2002 budget: other sections

2000/2325(BUD) - 15/10/2001

The committee adopted the report by Kathalijne BUITENWEG (Greens/EFA, NL) on the 2002 general budget - other sections. In its comments on the general framework, the committee expressed concern at the increasingly difficult situation in Heading 5 (Administrative Expenditure) and pointed out that new needs had emerged that were not considered in the Financial Perspective, such as developments in the context of the second and third pillars (the European Security and Defence Policy, Eurojust, etc.), and were putting additional pressure on the current margin. New initiatives decided on at European Councils were often adopted without adequate examination of possible budgetary consequences, and this should be remedied in future. The committee also stressed that enlargement preparations would have a major impact on the budgets of all the institutions and that the current ceilings of Heading 5 no longer allowed for the financing of any additional needs. Increased interinstitutional cooperation was needed to achieve economies of scale, and a thorough analysis of the value for money of all institutions was required. The committee also called on all institutions to report to it by February 2002 on how activity-based budgeting (ABB) would be applied in the 2003 budgetary process. Turning to Section I (the EP), the report underlined that a Statute for Members must be adopted as soon as possible, together with new rules governing Members' expenses. It stressed that Parliament had decided to remain within its self-imposed 20% ceiling of heading 5 and was committed to continuing its policy of budgetary rigour. The committee decided to allocate funds for enlargement-related expenditure to cover inter alia the creation of new posts and the refurbishment of the two chambers. In line with the principle of increased interinstitutional cooperation to achieve savings for the European taxpayer, the committee said that Parliament's premises in Brussels could be rendered suitable for hosting European Council meetings, thereby avoiding the need to finance new infrastructure. As far as internal staffing matters were concerned, the report stressed that the special early retirement scheme (the legal basis for which had yet to be adopted) would have to be applied with no impact on the budget. Lastly, the committee decided to increase the funding allocated to visitors' groups, arguing that it was vital to bring Parliament closer to European citizens. Information policy was also a vital tool in this respect and the activities of the relevant directorate-general should be reviewed with a view to improving the use of resources. As far as Section II (Council) was concerned, it welcomed the creation of a new title III (mission-related expenditure) in order to make expenditure on the second pillar more transparent, as Parliament had requested. As for Section IV (Court of Justice), the committee felt that the Court had been given the necessary resources in 2001 and 2002 to solve the problem of the translation backlog and to meet the expected increase in the workload of the Court of First Instance. It called on the Court to submit a report by 1 June 2002 on these two matters. For Section V (Court of Auditors), the committee reiterated its support for financing the second extension to the Court's building and decided to increase appropriations by EUR 1m for the 2002 tranche. The Economic and Social Committee (Section VI) was asked to look carefully at the added value of own-initiative reports before authorising them. Moreover, pressure on the translation service needed to be reduced by stricter rules on the length of texts and the languages used. The Committee was also invited, along with the Committee of the Regions (Section VII) to present a detailed report on the use of funds for missions.