



EU budget 2013: chaos in the Council

Committees: Committee on Budgets

Wednesday's adoption of the Council position on the EU's 2013 budget by EU ambassadors in COREPER led to even more confusion than last week's adoption of the Council position at a technical level, said Parliament's Budgets Committee MEPs on Thursday. Although the proposed budget cuts were approved without any changes, member states made several declarations that MEPs described as "inconsistent and irresponsible".

Contradictory statements

After a three-way meeting with the Cypriot Council Presidency and the Commission on Monday, MEPs highlighted the contradictions between the agreement among EU Heads of state - who at their 29 June Summit agreed on a Growth Pact with extra money for growth, research and innovation - and the severe cuts proposed by member states' civil servants for next year's budget (inter alia minus 15% for research and innovation and minus 25% for small business development).

At Wednesday's COREPER meeting, two contradictory statements were added. The first asks the European Commission to provide a full picture of payment needs for the main policy areas in 2013 and to propose an amending budget should it deem the proposed funds insufficient.

Three countries that had signed this declaration - Germany, France and Finland - then issued another declaration expressing regret that the 2013 budget had not been further reduced and underlining that the overall sums agreed for payments and commitments are an absolute maximum.

Another three countries - United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Sweden - voted against the Council's position, because they felt that the cuts did not far enough, while Austria abstained.

Who's in charge?

Parliament's main negotiator for next year's budget, Giovanni La Via (EPP, IT) speaks of "chaos in the Council": "I cannot place these contradictory signals anymore. It seems like the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing. I really wonder who is in charge in the Council", he said.

EU credibility undermined when it's most needed

Parliament's Budgets Committee Chair Alain Lamassoure (EPP, FR) fears that the Council's inconsistencies and irresponsible behaviour are undermining the EU's credibility.

"European governance, already complex, now sees its flaws aggravated by serious failures in national governance.

The conclusions of the European Council were adopted unanimously. EU Heads of State and Government earmarked additional funding for the new flagship "Growth Pact" they approved. But when discussing next year's budget, the Council's Cypriot Presidency then welcomed massive cuts in funding for research, innovation and cohesion as proposed by the Council at technical level. I wonder what European Council conclusions mean nowadays.

Press release

I also fail to understand why the ambassadors of France, Germany and Finland have signed two completely contradictory declarations. The first, signed by almost all countries, asks the European Commission to submit requests for additional funding rapidly if the cuts prove excessive and unmanageable. The second speaks of "regret" that no further cuts to the Commission proposal were accepted and announces that any proposal exceeding 2.79% in payments will be refused. These mixed signals undermine the credibility of the European Union when it is most needed", he said.

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