2007 budget: European Parliament's estimates

2006/2022(BUD) - 01/06/2006 - Budgetary text adopted by Parliament

The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by Louis **GRECH** (PES, MT) on the estimates of revenue and expenditure of the European Parliament for the financial year 2007 and agreed at this stage to a total amount of EUR 1 377 700 000 for Parliament's 2007 estimates. Parliament reserved, however, its final position until its first reading of the 2007 Draft Budget in the autumn.

It pointed out that Parliament's Bureau had proposed that 2007 should be a year of spending consolidation with no major new projects. The enlargement of the Union remained a key political priority, and information policy, assistance to Members and the policy to purchase buildings permanently occupied at the three working places would constitute the other priorities of the 2007 Budget.

Contextual framework of the 2007 budget: Parliament stressed the need to carry out a cost-benefit analysis for the Institution to assess the implications of retaining the self-imposed ceiling of Heading 5. It decided that in the event that the ceiling of 20% is retained, the 20% should constitute the upper limit of the Budget, and reserved therefore, its position on the 20% limit until the first reading. An analysis of the draft estimates shows that the main cost centres remain unchanged from previous years and relate in particular to expenditure on staff, property, information, Members and enlargement. Parliament requested that certain principles of sound financial management be taken into account in the stocktaking exercise, including identification of activities that have little added value, and an increased use of activity based budgeting. Sufficient funding should be allocated in areas where political decisions necessitate greater financial commitment, as in the case of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO, in order to avoid amending budgets and transfers as much as possible.

Enlargement:A total allocation of EUR 48 000 000 will be entered against the relevant budget items for enlargement-related expenditure. This amount represents approximately a 50% increase over the 2006 budget to be allocated to the enlargement process of Bulgaria and Romania assuming that the date of accession would be 1 January 2007.

Parliament Secretariat: With the exception of enlargement-related posts and a limited number of specialised posts, no further creation of new posts shall take place in 2007. Over the last few years there had been a significant increase in the level of employment covering both enlargement and non-enlargement posts, and Parliament maintained its opinion that the present staff complement was sufficient to cater for all the Institution's requirements.

Information policy:EUR 20 000 000 were put in reserve to be used in 2006 for the start-up of three major information projects, namely Parliament's Web TV, the Visitors' centre and Audiovisual facilities. Parliament wanted more information on actual and planned expenditure. It stressed its disappointment at the unjustifiable delays in the overall improvement in the Visitors' programme, for which an amount of EUR 21 318 000 was being allocated, and expected that immediate action would be taken to resolve all pending issues. Whilst Parliament welcomed the more user-friendly look of Parliament's website, it felt that access to and navigation within the website could be improved, in particular for the non-expert public.

Property: Parliament notedthat a number of essential issues relating to the purchase of the WIC and SDM buildings in Strasbourg had not as yet been adequately justified. Should negotiations be resumed, the final package agreed upon should give value for money to the Institution. Pending the outcome of these negotiations, Parliament decided not to enter EUR 50 000 000 under the relevant Item, and to transfer this amount to a building reserve to be created.

Security and Surveillance of Buildings: An amount of EUR 35 321 916 is budgeted for this, representing an increase of 9.9% over the amount foreseen in the 2006 Budget which was mostly due to an increase in the number of buildings. Parliament considered that the location of the European Parliament in Brussels is in many regards advantageous for the city. The Belgian State and the municipal authorities of the Brussels area should be asked to play a more prominent role in ensuring the security of the Members, staff and other persons working in the Parliament and in the surveillance of Parliament's area.

Multilingualism: multilingualism and the geographical dispersion of Parliament's activities account for about 48% of the expenditure in the preliminary draft estimates, which corresponds to an amount of EUR 673 000 000. Parliament stated that multilingualism is a sine qua non condition for the Institution and its Members, but recognised the high cost involved in maintaining such a vast translation and interpretation service, and the difficulty of controlling the expenditure involved. It urged the Secretary-General to ensure that the Code of Multilingualism is observed by all stakeholders, especially in the planning of meeting slots. The Bureau needed to take a prudent approach when deciding the introduction of extra working languages other than official languages, especially when it implies an additional cost for Parliament.