Guidelines for the 2022 Budget - Section III

2020/2265(BUI) - 25/03/2021 - Parliament's opinion on budgetary estimates/guidelines

The European Parliament adopted by 462 votes to 80, with 145 abstentions, a resolution on the general guidelines for the preparation of the 2022 budget, Section III - Commission.

Parliament wants to set up a recovery budget in 2022 after the COVID-19 crisis that will allow the EU to boost investment and tackle unemployment, foster the digital and green transition, focus on a strong European Health Union, promote an inclusive recovery, focusing in particular on the younger generation, and ensure a safe and prosperous environment for EU citizens.

A vibrant economy to boost investment and tackle unemployment

Concerned by the severe and long-lasting consequences of the crisis on SMEs, Members intend to secure sufficient funding for them through various EU programmes. They called

for the Single Market Programme to be given sufficient funding to encourage entrepreneurship, improve access to markets and help small businesses, including through the development of digital and entrepreneurial skills. They highlighted the role of the InvestEU programme in providing capital support to SMEs hit by the crisis, and support initiatives at EU level to facilitate the creation of new start-ups and improve their access to finance.

Parliament called for massive boost for investment in research, development and innovation in order to enable the EU to be a driving force in delivering the European Green Deal and the digital transition. It underlined the particular merits of Horizon Europe and considers it essential to provide SMEs, start-ups and universities with adequate, tailor-made support in research and innovation so that they can actively take part in these immense challenges.

Members stressed the pivotal role of the EU's cohesion policy as the prime investment policy of the Union for achieving a sustainable and inclusive recovery. They recalled the essential role of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) in helping to ensure stable and acceptable earnings for farmers and fishermen. They also underlined the need to boost the tourism sector, and in particular the hospitality industry, which experienced a particularly severe contraction during the pandemic.

Meeting the challenge of digital and green transitions

The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the urgency of bridging the digital divide, including through the implementation of the Digital Education Action Plan. Parliament believes that the Digital Europe Programme is essential to improve European competitiveness in the global digital economy and to achieve technological sovereignty. It called for a minimum of 20% of the recovery and resilience facility to be allocated to the digital transition.

Members stressed the central role of the EU budget in ensuring the success of the European Green Deal, including the biodiversity strategy. They also stressed the need to ensure that the new growth strategy, including the recovery funds and the Just Transition Facility, is adequately resourced. They also recognised the key role played by the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) in interconnecting the Union and all of its regions, including the outermost, insular and sparsely populated ones, in the transport, digital and energy sectors.

Climate action and environmental protection should be supported by providing the relevant programmes and instruments with additional resources in the EU budget, including the LIFE programme. Efforts in all policy areas should be intensified with a view to achieving, over the duration of the MFF 2021-2027, an overall climate spending target of at least 30% of the total amount of expenditure under the Union budget and the EU Recovery Instrument. Parliament should be involved in developing reliable and transparent methods for implementing and monitoring this expenditure.

A strong European Health Union

Parliament reaffirmed the importance of the EU4Health Programme, which is now the largest health programme ever to be funded by the EU budget. It believes that the current crisis has revealed the need to increase investment in healthcare infrastructure and skills and

the need to recover from past underinvestment.

The EU needs solidarity and collective responsibility, which translate into more EU health competences and more concrete steps towards a stronger European Health Union.

An inclusive recovery focusing on the younger generation

As young people are particularly affected by the fallout of the COVID-19 crisis, Parliament stressed that all funding possibilities should be explored in order to achieve greater market inclusion. It stressed the need to increase the financial resources of EU programmes such as Erasmus+ and highlighted the added value of the ESF+ for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee and the forthcoming Child Guarantee.

Members called for gender equality issues to be taken into account when drawing up budgets. They also called for additional support for the cultural and creative sectors and cultural tourism, which are the main sectors affected by the crisis.

Ensuring a safe and prosperous environment for European citizens

Members expect asylum and migration to remain priority areas for EU action. They called for more funds to be devoted to coordination with transit countries and countries of origin of irregular migrants to curb human trafficking and for Frontex to be given sufficient funding to achieve its objective.

Parliament supported strengthening the EU's efforts to tackle growing security threats such as terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism, people smugglers, human trafficking, drug trafficking, cybercrime and hybrid threats in Europe and neighbouring countries, as well as disinformation campaigns against European democracies from third countries.

Deeply concerned about the deterioration of the rule of law, democracy and fundamental rights in some Member States, Members insisted on the need to provide sufficient financial resources to support press freedom in the EU, while stressing the strategic role of the new ‘Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values’ programme in strengthening European citizenship and democracy as well as equality and the rule of law in the EU, and in supporting victims of gender-based violence. In addition, the European Public Prosecutor's Office should be adequately resourced and staffed to fight crime that is detrimental to the Union's budget.

Lastly, adequate financial support should be provided through both the Member States and the European Defence Fund, with a view to the progressive framing of the EU’s common defence policy and to increase the EU’s security and strategic autonomy.

Recovery instrument

Members recalled that in 2022, the EU budget will be considerably strengthened by the recovery instrument, with at least 60% of its total allocation committed to the various programmes before the end of that year. Parliament will closely monitor the overall implementation of the Recovery Instrument and will also pay particular attention to the monitoring of the Recovery and Resilience Facility.