2005 budget: section III, Commission

2004/2001(BUD) - 22/04/2004 - Budgetary text adopted by Parliament

In adopting the report by Salvador GARRIGA POLLEDO (EPP-ED, E), the European Parliament gives a broad welcome to the new method of presenting an Annual Policy Strategy as a way of bringing together the legislative and budgetary cycles and making political priorities more visible. (Please refer to the previous document).

Parliament notices that in the presentation of the three priorities included in the APS for 2005 - competitiveness and cohesion, security and European citizenship, and external responsibility: neighbourhood and partnership - the Commission is setting similar priorities to those laid down in its Communication on the financial framework beyond 2006.

Parliament is aware that, as a result of the additional budgetary constraints caused by the adjustment of the ceilings in heading 3,4 and 5 of the Financial Perspective, the budgetary authority may have to review the priorities set out in the Commission's annual policy strategy. It expects the Commission to re-allocate budgetary and human resources in accordance with the decisions of the budgetary authority.

On agriculture, Parliament notes that there should be greater support for young farmers, for the rural environment, for the fight against animal diseases and for European quality labels - all this is particularly important in the light of EU enlargement.

With regard to structural operations, Parliament states that the Member States should provide their forecasts for 2005; while there has been an improvement in the implementation of structural fund payment appropriations, there is a persistently large volume of outstanding commitments.

Concerning internal policies, Parliament is worried by the recent assessment by the Commission, in the progress report on implementing the Lisbon strategy. It highlights the need to concentrate its efforts and, within the 2005 budget, prioritise the key Lisbon strategy measures with budget relevance in order to speed up the achievement of the objectives set. It reiterates its support for Community measures targeted at SMEs especially in view of promoting competitiveness in a fully integrated single market and in the pursuit of the Lisbon strategy. Parliament urges that finance and guarantee instruments for SMEs be further developed and strengthened. It also emphasises the need, following the accession of 10 new Member States, to ensure the continuity of the LIFE III programme and to bridge the gap between the expiry of LIFE and the new financial perspectives. A high priority must also be given to the Commission initiatives concerning Natura 2000.

On the issue of external actions, the Parliament is concerned at the current situation in Iraq and considers that measures to improve the prospects for a free and democratic Iraq must be supported. Aware of the serious budgetary constraints, it intends to carefully assess the possibility of recourse to the Interinstitutional Agreement instruments.

Fundamental support for establishing a New Neighbourhood Policy is expressed by the Parliament which helps to provide a sphere of prosperity and stability to the South and the East of the current EU borders. It emphasises that in the context of the Partnership between the EU and the Mediterranean it is necessary to strengthen all measures contributing to the full development of the Barcelona process. These objectives must be equally pursued in relation to the Eastern neighbours of the EU, with a view to establishing the Northern dimension.

Parliament stresses that the external priorities of the Union are not solely dependent on geographical proximity, and that the strategic efforts for co-operation and solidarity with other regions of the world must be maintained and strengthened; in this context, emphasises that the bilateral and multilateral relations between the EU and Latin America must be reinforced, especially in the light of the Third EU-Latin America Summit

Lastly, Parliament points out, in a context in which the significance of the EU as a Global Partner must be strengthened, that steps in the direction of establishing a European common diplomacy and towards the creation of a European external action service would directly contribute to the achievement of this goal. It equally notes that it intends to analyse future needs and current implementation of the CFSP, taking into account the major financial increase granted under this section for 2004.