



2020/1998(BUD)

13.10.2020

OPINION

of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

for the Committee on Budgets

on the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2021
(2020/1998(BUD))

Rapporteur for opinion: Nikos Androulakis

PA_NonLeg

SUGGESTIONS

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

1. Notes that the budgetary year 2021 is the first of the 2021-2027 multi-annual financial framework (MFF); further notes that the bulk of external action spending is concentrated in the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), on which inter-institutional legislative negotiations are still ongoing; stresses that those negotiations should conclude with an agreement as soon as possible;
2. Regrets that the new nomenclature for the external action part as proposed by the Commission is much less detailed than the previous one, reducing transparency, predictability, accountability, scrutiny, and limiting the budgetary authority's capacity to make budgetary choices reflecting political priorities; insists, therefore, that a more differentiated budget structure, with dedicated lines for the most important beneficiaries and sub-regions, is needed, in order to enhance the clarity and readability of the budget; notes that the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Committee on Development have proposed a revised nomenclature that is adapted to the new instruments, but introduces a higher level of detail by creating new budget lines within the extremely broad geographic and thematic lines proposed by the Commission; emphasises that the revised nomenclature enjoys strong support in both committees;
3. Rejects the deep cuts to heading 6 in the European Council agreement on the MFF of 21 July 2020, which would leave the NDICI at a lower level than its predecessor instruments during the current financial programming period, at a time when EU leadership is needed more desperately than ever; regrets the European Council's decision to discard the external pillar of Next Generation EU, namely the top-up of EUR 10,5 billion for the NDICI proposed by the Commission; emphasises that at a time when external challenges and matters of international politics are gaining importance and are dominating international politics, it has to be ensured that the external dimension of the Union budget is appropriately funded and prepared to respond without delay to current, emerging, as well as future challenges; calls for significant reinforcements for the NDICI as one of the EU's flagship programmes;
4. Calls for increased funding levels for all geographic and thematic programmes under the NDICI, in line with its first-reading position on the latter; reiterates its position that the thematic programmes within the NDICI should be reinforced in order to allow the Union to maintain its strong role in these priority areas; underlines that its position on the allocations for the NDICI is fully aligned with the amounts laid down in Parliament's first-reading position on the NDICI;
5. Calls in particular for a more ambitious budget of the human rights thematic programme of the instrument, in order to address the increasing challenges to human rights in the world, which are further compounded by the COVID-19 crisis; recalls that the protection and promotion of human rights worldwide continues to be a core business for EU external action; reiterates its strong support to human rights defenders, including environmental defenders, in particular those most at risk, and calls for adequate funds to

support the project Protect Defenders EU in order to extend and reinforce their protection; emphasises that adequate funding for actions to protect persecuted minorities must be available; underlines its support, including as regards adequate funding, for the Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the EU, as well as for activities to fight antisemitism and other types of discrimination.

6. At a time when democracy is becoming increasingly under threat around the world, reiterates its support for funding dedicated to election observation missions, including local observers; calls for increased funding for electoral observation missions and stresses their fundamental role of being a strong deterrent to electoral fraud and violence whilst also contributing to improving future elections, fostering peace and development and supporting democracy;
7. Calls for an increase in the budget lines for foreign policy needs and priorities, crisis response and civilian common security and defence policy emergency measures in order to deal with the dramatic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic;
8. Rejects the introduction of an “emerging challenges and priorities cushion” budget line, for which the Commission has provided no substantial information on the intended use of the funds under this line; insists that such a blank cheque is not compatible with the principles of transparency and democratic accountability and undermines the budgetary authority's prerogatives;
9. Emphasises the need for increased funding for the countries of the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood in order to support political and economic reforms and support democratic transitions, with a focus on the most committed partners following the principle of ‘more for more and less for less’; calls for increased visibility and transparency for EU funding in the near neighbourhood; calls on the Commission to monitor that no funding is misused;
10. Welcomes the EU financial support of over EUR 980 million for the Eastern Partnership countries in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic to help tackle the immediate needs in the health sector;
11. Following the recent worrying developments in Belarus, calls for the creation of a new Special Representative for Belarus, to support the process for a peaceful transition of power in accordance with the will of the Belarusian people; emphasises the strong need for greater financial support to civil society, human rights defenders, independent unions, independent media and non-governmental organisations in Belarus, while freezing any EU financial transfers to the current Belarusian government;
12. Believes that it is important to continue confidence building with the Eastern Partnership countries and especially with the associated ones; underlines the importance of promoting fundamental rights, democracy and the rule of law; therefore calls for the allocations to Azerbaijan and Belarus to be limited to support to civil society and non-state actors, as well as people-to-people contacts;
13. Recalls the challenges the countries of the Southern Neighbourhood are facing especially due to the tumultuous developments in the region, including but not limited

