



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Committee on Regional Development

2011/2020(BUD)

10.10.2011

OPINION

of the Committee on Regional Development

for the Committee on Budgets

on Parliament's position on the 2012 Draft Budget as modified by the Council -
all sections
(2011/2020(BUD))

Rapporteur: László Surján

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SHORT JUSTIFICATION

INTRODUCTION:

With Parliament's support, the Commission is building on a more positive economic outlook is designing measures in favour of growth and employments in 2012. In this context, it recognises the crucial role the EU Budget plays as a leverage and sustaining tool to actions implemented under the Member States' budgets. The Commission has thus established three main priorities for the 2012 Draft Budget namely, investing for growth within fiscal consolidation, reinforcing the budgetary strand of the Europe 2020 Strategy and strengthening the Lisbon Treaty priority areas, while paying due attention to the current circumstances and focusing on the need for a deep assessment of performance and of needs on the ground.

Your rapporteur shares the Commission's view that there is a need to reinforce the EU's joint effort and exploit synergies between Cohesion policy and other policies on the ground, and would stress the fact that Cohesion policy is an investment policy designed to promote development objectives in the regions, by supporting those whose economic development is lagging behind.

In the current circumstances, these aims require greater involvement of the Commission in assisting those Member States which are experiencing difficulty in implementing Cohesion policy.

REINSTATING THE DRAFT BUDGET:

In making its budgetary provisions, the Commission has therefore assessed budgetary needs taking into account the decisions of the European Council of 2005, the provisions of the financial perspective 2007-2013 and the Interinstitutional Agreement, as well as the amounts due under projects closing down under the 2000-2006 period. Your rapporteur considers that the only institution which has the available information to have an overview of the real budgetary needs of all regions is the Commission. Consequently he proposes that any reductions proposed by the Council be cancelled and that the sums initially proposed by the Commission in the Draft budget, be reinstated.

SHARE-OUT OF RESOURCES BETWEEN FUNDS:

The share-out between the different funds is as follows:

Structural Funds (ERDF and ESF) EUR 40 945, 9 million and the Cohesion fund EUR 11 793, 0 million. The increase in payment appropriations of 8,4% confirms the acceleration of the implementation trend which started in 2010 and shows indeed that the 2007-2013 Cohesion policy has reached cruising speed, implying also that further significant increases in payments are to be expected for 2013.

MAIN POLICY OUTPUTS FOR 2012:

The main policy outputs as established by the Commission include both the alignment of Cohesion Policy objectives with the Europe 2020, and the attainment of multiannual objectives by stimulating growth potential and employment of the least-developed Member States and regions, strengthening regions' competitiveness and promoting stronger territorial integration. Moreover, the Commission expects to get results from the implementation of EU Baltic Strategy and EU Danube Strategy in all aspects. Of particular importance is the adoption of the legal framework and delivery mechanisms for the future the programming

period 2014-2020. In this regard, the Commission expects to coordinate the preparation and adoption of the Common Strategic Framework in close cooperation with other Commission departments, and to begin discussions with Member States on strategic investment priorities post-2013. Finally, reference is made to the setting up of electronic clearing houses in the Member States and regions for the collection and sharing of data related to the funding of projects, and of interactive portals with the beneficiaries to enable them to provide data only once, and to monitor on-line the progress of the grant application and of payments ("e-Cohesion Policy").

PILOT PROJECTS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:

This year Members have tabled a reduced number of proposals for potential pilot projects/preparatory actions, most of which concern mainly extensions of previously approved measures.

The Commission was informally consulted on the need to extend the pilot projects and preparatory actions currently in force, having supported the continuation of the preparatory actions entitled "Enhancing regional and local cooperation through the promotion of EU regional policy on a global scale", and "The definition of governance model for the European Union Danube Region – better and effective coordination", as well as the pilot project entitled "Towards a common regional identity, reconciliation of nations and economic and social cooperation including a Pan-European Expertise and Excellence Platform in the Danube macro-region".

