

2004 budget: conciliation procedure

2003/2027(BUD) - 17/06/2003

The committee adopted the report by Jan MULDER (ELDR, NL) setting out its priorities for the 2004 EU budget ahead of the forthcoming 1st-reading conciliation between Parliament and Council, scheduled for July 2003. On agriculture spending, the committee deplored the fact that the share of the total budget taken by compulsory expenditure on the common agricultural policy (CAP) had been increased from 40.2% in the 2003 budget to 42.7% in the PDB 2004, thereby going against Parliament's request for the overall proportion of non-compulsory expenditure in the budget to be increased. The committee also urged the Commission to clarify the CAP mid-term review's budgetary impact on the EU general budget. Whilst MEPs were happy with the large increase for health and consumer protection, they also wanted to create a special item for insurance schemes for farmers for emergencies and calamities (such as foot and mouth disease, classical swine fever, avian influenza and similar diseases). The committee also wanted to see resources allocated for the development of environmental indicators and for the promotion of quality schemes in agriculture. Following the creation of a section comprising all expenditure related to the EU's fisheries policy (policy area 11: "Fisheries") under the "Activity-Based Budgeting" (ABB) system, MEPs said that they would look carefully at cuts made by the Commission in research and under the Structural Funds, and would also look into the need to raise payment appropriations for the scrapping fund for fishing vessels (the final decision on the financing of the fund is yet to be made by Council). As regards former heading 4 ("external actions"), the committee pointed out that increased appropriations for common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and European security and defence policy (ESDP) actions had been entered in the 2003 budget on the basis of an agreement whereby Parliament would be informed of and consulted on such actions. MEPs criticised Council for not having informed Parliament as regards the ESDP action in FYROM ("Mission Concordia") and urged it to deliver this information and henceforth to respect the agreement. They added that, in the meantime, the committee would withhold its final decision on the 2004 CFSP expenditure. As for pilot projects and preparatory actions, the committee regretted the small margin earmarked for this area (EUR 82.5m) and called for the introduction of new measures such as the training and exchange of national judges and a network of public institutions responsible for the training of the judiciary in the Member States (as well as the agriculture-related measures listed above). In a bid to boost entrepreneurship, MEPs also voiced concern about unchanged or insufficient funding of budget lines for SMEs compared to 2003 levels, despite the accession of ten new Member States in 2004.