2007 budget: other sections

2006/2018B(BUD) - 12/10/2006

The committee adopted the report by Louis GRECH (PES, MT) on the EU's 2007 draft general budget for the European Parliament, the Council, the Court of Justice, the Court of Auditors, the Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions, the European Ombudsman and the European Data Protection Supervisor.

In its general remarks, the committee agreed with the Council that "budgetary discipline and productivity gain should constitute key principles for all institutions", but did not support the Council's plans for across-the-board reduction, arguing instead that budgetary requests should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. It was in favour of continuing the policy of purchasing offices and buildings, while warning that this should not be "solely for the sake of acquiring property".

MEPs noted the problems experienced by the institutions in acquiring staff with particular professional skills and the growing trend towards hiring temporary staff and outsourcing certain services. They said that it would be "advisable" to address the policy to be followed by institutions in these areas. The report also highlighted the need to restructure the institutions' translation services, particularly the number and length of texts to be translated, and called on the institutions to present a report on the cost efficiency of their translation services.

The committee also felt that the institutions should provide more information on the performance of their core tasks in order to justify the consumption of their financial resources, and expressed disappointment at the lack of commitment of some institutions to redeploying staff. Finally, it reiterated previous calls for cooperation between the institutions to create synergy and contribute towards financial savings and greater efficiency.

- Section I - Parliament: the Bureau was asked to re-address the self-imposed ceiling of 20% of administrative expenditure (heading 5) in the coming years, "taking into account the development and consequential requirements of Parliament for 2009 and beyond". The committee recalled that the costs of having three places of work accounted for approximately 16% of Parliament's total expenditure and called for a report on the number of officials who are required in Strasbourg during the plenary session. MEPs reaffirmed their commitment to developing "an effective and user-friendly information strategy" to improve the relationship between Parliament and European citizens. They also decided to create two new budget lines for the Visitors' Centre and the Web-TV in order to enhance financial transparency and accountability for these two important areas, and to allocate extra funding for the visitors' programme. On staffing levels, the report said that "a leaner organisational structure has to be created, principally by streamlining new posts, prioritising objectives and the discontinuation of activities which are not core activities". On buildings policy, the committee decided to maintain EUR 50 million in the reserve for provisional appropriations for buildings to cover Parliament's property investment.

- **Section IV - Court of Justice**: the committee recommended creating 115 permanent posts for Romania and Bulgaria. It also said that the setting of a new Civil Service Tribunal should have helped reduce the congestion in other tribunals and called on the Court of Justice to report before March 2007 on the impact of this new Tribunal in terms of cost for buildings, staff and other expenses.

- **Section V - Court of Auditors**: the committee recommended creating 41 permanent posts for Romania and Bulgaria. It also restored funding cut by the Council for IT resources.

- **Section VI - European Economic and Social Committee:** the EESC was asked to produce an annual report on the impact of the advisory work that it performs for Parliament, the Council and the Commission. MEPs also agreed to the creation of 6 permanent posts for Romania and Bulgaria and increased the funding proposed by the Council by 1.12%, excluding the costs related to enlargement.

- **Section VII - Committee of the Regions**: the committee noted the non-request for new posts related to enlargement to Bulgaria and Romania and increased the funding proposed by the Council by 2.53%, excluding the costs related to enlargement.

- **Section VIII(A) - Ombudsman**: the committee increased the appropriations proposed by the Council by EUR 150 000 to top up the funding for translation.

- **Section VIII(B) - European Data Protection Supervisor**: the committee wanted to see more precise estimates, particularly in terms of staff and new requirements. In order to maintain the level of development of the EDPS, MEPs increased the funding proposed by the Council by 38.28% (without taking into account the amending budget).