



TEXTS ADOPTED

P8_TA(2017)0302

2018 Budget – Mandate for the trilogue

European Parliament resolution of 5 July 2017 on the mandate for the trilogue on the 2018 draft budget (2017/2043(BUD))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 314 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to Article 106a of the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community,
- having regard to the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2018, which the Commission adopted on 30 May 2017 (COM(2017)0400),
- having regard to Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002¹,
- having regard to Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1311/2013 of 2 December 2013 laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2014-2020²,
- having regard to the Interinstitutional Agreement of 2 December 2013 between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline, on cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management³,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 March 2017 on general guidelines for the preparation of the 2018 budget, Section III – Commission⁴,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 21 February 2017 on the 2018 budget guidelines (06522/2017),
- having regard to Rule 86a of its Rules of Procedure,

¹ OJ L 298, 26.10.2012, p. 1.

² OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 884.

³ OJ C 373, 20.12.2013, p. 1.

⁴ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0085.

- having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgets and the opinions of the other committees concerned (A8-0249/2017),

Draft budget 2018: delivering on growth, jobs and security

1. Recalls that in its resolution of 15 March 2017 Parliament confirmed that sustainable growth, decent, quality and stable jobs, socio-economic cohesion, security, migration and climate change are the core issues and main priorities for the 2018 EU budget;
2. Believes that in general terms the Commission proposal is a good starting point for this year's negotiations, considering that the 2018 EU budget must enable the EU to continue to generate sustainable growth and jobs, while ensuring the security of its citizens and addressing the migration challenges; regrets that the Commission proposal does not fully correspond to Parliament's call for action against climate change;
3. Welcomes the decision of the Commission to include in the draft budget the results of the mid-term revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2014-2020 even before its formal adoption by the Council, thus sending a strong signal about the importance of this MFF revision and the need for increased flexibility in the EU budget that could enable the Union to effectively respond to new emergencies and finance its political priorities;
4. Reiterates its firm conviction that in order to achieve sustainable growth and the creation of stable and quality jobs in the EU, boosting investment in research, innovation, infrastructure, education and SMEs is key; welcomes in this respect the proposed reinforcements to Horizon 2020, the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) and Erasmus+ as these programmes will contribute directly to reaching these goals; considers, however, that further reinforcements will be needed, especially given the cuts operated in these policies' financing to the benefit of EFSI financing;
5. Recalls the crucial role of SMEs in job creation and reduction of the investment gap, and underscores that their adequate funding must remain one of the top priorities of the EU budget; regrets, in this respect, that the proposed allocation for COSME is 2,9 % lower in comparison with the 2017 budget, and expresses its intention to further reinforce this programme in the 2018 budget; points to the need to further support SMEs and calls for full delivery on the programme's financial commitments in the remaining years of the current MFF; welcomes the Commission's attempt at streamlining SME financing within Horizon 2020;
6. Commends the role of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) in bridging the investment gap across the EU and between the EU's territories and helping to implement strategic investments that provide a high level of added value to the economy, the environment and society; supports, therefore, its extension until 2020; highlights the quick uptake of funds in the SME Window of EFSI and welcomes its intended scale-up; regrets, however, the lack of a holistic approach to SME funding that would allow for a clear overview of total funds available; underlines its position in the ongoing legislative negotiations that no further cuts should be incurred in existing EU programmes in order to finance this extension; considers that EFSI, whose guarantee fund is mostly financed by the EU budget, should not support entities established or incorporated in jurisdictions listed under the relevant EU policy on non-cooperative jurisdictions, or that do not effectively comply with EU or international tax standards on transparency and exchange of information;

