Tuesday 23 October 2012

General budget of the European Union for the financial year 2013 - all sections

P7_TA(2012)0359

European Parliament resolution of 23 October 2012 on the Council position on the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2013 - all sections (12749/2012 – C7-0233/2012 – 2012/2092(BUD))

(2014/C 68 E/09)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to Article 314 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and Article 106a of the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community,

— having regard to Council Decision 2007/436/EC, Euratom of 7 June 2007 on the system of the European Communities' own resources [1],

— having regard to Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities [2],

— having regard to the Interinstitutional Agreement of 17 May 2006 between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline and sound financial management [3],

— having regard to its resolution of 14 March 2012 on general guidelines for the preparation of the 2013 budget – Section III – Commission [4],

— having regard to its resolution of 29 March 2012 on Parliament's estimates of revenue and expenditure for the financial year 2013 [5],

— having regard to the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2013, which the Commission adopted on 25 April 2012 (COM(2012)0300),

— having regard to its resolution of 4 July 2012 on the mandate for the trilogue on the 2013 draft budget [6],

— having regard the European Council's decision of 28 June 2012 to create a "Compact for growth and jobs",

— having regard to the position on the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2013, which the Council adopted on 24 July 2012 and forwarded to Parliament on 14 September 2012 (12749/2012 – C7-0233/2012),

— having regard to Letter of amendment No 1/2013 to the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2013, presented by the Commission on 19 October 2012,

— having regard to Rule 75b of its Rules of Procedure,

[1] OJ L 163, 23.6.2007, p. 17.
[2] OJ L 248, 16.9.2002, p. 1.
[3] OJ C 139, 14.6.2006, p. 1.
[4] Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0077.
[5] Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0109.
[6] Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0289.

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— having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgets and the opinions of the other committees concerned (A7-0311/2012),

A. whereas the priorities expressed in the opinions given by its specialised committees, as well as those which emerged on the occasion of the meetings with the Rapporteurs specialising in budgetary matters, have as far as possible been taken into account in the present resolution and in Parliament's vote on the amendments to the budget,

Section III

1. Recalls that its priorities for the 2013 budget, as detailed in its above-mentioned resolution of 4 July 2012 on the mandate for the trilogue, consist in support for sustainable growth, competitiveness and employment, particularly for SMEs and youth; points out once again that the Commission's draft budget (DB) reflects Parliament's priorities as regards the programmes and initiatives to be reinforced towards these objectives;

2. Is fully aware of the severe difficulties arising from the state of the national economies and of the need for a responsible and realistic reading; cannot accept, however, the approach according to which the EU budget is made the source for possible savings with the same proportion and logic applied to the national budgets, given their substantial difference in nature, objectives and structure; highlights that decreasing EU resources will surely result in a lack of investment and liquidity in the Member States, thus aggravating the problems they are facing;

3. Underlines that the EU budget is to be seen as a complementary instrument of support for the Member States' economies, capable of concentrating initiatives and investment in areas strategic for growth and the creation of jobs as well as and of bringing about a leverage effect in sectors overcoming national boundaries; highlights that such a role is legitimised by the same Member States, who, together with Parliament, are responsible for the decisions from which most of the EU law stems;

4. Underlines the strong synergetic effects of the EU budget and thus its ongoing contribution to cost savings; believes that, with sufficient political will from Member States, even more savings could be achieved;

5. Recalls that 2013 is the last year of the current multiannual financial framework (MFF), which makes it of the utmost importance to reach a balance between commitments undertaken so far and payments deriving from them that need to be honoured, the institutional credibility of the EU being at stake as well as possible legal consequences for the Commission in case of missing reimbursement of legitimate payment claims;

6. Deplores, therefore, the decision of the Council to proceed again this year with the usual approach of horizontal cuts to the DB, aimed at artificially reducing the level of the EU's resources for 2013 by an overall total of EUR 1 155 million (- 0,8 %) in commitment appropriations (CA) and EUR 5 228 million (- 3,8 %) in payment appropriations (PA) as compared to the DB, thereby leading to a very modest increase compared to the 2012 budget both in commitments (+ 1,27 % compared to 2 % of the DB) and in payments (+ 2,79 % compared to 6,8 % of the DB);

7. Is surprised that, in this exercise, the Council has not taken into account latest Commission's forecasts for programmes' implementation, based on estimates of the same Member States, which on the one hand clearly highlight areas of over-performances where reinforcements are needed already in 2012 and on the other hand warn about the severe risk of shortages of payments, in particular under Headings 1a, 1b and 2; recalls in this context the letter that President Barroso addressed to the 27 Member States in July 2012 expressing his concern about the cuts made to the DB by the Council's reading, as a result of which there is a risk that sufficient funds are not made available to enable the EU to honour its debts;

