

2004 budget: others sections

2003/2002(BUD) - 09/10/2003

The committee adopted the report by Neena GILL (PES, UK) on the 2004 budget (sections other than the Commission). In its general remarks the committee insisted that, in view of the large increase in expenditure on buildings for the EU institutions expected from 2007 onwards as a result of enlargement, the margins under Heading 5 should be used to finance this expenditure in advance and thereby relieve pressure in future. On Section I (Parliament), the committee noted the high cost for external translation of the Verbatim Report of Proceedings, and said that savings should be sought on the systematic translation of all plenary interventions into all languages whilst maintaining the democratic right of MEPs and citizens, for example by the translation of interventions upon request. On Parliament's buildings policy, MEPs reiterated their support for purchasing Parliament's premises and for the "Europe House" framework. They said that the policy of rationalising offices should continue to be promoted so as to avoid duplication of functions and cost between Commission and EP information offices in the acceding countries and in the Member States, including the regional offices. The committee endorsed the creation of 355 posts in Parliament to cater for enlargement. Lastly, it wanted to increase funding for the Internet broadcasting of plenary sittings and meetings and stressed the need to modernise Parliament's website and provide the necessary know-how for web-publishing. On Section II (Council), it welcomed the transfer of expenditure on EU Special Representatives from the Council's to the Commission's budget, as Parliament had consistently requested, but pointed out that the Council continued to include operational activities and expenditure in its budget. The committee also asked the Council to re-examine the usefulness of maintaining representations in Geneva and New York. In accordance with the Gentleman's Agreement between the Council and Parliament, MEPs decided not to amend the budget concerning the Council's administrative expenditure. Lastly, the committee made a number of recommendations relating to posts for the Court of Justice (Section IV) and Court of Auditors (Section V). It added that the Economic and Social Committee (Section VI) and the Committee of the Regions (Section VII) should make the best use of the funding entered in the budget in order to cope with their enlargement needs. MEPs expressed concern that Parliament had been unable to grant discharge for the Committee of the Regions' 2001 accounts and called on the CoR to take steps to ensure transparency and sound financial management. Moreover, the ESC should ensure that funding for travel and subsistence allowances, attendance at meetings, etc. was used "in a transparent way and in accordance with sound financial management".