7. Takes positive note of the EU initiatives in the field of defence research and technology development and acquisition, which will contribute to achieving economies of scale in the sector and greater coordination among Member States, and, if developed correctly, will lead to more rational defence spending and enable savings at national level; underlines also the need to improve competitiveness and innovation in the European defence industry; recalls its earlier position that new initiatives in this area should be financed by additional funds and should not be detrimental to existing programmes, including the CEF;
8. Notes that the Commission has not followed up on Parliament's request that it put forward an assessment and relevant proposals for an '18th Birthday Interrail Pass for Europe'; believes that such proposals have the potential to boost European consciousness and identity; stresses, however, that any new projects must be financed by new financial resources and without impacting on existing programmes, and should be as socially inclusive as possible; reiterates its previous call on the Commission to put forward relevant proposals in this regard;
9. Welcomes the fact that the draft budget 2018 includes an additional allocation for the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), thus responding to Parliament's previous calls for the continuation of this programme; notes, in parallel, the proposal for draft amending budget 3/2017 that integrates the provision of EUR 500 million in commitments for the YEI, as agreed by Parliament and the Council in the 2017 budgetary conciliation; is convinced that the proposed amounts are clearly insufficient for the YEI to reach its goals, and believes that in order to effectively tackle youth unemployment the YEI must continue to contribute to the Union's priority objective of growth and jobs; insists on the need to provide an effective response to youth unemployment across the Union, and underlines that the YEI can be further improved and be made more efficient, notably by ensuring that it brings real European added value to youth employment policies in the Member States and does not replace the financing of former national policies;
10. Recalls that cohesion policy plays a primary role for the development and growth of the EU; stresses that in 2018 cohesion policy programmes are expected to catch up and reach cruising speed; emphasises Parliament's commitment to ensuring adequate appropriations for these programmes, which represent one of the core policies of the EU; is, however, preoccupied by the unacceptable delays in the implementation of operational programmes at national level; calls on Member States to ensure that the designation of managing, auditing and certifying authorities is concluded and implementation is accelerated; recognises that the long negotiations over the legal bases have meant that the EU institutions involved in them have their portion of responsibility for the low implementation rate; notes the fact that some Member States consider that cohesion funds could be a tool for guaranteeing solidarity in Union policies;
11. Is particularly concerned at the possible reconstitution of a backlog of unpaid bills towards the end of the current MFF period, and recalls the unprecedented amount of EUR 24,7 billion reached at the end of 2014; welcomes the fact that the Commission, on the occasion of the MFF mid-term revision, for the first time provided a payment forecast up to 2020, but stresses that this needs to be duly updated every year, in order to allow the budgetary authority to take the necessary measures in time; warns of the detrimental effect that a new payment crisis would have especially on beneficiaries of the EU budget; is convinced that the credibility of the EU is also linked to its ability to ensure an adequate level of payment appropriations in the EU budget that will allow it to deliver on its commitments; underlines the detrimental effect that late payments have

on the private sector, and notably on EU SMEs having contracts with public bodies;

12. Highlights the importance of delivering on the EU's commitment to achieving the goals set at COP21, especially in the light of the recent decision of the US Administration to withdraw from the agreement; underlines, in this respect, that there is a serious risk of falling short of meeting the objective of devoting at least 20 % of EU expenditure in the 2014-2020 MFF to climate-related actions unless more efforts are made; notes with concern the modest increase of 0,1 % for biodiversity; stresses the importance of mainstreaming biodiversity protection across the EU budget, and reiterates its previous call for a tracking methodology that takes into account all biodiversity-related spending and its efficiency; stresses also that EU-funded projects should aim not to have a negative impact on climate change mitigation or on the transition to a circular, low-carbon economy;
13. Emphasises that the unprecedented mobilisation of special instruments has shown that the EU budget was not initially designed to address issues like the current migration and refugee crisis; believes that moving to a post-crisis approach is premature; opposes, therefore, the proposed decreases in Heading 3 compared to the 2017 budget, which are not in line with the EU pledge to deal in an efficient manner with the migration and refugee crisis; stresses, however, that after a response to an urgent and unprecedented situation a more systemic and proactive approach should follow, complemented by an effective use of the EU budget; reiterates that citizens' security and safety is an EU priority;
14. Reaffirms that tackling the root causes of the migration and refugee crisis represents a long-term sustainable solution, along with stabilisation of the EU's neighbourhoods, and that investments in the countries of origin of migrants and refugees are key to achieving this objective; welcomes, in this regard, the External Investment Plan (EIP) and the agreement among the institutions on the European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD), and calls for the fund's rapid implementation; notes therefore with surprise the decreases in Heading 4, which cannot be fully justified in the framework of past budgetary increases or low implementation rate; reaffirms that tackling the root causes of the migration includes, but is not limited, to addressing issues such as poverty, unemployment, education and economic opportunities, as well as instability, conflict and climate change;
15. Welcomes the increase proposed for the eastern component of the European Neighbourhood Instrument, responding to Parliament's previous calls; is convinced that the EU's support, especially for the countries that have signed Association Agreements, is essential in order to further economic integration and convergence with the EU and to advance democracy, the rule of law and human rights in our Eastern Neighbourhood; stresses that such support should apply as long as the countries concerned meet the eligibility criteria, especially as regards the rule of law, the fight against corruption, and the strengthening of democratic institutions;
16. Highlights the importance of the European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF), which was set up to respond to major natural disasters and express European solidarity to disaster-stricken regions within Europe, and takes note of the proposed increase in commitment and payment appropriations for the EUSF; calls on the Commission to assess without delay whether a further increase will be necessary, bearing in mind, in particular, the earthquakes in Italy and the fires in Spain and Portugal (with tragic loss of human lives), which have had a dramatic and substantial impact on human life, in particularly

