2022 budget: estimates of revenue and expenditure, Section I – European Parliament

2020/2264(BUI) - 29/04/2021 - Parliament's opinion on budgetary estimates/guidelines

The European Parliament adopted by 582 votes to 91, with 18 abstentions, a resolution on Parliament’s estimates of revenue and expenditure for the financial year 2022.

Parliament approved the agreement reached during the conciliation between the Bureau and the Committee on Budgets on 14 April 2021 to set the increase in the 2021 budget at 2.4%, bringing the overall level of its estimates for 2022 to EUR 2 112 904 198, and to reduce the level of expenditure in the preliminary draft estimates approved by the Bureau on 8 March 2021 by EUR 18.85 million.

Parliament supported the increase of 76 posts for the political groups and 66 posts for the committee secretariats to accommodate proportionately the increased workload and to implement the Union's policies. At the same time, it called on the Council to use potential synergies to increase the efficiency of the administration. It stressed that Parliament's budget for 2022 should be realistic and accurate in order to avoid over-budgeting.

Greening the Parliament

The resolution stressed that Parliament needs to be at the forefront of adopting more digital, flexible and energy-efficient working methods and meeting arrangements, learning from the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic and capitalising on the technology investments already implemented. In this context, it called for a detailed review of how Members, staff and officials conduct their parliamentary work.

Parliament is invited to reassess its environmental (EMAS) targets for 2024 in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2022 and to reassess upwards the targets adopted in 2019 with regard to the key performance indicators. Members reiterated their call to amend its current CO2 reduction plan to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030, using an internal carbon price.

Parliament called for the expansion of voluntary teleworking. It called for a preference to be given to hybrid meetings or fully remote meetings when they do not involve political decision making. A call was made to establish, following COVID-19 business continuity measures, a new flexible framework for the provision of remote interpretation for the post-COVID era.

Members called for requirements to be set to favour low-carbon modes of transport, without hindering without hindering Members in the fulfilment of their mandate and the exclusion of the most harmful modes of transport. They encouraged Parliament's staff to use public transport and called for improved bicycle facilities on Parliament's premises.

Parliament also recalled that tender criteria should also include environmental, social and gender dimensions, with detailed indicators. It called for a gender perspective to be incorporated into the draft estimates in the future.

Transparency and accountability

Parliament called on the Bureau to: (i) introduce changes to the rules governing the GEA by the end of 2021; (ii) immediately implement in full the Plenary’s decisions; (iii) define clear and legally certain

standards regarding in which cases of whistle blower protection can be granted, including for accredited Parliamentary assistants (APAs); (iv) take steps towards full alignment of the allowances granted to officials, other staff and APAs in respect of duty travel between Parliament's three places of work.

Parliament is invited to draw up and publish, in compliance with the Data Protection Regulation, a detailed annual report on interest representatives and other organisations that have had access to Parliament's premises.

Digital infrastructure

Parliament supports the investment in digital infrastructure, including cybersecurity and insisted on Parliament to integrate the environmental issue into the European digital agenda.

Members strongly encouraged that measures be taken to ensure that Parliament’s procurement of software and digital infrastructure, including cloud solutions, avoids vendor lock-in effects through portability and full interoperability requirements, uses of open source software and earmarks procurement for SMEs and start-ups.

In addition, remote voting systems put into place to safeguard continuity of Parliament's work during the COVID-19 pandemic should be unified.

Engaging with citizens

As Parliament is the only EU institution subject to universal suffrage, Members considered it important to provide citizens with a better understanding of Parliament’s activities as well as raising political awareness and promoting EU values. It called for more digital means to directly engage with citizens and for Parliament, through its Liaison Offices to set up and events such as the European Youth Event (EYE) between Members and young people at local level.

Members also reiterated support for multilingualism and the rights of the national, regional and linguistic minorities. They called on to the Secretary-General to analyse the feasibility of the introduction of international sign language interpretation for all plenary debates.

Building projects

Members called for a debate on the functioning of the European Parliament and a reassessment of its space needs in the light of the effects of the pandemic and the expected increase in teleworking, and, if appropriate, for the adaptation of its long-term building strategy. They stressed that careful planning should allow for substantial savings. Members welcomed the Bureau's decision to adopt building passports for the life-cycle management of the building portfolio of Parliament.

Lastly, pointing out that the COVID-19 pandemic is having a negative impact on Parliament's dynamism, Members called on the Bureau to undertake an analysis to find new practices that would make Parliament livelier once the COVID-19 crisis is over.