

# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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*Committee on Constitutional Affairs*

**2004/2001(BUD)**

3 September 2004

## **OPINION**

of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs

for the Committee on Budgets

on the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2005:  
Section III, Commission  
(C5-0300/2004 – 2004/2001(BUD))

Draftsman: Gérard Onesta



## SHORT JUSTIFICATION

The financial year 2005 will be the first budget to cover 25 Member States over the whole year. It is thus essential in all policy fields to make strong efforts to contribute to a rapid integration of the new Member States and to acquaint them with the inner workings of the European Union, in particular its institutional order and decision mechanisms. Moreover, a draft constitution for Europe has been adopted by the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) on 18 June 2004. After the final legal and linguistic verification of the text, that constitution will have to be presented and explained to the citizens of the Member States, especially in the growing number of countries who will call on their citizens to approve it in a referendum. Finally, the debate on the future financial framework post 2006, which the Commission launched in February 2004, will influence the smooth progress of the budget negotiations.

In the Preliminary Draft Budget, the total ceiling of payment appropriations for 2005 is EUR 114,2 billion, which corresponds to 1,08 % of the GNI. The ceiling of the internal policies (heading 3 of the financial perspectives) in nominal terms increases by EUR 290 million, i.e. + 3,3 % against the budget 2004. Significant increases compared to the 2004 budget can be found in one of the policy areas important for this Committee, i.e. education and culture (+EUR 37 million). According to the activity based budget classification, the budget items of interest to the Committee on Constitutional Affairs can be found in Titles 15 (education and culture), 16 (press and communication) and 25 (Commission's policy coordination and legal advice).

In 2005, every effort must be made to bring home to Union citizens the importance of the issues at stake in the forthcoming transformations of the European Union. Otherwise, there is a clear risk to deepen the disenchantment vis-à-vis the European Union that has become apparent in a number of polls over the past few years. The Committee on Constitutional Affairs will thus focus on the following aspects:

- information relays;
- the Prince programme;
- the Jean Monnet action programme (European integration in universities);
- subsidies for bodies active in the constitutional field, notably the College of Europe (15 02 01 02), the European University Institute in Florence (15 02 01 03), the European Law Academy in Trier (15 02 01 03), the European Institute of Public Administration in Maastricht (15 02 01 05), "Our Europe" Association, grants to European think tanks and organisations advancing the idea of Europe (15 06 01 03), the Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman House (15 06 01 06);
- Webcasting and storage of plenary sessions and other important public meetings.

With the exception of item 16 05 01 (see below) the draft budget adopted by the Council has not changed the amounts proposed by the Commission in its preliminary draft budget (PDB).

## **INFORMATION OUTLETS (16 05 01)**

As noted above, the draft Constitution for Europe must be disseminated and explained to the public, not least in the context of referenda to be organised in at least 11 Member States. Strong support for the work of the information relays is therefore essential. In its PDB, the Commission has entered an appropriation of EUR 17.75 million against item 16 05 01, an increase of 3,8%. The Committee on Constitutional Affairs regards this amount as appropriate. However, the DB proposes to reinstall the 2004 figure of 17.1 million. In view of the information tasks to be tackled with in 2005, this is not acceptable.

## **PRINCE PROGRAMME, SECTION 'DEBATE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE' (25 03 02)**

The Prince programme is an information programme designed to increase public awareness of the European Union's main political priorities, such as the euro or enlargement. In its 2005 PDB, the Commission has earmarked appropriations totalling EUR 1.5 million for Item 25 03 02, whereas the corresponding figure for the latter item in 2004 was EUR 4.5 million. However, the need to support a wide public debate on the future of Europe is all the more pressing at a time when the draft constitution for the Union is to be made familiar to citizens. This is all the more so because of the low turn out at the last European elections. The reduction proposed by the Commission is thus unacceptable.

For this reason, the Committee on Constitutional Affairs is proposing an increase in funding for Item 25 03 02 of the Prince programme, with a view to providing it with the appropriations required to keep the citizens of the 25 Member States properly informed about the European integration process and to foster public debate. This increased funding should take the form of additional appropriations amounting to EUR 6,5 million, bringing the total volume up to EUR 8 million. These resources should be used to increase public awareness of the draft constitutional Treaty and to foster greater participation by European citizens in the debate on the structure of the future European Union, a structure which a majority of those citizens will be asked to approve in referendums.