in deprived regions; calls for the rules for mobilising this fund to be adapted, allowing more flexible and timely mobilisation, covering a wider range of disasters with significant impacts and reducing the time between the disaster and the availability of funds;

17. Notes that the draft budget 2018 leaves very limited margins or no margin under the MFF ceilings throughout Headings 1, 3 and 4; considers this to be a consequence of the significant new initiatives taken since 2014 (EFSI, migration-related proposals, and lately defence research and the European Solidarity Corps), which have been squeezed within the MFF ceilings agreed in 2013; recalls that the MFF, in particular after its mid-term revision, provides for flexibility provisions which, albeit limited, should be used to their fullest in order to maintain the level of ambition of successful programmes and tackle new and unforeseen challenges; expresses Parliament's intention to further mobilise such flexibility provisions as part of the amending process; calls, once again, for the introduction of new genuine own resources in the EU budget;
18. Notes in this respect the numerous references in the draft budget to the necessity of a letter of amendment which may partially pre-empt Parliament's position in the budgetary procedure; regrets that, instead of already including them in the draft budget, the Commission has announced that possible new initiatives in the area of security and migration and a possible extension of the Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRT) may be proposed as part of an upcoming letter of amendment; urges the Commission to provide details as to these upcoming proposals in a timely manner so that the budgetary authority can properly examine them; stresses that these potential initiatives should not disregard, let alone replace, requests and amendments put forward by Parliament in the context of this budgetary procedure;
19. Reiterates its support for the implementation of the Commission's strategy 'Budget Focused on Results', and calls for continuous improvement of the quality and presentation of performance data, so as to provide accurate, clear and understandable information on EU programmes' performance;

Subheading 1a – Competitiveness for growth and jobs

20. Notes that in comparison with 2017, the Commission proposal for 2018 corresponds to an increase in commitments under subheading 1a of +2,5 % to EUR 21 841,3 million; welcomes the fact that Horizon 2020, the CEF and Erasmus+ account for an important part of this increase as their commitment appropriations rise by respectively 7,3 %, 8,7 % and 9,5 %, but notes still that this is slightly below their financial programming; highlights in particular the very low success rate for applications under Horizon 2020;
21. Is surprised, however, that COSME commitment and payment appropriations have been reduced respectively by 2,9 % and 31,3 %, although support to SMEs is identified as one of the top priorities of the EU;
22. Reiterates, regarding the extension of the EFSI, that Parliament opposes any further cuts to the CEF, and takes the view that the additional EUR 1,1 billion allocated to the EU guarantee should be taken only from unallocated margins (for an amount of EUR 650 billion) and expected net positive income (for an amount of EUR 450 billion); recalls that the CEF envelope (ICT strand) also integrates the new Wifi4EU initiative; recalls that the CEF budget is subjected to systematic oversubscription due to insufficient appropriations, especially with regard to the infrastructure strand;

23. Takes note of the Commission's proposal to set up a European Solidarity Corps (ESC); notes, however, with concern that, despite Parliament's warnings, the legislative proposal adopted on 30 May 2017 envisages that three fourths of the ESC budget would be financed by redeployments from existing programmes, and mainly from Erasmus+ (EUR 197,7 million); is concerned at the risk that this situation would pose to those EU programmes, and expresses its intention to further reinforce Erasmus+ in the 2018 budget; reiterates that any new political commitments should be financed with new appropriations and not redeployments from existing programmes;
24. Welcomes the proposed scaling-up of the preparatory action on defence research and the presentation by the Commission of a legislative proposal for a defence industry development programme;

