2002 budget: section III, Commission

2000/2324(BUD) - 22/03/2001

The committee adopted the report by Carlo COSTA NEVES (EPP-ED, P) on the guidelines for the 2002 budget procedure. Among the political priorities highlighted by the report were the need to ensure food safety and quality, to restore public confidence, particularly in view of the BSE crisis and to support sustainable agriculture. Another priority was to maintain the EU's commitments in external relations. Turning to matters affecting the budget as a whole ("horizontal questions"), the committee welcomed the application of the activity-based budget (ABB) system to the internal management of the Commission. It reiterated its view that the distinction between compulsory and non-compulsory expenditure should be abolished and that CAP legislation should be brought under the codecision procedure. It also wanted to examine closely the effectiveness of pre-accession expenditure to assess whether it was fulfilling its purpose of preparing the accession candidates for membership. Rapid clarification of potential problems was needed, especially as regards the CAP and cohesion policy, in order to find solutions which were fair to both existing and new Member States. Lastly the committee called for appropriate account to be taken of the needs (in payment appropriations) of headings 1b (rural development), 2 (structural actions) and 7 (pre-accession). Regarding the individual budget headings, the following points should be noted: Heading 1 (Agriculture): the committee said that Parliament would support measures which were designed to help the farming sector cope with the consequences of the BSE crisis, while maintaining budgetary discipline; Heading 2 (Structural actions): the committee stressed the importance of ensuring a balance between commitments and payments throughout the period 2000-2006. It welcomed the fact that appropriations could this year be fully re-entered in the budget, despite the late approval of operational programmes; Heading 3 (Internal policies): the report restated the need for interinstitutional cooperation to make information policies more effective. It repeated its support for the e-learning initiative. It also called for speedier measures to create a European area of freedom, security and justice and to devise a coherent asylum policy in the EU and the candidate countries. The EU should take appropriate measures to combat exclusion, illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings; Heading 4 (External action): the committee looked forward to seeing an up-to-date evaluation of the needs of the whole Balkan region, to be produced by the Commission following publication of the World Bank's assessment of the situation of Yugoslavia. This evaluation should be accompanied by a detailed multi-annual programming proposal for expenditure under this heading. The committee insisted that support for reconstruction in Yugoslavia must not "diminish the attention" accorded to other parts of the western Balkans. It also called for improved implementation of the MEDA programme and development of the "northern dimension". Lastly, it demanded that financial arrangements for any new developments under the European security and defence policy should be transparent.