2005 budget: others sections

2004/2002(BUD) - 17/02/2004

The committee adopted the report by Wilfried KUCKELKORN (PES, D) on the guidelines for the sections other than the Commission (including Parliament) for the 2005 budgetary procedure. MEPs pointed out that 2005 would be the first full budgetary year for the Union of 25 Member States, and took note of the financial constraints foreseen for heading 5 (administrative expenditure) in 2005, involving a reduction of EUR 94 million in the ceiling. They therefore called on the institutions to present "realistic requests corresponding to their real needs" in the 2005 estimates, and stressed the importance of interinstitutional cooperation, e.g. between linguistic services, as a way of cutting costs. Turning to the individual sections, the committee decided to reserve its position at this stage regarding Parliament's self-imposed limit of 20% of expenditure under heading 5, in view of a number of uncertainties such as the current lack of agreement on a Members' Statute, the actual outcome of enlargement-related recruitments in 2004 and the development of several building projects. The report pointed out that expenditure relating to the European political parties should remain outside the self-imposed 20% ceiling as it did not count as Parliament's administrative expenditure. On the question of assistance to Members, the committee said that the pilot project on expertise budgets should be assessed on the basis of the experience of the committees concerned before any arrangements are made for allocating research envelopes to parliamentary committees. The report also underlined the importance of web-publishing in disseminating information, including internet broadcasting of plenary sittings, and said that video-conferencing should be used to a greater extent. Lastly, while stressing the importance of multilingualism, MEPs said that the costs of the language regime must remain in proportion to the benefits. The Council was asked to consider presenting its estimates with the PDB instead of its 1st reading, in order to increase transparency. MEPs also said that Parliament would continue to monitor the Council's operational budget, while respecting the "Gentleman's Agreement" as regards administrative expenditure. The Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions were urged to pursue "budgetary rigour" in their estimates and to improve cooperation. Lastly, MEPs noted that the Ombudsman had to be able to handle complaints from citizens in all languages.