2000 budget : section III

1998/2186(BUD) - 19/10/1999

The report by Jean-Louis BOURLANGES (EPP/ED, F) for Parliament's first reading on the 2000 general budget was adopted by the committee. The resolution accompanying the committee's amendments to the Council's draft budget was based on Parliament's budget guidelines adopted last spring. It set out priorities and explained the proposals the committee was submitting to plenary. The resolution called on the Commission to put forward a proposal to revise the budget for External Action (Category 4 of the Financial Perspective) laid down in the Interinstitutional Agreement of 6 May and asked the Council to accept a revision of those figures. This would allow sufficient funding to be found for the four "absolute priorities" of the 2000 budget in this area (aid for reconstruction in Kosovo, the fisheries agreement with Morocco, reconstruction aid to Turkey following the earthquake and financial assistance for East Timor). Turning to the other expenditure categories, the committee's amendments would restore the funding for agriculture earmarked in the Commission's preliminary draft budget (PDB), pending the letter of amendment to be presented by the Commission in late October, which would enable the farm budget for 2000 to be based on the latest estimates of real needs in agriculture. For Structural Operations (Category 2 of the Financial Perspective), the committee sought to restore the payment appropriations put forward in the PDB under the new multiannual framework (the 2000-2006 Financial Perspective). It also wished to increase payment appropriations in order to complete current programmes financed under the multiannual plan now coming to an end (the 1993-1999 Financial Perspective), so as to enable outstanding commitments (payments scheduled under previous budget years but not yet paid out) to be liquidated. On Internal Policies (Category 3), the committee reiterated Parliament's wish for priority to be given to the major multiannual programmes: Socrates, Youth, Culture 2000 and Life. As co-legislator with the Council, Parliament wanted to find solutions to the funding of these programmes which represented a balance between their total funding and the annual figures to be entered in the budget. Particular emphasis was placed on measures to boost jobs and SMEs; here the committee had restored the figures of the PDB. It also called for additional funds for public information campaigns and for measures covering the reception and care of refugees. Parliament was asked to ensure that all measures to do with the creation of an area of freedom, security and justice were placed together under a new budget heading. The committee also proposed that appropriate funding be provided for pilot projects and preparatory measures. Lastly, in the area of research, the committee wanted Parliament to ask the Commission to supply full information, broken down by key area, on the management of research activities. On Administrative Expenditure (Category 5), the committee drew on the recommendations of the Committee of Independent Experts to call on the Commission to speed up its administrative reforms. It repeated the call for the Technical Assistance Offices (TAOs) to be gradually disbanded. To improve transparency, it believed administrative expenditure relating to programme management should be clearly identified. This expenditure should be entered separately from the operating appropriations approved for such programmes. It confirmed its backing for the rapid establishment of the EU anti-fraud office (OLAF), for which it provided for 75 extra posts in the year 2000.