

2006 budget: the European Parliament's estimates

2005/2012(BUD) - 20/04/2005

The committee adopted the report by Valdis DOMBROVSKIS(EPP-ED, LV) on the European Parliament's estimates for the 2006 financial year. The key priorities for the coming year were identified as: proper preparation for the 2007 enlargement, consolidation of the 2004 enlargement and the reinforcement of information and language services.

The report noted that the cost of pre-accession needs for Bulgaria and Romania had been estimated at EUR 13.8m, covering costs related to observers from the two countries as well as linguistic and support staff. It expected this amount to be "fine-tuned" at first reading. As for the 2004 enlargement, the committee expressed its concern that a high number of posts for officials of the new EU10 had still to be allocated, and regretted the delays in recruitment procedures.

Regarding Parliament's information and communication policy, MEPs noted that the Bureau of the EP was set to come up with proposals on the institution's overall communication strategy. A better link with citizens should be ensured by the EP's external offices, and the committee expected appropriations to be entered in next year's budget for external offices in Bulgaria and Romania . It also reiterated its longstanding view that the Europarl website was an important tool in Parliament's information policy, and should be made more user-friendly. It added that citizens and the media should have easy access to an improved Legislative Observatory on the EP website.

The report said that Members of the European Parliament should be given enhanced support from linguistic services to allow them to work in their own languages. Translation capacities should therefore be increased, while interpretation facilities should be available to a greater extent for political groups and working parties. Synergies with other institutions should also be explored.

The report also underscored the importance of personal assistants for the work of MEPs and called for a statute for assistants, for the sake of budgetary transparency. Lastly, it called for strict enforcement of the new rules on smoking on Parliament's premises.