2006 budget: Section III, Commission

2005/2001(BUD) - 13/10/2005

The committee adopted the report by Gianni PITTELLA (PES, IT) on the EU's draft general budget for 2006 (Section III - Commission). MEPs reiterated Parliament's commitment to meeting the key political objectives for 2006 as well as "building a credible bridge into the new financial perspective". They restored many of the across-the-board cuts which the Council had made in July 2005 and pledged to increase budgetary commitments for the Lisbon strategy, information policy and external actions and to step up the focus on research, education and youth programmes.

- Heading 1: agriculture and rural development: the committee proposed a ground-breaking budgetary amendment aiming to scrap the EUR 1 billion subsidy for tobacco growers; a part of the money saved should be used for EU anti-smoking campaigns. It also welcomed the "modulation" transfer of 650m to the rural development sub-heading, which continues the process of reforming the Common Agricultural Policy, and underlined the importance of innovation and renewal, including training and measures for young farmers.

- Heading 2: structural actions: the committee noted the large gap between the Member States' payment forecasts for this heading and the Commission's PDB and therefore decided to increase payment appropriations to a level of EUR 39.2 billion. It also urged the Council to agree to a solution to solve the problem of financing the PEACE programme for Northern Ireland .

- Heading 3: internal policies: MEPs wanted to add no less than EUR 200 million in payment appropriations to a range of budget headings for the Lisbon strategy which the Council reduced at first reading. They argued that the 2006 budget was a bridge to a new programming period and should therefore, in line with tradition, anticipate the higher funding planned from 2007 onwards for the key policy areas. They accordingly reinforced a set of important budget lines for research and innovation, SMEs, competitiveness, Socrates, Youth, development of the internal market, Life, Intelligent Energy, and Leonardo da Vinci. The committee also increased the funding allocated to EU information policy and emphasised the urgent need for the Commission to publish its White Paper on information and communication policy.

- Heading 4: EU external policy: once again, the committee emphasised that the EU had taken on new responsibilities in this area over the past five years without any parallel adjustment of the necessary financial resources. MEPs rejected the Council's cuts and decided to enter appropriations at a level which would safeguard Parliament's traditional priorities (such as regional programmes and promoting human rights around the world) while making room for the new priorities such as the reconstruction of Iraq (EUR 200 million for 2006) and tsunami-hit regions (EUR 180 million).

As for the CFSP, the committee proposed to deny Council its proposed increase for two additional special envoys, saying that Parliament should be consulted for CFSP expenditure coming from the EU budget, on the basis of an agreement struck in 2002 with Council to exchange information in this area.

- Other headings: for Heading 5, the committee was keen to re-establish the 46 posts requested by the Commission which had been cut by the Council in July, but it attached conditions to its support. As regards Heading 7, MEPs insisted on greater budgetary transparency in relation to Community assistance to candidate or pre-candidate countries.