2007 budget: Commission's annual strategic priorities

2006/2020(BUD) - 25/04/2006

The committee adopted the report by James ELLES (EPP-ED, UK) on the Commission's Annual Policy Strategy for 2007. MEPs expressed concern about "the visible discrepancy between the challenges which the European Union is facing and the appropriations that might be available under the relevant headings of a backward-looking financial perspective 2007-2013 to respond effectively to these challenges, in particular for competitiveness, research and innovation, which the Council and Commission have themselves labelled as priorities". The committee noted the Commission's strategic objectives as set out in its APS document "Boosting trust through action"; although sharing its analysis, it strongly criticised the Commission for its complacency and laid-back attitude in setting out the nature of the challenges facing the European Union. The committee believed, for example, that insufficient attention had been given by the Commission to the vast and very rapid changes underway in the global economy, notably in emerging economies such as China and India.

MEPs in the committee urged the Member States and the Commission to pay special attention to those areas that form the basis of a healthy modern economy, such as knowledge, skills, research and development, innovation, information society technologies and energy. The report recalled the importance of strengthening the capacities of the "knowledge-triangle" (education, research and innovation) and reinforcing the links among them. It added that all policies in Member States and at EU level should be geared to supporting research and innovation wherever possible. The committee strongly supported the measures for the development and completion of the European information society, as this would promote inclusion, better public services and quality of life. MEPs stressed that, in the face of increasing global competition, the ability of employers and employees alike as well as of companies as a whole to adjust sufficiently to current changes would be decisive. In this context the development of policies of and for the future was of vital importance and the Globalisation Fund, as currently under discussion, might be a first step in the right direction.

The committee said that the setting up of a new European Institute of Technology could undermine or overlap with existing structures and may therefore not be the most effective use of funds in this context. It shared the Council's view that the financial framework setting up mid-term political priorities needed to be adjusted to a fast-developing world in order to allow the EU to maintain its political and economic position both at internal level, so as to meet the Lisbon objectives and, at external level, so as to meet the Millennium Goals to achieve a successful Neighbourhood Policy and to take leadership in the globalisation process. Lastly, the committee stressed that at internal and external level, the Common Agricultural Policy should be adjusted to the future needs, and drew attention in this context to compulsory co-financing, increased market orientation, a level playing field and the abolition of export subsidies as favourable options.