2001 budget: EP's estimates

2000/2092(BUD) - 18/04/2000

The committee adopted the report by Markus FERBER (EPP/ED, D) on Parliament's budgetary estimates for 2001. The committee supported a budget of EUR 987.8m as compared to the current year's figure of EUR 965.5m (a rise of 2.28% to take account of the expected inflation rate in 2001 of 2%). These figures would allow Parliament to keep to its self-imposed ceiling of 20% of the total administrative expenditure (Category 5 of the financial perspective) for all the institutions in the year in question. The report called for budgetary rigour to continue, while nevertheless highlighting the increased workload Parliament had faced since the Amsterdam Treaty came into force (largely owing to wider use of the codecision procedure). The committee pointed out that Parliament had to start preparing in 2001 for the consequences of enlargement (including language costs) while not anticipating political decisions which would be taken in due course. In addition, Council and Parliament were asked to cooperate on the adoption of statutes for MEPs and parliamentary assistants. In the light of the Court of Auditors' preliminary observations on the expenditure of the political groups, the committee asked the Bureau and the Secretary-General to ensure complete transparency in the use of those funds for a transition period until the statute for European political parties had entered into force, by entering the appropriations for European political parties under a separate budget heading. On staff policy, the report urged the Secretary-General to compare existing staff profiles with Parliament·s constantly evolving requirements in order to pave the way for any changes needed. It also envisaged additional funding to allow a moderate increase in staff numbers. Lastly, the report called for a continuation of the present policy of purchasing any buildings Parliament needed and supported the policy of paying for them in as short a time as possible to reduce the interest burden to a minimum. As to the refinancing and purchase operation of the Louise Weiss building (LOW), this could only take place once a settlement of the final construction cost had been agreed with the promoters. The committee said that the refinancing scheme should be transparent and legally watertight, especially if Council once again refused the direct financing procedure.