8. Underlines that the current procedures for assessing the real needs for payment appropriations between the relevant administrations in the Member States and the competent services in the Commission take place in total obscurity; strongly believes that such procedures adversely impact on the quality of the final result, on the level of information that reaches not only the governments themselves but also the national parliaments and the European Parliament, and on the negotiations between the two branches of the budgetary authority;

9. Notes that Council's cuts are spread over all the headings, but that Headings 1a and 1b are particularly affected as regards payments (-EUR 1,9 billion and -EUR 1,6 billion respectively as compared to the DB), i.e. the headings under which most of the programmes and initiatives responsible for delivery of the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy are concentrated; warns that such an approach puts at risk the fulfilment of commitments previously undertaken and consequently the delivery of jointly decided EU priorities;

10. Underlines that these cuts are fully at odds with the conclusions of the June 2012 European Council, which identified the EU budget as "a catalyst for growth and jobs across Europe" and decided to concentrate resources, including EUR 55 billion coming from the Structural Funds, on growth-enhancing measures; considers that that decision, taken at the highest political level of the EU, needs to be translated into a sufficient level of payments for 2013 in favour of programmes and actions underpinning this priority;

11. Rejects the Council's argument that these cuts correspond to under-implemented or low-performing programmes, since they also affect programmes showing excellent implementation rates (e.g. the Lifelong Learning Programme and the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) under Heading 1a and the Competitiveness and Employment objective under Heading 1b), whilst they do not touch areas experiencing under-implementation; points out that such criteria completely disregard the multiannual character of the EU's policies, and of cohesion policy in particular, characterised by a rising profile of payments towards the end of the MFF;

12. Points out that the substantial reduction in the level of payments as compared to commitments set by the Council would logically result in a further increase of the RAL at the end of the year, by increasing the gap between CA and PA by EUR 4,1 billion, especially considering that the largest shares of the RAL relate to cohesion policy (65,6 %) and to R&D sector (10,5 %), which are the two main areas suffering from the cuts;

13. On the basis of the data presented by the Commission in the inter-institutional meeting on payments of 26 September 2012, doubts that the increase in payments by 6,8 % proposed in the DB will be sufficient to cover reimbursements of payment claims awaited by Member States under the various headings – and in particular for Headings 1a and 1b – in the absence of an amending budget covering payment needs for 2012; will therefore reject any attempt to reduce the level of payment appropriations as compared to the DB proposal;

14. Due to the recent years' experience, does not deem the declaration of payments proposed by the Council in its reading as a sufficient guarantee that an adequate level of payments will eventually be made available for all headings; takes the general approach, therefore, of restoring, at the level of DB payments cut by Council in all headings and to increase payment appropriations over DB on a selected number of lines characterised by high levels of implementation within each heading, in particular Headings 1a and 4, to cover the real needs of the corresponding programmes, as identified by the Commission;

15. Gives mandate to its delegation for the Budget 2013 conciliation not to accept any level of payments both for the Amending budget No 6/2012 and the Budget 2013 that does not fully cover the payment needs for 2012 and 2013, as those are estimated by the Commission;

16. Asks Member States to ensure that the estimates they are sending to the Commission - and on which the Commission is establishing its proposal on payments - are verified and certified at the appropriate political level in each Member State;

17. Regrets that the Council departed substantially (all in all by EUR 2,15 billion), as regards commitments, from the financial programming figures, which result from a joint decision with Parliament at the beginning of the programming period, as well as that Council completely disregarded Parliament's priorities, as expressed in Parliament's mandate for the trilogue; recalls that Parliament's reading is based instead upon, and coherent with, benchmarks arising from that mandate;

18. Underlines that the answer to the crisis must be more Europe and not less Europe, in order to restart investment, boost the creation of jobs and help rebuild confidence in the economy; has already been critical of the freeze in commitment appropriations in the DB adopted by the Commission as underlined in Parliament's above-mentioned resolution of 4 July 2012 on the mandate for the trilogue, cannot therefore accept Council's decision to reduce them further down to 1,27 % compared to budget 2012; recalls that commitments reflect EU political priorities and should be set having in mind a long term perspective where the economic downturn might be over; intends to increase commitment appropriations above the DB on a few selected budget lines directly related to the delivery of the Europe 2020 priorities and in line with traditional Parliament's priorities;

19. Sets therefore the overall level of appropriations for 2013 to EUR 151 151,84 million and EUR 137 898,15 million in respectively commitment and payment appropriations;

Heading 1a

20. Deplores that, although this is the key heading for the delivery of the Europe 2020 objectives, Heading 1a bears practically the totality of the Council's cuts in commitments (-2,9 % compared to DB) in Heading 1 and is the most affected as regards decreases in payments (-EUR 1,9 billion or -14 % compared to DB); decides to undo almost all cuts by Council and to reinforce above DB in commitment and payment appropriations only a selected number of lines directly linked to the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy and characterised by high levels of implementation and strong absorption capacity;