Subheading 1b – Economic, social and territorial cohesion

25. Notes that total commitment appropriations for subheading 1b amount to EUR 55 407,9 million, representing an increase of 2,4 % compared to the 2017 budget if draft amending budget 3 is included;
26. Notes that the proposed amount of EUR 46 763,5 million in payment appropriations is 25,7 % higher than in 2017, this being largely a reflection of the drop experienced in 2017 due to the delay in effectively launching the new operational programmes; recalls that inaccurate forecasts by the Member States have led to a significant underuse of payment appropriations in subheading 1b in 2016, by more than EUR 11 billion, and notes that the proposed 2018 levels have already been revised downwards by EUR 1,6 billion since the previous forecasts;
27. Stresses the need for the implementation of the 2014-2020 programmes to reach full speed, and strongly believes that any 'abnormal' build-up of unpaid bills must be avoided in the future; calls, in this context, on the Commission and the Member States to resolve, as a matter of priority, any outstanding issues linked with the delayed designation of national managing and certifying authorities, as well as other bottlenecks for the submission of payment applications; sincerely hopes that both the national authorities and the Commission have improved their estimates of the payment needs in the 2018 budget and that the proposed level of payment appropriations will be fully executed; recognises that the lengthy negotiations between the EU institutions regarding the legal bases are among the several causes of this current low implementation rate;
28. Welcomes the Commission's proposal to fund the continuation of the YEI, and notes the proposed mobilisation of EUR 233,3 million from the global margin for commitments; calls on the Commission and the Member States to follow the indications of the recent report of the European Court of Auditors; recalls that any increase in the dedicated allocation for the YEI should be matched with the corresponding amounts from the European Social Fund (ESF); expresses its intention to explore all possibilities in order to further reinforce this programme in the 2018 budget;
29. Underlines the importance of the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) for tackling poverty and social exclusion, and asks for appropriate resources to be allocated in the 2018 budget to allow the needs of the target groups and the Fund's objectives to be adequately met;

Heading 2 – Sustainable growth: natural resources

30. Takes note of the proposed EUR 59 553,5 million in commitments (+1,7 % compared to

2017) and EUR 56 359,8 million in payments (+2,6 %) for Heading 2, leaving a margin of EUR 713,5 million under the ceiling for commitments; notes that the increased appropriations to finance the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) needs for 2018 (+2,1 %) are largely due to a significantly lower amount of assigned revenue being expected to be available in 2018;

31. Notes that the Commission has left a EUR 713,5 million margin under the ceilings of Heading 2; points to the fact that increased volatility of agricultural markets, as was the case with the dairy sector crisis in the past, might mean envisaging recourse to this margin; calls on the Commission to ensure that the margin left under the ceilings is sufficient to address any crises that may arise;
32. Highlights the prolongation of exceptional support measures for certain fruits for which the market situation is still difficult; regrets, however, that the Commission is not currently proposing support measures in the livestock sectors, and particularly in the dairy sector, related to the Russian ban on EU imports, and expects, therefore, a change of course in this regard; expects, consequently, that if the margin of Heading 2 is deployed, a part of it will be allocated to dairy farmers in countries most affected by the Russian embargo; awaits the Commission's letter of amendment, expected in October 2017, which should be based on updated information on the EAGF funding, verifying real needs in the agricultural sector and duly taking into account the impact of the Russian embargo and other market volatilities;
33. Welcomes the increase in commitments of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) (+2,4 %) and of the LIFE+ programme (+5,9 %), in line with financial programming, but regrets that considerably reduced payment appropriations seem to reveal a still slow take-off of those two programmes in the 2014-2020 period;

