2005 budget: section III, Commission

2004/2001(BUD) - 05/04/2004

The committee adopted the report by Salvador GARRIGA POLLEDO (EPP-ED, E) on the annual policy strategy (APS) for 2005. The committee broadly welcomed the APS as an instrument aiming to combine the budgetary and legislative cycles and reinforce the political visibility of Parliament's budgetary priorities. Regarding the financial framework, it stressed the substantial reduction of the ceilings, in particular for headings 3 (internal policies), 4 (external actions) and 5 (administrative expenditure), and pointed out inter alia that new needs would require new resources. After taking account of the opinions of the other parliamentary committees, the Committee on Budgets made the following recommendations for the various budget headings: - agriculture: in an enlarged Europe, it will be necessary to provide more financing for rural areas, subsidies for young farmers, the fight against animal diseases, and European quality labels; - structural operations: Member States should communicate their forecasts to the Commission. Although implementation of payment appropriations had improved in 2003, there was still a large volume of outstanding commitments; - internal policies: the lack of progress in implementing the Lisbon strategy meant that it was necessary to further develop and strengthen finance and guarantee instruments for SMEs. The common immigration/migration policy needed to be reinforced and the fight against terrorism should be stepped up. There was also a need to ensure the continuity of the LIFE III programme; - external actions: measures to improve the prospects for a free and democratic Iraq must be supported, and assistance must be provided for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. A New Neighbourhood Policy must be established, in particular with regard to the South and the East of the enlarged EU. Efforts for cooperation with other regions of the world (Latin America and the ACP countries) must be maintained and strengthened. Lastly, the Commission should submit a concrete proposal on developing the Parliamentary Assembly of the WTO; - personnel and administration: Parliament would evaluate the Commission's request for 700 new enlargement-related posts on the basis of different criteria (such as the absorption capacity of the Institutions, the geographical balance of posts, the implementation of Parliament's priorities and the process of outsourcing). Policy on agencies must comply with a rigorous budgetary approach. Lastly, MEPs said that the Activity Statements should include, for each area of the budget, measurable objectives and performance indicators as well as a summary of the Court of Auditors' findings and the Discharge Authority's conclusions.