to the COVID-19 emergency and the fragile security environment; is of the opinion that, especially following the dramatic events in Lebanon, an increased support should be foreseen; regrets that 25 years after the launch of the so-called Barcelona Process, the construction of an area of shared prosperity, stability and freedom with the Mediterranean countries of North Africa has not yet been completed;

14. Calls for increased financial support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, in recognition of its essential role as a unique provider of vital services for millions of Palestine refugees and as an investment towards security, stability and development in the region;
15. In order to support a peaceful resolution to the Libyan conflict proposes the creation of a dedicated budget line for "the support to the political process in Libya";
16. Stresses the importance of the accession process of the Western Balkan countries; calls for increased funding to uphold the EU's engagement in the region, especially in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic effects; welcomes the stronger focus of the funding under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III) on the so-called fundamentals, notably democracy, the rule of law, respect for human and fundamental rights, good governance and civil society, as well as people-to-people contacts;
17. Points out that the revised nomenclature proposed by the Committee on Foreign Affairs envisages separate budget lines for the Western Balkans and Turkey; insists on the need for dedicated budget lines for Turkey in view of the highly sensitive nature of EU funding for Turkey;
18. Underlines that the allocation of IPA funding should be conditional on respect for the rule of law, democracy, human rights, European and international law, the sovereign rights of Member States and the principle of good neighbourly relations; underlines that due to the backsliding in all these areas, the allocations for Turkey should remain at a substantially reduced level and be limited to the so called fundamentals; funding for Turkey should be directly managed by the EU and focus exclusively on support for civil society and people-to-people contacts with the objective of protecting and promoting democratic values and principles, human rights and the rule of law; stresses that it is time for a different approach towards Turkey;
19. Stresses the responsibility of the EU to support the protection of the Arctic; underlines the importance of investing into developing a more coherent EU Arctic Policy;
20. Recalls that various European political leaders have highlighted the importance of significantly advancing the EU's relations with the African continent, and hence stresses the need to adequately match words with deeds and provide adequate funding in order to address the many joint short-, medium-, and long-term challenges and opportunities which Europe and Africa can tackle together; emphasises the need for increased funding for the development and security of the Sahel countries;
21. Recalls that funding instruments, projects or programmes need to be assessed in the light of the Green Deal in general and the Union climate objectives in particular, and should take them fully into account;

