

2008 budget: the European Parliament's estimates

2007/2018(BUD) - 21/05/2007

The committee adopted the report by Ville ITÄLÄ (EPP-ED, FI) on the draft estimates of the European Parliament's revenue and expenditure (2008). The committee recalled that the 2008 budget should be a 'budget for the EU tax-payer', aimed at responsible budgetary behaviour on the part of all actors involved in the process, with decisions on financial resources based on "solid reasoning".

The committee proposed to set the budget at EUR 1 427 400 000, representing an increase of 2.1% over the 2007 budget (which is EUR 64 000 000 lower than the draft estimates set by the Bureau). It said that until "concrete information" is available on certain projects, a precise amount cannot be entered against the corresponding budget lines. In that context, the committee proposed to leave a token entry ("pm") in Chapter 10 4 ("Reserve for information and communication policy") and in Chapter 10 6 ("Reserve for priority projects under development").

The committee took note of the proposals to allocate an overall budget of EUR 41 800 000 to information policy, which will include EUR 10 300 000 for an awareness campaign with a view to the 2009 European elections, EUR 9 000 000 for implementation of the Parliamentary Television Channel (WebTV), EUR 15 700 000 for the Audiovisual Centre and EUR 6 800 000 to complete the construction of the Visitors' Centre.

The committee said that the development of a specific programme, similar to that for Visitors' groups, focusing on small and local media would be of interest to Members as one of the most efficient means of raising EU citizens' awareness of the European Parliament's activities. It called on the Quaestors to examine the feasibility of providing each Member with proper means for inviting local journalists to come to the EP.

On multilingualism, the report expressed concern at the fact that translations of documents were not always available in all languages for debates in committees and insisted that an efficient translation system must be preserved in order to ensure the equal treatment of all Members.

With regard to buildings policy, MEPs in the committee stressed that a global approach must be taken when deciding on renting, purchasing or fitting-out buildings and that every decision must take into account the longer-term financial consequences.

Among other points raised, the committee noted that the increase in IT expenditure over the last four years had reached 28%. It said that the current strategy was useful in modernising Parliament's IT systems, enhancing the services provided to users and developing a new internet website, but stressed that the number of projects had multiplied and that the Directorate on Information Technologies (DIT) should make proposals to rationalise its costs. It also noted that the estimate for telecommunications charges was approximately the same as for 2005, whereas the actual costs have been falling annually since 2004 owing to the use of new technologies and general price reductions in the sector, and in 2006 were EUR 2 100 000 below the estimates. The Secretary-General was urged to report to the Budgets Committee on the use of current VOIP technologies to reduce telephone costs.

On staff policy, the report said that efforts could be made to limit the number of staff missions to Strasbourg and, where possible, to make better use of new technologies such as video conferencing. Lastly, the committee stressed the need to reinforce the relationship between Members of the European

Parliament and Members of EU national parliaments and democratically elected national parliaments of third countries, and affirmed its willingness to support the programme for information exchanges with national parliaments (Item 3249) once it had received further detailed information.