2000 budget : section III

1998/2186(BUD) - 16/12/1999

In adopting the report by Mr Jean-Louis BOURLANGES (EPP/ED, F), the European Parliament approved its second reading a budget for the year 2000 of EUR 93,2 billion in commitment appropriations (that is a reduction of 1,37%) and EUR 89,3 billion in payment (that is a rise of 4,48%). In comparison with 1999, there is a reduction of 3,7% of the budget. It should be noted that the framework of the budgetary discipline is respected and that the accent is put on strengthening rural development, research policy, and culture. Pre-accession aid rises from EUR 1,3 billion to EUR 3 billion. The 2000 budget, as voted in its second reading, includes many positive elements from the Parliament's point of view: - technical and administrative reform of the technical assistance offices; - financing of "Kosovo" expenditure above the ceiling of heading 4, which permits the avoiding of the redeployment of appropriations at the interior of this budget heading thanks to the use of the flexibility instrument (see procedure 1999/0210/ACI); - a rise in payment appropriations in order to gradually reduce the gap that exists between the inflated commitment appropriations and the inadequate payment appropriations; - the adoption of certain measures (reconstruction of East Timor, aid to Turkey, future fishing Agreement with Morocco, distribution of milk in schools, distribution of food products to the least well off...) close to the Parliament's heart. On the other hand, the Parliament is frustrated concerning long-term aid to Kosovo. In fact, the Parliament sought an exact, realistic and serious assessment of needs of the province; it did not get this. It also wanted a multi-annual commitment from the Council; it did not get this. In addition, it sought, in the long-term, a revision of the financial perspectives; it obtained a declaration promising this, but not a firm commitment from the Council. In this case, the European Parliament succeeded with respect to the use of the flexibility instrument but this will only be valid for a year (the year 2000). By 2001, the European Parliament will no longer be able to use this flexibility instrument for Kosovo. A revision of financial perspectives will be necessary from 2001. Thus, it accepts the compromise proposed by the Council which seeks to finance the reconstruction of Kosovo to the amount of EUR 360 million in the year 2000, by leaving a margin of EUR 20 million under the ceiling of heading 4 and undertakes to proceed, if necessary, to a redeployment of appropriations of EUR 40 million. Lastly, it calls on the Commission to present by April 2000 at the latest a very clear evaluation of the financial needs of Kosovo and for the whole of the Western Balkans, as well as the consequences of this evaluation in budgetary terms (in particular an eventual revision of the financial perspectives).