21. Strongly regrets that, instead of increasing appropriations for the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) and the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) programmes, the Council decided to cut the Commission's proposal on corresponding budget lines, which is in clear contradiction with the recent European Council's decision to create a "Compact for growth and jobs" supporting, among others, research and development, innovation and employment; underlines the very good performances of these programmes, for which Commission reports accelerated implementation in 2012 compared to last year;

22. Considers the CIP programme as one of the main deliverers of Europe 2020 and an essential tool to facilitate access to finance, in particular for innovative SMEs; decides, therefore, to increase commitment and payment appropriations in favour of the CIP Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme and CIP Intelligent Energy Europe as well as, in line with the increasing demands by SMEs, to increase both CA and PA for the financial instruments under this programme;

23. Takes note of the Commission's proposal to cover the additional costs for ITER through performance savings deriving mainly from Joint Undertakings and administrative expenditure of FP7; recalls the added value of EU-financed research and its crucial role in reaching the goals of growth, competitiveness and employment enshrined in the Europe 2020 strategy; in line with the Interinstitutional Declaration of December 2011, decides, therefore, to partly compensate these decreases by setting commitments above DB on a selected number of operational FP7 lines directly underpinning the Europe 2020 strategy and characterised by excellent levels of implementation and strong absorption capacity; proposes to finance this partial offset above the available margin through the mobilisation of the Flexibility Instrument for an amount of EUR 50 million;

24. Stresses the substantial added value of the Lifelong Learning and Erasmus Mundus programmes, which, against modest financial envelopes, provide great returns in terms of effective implementation and positive image of the Union vis-à-vis its citizens; in line with its established position in the last budgetary procedures, decides to increase appropriations both in CA and in PA for these programme above DB, considering their high absorption capacity;

25. Deplores the cut in payments (-EUR 23 million as compared to DB) by the Council affecting the financial support for projects of common interest in the Trans-European transport network; highlights that this programme, through investment in high European added-value infrastructures, is essential in order to increase the competitiveness of the EU as a whole and directly contributes to growth and employment; underlines that the programme performs well in terms of implementation and that the year 2013 will be crucial as it is meant to prepare for the entry into force of the Connecting Europe Facility; therefore decides to maintain the level of commitments and payments proposed in the DB;

26. Chooses to restore DB payments for the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF); highlights the fact that restoring payment appropriations will avoid transfers from other budget lines and that the amount appropriated represents the minimum amount consumed by the EGF in the first few months of the year;

Heading 1b

27. Strongly deplores the substantial cuts in payments (- EUR 1,6 billion or - 3,3 % as compared to DB) by the Council affecting the Regional Competitiveness and Employment objective (- 12,9 %), the European Territorial Cooperation objective (- 18,7 %) and the Cohesion Fund (- 4,7 %) which, if adopted, would definitely hamper the correct execution of projects during the last year of the programming period, with dramatic consequences, especially for the Member States which are already under social, economical and financial constraints, thereby substantially increasing the RAL; notes instead that the convergence objective is left practically untouched;

28. Recalls that the high level of payments in the DB for this heading (+ 8,1 %) results from commitments undertaken in the past, which need to be honoured at the end of the programming period in line with the natural life cycle of the Structural Funds; stresses that a more realistic approach from the Council as to the actual payment needs under this heading in the recent EU budgetary procedures would have allowed a much lower percentage of increase in payments;

29. Recalls the doubts expressed in its mandate for the trilogue as to whether the level of payments proposed in the DB will be sufficient to reimburse the totality of the expected payment claims in the absence of an amending budget this year; underlines that the same Commission's proposal is based on the assumption that all payment needs from previous years up to 2012 are covered;

30. Rejects the cuts introduced by the Council on Heading 1b, which would lead to a much more serious shortage in payments than already expected and would impede the reimbursement for already spent resources to the beneficiary Member States and regions, with serious consequences especially for those Member States which are already under social, economical and financial constraints; points out again that this heading is responsible for two thirds of the current outstanding commitments and that cutting the level of payments for 2013 would also lead to a strong increase in the level of RAL by the end of next year; asks therefore the Commission to present an analysis on the situation of RAL and a sound strategy as to how the level of RAL should be reduced; calls on the Commission to provide Parliament with information on a monthly basis on the breakdown per Member State and per Fund of the claims submitted for reimbursement;

31. Does not consider the Council's declaration asking the Commission to submit a draft amending budget in case of insufficient payments under Heading 1b as a sufficient guarantee that an adequate level of payments will be made available in 2013, given that similar commitments have been already undertaken and disregarded by the Council in the past two years; asks the Council Presidency to make a public statement and explain the discrepancy between the Council's reading on payments and the actual needs of Member States, as expressed in their estimates;