## **JEAN MONNET ACTION PROGRAMME: EUROPEAN INTEGRATION IN UNIVERSITIES (15 02 01 01)**

Over the past few years, the establishment of chairs under the Jean Monnet action programme has had to be slowed down temporarily, given that for some time all appropriations have been earmarked for the establishment of chairs in the new Member States and in universities in third countries. That guideline was then entirely appropriate, but should not be implemented to the detriment of the action programme's other objectives in the 25 Member States.

The Jean Monnet action programme is the only direct action programme whose aim is to disseminate the idea of European integration at university level. Moreover, academics represent important opinion multipliers in the context of the debate on the future of Europe, as emphasised by Declaration 23 annexed to the Treaty of Nice, which cites them as key discussion partners in that constitutional debate.

The Committee on Constitutional Affairs thus sees a need to increase the appropriation against Item 15 02 01 01 with 2 %, in line with most other items falling under Article 15 02 01. The amount would thus be EUR 3,876 million.

## **COMMUNITY SUBSIDIES FOR ORGANISATIONS WORKING TO ADVANCE THE IDEA OF EUROPE**

The funds granted under this item are intended to support institutions active at the European level and to contribute to the funding of bodies and projects which seek to encourage research into European integration. Some of these bodies focus on subjects in the constitutional field.

Until recently, there were two different kinds of budget lines in the Commission budget: lines in Part A of the budget covered administrative expenditure, those in Part B covered operational expenditure. For a number of years, grants were awarded to organisation pursuing a European interest on an annual basis, and at the initiative of the Parliament, under Part A of the budget, without a legal base. Grants were made either by the creation of dedicated budget lines (e.g. for the European University institute in Florence) or by "earmarking", i.e. assigning sums under a given budget line to name beneficiaries. Since the advent of Activity Based Budgeting and of the new Financial Regulation removed the distinction between administrative and operational expenditure in the classical sense, and excluded the possibility of earmarking, the Commission proposed several programmes to cover this range of budget lines until then without legal base. These proposals came into force shortly before the parliamentary elections in June: Two of them contain annexes listing named beneficiaries to whom, exceptionally and by way of derogation from the financial Regulation, grants *might* be made in 2004 and 2005 without the Commission needing to issue a call for proposals.

Part of the organisations of interest to the Committee on Constitutional Affairs fall under Part 1 and 3A of Council Decision 971 /2004 of 21 April 2004 (OJ L 138 of 30 April 2004), promoting bodies active at European level and support specific activities in the field of education and training, namely the College of Europe (EUR 4,348 million), the European University Institute in Florence (EUR 4,776 million), the European Law Academy in Trier (EUR 1,581 million), the European Institute of Public Administration in Maastricht (EUR 0,839 million) (all of these Annex, Action 1) and the Jean Monnet Chairs (Annex, Action 3A). There are also a few other training institutes that fall under this part of this legal base (European Inter university Centre for Human rights and Democratisation, European Agency for Development in Special Needs and International Centre for European Training) This Decision has a financial envelope of 77 Million over 3 years of which between 58% and 65% may be used for Action 1A. This means between EUR 14, 88 million and 16,68 million per year. For 2004 Action 1A amounted to EUR 14,151 million. For 2005 the proposed envelope is 16,116 million. It has to be borne in mind that any increase for any organisation goes almost automatically at the detriment of others financed under the same (sub) envelope or at the detriment of the 2006 budget of the same organisations.

Other organisations of interest to the Committee on constitutional Affairs fall under Decision 100/2004 of 26 January 2004 (OJ L 30 of 4 February 2004), action programme to promote active european citizenship (civic participation), such as "Our Europe" Association (EUR 0,612 million, an increase of 2% over the 2004 budget), grants to European think tanks and organisations advancing the idea of Europe (2,405 million, no increase over 2004, because

subject to the rule of gradual decrease)), support for the Jean Monnet and the Robert Schuman House (0,383 million, an increase of 2% over the 2004 budget). This decision has a financial reference amount of 72 million over 3 years, and has to finance a wide range of organisations; it also has to cover e.g. the platform of European social NGO's, trade unions, the European Council of Refugees and Exiles and town twinning. Again, any increase that would be proposed for any organisation would go at the detriment of other organisations or at the detriment of the budget for 2006.

