# 2003 budget: section III, Commission

2002/2004(BUD) - 26/02/2002

In adopting the report by Göran FÄRM (PES, S) on the guidelines for the 2003 budget procedure for the Commission, the committee confirmed that preparations for enlargement would be the top priority. It was concerned about the need to finance these preparations within the ceiling of Heading 5 and called on the Commission to evaluate the budgetary consequences resulting from possible staffing and structures duplication, particularly as enlargement would increase the geographical area of the common policies. It reiterated its support for the Commission's administrative reform and stressed its intention of controlling the output over the 2003 budget and ensuring that Parliament's opinions were respected. On the question of institutional reform, the report stressed that the Convention represented an opportunity to introduce the reforms needed to reduce the democratic deficit, by extending codecision as a general rule and doing away with the distinction between compulsory and non-compulsory expenditure. MEPs called on the Commission to launch the mid-term review of Agenda 2000 as soon as possible, with a view to "substantial CAP reform" which would gradually move away from market support towards strengthening rural development, while nevertheless taking account of the difficult situation of certain regions. The Commission was also asked to present proposals which would allow unused funds in subheading 1a (market support) to be transferred to subheading 1b (rural development) during the same budget year. The committee also wanted funding to be used under the SAPARD programme for carrying out rural development measures modelled on the Leader+ programme in the candidate countries. Turning to Heading 4 (external actions), the committee underlined its commitment to providing substantial financial assistance for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, as part of as large an international coalition as possible, under strong political conditions (in accordance with the goals agreed in Bonn). However, it was also concerned to maintain Community aid programmes in other parts of the world and, inter alia, to maintain the level of assistance foreseen by the MEDA and CARDS programmes. The other key points raised by the committee included: concern about the delays in payments under the Structural Funds (Heading 2) and the pre-accession programmes SAPARD and ISPA (Heading 7), support for the fight against terrorism while nevertheless ensuring respect for human rights, and the importance of developing coherent asylum and immigration policies (Heading 3 - internal policies). Lastly, still under Heading 3, the Commission was urged to make the utmost effort to ensure dynamic economic growth and full employment by supporting, inter alia, education, lifelong learning, e-learning, e-Europe and the new information technologies.