2006 budget: orientations, other sections

2004/2271(BUD) - 21/02/2005

The committee adopted the report by Valdis DOMBROVSKIS(EPP-ED, LV) on the guidelines for the administrative budgets of the institutions and bodies other than the Commission under the 2006 budgetary procedure.

In its general remarks on political priorities, the committee said that the key issues included the bedding down of the 2004 enlargement, the need to make a "dynamic start" on preparations for the 2007 enlargement and making the best use of available funds. It pointed out that the majority of the new staff from the 10 new Member States would be recruited by 2006 and that training would have to be organised for them. It also asked the other institutions to provide a budgetary impact assessment for the projected 2007 enlargement by 1 September 2005 at the latest.

Turning to the individual institutions, the committee first looked at the challenges facing Parliament and supported the requirement for "sufficient numbers of qualified interpreters and translators to be made available for all official languages to enable all Members to participate actively in Parliament's work". As information and communication policy had a key role to play in the crucial task of bringing Parliament closer to citizens, MEPs stressed the importance of audiovisual facilities and the need to improve webcasting and to make Parliament's website more user-friendly. The role of the external offices should also be further developed. The committee also felt that "significantly more resources" should be allocated to help Parliament cope with its increased responsibility in legislative decision-making. It added that "the absence of a single working place results in significant extra costs for Parliament's budget" to the tune of EUR 200 million per year. On the situation of MEPs' assistants, the report supported the creation of a single set of conditions, not least to improve financial transparency.

Among the points raised with regard to the other institutions: the Council was urged to apply the same rigour in establishing its own budget as it applied to the budgets of other institutions;

the Court of Justice was asked to use its resources more efficiently in order to speed up legal procedures; the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions were reminded of the importance of budgetary rigour and financial control; and the increase in activities by the Ombudsman's office was noted.