



Check your own EU funding request before complaining, MEPs advise ministers

Plenary sessions

EU member states' finance ministers would be well advised to check their own countries' EU funding requests before seeking to cut the budget needed to pay them, said MEPs on Thursday, in comments on a Commission proposal for an €8.9 billion remedial budget to meet payments shortfalls in 2012.

The Commission estimates that an additional €8.9 billion is needed to pay the bills - most of which come from member state authorities managing EU funds in their countries - in 2012.

The extra money is needed to remedy the current shortfall of payments for the Erasmus scholarship programme, the 7th Framework programme for Research and Development, Rural Development, the European Social Fund and the Lifelong Learning programme.

The remedial budget was presented by Budgets Commissioner Janusz Lewandowski in Strasbourg on Tuesday

In a reaction, Budgets Committee Chair Alain Lamassoure (EPP, FR) said: "The Commission has estimated the sum of financial claims by member states' administrations, like the national European Social Fund agencies and the regional authorities. When I read the initial reactions of some finance ministers, I wonder whether they even know that the total amount of the bills is based on requests from their own countries. We should stop these games and be clear. I propose that the member states' claims should go through their finance ministries, which should certify them before sending them to Brussels. Like that we can focus our political discussion on future commitments, rather than discussing bookkeeping".

Giovanni La Via (EPP, IT), the MEP steering the 2013 budget through Parliament said: "The bills for 2012 have to be paid in 2012. If no extra money is added, it will have negative consequences for the budget in 2013. We have to avoid postponing problems from one year to the next. Otherwise we will find ourselves in a similar situation next year, which is bad news for students, researchers and small companies".

Francesca Balzani (S&D, IT), the MEP in charge of the 2012 budget, described the proposal for higher payments as a positive signal: "This means that EU policies are going in the right direction. It's time for the member states to act on their commitments and strengthen the European citizen's trust in EU institutions".

In Monday's plenary debate on the EU's 2013 budget, many had MEPs expressed worries that this year's Erasmus payment shortfalls would be repeated in 2013 if EU member states were to stick to the deep budget cuts they propose to make in the draft budget for 2013. To prevent this, they voted to reverse the cuts by the Council and bring the 2013 budget back in line with the Commission's proposal.

Last year the Council signed a declaration committing itself to make available additional resources available promptly, if needed in the course of the year ([link to the right](#)). Both the amending budget for 2012 and the 2013 budget will be discussed on Friday, at the first conciliation meeting on the 2013 budget.

Press release

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