Heading 3 – Security and citizenship

34. Notes the proposed EUR 3 473,1 million in commitment appropriations for Heading 3; emphasises the need for joint, comprehensive and sustainable solutions to the migration and refugee situation and related challenges;
35. Welcomes the Commission's proposal for an additional EUR 800 million dedicated to tackling security issues, particularly following the series of terrorist attacks in the EU;
36. Is of the opinion that the importance and urgency of these issues is not in line with the significant decreases in commitment (-18,9 %) and payment appropriations (-21,7 %) proposed for Heading 3 compared with the 2017 budget, notably with regard to the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), the Internal Security Fund (ISF) and the Justice programme; calls for adequate budgeting for these funds; insists that these decreases are not justifiable by the delays in implementation of the agreed measures or in adoption of the new legal proposals; calls, therefore, on the Commission to ensure that adequate budgetary resources are provided for and that any additional needs will be swiftly addressed;
37. Regrets that until now there has been no effective system for redistribution, and that this has resulted in an unequal load for some Member States, notably Italy and Greece; recalls that 361 678 refugees and migrants arrived in the EU in 2016, of which 181 405 arrived in Italy and 173 447 in Greece, and that Italy has already received 85 % of the refugees and migrants who have reached the EU so far in 2017; regrets that Italy has so far only received EUR 147.6 million from the AMIF, a sum that only covers 3 % of the

country's total expenses for managing the migration crisis;

38. Furthermore believes that cooperation among Member States in security-related matters could be further enhanced through increased support from the EU budget; questions how such an objective could be reached while relevant budgetary lines of the ISF are significantly decreased compared to the 2017 Budget; stresses the need to guarantee the necessary funding to implement the proposed new information and border systems, such as the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) and the Entry-Exit System;
39. Considers that 2018 will be a pivotal year in the establishment of the European Agenda on Migration, with several of its key components under development; underlines the need to carefully assess the budgetary implications of a number of legislative proposals on the table, such as the reform of the Dublin common asylum system and the new Entry-Exit System and ETIAS system, including the possibility of their late adoption; stresses the importance of adequate financing to match the Union's ambition in this regard and urgently achieve the establishment of an effective European asylum and migration policy, in full respect of international law and based on solidarity among Member States;
40. Points out that the Commission's proposal, for the third year in a row, does not leave any margin under the ceiling for Heading 3, evidencing the outdated size of the smallest MFF heading, as argued by Parliament as part of the mid-term revision process; welcomes, in this context, the Commission's proposal to mobilise the Flexibility Instrument for an amount of EUR 817 million in commitment appropriations, which can only be made possible thanks to the additional flexibility obtained in the revised MFF Regulation; insists that the expenditure level is still insufficient, and regrets that the Commission has postponed any further proposal to a future letter of amendment;
41. Recalls Parliament's consistently strong support for culture and media programmes; welcomes the proposed increases for the Creative Europe Programme compared with the 2017 budget, including for the European Year for Cultural Heritage under 'Multimedia actions'; insists, furthermore, on sufficient funding for the programme 'Europe for Citizens'; calls on the Commission to review initiatives under the 'multimedia actions' budget line so as to ensure that the budget effectively supports high-quality independent coverage of EU affairs; reiterates its support for a sustainable multiannual funding arrangement for Euranet+; welcomes, finally, the increases in commitment appropriations for the Food and Feed programme and the Consumer programme compared with the 2017 budget; emphasises, finally, the importance of a strong Health Programme and an appropriate budget to enable European cooperation in the field of health, including new innovations in healthcare, health inequalities, the burden of chronic diseases, anti-microbial resistance, cross-border healthcare and access to care;

Heading 4 – Global Europe

42. Regrets the overall decrease of financing for Heading 4, amounting to EUR 9,6 billion (-5,6 % compared with the 2017 budget) in commitment appropriations; notes that the decreases in the main Heading 4 instruments are largely linked to past reinforcements approved in the 2017 budget for the FRT and the New Partnership Framework under the European agenda on migration;

