2007 budget: other sections

2006/2018B(BUD) - 26/10/2006 - Budgetary text adopted by Parliament

The European Parliament adopted a resolution drafted by Louis **GRECH** (PSE, AT), and approved the budget of the other institutions, whilst refusing to align itself with Council on across-the-board reduction. It recalled that 2007 is the first year of the new financial framework (2007-2013), for which the ceiling of heading 5 (Administrative expenditure) has been set at EUR 7 115 000 000 at current prices but that after Council's decision the draft budget has a margin of EUR 285 190 000 below the ceiling of heading 5 for 2007. It decided to leave a margin under the ceiling of heading 5, and recommended restoring EUR 30 389 840 out of the EUR 47 812 781 reduction made by Council on the budget of the other institutions (excluding the Commission).

Overall, Parliament felt that the principle of budgetary discipline should be applied to all the institutions, but that budgetary requests should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis which would result in a clear and more precise picture of the real needs and priorities of each institution. It expected the institutions to ensure that policies and activities financed by the taxpayers provide real added-value for citizens and that budget appropriations are used in accordance with the principles of sound financial management and cost-effectiveness. It therefore decided to limit the budget increase of 2007 to 4.79%, excluding enlargement costs.

With regard to the buildings policy of the European institutions, Parliament felt that, under normal circumstances, the policy of purchasing buildings should be continued especially since, over the years, this policy has served the European Parliament's interests well. However, the institutions should present for each future acquisition proposal an indication of the additional related costs that would result in the medium term. Parliament recommended the implementation of a policy of multiannual property investment planning instead of an annual plan.

Parliament also felt that it was important to address the policy regarding outsourcing and recruitment of temporary contract workers, in view of the he ever-increasing trend in the hiring of temporary staff in certain technical fields. In the coming years institutions should ensure that a re-deployment policy is an integral part of the planning procedure when preparing the annual estimates, thus ensuring that human resources requested are in line with operational requirements. Parliament agreed with Council's policy to accept all new posts related to enlargement. On the other hand, it did not agree with Council's decision to increase the "standard abatement" to a relatively high level and base it on the current rate of vacant posts.

Parliament recommended forms of cooperation between institutions which are bound to create synergy and contribute towards financial savings and greater efficiency, whilst helping the citizens to better understand the role of the EU in their everyday activity. There needs to be a more harmonised and standard approach when drafting estimates, including clear and precise justifications, as this would facilitate their analysis.

Parliament made several specific demands with regard to each of the institutions, and certain amendments were passed in Plenary session in respect of the Parliament’s own budget.

European Parliament: after careful examination of Parliament's budgetary requirements, Parliament felt that the final level should be set at EUR 1 397 460 174 corresponding to a 5.74% increase over the 2006 budget. It called on the Bureau to re-address the self-imposed ceiling of 20% of heading 5 in the coming years, taking into account the development and consequential requirements of Parliament for 2009 and beyond. It regretted that the budgetary authority has had no feedback from the Administration on its request relating to the minimisation of costs in areas experiencing unnecessary expenditure as a result of

having three places of work, recalling that the costs of this geographical dispersion represent approximately 16% of the total expenditure of Parliament. The Administration was requested to submit a report on the number of officials who are required in Strasbourg during the Plenary Session.

With regard to buildings policy, Parliament noted that the Bureau has proposed to enter an additional EUR 19 million in the reserve for buildings over and above the EUR 50 million requested in Parliament's estimates, but felt that the amount of EUR 19 million is not at this stage a realistic requirement. It decided to maintain the EUR 50 million in the reserve for provisional appropriations for buildings to cover the institution's property investment. The Administration was asked, especially after the "Strasbourg experience", to apply more stringent procedures when purchasing buildings, and to draw up a report examining whether it might be feasible to establish a European Building Authority charged with responsibility for the construction and maintenance of the buildings of the EU Institutions and bodies.

On information policy, Parliament passed an EPP-ED amendment, re-affirming its policy that it should continue its efforts to develop an effective and user-friendly information strategy with the main objective of improving the relationship between the institution and European citizens. This can only be achieved on the basis of a report on a global concept for information and communication with citizens and after analysis of the added value of each information tool.

It noted the Bureau's proposals to release EUR 6 700 000 from the reserve for information and communication policy earmarked for Web TV, and decided maintain the EUR 6 700 000 allocated by the Bureau for Web TV in the reserve, as well as the 5 posts relating to the project, until the prototype, the content and the cost of the project are presented to the budgetary authority for its final decision. Parliament regretted the unnecessary delays in the implementation of the overall improvement of the visitors" programme and reiterated its call for immediate action to resolve the sensitive issue regarding the under-spending of EUR 5 million relating to the programme. It accepted an EPP-ED amendment that the reception of visitors' groups should be done under the best conditions, and it requested the Administration to study carefully practical arrangements such as access to the new Visitors' Centre, the conditions for visiting the Plenary Chamber and the availability of meeting rooms. It agreed with the following Bureau proposals regarding various appropriations on vistors and confirmed the "Citizens Agora" initiative for a trial period.

On enlargement, Parliament confirmed the decision to enter an allocation of EUR 48 million for enlargement related expenditure (Romania and Bulgaria) and called on the Administration to ensure that enlargement-related recruitment processes do not experience the same delays as witnessed in the enlargement to the EU 10.

On the question of multilingualism, Parliament acknowledged its importance for the work of Members and for citizens, and pointed out that it represents approximately 33% of the total expenditure of Parliament. More discipline and control are necessary to administer this service effectively. It approved appropriations for the Irish language (EUR 412,000 for 2007).

On the question of assistance and services to Members, Parliament welcomed the report on the final assessment of the "Raising the game" exercise, and agreed that the main objectives of improving the support provided to Parliament's bodies and Members have, on the whole, been achieved. It gave its full support for the adoption of a real and meaningful statute for Members" assistants.

Other institutions: Parliament’s remaining recommendations with regard to the other institutions conformed largely to those of its competent committee. (Please see the summary of committee proceedings.)