

Forward policy planning: budgetary implications for capacity-building

European Parliament resolution of 8 October 2013 on forward policy planning and long-term trends: budgetary implications for capacity-building (2012/2290(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the European Union’s general budget for the financial year 2013¹ and, in particular to the preparatory action ‘Interinstitutional system identifying long-term trends’ in the 2013 budget,
 - having regard to Financial Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012, in particular Articles 54(2)(a) and (b) and 54(e) thereof, applicable to the general budget of the Union and its rules of application,
 - having regard to the ESPAS (European Strategy and Policy Analysis System) report ‘Global Trends 2030 – Citizens in an Interconnected and Polycentric World’, produced by the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS)²,
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgets and the opinions of the Committee on Regional Development and the Committee on Constitutional Affairs (A7-0265/2013),
- A. whereas we are living through a period of rapid transition – evident in relation to the dynamics of power, demographic change, climate change, urbanisation and technology, making it increasingly necessary for policy-makers in all jurisdictions to invest greater efforts in the study and monitoring of major global trends;
- B. whereas the 2010 EU budget provided, on Parliament’s initiative, for the Commission to undertake a pilot project over two years with the aim of exploring the possibility of establishing an ‘interinstitutional system identifying long-term trends on major policy issues facing the EU’;
- C. whereas the 2012 EU budget authorised the project to go to the next phase as a preparatory action for the three years from 2012 to 2014, with the aim of putting in place, by the end of 2014, a fully functioning ‘European Strategy and Policy Analysis System’ (ESPAS) involving all relevant EU institutions, by developing ‘closer working cooperation between the research departments of the various EU institutions and bodies which are devoted to the analysis of medium- and long-term policy trends’³;
- D. whereas the establishment of a durable interinstitutional system at administrative level for identifying and mapping major trends likely to shape the future policy context would assist and support the EU institutions in preparing and responding to challenges and defining coherent strategic options for the years ahead;

¹ OJ L 66, 8.3.2013.

² 27 April 2012; http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/ESPAS_report_01.pdf.

³ http://europa.eu/espas/pdf/espas-preparatory-action-amendment_en.pdf.

- E. whereas such a well established and acknowledged system could provide a basis for reflection in the context of preparing the EU budget and establishing political priorities on an annual and multiannual basis and linking financial resources more directly to political objectives;
 - F. whereas the empowerment of women cannot be achieved without the recognition and effective implementation of their rights; whereas ESPAS could also provide an effective analysis of the challenges faced in promoting gender equality, from political empowerment to combating all kinds of discrimination against women;
 - G. whereas the first ESPAS-sponsored report, ‘Global Trends 2030 – Citizens in an Interconnected and Polycentric World’, commissioned from the EUISS, identifies several global trends that seem likely to shape the world in coming decades;
 - H. whereas these trends include, notably: the growing empowerment of the individual, fuelled in part by technological change; greater stress on sustainable development against a backdrop of growing resource scarcity and persistent poverty, and compounded by the effects of climate change; and the emergence of an international system characterised by a shift of power away from states, with growing governance gaps as the traditional mechanisms for interstate relations fail to respond adequately to public demands;
1. Believes that coherent and effective EU policy-making will depend more and more on the timely identification of those long-term global trends that have a bearing on the challenges and choices facing the Union in an increasingly complex and interdependent world;
 2. Highlights the importance of the EU institutions cooperating in an effective manner to monitor and analyse these long-term trends, as well as cooperating and networking with other actors, including the wider research community, both inside and outside the European Union, who are interested in similar issues in third countries; underlines, in this context, the importance of continuing the process of developing an effective capacity for the provision of independent, high-quality interinstitutional analysis and advice on key trends confronting policy-makers within the EU system;
 3. Points out that, in line with the principle of subsidiarity, the development of long-term socio-economic strategies and the implementation of policies in the EU is the responsibility of a variety of public organisations, such as the European institutions, government ministries, regional or local authority departments and specific agencies; highlights the fact that the economic and social partners, non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders also play a part in the development of long-term strategies alongside public bodies in the Member States and the European institutions; therefore, underlines that a multi-level governance approach should be applied;
 4. Stresses that, on account of its multiannual, long-term and horizontal character, cohesion policy is necessarily a policy with a strong forward-planning component and that, given its significant share of the EU budget, it needs to have a prominent place in all forward-looking budgetary planning;
 5. Believes that policy formulation in respect of cohesion policy and other fields depends increasingly on the timely identification of long-term global trends; notes, in this connection, various forward-looking reports such as Project Europe 2030 (the report to the European Council by the Reflection Group on the Future of the EU 2030) and ‘Global Trends 2030 – Citizens in an Interconnected and Polycentric World’, prepared by the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) as part of the European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS) project; recommends closer coordination of such reporting initiatives;