32. Decides, therefore, to restore the DB in commitments and in payments for all budget lines cut by Council under this heading and to increase commitment and payment appropriations above DB for the technical assistance to the Baltic Sea Strategy;

33. Urges the Council to agree on Draft amending budget No 6/2012 presented by the Commission with the aim to compensate the shortage of payment appropriations this year and to avoid blocking the execution of running projects at the end of the programming period; gives mandate to its delegation in the framework of the negotiations with the Council, should the Council not be ready to approve in full the DAB, to possibly increase payment appropriations by the amount rejected by Council, distributing it pro rata between all the operational lines of Heading 1b;

Heading 2

34. Considers that the Commission's estimates of budgetary needs are more realistic than the Council's forecast figures, in particular in the light of forthcoming payments; restores therefore Council's cuts under this Heading to a level of EUR 60 307,51 million, which is 0,6 % above the 2012 budget;

35. Points out that the traditional agricultural amending letter to be forthcoming in October 2012 will adjust the current estimates to a more precise assessment of the real needs; draws attention to the final level of assigned revenue to be available in 2013 (conformity clearance correction, irregularities and milk super levy), which will ultimately set the level of fresh appropriations to be adopted in the Budget 2013; estimates that the current margin of EUR 981,5 million should be sufficient to cover the needs under this heading in the absence of unforeseen circumstances;

36. Calls on the Commission to increase its efforts to define clear priorities under this Heading that favour sustainable farming systems which preserve biodiversity, protect water resources and soil fertility, respect animal welfare and support employment;

37. Rejects the increase of the so-called negative expenditure line (clearance of accounts) as this appears to be set artificially high compared to Heading 2 appropriations and partly restores the Commission's proposal, allowing a more realistic approach;

38. Confirms its commitment to act in preventing and responding to crises in the fruit and vegetable sector, and therefore supports an adequate level for producer groups for preliminary recognition; advocates a sufficient increase of the Union's contribution to the crisis fund within operational funds for producer organisations;

39. Provides for an increased support for the school milk programme and the continued support for programme concerning school fruit;

40. Maintains the budget allocation dedicated to the Food Distribution Programme for the Most Deprived Persons in the EU that supports 18 million people with problems of malnutrition within the Union; welcomes the effort made by the Commission in finding a political and legal solution to continue with the programme in 2013; hopes that a solution enabling for the continuation of the programme during the next MFF period will be found;

41. Supports the reduction of some budget lines on refunds drastically, in some cases even to zero, as this instrument is politically controversial and has not been taken up for some products at the same level as in the budget year 2012; notes that some refund lines have been earmarked as negative priorities; weighs up carefully to what extent these lines should be reduced, in order to be able to use this instrument if needed under the current regulation on refunds;

42. Provides for a continued support on a commensurate level for the LIFE+ programme, which gives priority solely to environment and climate action projects, supporting the development of a sustainable and a more resource-efficient economy and the protection, conservation and restoration of eco-systems; recalls again that environmental problems and their solutions do not recognise national borders, thus dealing with it at EU level is self-evident; in this respect, calls on the Member States to significantly improve their implementation of EU environmental legislation;

43. Stresses that the common fisheries policy remains a crucial political priority for the EU and maintains its financing at the proposed DB levels, in view of its upcoming reform; believes that the funding of the integrated maritime policy should not come at the expense of other fisheries actions or programmes under Heading 2; considers effective fisheries' management of crucial importance in order to preserve fish stocks and prevent overfishing;

Heading 3a

44. Notes that the overall cuts in funding proposed by the Council compared to DB 2013 is -EUR 15 million in commitment appropriations and -EUR 51 million in payment appropriations; notes that these cuts correspond to -1,07 % compared to the DB and to -15,5 % compared to the initial financial programming of the Commission;

45. Rejects the cuts performed by the Council in payment appropriations in the following areas: European Return Fund (-EUR 18 million), European Refugee Fund (-EUR 1,8 million), European Fund for the Integration of third-country nationals (-EUR 3,2 million) and Fundamental Rights and Citizenship (-EUR 1 million); decides, therefore, to restore the level of the DB on the corresponding lines;

46. Rejects the Council's unilateral decision to change the legal basis of the proposal on the "Schengen evaluation mechanism" from ordinary legislative procedure to Article 70 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union; supports the Conference of Presidents' decision to block cooperation with the Council on the 2013 budget as regards internal security aspects; endorses, therefore, the position taken by its Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs to put into the reserve some budgetary lines in Title 18 which relate to internal security (in commitment and payment appropriations) until a satisfactory outcome is achieved on the Schengen governance package; is of the opinion that this reserve should not be applied to the agencies working under Heading 3a in order not to jeopardise their work;

47. Emphasises the important role that the programme for preventing and combating all forms of violence (DAPHNE) plays in eliminating violence against women, young people and children in the EU, especially in the current context of crisis; notes the measurable results of the DAPHNE programme as well as its impact on policy change within Member States; therefore increases its payment appropriations above the level of the DB;

Heading 3b

48. Regrets that, despite the cuts already proposed in the DB, Council makes further cuts in appropriations for Heading 3b, both in commitments and in payments, by approximately EUR 9,5 million; takes the general approach of undoing all Council's cuts so as to ensure a proper implementation of the running programmes and actions under this heading;

49. Reiterates that fostering a sense of active citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among young Europeans is essential for Europe to be able to exploit the talents of the best-educated generation in history; emphasises the need to encourage cross-cultural communication and EU citizenship within the next generation; has therefore decided to increase funding for the Youth in Action programme compared to DB, especially considering the sound implementation of the programme for many years running;

50. Considers that the information campaign on the European Year of Citizens 2013 together with communication activities require adequate appropriations to properly involve citizens in the European project and promote dialogue on the EU issues; deplores that the budget proposed by the Commission is the smallest ever allocated to a European Year and decides to reinforce appropriations for the corresponding budget line;

51. Supports the continuation of the successful preparatory action "European partnerships on sport", considering the novel competences bestowed upon the Union by the Lisbon Treaty in the field of sports, with a particular focus on grassroots and mass sport, promoting fairness in sporting competitions by fighting against match-fixing and protecting the physical and moral integrity of sportsmen and sportswomen;

Heading 4

52. Highlights that cuts in payments brought by the Council to Heading 4 (-EUR 1 billion or -14,1 % as compared to DB) represent approximately 20 % of the overall cuts across all headings; considers that such a massive reduction would impede the Union to respect the commitments to which it has committed itself on the world scene; notes that the Commission's proposal was only slightly above the level of the 2012 budget and already substantially reduced compared to the financial programming; decides to restore the level of both commitment and payment appropriations in most budget lines to the levels proposed in the DB;

53. Considers, however, that some decreases compared to the DB can be accepted in some budget lines, such as Macro-Financial Assistance, membership of international organisations in the field of customs and tax and cooperation with Greenland;

54. Proposes a small increase in the level of commitment and payment appropriations above the DB for budget lines in the areas of geographical development cooperation, as well as for the Electoral Observation Mission and the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria; highlights that this should prevent the EU from being further off track as regards its strong commitments on development cooperation financing;

55. Points out that, in accordance with the declaration signed by the Commission and UNRWA on EU support for UNRWA (2011-2013), the EU's annual contribution is based on the 2011 Palestinian allocation (EUR 300 million), and a reduction in that reference amount would have a knock-on effect on the allocation for UNRWA; believes that increased funding for Palestine and UNRWA is crucial for ensuring that UNRWA is given the necessary resources it needs to provide the essential services for which it has been mandated by the UN General Assembly and to safeguard the safety and livelihood of refugees in the light of the instability in the region;

56. Also deems it necessary to increase appropriations for the support to the economic development of the Turkish Cypriot Community in order to ensure the continuation of the EU financial support to the work of the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus and of the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage;

57. Introduces separate budget lines for all CFSP missions and EU Special Representatives in the different geographical areas, as proposed in the reform of the Financial Regulation, which will provide a more transparent and complete overview of missions conducted under this policy;

Heading 5

58. Takes note of the Council's position decreasing the Commission's proposal on Heading 5 – All sections by EUR 146 million overall, despite the institutions' efforts, as reflected in their estimates and the DB, towards budget consolidation of administrative expenditure, at a time of economic and budgetary constraints;

59. Stresses in particular that most institutions, including Parliament and the Commission, complied with and even overstepped their commitment to restrict their administrative budgets to an increase below the expected inflation rate; welcomes these efforts and sets Heading 5 appropriations at an overall level of EUR 8 506,87 million, of which EUR 4 967,37 million for the Commission;

60. Well notes that the cuts brought by the Council stem from the non-budgeting of the 1,7 % 2011 salary adjustment, the increase of the standard abatement rate for various institutions and services and other specific cuts to some items of administrative expenditure, but considers such cuts to be ill-founded and simply aimed at artificially freezing administrative expenditure in nominal terms, despite statutory and contractual obligations and the EU's new competences and tasks;

61. Considers, in particular, that the increases in the standard abatement rates, meant to increase the number of unpaid posts within the institutions, reflect a conservative approach which will directly affect the possibility to improve occupancy rates of the establishment plans that are at the same time being approved by the budget authority; emphasises that such an approach is all the more detrimental in a context of reduction of establishment plans, which mechanically improves occupancy rates, and that the financing of these posts should not be considered as an adjustment variable for achieving a nominal freeze of administrative budget or any other predefined target amount;

62. Decides, for all the institutions apart from the Council, as well as for the European Schools, to restore (or in the case of the Court of Justice, add) in reserve the amounts corresponding to the 1,7 % 2011 salary adjustment for budget year 2013, pending the Court's ruling; underlines that this is sound budgeting, given the likelihood of a ruling in favour of the Commission, and warns the Council that, in such event, the budgetary authority will need to accommodate the retroactive effect of such ruling also for years 2011 and 2012, including late interest;

63. Also undoes other cuts brought by the Council on specific items of administrative expenditure, notably, within the Commission, on ICT equipment and services and some offices;

64. Takes note that the Council accepted the proposed 1 % staff reduction in the Commission's establishment plan, notably in the areas of administrative support, budgetary management and anti-fraud;

65. While restoring or maintaining the Commission's and, partly, other institutions' requests for posts on the basis of a case-by-case approach, calls for an in-depth impact assessment to be carried out on the planned staff reductions by 2018, taking full account of, inter alia, the Union's legal obligations and the institutions' new competences and increased tasks arising from the Treaties;

66. Although welcoming the information given in the DB on those areas which were reinforced in staff, such as European economic governance, the single market and security and justice, notes with concern that staff cuts were made within the Commission to some other Directorates-General such as Enterprise and Industry, Competition, Mobility and Transport, Research and Innovation Eurostat which however make a substantial contribution to the achievement of the EU's priorities; is also concerned by the adverse impact fewer posts in the areas of administrative support, budgetary management and anti-fraud may have on the swift, regular and effective implementation of EU actions and programmes, especially at a time when the EU's competences continue to increase and a new Member State joins the Union;

67. Therefore asks the Commission to include in its annual staff screening report a combined assessment by Directorates-General and services, taking into account their size and workload notably, and by the types of posts, as presented in this screening report (policymaking, programme management, administrative support, budgetary management and anti-fraud activities, language services, etc.);

68. Deplores the cuts made by the Council on the administrative and research support lines, including executive agencies, by overall 6,6 % in CA and PA (-EUR 71,8 million) compared to DB, with the highest cuts affecting Heading 1b (-23,7 %) and Heading 4 (-13,2 %); underlines that this would result in a 5,5 % decrease as compared to similar 2012 appropriations, despite the savings already proposed in the DB, and would therefore be likely to affect the swiftness and quality of budgetary implementation of the multi-annual programmes to which they are related; stresses, moreover, that decreasing the administrative lines of a given programme without increasing its operational expenditure would result in a modification of the whole co-decided envelope for that programme; therefore decides to restore the DB for those lines;

69. Also sets a number of reserves on some budget lines with a view to obtaining specific information;

Agencies

70. Endorses, as a general rule, the Commission's estimates of agencies' budgetary and staff needs and notes that the Commission had already considerably reduced the agencies' initial requests and applied also to them the 1 % staff reduction in the DB;

71. Considers, therefore, that any further cuts as proposed by the Council would endanger the proper functioning of the agencies and would not allow them to fulfil the tasks they have been assigned by the legislative authority; rejects the Council's horizontal approach in cutting appropriations for agencies, whose needs have to be assessed on a case-by-case basis; also calls on the Commission to identify, for the next MFF period, possible areas of duplication of work or reduced added value in relation to the agencies, with a view to streamlining their functioning;

72. Decides to increase the 2013 budget appropriations for the three financial supervision agencies; believes that those appropriations should reflect the need to fulfil the required tasks as more regulations, decisions and directives are being adopted to overcome the current financial and economic crisis which is strongly linked to the stability of the financial sector;

73. Cannot accept the Council cuts on agencies under Heading 3a, which represent a decrease by EUR 2,8 million in both CA and PA, as agencies represent 18 % of the overall appropriations under Heading 3a and the Council cuts would have a disproportionate impact on this heading; intends, therefore, to restore the proposed DB, which seems to establish a balanced equilibrium level;

74. Is aware that certain agencies (such as Europol, EASA, ACER) have to implement additional tasks in 2013 which might not be reflected in the allocated budget or establishment plan for 2013; requests from the Commission, in case of necessity, to propose timely an Amending Budget for the respective agency; expects from the Commission further to present a new financial statement when a legislative procedure has been finalised by Parliament and the Council extending the mandate of an agency; is alert that such an extension might require additional resources which would need to be agreed upon by the budgetary authority;

Pilot projects and preparatory actions (PP-PAs)

75. Having carried out a careful analysis of the pilot projects and preparatory actions submitted – as regards the rate of success of the ongoing ones and excluding initiatives already covered by existing legal bases, and taking fully into account the Commission's assessment of the projects' implementability, decides to adopt a compromise package made up of a limited number of PP-PAs, also in view of the limited margins available, in particular under Headings 1a and 3b;

Other sections

76. Is concerned by the Council's position of a nominal freeze across all EU institutions; believes that each institution should be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the needs and specific situation of each institution;

77. Welcomes efforts made by the institutions to find additional savings and restrict their budgets; highlights the fact that the level of their budgets for 2013 will include the costs of the enlargement to Croatia and the 1,7 % salary adjustment for 2013; stresses, however, that the costs of enlargement to Croatia should not be seen as increase in their budgets but as justified financing of accession to the EU of a new Member State;

78. Emphasises that, as a consequence of additional savings made by the institutions between spring and autumn 2012, appropriations are currently at a very low level; is concerned that there is almost no margin for new unavoidable expenses that may arise with regard to legal obligations;

79. Believes that the budgetary authority should ensure a level of appropriations which will guarantee the smooth functioning of the institutions and respect for legal obligations and provide a high-level administration to serve EU citizens;

Section I – European Parliament

General framework

80. Recalls that it insisted, when adopting its estimates for 2013 ([1]), on the need for strict budgetary control and identifying further savings during this budgetary procedure;

81. Welcomes the agreement reached during the conciliation of 26 September 2012 between the Bureau and the Committee on Budgets; points out that the overall level of its 2013 budget is EUR 1 750 463 939, and represents therefore a net reduction of EUR 18,3 million compared to the preliminary draft estimates of February 2012;

82. Points out that the level of its 2013 budget is 1,9 % above the 2012 budget including the costs for Croatian accession; highlights that, due to the current inflation rate of 1,9 %, there is thus a real decrease of the operating budget, despite recently added competences, new posts and actions, the financing of Croatia's accession and the costs for preparing the 2014 elections;

83. Approves the following adjustments to the estimates:

— reduce the appropriations in the contingency reserve,

— internalise the security service in a budget-neutral manner,

— pursue the internalisation of ICT activities and, as consequence, create 30 new posts in the establishment plan in a budget-neutral manner (offset by savings),

— adjust the appropriations for the European Parliamentary Association;

84. Also reduces appropriations for the House of European History by EUR 5,3 million;

85. Furthermore, recognising the challenging economic situation across the EU, recalls the decision taken not to index Members' individual allowances until the end of the mandate, highlights that staff mission allowances have not been indexed since 2007, and reconfirms the decision in the 2012 budget resolution ([2]) to reduce all budget lines related to travel;

86. Welcomes the information and analyses contained in the 2011 Parliament's budgetary and financial management report and in the DGs annual activity reports, regarding budget lines that were under-implemented in 2011, and calls for further objective analysis of this type concerning the 2012 budget in order to more readily identify potential future savings to be offset by investment where needed and useful for the proper and smooth functioning of Parliament;

Working arrangements of Parliament

87. Believes that, like every directly elected parliament, the European Parliament should have the right to decide on its own seat and working place arrangements;

([1]) Texts adopted, P7_TA(2012)0109.
([2]) Texts adopted, P7_TA(2011)0461.

88. Declares, therefore, that Parliament's seat and places of work for Members and officials should be decided upon by Parliament itself;

89. Urges the two arms of the budgetary authority (the Council and Parliament), in order to make financial savings and to promote a more sustainable climate- and environmentally friendly solution, to raise the issue of a single seat and Parliament's working places for Members and officials in the upcoming negotiations on the next MFF for 2014-2020;

90. Urges the Member States to revise the issue of Parliament's seat and working places in the next revision of the Treaty by amending Protocol 6;

91. In the meantime, calls on the Council to start elaborating a road-map with the Parliament towards a single seat and a more efficient use of Parliament's working places, taking into account specific up-to-date figures detailing the cost of each place of work and working conditions for staff, as well as economic, societal and environmental factors – to be presented in a report by 30 June 2013;

92. Suggests that the agreement between the Luxembourg authorities and Parliament on the number of staff to be present in Luxembourg should be revised, taking into account a revision of Parliament's needs;

Joint working group

93. Welcomes the establishment of a joint Working group on Parliament's budget between the Committee on Budgets and the Bureau; in particular, strongly supports its work on the launch of a comparative study Parliament's budget with the budgets of the US Congress and a sample of Member States' parliaments; recalls that this study is scheduled for completion by the end of 2012; expects this study to create long-term savings in the Parliament's budget and present ideas for improving its efficiency in 2013 and the following years;

94. Considers that the Joint Working Group should reflect the democratic balance within Parliament; believes that the working group should consider, inter alia, further alternatives relating to the opening hours of the Members' Register and measures to encourage the use of cheaper and greener modes of transport; furthermore, calls on the working group to report back to the Committee on Budgets and the Bureau in order to achieve medium and long-term structural and organisational savings in Parliament's budget;

95. Welcomes the joint working group's proposal to close the Members' Register on Fridays in constituency (turquoise) weeks;

96. Calls on the Bureau to implement the proposals for savings agreed by the joint working group without delay;

Travel

97. Welcomes the efforts made to seek further savings in Members' and staff travel; notes the savings made on mission expenses incurred by staff; notes that the related budgetary line decreased in 2012 and that these savings have been made possible by better management, use of video-conferencing and a reduction in the number of missions;

98. Calls on the administration to evaluate developments in the low-cost travel market, to keep up to date with new developments in the market and to exploit any possibilities for savings; furthermore, calls on the administration to allow and encourage the use of low-cost air tickets and the purchase of flexible economy tickets; believes that further measures should be examined in order to reduce the number of business class flights purchased by Members;

IT/travel

99. Notes that the savings made on travel in 2011 thanks to the increased use (+ 56,6 %) of video-conferencing are estimated at EUR 1,4 million; believes that further savings in mission costs can be achieved by progressively replacing missions with video-conferencing, which will also limit the Parliament's carbon footprint; requests, therefore, the results of an analysis carried out by the Parliament's administration on the need for further video-conferencing equipment by no later than February 2013;

Buildings

100. Believes in, and calls for, a transparent decision-making process in the field of buildings policy through close and open cooperation with the Committee on Budgets;

101. Requests timely information about the Secretary General's findings on, and schedule of, the renovation works and office relocation in the coming years; underlines the importance of proper planning and entering appropriations into the budget at the appropriate stage;

Translation

102. Reiterates that savings on translation should not jeopardise multilingualism; draws attention to the fact that the quality of translations and of the working conditions of the services concerned need to be safeguarded;

Section IV – Court of Justice

103. Notes that, despite major structural changes and a continually growing caseload, the Court has limited the increase of its operating budget to 1,56 % (in addition to 1,49 % due to Croatian enlargement);

104. Therefore restores appropriations for translation in order to avoid delays in proceedings and for IT resources as recommended by auditors;

105. Partially restores remunerations and fixes the standard abatement rate at 4,5 % in order to allow the Court to correctly carry out its functions; furthermore, partially restores appropriations for maintenance and energy;

106. Supports the ongoing revision of the Statute of the Court and commits to processing any amending budget linked to this issue without delay;

Section V – Court of Auditors

107. Notes that the Court reduces its establishment plan by 9 posts in 2013; therefore restores the initial standard abatement of 1,8 % to limit the risk on the implementation of the Court's strategy and the delivery of the planned Audit Reports; also restores appropriations for recruitment relating to Croatian accession to the level of the DB;

Section VI – European Economic and Social Committee

108. Partially restores remunerations and allowances, to apply a 5,5 % standard abatement rate, which will still mean a reduction of the current occupancy rate; partly undoes other arbitrary cuts made by Council, such as expenditure linked to the Official Journal and operating expenditure such as interpretation, already reduced in 2012 to its 2009 outturn level;

109. Fully restores appropriations for annual lease payments which are linked to legal obligations under existing contracts and subject to annual indexation depending on Belgian inflation;

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Section VII – Committee of the Regions

110. Partially restores appropriations for the Committee of Regions to meet its existing statutory and legal obligations in the field of annual lease payments and staff salaries; notes that Council's drastic cut on remunerations and allowances would amount to applying twice the 1 % staff cut (already included in the DB) to this institution;

Section VIII – European Ombudsman

111. Notes the 3,49 % increase of the European Ombudsman's budget; notes that part of this increase is linked to unavoidable rental costs; reinstates appropriations for remuneration and allowances which are required due to previously vacant posts being filled;

Section IX – European Data Protection Supervisor

112. Fully restores the EDPS budget; notes that its increase is in line with the forecasted inflation rate; in particular, reinstates two new posts and corresponding appropriations which are foreseen to help carry out core activities of the institution;

Section X – European External Action Service

113. Notes that the EEAS is a relatively new institution in a growing phase and that its network still needs to be enhanced in order to meet the EU's political priorities and that, with 141 delegations, the EEAS is uniquely - among the EU institutions - exposed to inflation in third countries and to exchange-rate fluctuations;

114. Welcomes the fact that, for 2013, the EEAS has frozen appropriations in nominal terms on a number of budget lines and made targeted reductions on other lines, savings which could reach 1,3 % of its 2012 budget;

115. Notes that the EEAS is showing self-restraint as no new posts are created in its establishment plan for 2013;

116. Highlights that the proposed increases in the EEAS budget are required to meet statutory staff costs and other legal obligations, as well as to respond to the political expectations for the EEAS to be present in priority countries;

117. Rejects, therefore, the Council's decision to freeze the EEAS budget in nominal terms at the 2012 level, and proposes an adequate increase in view of its overall financial context;

118. Undoes the cuts made by Council that would entail a reduction in the number of officials and would contradict the efforts made since the creation of the EEAS to recruit and to redeploy staff to meet increased operational requirements;

119. Reinstates appropriations needed to comply with rental contracts in force and service-level arrangements with the Commission and the Council, and to gradually replace and streamline inherited outdated and overlapping IT systems;

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120. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the other institutions and bodies concerned and the national parliaments.