



EU budget: first 2014, then 2015, say Budgets Committee MEPs

[11-11-2014 - 18:25]

Giving the European Union a budget must take priority over redistributing resources to EU member states, said Budgets Committee MEPs on Tuesday, after a third fruitless effort to engage the Council of Ministers in budgetary negotiations within the official deadline. MEPs want the most urgent bills for 2014 to be settled before discussing the 2015 budget, but the Council has yet to agree even on the first budget top up, proposed by the European Commission as long ago as May.

"It is shocking that Council has devoted no time to discussing how outstanding bills for this year should be paid or how next year's budget should look, given that citizens are increasingly disillusioned with how Europe manages its affairs. It has only discussed the GNI issue, which does not affect the budget," said Budgets Committee chair Jean Arthuis (ALDE, FR), referring to the outcome of Council's 7 November meeting.

"Parliament has a clear and transparent position and has been awaiting the Council's response. Yet the Council has failed to take a stance and we have only three days left to conclude. This shows a lack of respect for EU citizens who are the final beneficiaries of the budget", he added.

First 2014, then 2015

Parliament first wants to know how unpaid bills will be paid in 2014, before negotiating fresh funding for member state projects in 2015.

The sum of unpaid bills at the year's end grows year after year because there is ever less money left to meet them. In 2010, unpaid bills amounted to €5 billion, rising to €23.4 billion by the end of 2013 and a forecast €28 billion by the end of this year. As a result, small and medium sized enterprises, students, researchers, NGOs in the humanitarian sector as well as municipalities have to wait for money to which they are perfectly entitled.

"At the start of this new legislature we have to stop the growth of unpaid bills. This year's unforeseen resources from fines of €5 billion must go to settle the most urgent ones", said Mr Arthuis, referring to windfall revenues from competition-related fines. "We are not fanatics - we are simply asking the Council to pay what it promised", he added.

To enable Parliament and the Council to close the budget negotiations on time and table means both to stop the growth of unpaid bills and to finance new programmes, Budgets Committee MEPs called on the Council to present its stance by late Thursday morning, so as to allow discussion and deliver an agreement by the Friday deadline.

Background

The EU budget is proposed by the European Commission and decided upon by the European Parliament and the Council in negotiations lasting 21 days. The outcome must be approved by both institutions before the Parliament's President can sign the budget.

Press release

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