6. Calls for the integration of the gender perspective in the appraisal of long-term global trends and future reports as a means to fight human rights breaches, discrimination and poverty;
7. Welcomes specifically the outcome so far of the administrative-level pilot project (2010-2011) and preparatory action (2012-2014) designed to develop a European Strategy and Policy Analysis System (ESPAS), in order to help identify long-term trends on major issues facing the Union, and strongly recommends that this process continue after the expiry of the current preparatory action; and considers that such a system should involve staff from all the relevant EU institutions and bodies, including the Committee of the Regions; believes that the reporting mechanism needs to be the subject of a discussion involving all relevant interest groups, businesses and non-governmental organisations;
8. Urges the four institutions and bodies currently involved in the ESPAS process – the Commission, Parliament, the Council and the European External Action Service – to elaborate and sign some form of interinstitutional agreement, ideally to be concluded in the spring of 2014, with each partner undertaking to maintain and participate in the agreement on a continuing basis;
9. Stresses the need for the participating institutions and bodies to devote the necessary staff and financial resources to the ESPAS system through each of their respective budgets, in full compliance with the Financial Regulation, and in particular Article 54(e) thereof, and in the context of the annual budgetary procedure, so as to ensure that this capability can be developed in a budgetarily neutral way in future years, underlines the need for the EU institutions to invest in staff with specific expertise to contribute fully to analysing and monitoring global trends as well as the expertise to identify options and make policy recommendations for the specific needs of each EU institution;
10. Insists that ESPAS be steered and overseen by an appropriately composed interinstitutional board, which would set the mandate and priorities of ESPAS and designate any director or other officers, and in which Parliament will, if it chooses, be represented by Members – it being understood that, within the framework of its mandate, the detailed work of ESPAS should be carried out on an independent basis.
11. Welcomes the intention to use the ESPAS process, and building upon its global network, to build up a global on-line repository of papers and material from multiple sources relating to medium- and long-term trends, freely open to policy-makers and citizens worldwide;
12. Welcomes the fact that closer administrative cooperation between the EU institutions through the ESPAS process will lead to the presentation, as part of the preparatory action, of a foresight report analysing long-term trends and their implications for the challenges and choices facing the Union during the period 2014-2019, due to be submitted for the attention of the incoming Presidents of the institutions in 2014; considers that this exercise is successful and should be repeated on at least a five-yearly basis thereafter;
13. Believes that a permanent system – aiming to provide regular analysis of medium- and long-term trends for the EU institutions in order to encourage a more strategic approach to decision-making – should include provisions for the submission of an annual ‘strategic trends report’ to the institutions, in advance of the State of the Union debate, and the publication of the Commission’s annual work programme in order to track and assess the changing pattern of long-term trends, and also to provide specific input to the budgetary authority in the run-up to the negotiation of a post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), as well as for any mid-term revision of the 2014-2020 MFF;

14. Instructs its President to forward this report to the Council, the Commission and the European External Action Service.