In its 2005 PDB, the Commission has slightly increased the appropriations earmarked for most of these bodies (with 2 %- in line with inflation), namely those not subject to the rule of gradual decrease (article 113 of the Financial Regulation), as specified in the Decisions 971/2004 and 100/2004). The Committee on Constitutional Affairs is satisfied to see a higher increase for two bodies, namely the European College (an increase of 50% over 2004) and the European University Institute (an increase of 8,5%) so that the appropriations earmarked for these items will be in keeping with the increased number of candidates and students to take into account after enlargement.

The rapporteur does not propose any increase beyond the PDB at this stage for any particular organisation, because of the limited size of the financial envelopes of the legal bases concerned and the different committees involved. He remains however open for suggestions of other Members.

## **WEBCASTING AND STORAGE OF PLENARY SESSIONS AND OTHER IMPORTANT PUBLIC MEETINGS**

The broadcasting on the Internet of public debates and meetings held by the institutions of the European Union has to be further strengthened. As regards the Parliament, the storage on a special drive of broadcasted Plenary sessions, plus the there provided interpretations in all languages, could serve as an attractive alternative to the traditional "arc-en-ciel". The Bureau is thus asked to take further steps in this direction.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The Committee on Constitutional Affairs calls on the Committee on Budgets, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Considering the political and constitutional changes which the European Union will have to prepare in 2005, the work of the information outlets must be strongly supported, the main task being to acquaint the European public with the draft constitution for Europe adopted by the Heads of State and Government on 18 June 2004;
2. The constitutional debate on the further development of the European Union will continue next year, taking account of the institutional structure of a Europe with 25 Member States and the new role of the Union in the world. Accordingly, the Prince programme, which provides the resources needed to foster debate on these subjects outside the institutions, will take on even more importance than in the past;

3. The preparation of the draft constitution by the Convention on the Future of Europe as well as the proceedings of the Intergovernmental Conference were significantly enriched by contributions from academics and think tanks. As the major constitutional issues will continue to be discussed in the institutions and in the media of all Member States, in particular ahead of the referendums on the constitution, sufficient funding for university centres and think tanks specialising in constitutional affairs must be ensured;
4. The Bureau is invited to take further steps in the direction of storage on a special drive of broadcasted Plenary sessions together with its interpretation in all languages as an alternative to the traditional "arc-en ciel" and if necessary reinforce the appropriations for this item in the Parliament budget.

## PROCÉDURE

<b>Title</b>	On the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2005: Section III, Commission
<b>Procedure number</b>	C5-0300/2004 – 2004/2001(BUD)
<b>Committee responsible</b>	BUDG
<b>Enhanced cooperation</b>	
<b>Draftsman</b> Date appointed	Gérard Onesta 27.7.2004
<b>Discussed in committee</b>	27.7.2004      2.9.2004
<b>Date suggestions adopted</b>	2.9.2004
<b>Result of final vote</b>	for:                      18 against:                4 abstentions:           0
<b>Members present for the final vote</b>	Jens-Peter Bonde, Carlos Carnero González, Richard Corbett, Jean-Luc Dehaene, Andrew Nicholas Duff, Bronisław Geremek, Genowefa Grabowska, Ignasi Guardans Cambó, Sylvia-Yvonne Kaufmann, Jo Leinen, Íñigo Méndez de Vigo, Borut Pahor, Marie-Line Reynaud, Alexander Stubb, Johannes Voggenhuber, Wojciech Wierzejski
<b>Substitutes present for the final vote</b>	Mercedes Bresso, Stavros Lambrinidis, Ashley Mote, Gérard Onesta, Georgios Papastamkos, Secondo (Mauro) Zani
<b>Substitutes under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote</b>	