Growth, solidarity and paying the bills: budget MEPs vote 2016 budget priorities

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Next year’s EU budget priorities should be fostering growth by helping employment, enterprises and entrepreneurship, showing solidarity both within the EU and with countries outside it and putting EU finances in order by tackling the overdue payments backlog and reforming the EU revenue system, say Budgets Committee MEPs in a resolution voted on Thursday.

The Budgets Committee guidelines for the European Commission, drawn up by Mr José Manuel Fernandes (EPP, PT) are summarized below.

Employment, enterprises, and entrepreneurship for growth

- The EU budget and the Juncker investment plan must help the 20 million small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) which account for 99% of business in the EU to again become its main job creators.
- EU funds should encourage the creation of start-ups.
- “European Youth Initiative” job creation schemes for young people: the Commission should look into the reasons for the initiative’s slow start in EU member states and ensure that it is funded beyond 2015.

Internal cohesion and external solidarity

- Spending on evening out differences among regions, which accounts for the largest slice of the EU budget, should continue to sustain public investment in vital areas. Despite delays, regional development projects should be fully up and running by 2016.
- Solidarity should go beyond EU borders, in particular by delivering urgent humanitarian assistance and development aid to Ukraine and elsewhere.
- The burden of handling immigration flows should be fairly shared among EU countries.

Overdue payments and own resources

- The Commission must deliver on its pledge to present a plan to reduce the growing payments backlog, which reached an unprecedented €24.7 billion by the end of 2014, despite Parliament's repeated efforts to persuade the Council of Ministers to act.
- MEPs reiterate their call for in-depth reform of the revenue system that funds the EU budget and their backing for the Monti Group’s efforts.

Background
The budget guidelines are the first document that Parliament produces during the annual budget procedure. It sets out the line that Parliament expects the Commission to take when drawing up its budget proposal. The Multi-annual Financial Framework ceiling for 2016 is €150.217 billion in commitment appropriations.

Next steps

The full Parliament votes on the guidelines at its March plenary session. The Commission is to present its proposal in late May. Next year's budget has to be agreed between the Council and the Parliament by the end of December.

Useful information

- Joint statements on payment appropriations and a payment plan (points 3.6 and 3.7 of EU budget 2015) (17.12.2014)
- Budget tool: expenditure and contribution by member state
- EP research: EU Budget and National Budgets: Facts, Figures and Impact

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