The only new measure proposed is a preparatory action entitled: "Atlantic Forum for the EU Atlantic Strategy", proposing the definition of a transversal action plan with concrete priorities to be implemented from 2014 onwards, with the active involvement of Atlantic stakeholders. The action plan should be strongly connected with the regional policy and the Integrated Maritime Policy, and should also facilitate synergies with other EU policies. In this context the preparatory action should finance a platform for dialogue of stakeholders – the Atlantic Forum –, aiming at defining the priority projects and the governance of the Atlantic Strategy, and at the elaboration and adoption of the action plan.

In the context of the same informal pre-evaluation procedure, the Commission has also supported the continuation of the measure of "Technical assistance and dissemination of information on the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and an improved knowledge of macro-regions strategy", which should therefore also be tabled as an amendment to the Draft Budget.

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 entered in the Draft Budget (DB) for subheading 1b correspond to the needs and objectives for regional policy as set by the Union and therefore requires that budget lines of subheading 1b as proposed by the Commission be maintained or, where necessary, restored; in particular, rejects the swingeing cuts which the Council has proposed in the subheading 1b payment appropriations;
2. Stresses that the effective and efficient implementation of regional policy is the key to the achievement of the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy considering particularly the present context of economic adversity and fiscal consolidation, as it contributes not only to the effective reduction of regional disparities, but also to creating a suitable framework for stable and sustainable economic growth and implementing the Agenda for new skills and new jobs;
3. Welcomes the increase in commitment appropriations under subheading 1b by 3,4 % to EUR 52 738 900 000, and the increase in payment appropriations by 8,4 %, to EUR 45 134 800 000, over 2011, this latter sum including the reduction of 35,2% to EUR 3 110 000 000 in the outstanding commitments for the 2000-2006 period, engendered by the final phase of the closure of this programming period in 2012;
4. Calls on the Commission to support and implement all the pilot projects, preparatory actions and technical assistance measures as proposed by the REGI Committee for subheading 1b;
5. Considers it particularly important to extend the current ongoing pilot projects and measures related to implementation of the macro-regional strategies, given that if those strategies were implemented more effectively, the potential of the regions could be exploited to greater advantage, the Structural Funds could be turned to account in a more purposeful way, and the best possible response could be found to the challenges posed in a given region, for instance in the field of environmental protection;
6. Welcomes the intention of the Commission, as endorsed by the European Council, to enhance synergies between the current loan programmes to certain Member States and the Structural Funds, with a view to boosting competitiveness and growth, and calls on the Commission to enhance its efforts to find ways to effectively improve the capacity of Member States in terms of general capacity to efficiently implement Cohesion policy programmes.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	6.10.2011
Result of final vote	+: 41 -: 2 0: 1
Members present for the final vote	François Alfonsi, Luís Paulo Alves, Charalampos Angourakis, Catherine Bearder, Jean-Paul Basset, Victor Boştinaru, Philip Bradbourn, Zuzana Brzobohatá, John Bufton, Alain Cadec, Salvatore Caronna, Francesco De Angelis, Tamás Deutsch, Rosa Estaràs Ferragut, Brice Hortefeux, Danuta Maria Hübner, Filiz Hakaeva Hyusmenova, Juozas Imbrasas, María Irigoyen Pérez, Seán Kelly, Mojca Kleva, Petru Constantin Luhan, Ramona Nicole Mănescu, Riikka Manner, Iosif Matula, Erminia Mazzoni, Jan Olbrycht, Markus Pieper, Monika Smolková, Georgios Stavrakakis, Nuno Teixeira, Michail Tremopoulos, Viktor Uspaskich, Lambert van Nistelrooij, Oldřich Vlasák, Kerstin Westphal, Joachim Zeller, Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Jens Geier, Elisabeth Schroedter, László Surján, Giommara Uggias, Derek Vaughan, Sabine Verheyen