22. Insists that the European Investment Bank reports in a timely and comprehensive manner on all its external spending to the relevant its committees;
23. Regrets the low level of funding for heading 5, and in particular for the European Defence Fund and for military mobility; calls for increased funding for the European Defence Fund in order to fully foster an innovative and competitive defence industrial base that will contribute to the much-needed strategic autonomy of the EU;
24. Calls for increased funding for military mobility with the aim of helping Member States act faster and more effectively; notes that sufficient funding is needed to support missions and operations under the common security and defence policy, including by measures such as funding dual-use transport infrastructure and simplifying diplomatic clearances and customs rules;
25. Stresses the importance of a progressive framing of the EU's common security and defence policy; underlines the importance of enhancing European cooperation in defence matters since it not only makes Europe and its citizens safer, but also leads to a cost reduction, which means that more money is available for other pressing matters; calls on the Commission to propose strategic guidelines for strengthening the permanent structured cooperation;
26. Repeats its previous statements about the threats related to cybersecurity as well as the spreading of fake news; in this respect highlights the need for the Union budget to better address and respond to those key challenges on a horizontal level, including in particular at the headquarters of the EU, as well as its delegations around the world; calls for further and permanent funding for strategic communication actions to counter disinformation campaigns, propaganda and foreign influence, especially for the flagship project of the European External Action Service - East StratCom Task Force - EU vs. Disinfo;
27. Reiterates its firm belief that in countries of specific strategic interest for the EU, particularly the accession countries and the associated countries of the Eastern Partnership, a closer link between the Parliament and the respective national parliaments should be established, and therefore calls for adequate funding to ensure additional staff to enhance the important field of parliamentary cooperation;
28. Rejects the Council's cuts to the administrative budget of the European External Action Service; calls on the Rapporteur for the Committee on Budgets for section X to restore the draft budget on all lines cut by the Council in section X.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	12.10.2020
Result of final vote	+: 44 -: 10 0: 11
Members present for the final vote	Alviina Alametsä, Maria Arena, Petras Auštrevičius, Traian Băsescu, Anna Bonfrisco, Fabio Massimo Castaldo, Susanna Ceccardi, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Katalin Cseh, Tanja Fajon, Anna Fotyga, Michael Gahler, Kinga Gál, Sunčana Glavak, Raphaël Glucksmann, Klemen Grošelj, Bernard Guetta, Márton Gyöngyösi, Sandra Kalniete, Dietmar Köster, Andrius Kubilius, Ilhan Kyuchyuk, David Lega, Miriam Lexmann, Nathalie Loiseau, Antonio López-Istúriz White, Lukas Mandl, Thierry Mariani, David McAllister, Vangelis Meimarakis, Francisco José Millán Mon, Javier Nart, Gheorghe-Vlad Nistor, Urmas Paet, Demetris Papadakis, Kostas Papadakis, Tonino Picula, Manu Pineda, Kati Piri, Giuliano Pisapia, Jérôme Rivière, María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos, Nacho Sánchez Amor, Isabel Santos, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, Andreas Schieder, Radosław Sikorski, Jordi Solé, Sergei Stanishev, Tineke Strik, Hermann Tertsch, Hilde Vautmans, Harald Vilimsky, Idoia Villanueva Ruiz, Viola Von Cramon-Taubadel, Witold Jan Waszczykowski, Charlie Weimers, Isabel Wiseler-Lima, Salima Yenbou, Željana Zovko
Substitutes present for the final vote	Nikos Androulakis, Vladimír Bilčík, Andrea Bocskor, Bart Groothuis, Andrzej Halicki, Evin Incir, Katrin Langensiepen, Marisa Matias, Hannah Neumann, Juozas Olekas, Kris Peeters, Paulo Rangel, Frédérique Ries, Nicolae Ștefănuță, Ernest Urtasun, Mick Wallace
Substitutes under Rule 209(7) present for the final vote	Margrete Auken, Lefteris Nikolaou-Alavanos, Carlos Zorrinho

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

44	+
PPE	Traian Băsescu, Vladimír Bilčík, Michael Gahler, Sunčana Glavak, Kinga Gál, Andrzej Halicki, Sandra Kalniete, Andrius Kubilius, Miriam Lexmann, Antonio López-Istúriz White, David McAllister, Vangelis Meimarakis, Francisco José Millán Mon, Gheorghe-Vlad Nistor, Radosław Sikorski, Isabel Wiseler-Lima, Željana Zovko
S&D	Nikos Androulakis, Maria Arena, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Tanja Fajon, Raphaël Glucksmann, Dietmar Köster, Juozas Olekas, Demetris Papadakis, Tonino Picula, Kati Piri, Giuliano Pisapia, Isabel Santos, Andreas Schieder, Sergei Stanishev, Nacho Sánchez Amor
Renew	Petras Auštrevičius, Katalin Cseh, Klemen Grošelj, Bernard Guetta, Ilhan Kyuchyuk, Nathalie Loiseau, Javier Nart, Urmaz Paet, María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos, Hilde Vautmans
NI	Fabio Massimo Castaldo, Márton Gyöngyösi

10	-
ID	Anna Bonfrisco, Susanna Ceccardi, Thierry Mariani, Jérôme Rivière, Harald Vilimsky
ECR	Hermann Tertsch, Charlie Weimers
GUE/NGL	Manu Pineda, Idoia Villanueva Ruiz
NI	Kostas Papadakis

11	0
PPE	David Lega, Lukas Mandl
Verts/ALE	Alviina Alametsä, Hannah Neumann, Jordi Solé, Tineke Strik, Ernest Urtasun, Viola Von Cramon-Taubadel, Salima Yenbou
ECR	Anna Fotyga, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention