

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2004



2009

Committee on Regional Development

2008/2026(BUD)

10.9.2008

OPINION

of the Committee on Regional Development

for the Committee on Budgets

on the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2009
(C6-0000/2008 - 2008/2026(BUD))

Section III - Commission

Rapporteur: Miloš Koterec

PA_NonLeg

SHORT JUSTIFICATION

At the end of the first quarter of 2008 the European Commission was able to approve all the National Strategic Frameworks thus reducing the risk of undue delays such as those which incurred at the start of the previous programming period. It should be noted at this point that unlike certain other policy areas, whilst overall priorities are set out in the relevant regulations, and the allocation of resources distributed among the 27 Member States in the year preceding the beginning of the programming period¹, the precise allocation of funding to different projects at a national level, is dependent on the Member State's strategic reference framework, and the uptake of Community funds for the agreed operational programmes.

Thus it is recalled that "***All figures for the Structural funds and the Cohesion Fund are derived from the envelope decided in the legal basis and are fully consistent with the ceilings of the IIA***". In making its budgetary provisions therefore, the European Commission has assessed budgetary needs taking into account the decisions of the European Council of 2005, the provisions of the financial perspective 2007-2013 and the IAA, the amounts due under projects closing down under the 2000-2006 programming period, the likely calls for advance payment for the current period. Thus Structural funds 2009 commitments increase by 2.5% to a total of € 48.413.9 million whilst provisions for payments fall by 13.9% to € 34.914.1 million.

The need for continued budgetary discipline and the pan European decline in public investment have shifted emphasis on to the need to create the conditions required for:

- Net job creation schemes;
- addressing social exclusion;
- The development of the knowledge based economy.

On this point the European Commission tells us² that for the period 2007-2013 it is expected that 775.000 gross jobs will be created under the Convergence objective and the Competitiveness and employment objective.

It is this approach, which will be the yardstick for measuring the success of Regional policy during the mid-term review which will take place in 2009 and it is in the context of addressing the problem of social exclusion that the proposed pilot project must be seen.

During 2009 the Commission has been monitoring the 2000-2006 programming period and the closure of the programmes and projects as well as assessing the impact the policy has had during that period. We are told that over the reference period both ERDF objectives 1 and 2 regions performed very well on the growth and convergence targets. In particular the GDP of Objective 1 regions grew from 64% of the EU 15 average in 1995 to 70% in 2003.

As in 2008 the share out of commitment appropriations for 2009 is provisional and based on historical data of the 2000-2006 programming period. Nevertheless, the European Commission is clearly the only institution having access to the information required to assess the full budgetary requirements and it is for this reason that your draftsman proposes that any unjustified changes introduced by Council in its Draft Budget be immediately rectified by

¹ European Council December 2005

² p42 SEC(2008)514

Parliament.

As has been established practice, the total amount allocated for each year is committed at the beginning of the year leaving little or no room for Parliament to propose pilot projects. Your draftsman is aware of the many activities the European Commission and the Member States are undertaking in favour of disadvantaged groups and in particular the Roma. However he is also aware of the relatively low level of effectiveness and a lack of coordination at pan European level concerning the activities aimed at assisting the integration of these peoples. EU strategy for regional development has established several horizontal policies. The development of Roma communities is one of the most important in this regard. Stressed in all relevant national strategic frameworks throughout the Union there is a more or less horizontal approach to this specific problem. At the same time there is a lack of strategic coordination and exchange of experience and best practices between member states, although each country which tackles the issues of the development of Roma community has its own specificities, the core of the problem is the same.

The aim of the pilot project therefore is to undertake a new approach to training and education of the Roma communities beginning with preschool children, through the further education of young mothers up to the training and education of adults. The pilot project shall be based on current understanding of the Roma communities' problems in the European Union putting the emphasis on the whole complex and synergic spectrum of best procedures in this regard. It is your draftsman's view that it is only by creating a well coordinated, pan- European approach that this can be achieved.

