 2021 to EUR 2 090 467 628, and to decrease the level of expenditure in the preliminary draft estimates approved by the Bureau on 9 March 2020 by EUR 20 million.

Members stressed that Parliament's functioning depended on the performance of its administrative tasks, which required adequate staffing. They also called for a comprehensive analysis and detailed justification of the costs and savings associated with the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the Union.

Transparency and accuracy

Members insisted that the overall budgetary and human resources available to Parliament should be used in the most cost-effective way to enable Parliament and its Members to legislate effectively. They reaffirmed that this approach

required careful planning and organisation of working methods and, wherever possible, the pooling of functions and structures. In addition, Parliament should ensure that public procurement is of high quality and socially responsible.

Engaging with citizens

Members underlined that it is essential for Parliament, the only Union institution that is subject to universal suffrage, to continuously engage with the European citizens through various communicative channels, in the spirit of a multifaceted political dialogue, not only during the electoral year but throughout the entire legislature.

Parliament called for, inter alia:

- an assessment of the results achieved by the "Europa Experience" centres (already inaugurated in Berlin, Copenhagen, Helsinki, Ljubljana and Strasbourg), which are to inform European citizens, especially young people, about Parliament's key powers, as well as a detailed breakdown of expenditure on setting up the centres, which are due to open in 2021, before Parliament's reading of the budget in autumn 2020;

- additional information on the modalities of setting up and the cost of the mobile versions of the Parlamentarium;

- a detailed analysis of representation costs and the costs of extending Parliament's activities and diplomatic presence beyond the Union's borders, in Indonesia (Jakarta), Ethiopia (Addis Ababa) and the United States (New York), as well as an analysis of the added value of Parliament's current representation in Washington;

- information on sustainable travel choices with regard to visitor services and the provision of further information on the new visitors' strategy (including the possibility of establishing a "cluster for seniors") and the information campaign.

Multiannual building projects

Parliament called for a transparent decision-making process in the field of buildings policy based on early information. It recommended that the annual budget planning take into account the regular renovation of all buildings and that an amount corresponding to 3 % of the total surface area of all buildings be allocated for that purpose.

The resolution recalled that a vast majority of Parliament’s Members expressed support for a single seat to ensure the efficient use of Union taxpayers’ money and to assume its institutional responsibility to reduce its carbon footprint. It

emphasises that the geographical dispersion of Parliament's three seats amounts to 6 % of the institution’s overall budget, while its annual environmental impact is estimated to be between 11 000 to 19 000 tonnes of CO2 emissions. Members called for the need to find solutions to optimise parliamentary institutional work, financial costs and the carbon footprint.

Security, IT and infrastructure development

Considering that the building security and the cyber-security are essential for the safety and functioning of Parliament, Members supported the investment made by Parliament to maintain a modern and efficient workplace. They welcomed the Digital Workplace4MEP strategy (a digital working environment for Members), which offers solutions for mobility and efficiency. They took note of the fact that the DG for Translation aims to develop a tool that is able to automatically translate multilingual parliamentary debates in real time. Lastly, they called for the further development of stable and secure teleworking systems for all devices.

Green Parliament and sustainable mobility

Recalling that since 2016, Parliament is the first Union institution to become carbon neutral, Members welcomed the Bureau decision that new and more ambitious environmental targets were set for the current legislative term, that should be achieved by 2024 in key areas such as carbon footprint reduction. They called for a detailed roadmap on achieving those targets to be presented to Parliament’s Committee on Budgets and for the option to increase the ambition of those standards by mid-term in 2022.

Parliament welcomed the new parking policy developed in Parliament’s car parks aimed at promoting the use of electric vehicles through the installation of electric charging stations. It supported all future measures to encourage Members and staff to reduce the use of passenger cars and to prioritise the use of public transport and bicycles, including also financial incentives.

Members and accredited parliamentary assistants related issues

Parliament asked the Secretary-General and the Bureau to fully respect the Members' Statute and to establish, together with the pension fund, a clear plan for Parliament to fully meet its obligations for the voluntary pension fund for its Members. It supported the request to investigate ways of ensuring sustainable financing of the voluntary pension fund while ensuring full transparency. It also reiterated its call for transparency with regard to the Members' general expense allowance.

Parliament recalled its request concerning the amount of allowances paid to the APAs for missions carried out between Parliament's three places of work and invited the Bureau to align it at the level of allowance systems for civil servants and other agents.

Members also welcomed the measures taken by Parliament regarding the Covid-19 outbreak, including new temporary working methods and allowing the use of Parliament's facilities in the battle against the coronavirus. It asked the Bureau to propose further measures to address consequences of the Covid-19 outbreak.

Lastly, Parliament recalled the requirement, enshrined in the Rules of Procedure at the time of its last reform, to adopt an action plan on gender equality aimed at mainstreaming gender equality in all Parliament's activities.