43. Believes that the level of cuts for the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) and the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), especially the latter's southern component, is not justified, given the longer-term needs regarding EU action on migration going beyond the migration compacts under the Partnership Framework and its commitment to international development; calls, in this context, for an increase in the financial resources to be dedicated to the peace process and financial assistance to Palestine and UNRWA; recalls the importance of ensuring sufficient funds for the Southern Neighbourhood, since stability in the Middle East is a key element for addressing the root causes of migration;
44. Welcomes, nevertheless, the proposed increases for the eastern component of ENI, which will contribute to supporting democratic reforms and economic integration with the EU, especially in the countries that have signed Association Agreements with the Union;
45. Notes the increased support for political reforms in Turkey (IPA II), especially in the context of the country's backsliding in the fields of the rule of law, freedom of speech and fundamental rights; calls on the Commission to suspend the pre-accession funds if the accession negotiations are suspended, and, should that scenario unfold, to use those funds to directly support civil society in Turkey, and to invest more in people-to-people exchange programmes such as Erasmus+, for students, academics and journalists; expects sufficient funding for the IPA beneficiary countries in the Western Balkans, which are in urgent need of financial support for reforms;
46. Considers, given the importance of higher education for overall reforms in partner countries, that student mobility and academic cooperation between the EU and neighbourhood countries should receive continuous support; regrets, therefore, the reductions in the appropriations for technical and financial assistance under the three external instruments (IPA, ENI and DCI) aimed at promoting the international dimension of higher education for the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme;
47. Takes note of the Commission's proposal to leave a margin of EUR 232 million below the ceiling; is convinced that the challenges that the EU's external action is faced with call for sustained funding exceeding the current size of Heading 4; recalls that the contingency margin was used in the 2017 budget to allow for funding above the ceiling; maintains that new initiatives should be funded with fresh appropriations and all flexibility options to the level agreed within the MFF revision should be fully used;
48. Calls on the Commission, which makes repeated references to a possible prolongation of the FRT, to put forward a genuine proposal for its prolongation as soon as possible if that is its intention; recalls the commitment made by Parliament, the Council and the Commission to ensure that the establishment of the FRT and the trust funds is transparent and clear, and consistent with the principle of the unity of the Union budget with respect to the prerogatives of the budgetary authority, including parliamentary scrutiny; urges Member States once again to honour in timely fashion their commitments to the financing of the FRT and the trust funds;
49. Lends its full support to the pledges made by the EU at the Brussels conference on Syria, confirming the previous London pledges; agrees with the reinforcement of the ENI and of humanitarian aid by EUR 120 million each to meet this pledge;

Heading 5 – Administration

50. Notes that Heading 5 expenditure is increased by 3,1 % compared to the 2017 budget,

up to EUR 9 682,4 million (+EUR 287,9 million); notes that more than one third of this nominal increase is explained by additional appropriations needed for pensions (+EUR 108,5 million); takes note that the additional appropriations result mostly from a growing expected number of pensioners (+4,2 %); takes note also that the number of pensioners is expected to rise further in the coming years; takes note of the rigorous approach to administrative expenditure and the nominal freeze for all non-salary-related expenditure;

51. Notes that the effective margin is EUR 93,6 million under the ceiling after the offsetting of EUR 570 million for the use of the contingency margin for Heading 3 mobilised in 2017; underlines that Heading 5's share of the EU budget has slightly increased to 6,0 % (in commitment appropriations) due to pensions;

Pilot projects – preparatory actions

52. Stresses the importance of pilot projects (PPs) and preparatory actions (PAs) as tools for the formulation of political priorities and the introduction of new initiatives that might turn into standing EU activities and programmes; intends to proceed with the identification of a balanced package of PP-PAs; notes that in the current proposal the margin in some headings is quite limited, or even non-existent, and intends to explore ways to make room for possible PP-PAs without decreasing other political priorities; considers that in its implementation of PP-PAs the Commission should inform step by step the Members of the European Parliament at their origin, so as to ensure full respect for the spirit of their proposals;

Agencies

53. Notes the overall increase in the draft budget 2018 for decentralised agencies of +3,1 % (not taking into account assigned revenues) and +146 posts, but highlights wide differences between 'cruising speed' agencies (-11,2 %) and 'new tasks' agencies (+10,5 %); assumes that these figures properly reflect the fact that since 2013 most agencies have completed or even exceeded the 5 % staff cuts (some are to complete them in 2018), while staff increases in the same period were confined to agencies dealing with migration and security (+183 posts), financial supervisory agencies (+28 posts) and some agencies entrusted with new tasks (ERA, EASA, GSA) (+18 posts); reiterates its call, as expressed in the 2015 discharge procedure¹, to safeguard resources and where necessary provide additional resources so as to ensure the proper functioning of the agencies, including the Network of EU Agencies' Permanent Secretariat (now called the Shared Support Office);
54. Reiterates its conviction that the EU agencies active in the Justice and Home Affairs field must be urgently ensured the necessary operational expenditure and staffing levels to allow them successfully to take on the additional tasks and responsibilities that they have been given in recent years; welcomes, in this regard, the staff increases proposed for the European Coast and Border Guard Agency (Frontex) and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), which it considers to be the minimum to ensure that these agencies can effectively perform their operations; underlines that the proposed budget and staffing level for Europol is insufficient for it to fulfil its assigned tasks, as the

¹ See European Parliament resolution of 27 April 2017 on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget of the European Union agencies for the financial year 2015: performance, financial management and control (Texts adopted, P8_TA(2017)0155).

Commission and the Member States have decided in previous years to strengthen cooperation between Member States, especially in the fields of combating terrorism, organised crime, cybercrime and human trafficking and of protection for unaccompanied children; underlines the gaps identified in the existing exchange of information architecture, and urges the Commission to provide eu-LISA with the appropriate human and financial resources for it to fulfil the additional tasks and responsibilities recently assigned to it in this respect; underlines the important role of EASO in supporting Member States in the management of asylum applications, especially when dealing with an increased number of asylum seekers; regrets the decrease in the operational funding level (-23,6 % compared to 2017) and the staffing level (-4 %) for Eurojust, which is currently having to face an increase in its casework;

55. Notes with concern that the EU agencies in the area of employment and training (CEDEFOP, ETF, EU-OSHA, EUROFOUND) and in the area of environmental action (ECDC, ECHA, EEA, EFSA, EMA) are being treated as particular targets for staff cuts (-5 and -12 posts respectively); believes this is contradictory to the overall Union policies of creating decent, quality and stable jobs and combating climate change; welcomes the increase in staff and budget for ACER and GSA, but underlines that these increases are not sufficient for the agencies to adequately fulfil their tasks;
56. Notes that the year 2018 is the third REACH registration deadline, affecting a large number of companies in Europe and the highest number of SMEs to date, and that this will consequently have a significant impact on the workload of ECHA; calls, therefore, on the Commission to refrain from the planned reduction of six temporary agent posts in 2018 and to postpone this reduction until 2019 so that ECHA can effectively implement its entire 2018 work programme; notes, in this regard, that ECHA has already implemented a 10 % staff reduction for REACH since 2012;

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57. Recalls that gender mainstreaming is a legal obligation stemming directly from the Treaties; calls for the enforcement of gender budgeting within the budgetary procedure and for budgetary expenditure to be used as an effective tool for promoting equality between women and men; recommends developing a budget plan for implementing gender mainstreaming in the EU institutions, as per the adopted pilot project, and including in the future a specific budget line for managing the coordination of gender mainstreaming throughout the institutions;
58. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.

ANNEX

JOINT STATEMENT ON THE DATES FOR THE BUDGETARY PROCEDURE AND MODALITIES FOR THE FUNCTIONING OF THE CONCILIATION COMMITTEE IN 2018

- A. In accordance with Part A of the annex to the interinstitutional agreement between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline, on cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management, the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission agree on the following key dates for the 2018 budgetary procedure:
1. A trilogue will be called on 13 July in the morning, before the adoption of the Council's position;
 2. The Commission will endeavour to present the Statement of Estimates 2018 by late May;
 3. The Council will endeavour to adopt its position and transmit it to the European Parliament by week 37 (third week of September), in order to facilitate a timely agreement with the European Parliament;
 4. The European Parliament's Committee on Budgets will endeavour to vote on amendments to the Council's position by the end of week 41 (mid-October) at the latest;
 5. A trilogue will be called on 18 October in the afternoon, before the reading of the European Parliament;
 6. The European Parliament's Plenary will vote on its reading in week 43 (Plenary session of 23-26 October);
 7. The Conciliation period will start on 31 October. In agreement with the provisions of point c of Article 314(4) TFEU, the time available for conciliation will expire on 20 November 2017;
 8. The Conciliation Committee will meet on 6 November in the afternoon hosted by the European Parliament and on 17 November hosted by the Council and may resume as appropriate; the sessions of the Conciliation Committee will be prepared by trilogue(s). A trilogue is scheduled on 9 November in the morning.

Additional trilogue(s) may be called during the 21-day conciliation period, including possibly on 13 or 14 November (Strasbourg).

- B. The modalities for the functioning of the Conciliation Committee are set out in Part E of the annex to the above-mentioned interinstitutional agreement.