Finally, and in view of the very small margin that exceptionally is available in the technical assistance envelope, I have proposed to reduce the amount of credits available on the relevant budget line (13.03.20) transferring the sum of € 5 million to a new budget line which is to be created with the title:

Pilot project: Pan European activities for and coordination of integration methods for the Roma.

SUGGESTIONS

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

1. Takes the view that the amounts for regional policy entered in the preliminary draft budget correspond to the needs of the Union in its efforts to reduce regional disparities and meet the Lisbon and Gothenburg objectives; therefore calls for all PDB budget lines to be maintained or, where necessary, restored;
2. Expresses concern at the considerable reduction in structural fund payment appropriations compared with 2008, and looks to the Commission to carry out a fresh analysis of the basic situation;
3. Notes, however, that in two PDB budget lines of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), which concern in particular the Regional Competitiveness and Employment Objective and the European Territorial Cooperation Objective, the

commitments are reduced compared to 2008; stresses the importance of attributing adequate resources to these objectives which are central to regional development; calls, therefore, for an increase in these commitments at least to the levels of the 2008 PDB, taking also into account the yearly inflation rate;

4. Stresses Parliament's wish for special attention to be given in the draft general budget for 2009 to small and medium-sized enterprises as well as micro enterprises, bearing in mind their role in regional development;
5. Calls on the Commission to undertake a pilot project to test a new approach to the training and education of the Roma communities, beginning with pre-school children, continuing with the further education of young mothers and including the training and education of adults, thus enabling the Roma to be self-sufficient in development; recommends that this pilot project be based on the current understanding of the Roma communities' problems in the European Union and have an emphasis on the whole complex and synergic spectrum of best procedures in this regard.
6. Calls on the Commission to undertake a pilot project to promote knowledge of, and experience in, EU Regional Policy in third countries through the organisation of international events, network building between regional and local stakeholders, development of joint projects and new regional partnerships, as well as the exchange of good practices; considers that such a pilot project would be instrumental in promoting EU values and cohesion policies through these regional dialogues; recommends that the Commission cooperate with the Forum of Global Associations of Regions (FOGAR) and the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), in order to ensure complementarities and synergies between their respective actions in this field;
7. Calls on the Commission to implement a pilot project to set up an Erasmus programme for local elected representatives to contribute to exchanges of good practice in the area of governance and thereby set in motion a process of continuous learning aimed at all individuals involved, in particular regional and local elected representatives; recommends, in this connection, that regional and urban policies be brought under an integrated development strategy, which is, however, possible only through improved governance.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	9.9.2008
Result of final vote	+: 48 -: 2 0: 2
Members present for the final vote	Emmanouil Angelakas, Stavros Arnaoutakis, Elspeth Attwooll, Jean Marie Beaupuy, Rolf Berend, Victor Boştinaru, Wolfgang Bulfon, Giorgio Carollo, Antonio De Blasio, Petru Filip, Gerardo Galeote, Iratxe García Pérez, Eugenijus Gentvilas, Ambroise Guellec, Gábor Harangozó, Marian Harkin, Jim Higgins, Filiz Hakaeva Hyusmenova, Mieczysław Edmund Janowski, Rumiana Jeleva, Gisela Kallenbach, Tunne Kelam, Evgeni Kirilov, Miloš Koterec, Constanze Angela Krehl, Florencio Luque Aguilar, Sérgio Marques, Yiannakis Matsis, Miroslav Mikolášik, James Nicholson, Lambert van Nistelrooij, Jan Olbrycht, Maria Grazia Pagano, Maria Petre, Markus Pieper, Pierre Pribetich, Giovanni Robusti, Wojciech Roszkowski, Elisabeth Schroedter, Grażyna Staniszevska, Catherine Stihler, Margie Sudre, Andrzej Jan Szejna, Kyriacos Triantaphyllides, Oldřich Vlasák
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Brigitte Douay, Den Dover, Emanuel Jardim Fernandes, Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg, Eleonora Lo Curto, Zita Pleštinská, Iuliu Winkler
Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote	