

European Parliament press release on the financial perspective 2007–2013 (5 April 2006)

Caption: Following the agreement reached on the financial perspective 2007–2013 at the trilogue meeting held on 4 April 2006 between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission, the various protagonists and, in particular, MEPs give their reactions.

Source: Europarl - News - Budget. Budget deal reached for 2007-2013 - MEPs give their views. [ON-LINE]. [Brussels]: European Parliament, [24.05.2006]. REF.: 20060405STO07095. Disponible sur http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/story_page/034-7096-093-04-14-905-20060405STO07095-2006-03-04-2006/default_en.htm.

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Budget deal reached for 2007-2013 - MEPs give their views

MEPs expressed satisfaction that a deal has been reached on the long-term EU budget but were disappointed that only an extra €4 billion in funding has been added to the €862.4 billion agreed in December. MEPs had wanted an extra €12 billion but the deal was nonetheless broadly welcomed by most of the political groups and President Borrell. The extra cash will benefit education programmes like Erasmus and small companies.

President Josep **BORRELL** announced to MEPs that Parliament's negotiating team on the Financial Perspective had reached an agreement with representatives of the Commission and the Council. Parliament, he said, had had both quantitative and qualitative goals: "We wanted both more resources and better structuring." The ceiling, he said, was now €4 billion more than in the Council's December agreement. "This is fresh money for those programmes which had been very considerably cut: Erasmus, Life Long Learning, innovation and assistance for small and medium sized enterprises." There was also €2.5 billion more for the European Investment Bank to fund SMEs and Trans-European Transport Networks. It would also, he said, be possible to carry forward some unspent funds to two subsequent financial years.

Parliament's rapporteur Reimer **BÖGE** (EPP-ED, DE) said he was not satisfied with this result. The Financial Perspective for the enlarged Europe and what was needed in terms of added value had vanished, he said. However, he said, "in current circumstances we have reached the very limits for an acceptable solution. We did our utmost. Parliament was not just obsessed with figures – we wanted reform of policy, new instruments, the cutting of red tape and guarantees for Parliament's role on foreign policy instruments – and a proper role in the 2008-9 review. We have managed to get these qualitative aspects on board in a satisfactory way. As far as the figures are concerned, all sides have reached the pain threshold." There was, he said, more funding for Life Long Learning and competitiveness and an additional 40,000 students would be able to take part in European exchanges. He thanked all of Parliament's team for working together to "deliver this commitment to European added value."

For the Commission, José Manuel **BARROSO** expressed his satisfaction at the agreement reached by the negotiators. He congratulated all involved. "This is clearly better than the European Council's December agreement. It is good news that we now have the funds to match our ambitions for the next seven years." He also mentioned the extra funding for TENs, Life Long learning and research. He hoped the agreement would be endorsed by the full Parliament and Council without delay. "This is not just about the figures, it is also about sound financial management principles, transparency, accountability and the quality of the way we work together." He pointed to the increased role for Parliament in the planned review of EU spending. "No-one is completely happy, but this is a good demonstration on the spirit of partnership, I hope we can move swiftly to build on this momentum to get all our programmes up and running in time for next year."

Political group speakers

EPP-ED group leader Hans-Gert **POETTERING** (DE) said that a lot of progress had been made which would not have been possible without the European Parliament, and without looking beyond the national interest to the common European interest. "We are not entirely happy, but we know that more could not be achieved." He too praised the EP negotiating team. He called for national authorities to shoulder their responsibility for proper handling of EU funds, not just blaming the EU for any deficiencies.

For the Socialist group, Martin **SCHULZ** (DE) said that while the agreement was "less than what we wanted, it was more than many expected. It was a victory for common sense." He said the review clause was especially valuable. He noted the Commission had undertaken to present proposal for the review. He looked forward to improved financial management, saying the EU must spend money properly – and that there was a general agreement to make progress. Thanking all involved, he said, "Today is a good day."

ALDE group leader Graham **WATSON** (UK) also thanked the negotiating team and the Austrian Presidency. "I hope this agreement will commend itself for approval... even though we are not satisfied.

There is not enough for research, for Gallileo, TENs and Life Long Learning. I know it is fashionable in some national capitals to pour cold water on our common endeavour... if the central force for developing our Union is no longer visionary leadership from within, then perhaps developments beyond our borders will persuade us to provide the Union with the resources we need."

On behalf of the Greens, Monica **FRASSONI** (IT) declared that they were "not terribly pleased" with the agreement and not particularly convinced that the Parliament could not have got more. She noted how the "basic problem is the same: the unwillingness by MEPs to pay for what's necessary in the EU". She thanked the negotiating team, whilst noting that it was entirely composed of men. Ms. Frassoni spoke of her concerns that the revision clause was not included in the agreement, she asked what the fate of this clause will be and what the EU decision making process will be in terms of its external progress. She lamented the 20 Billion Euro cut for rural development and also asserted that the topics of EU taxes and EU-own resources have to be kept on the agenda. She closed by describing the agreement as an "unsatisfactory" one.

Francis **WURTZ** (GUE/NGL, FR) said that the EU budget is "not the only instrument to foster plans for development and growth", suggesting the Central Bank as an example of another instrument. He described the budget as "an expression of political will" and in correlation, mentioned the lack of Members' States willingness to pay for the political decisions they take, suggesting enlargement, the structural funds and the cohesion funds as examples of this. Mr. Wurtz noted the "dreadful effects on research and cooperation" that the rejection of the December compromise - "a negative compromise" - had. He considered the Parliaments' budgetary demands to be "very modest indeed" and accordingly advised: "we have to reject this farce, we have to be responsible".

Wojciech **ROSZKOWSKI** (UEN, PL) spoke of his mixed feelings. He talked firstly of his relief that a decision has been made after 15 months, and that the pressure on EU finances is behind us. However he also spoke of his disappointment in the compromise, saying that there was a "limited distribution of EU funds" and the fact that the "Council was too tough in the face of modest demands" was "not very pleasant". Consequently he said that he could almost understand the Euro-scepticism and Europhobia, mentioning the stinginess of Member States. He declared that his group "will support this proposal", warning however that "if we are below the threshold in the annual budgets, the future of the Union is black".

Nigel **FARAGE** (UK) for the Independence and Democracy group, opened by saying that the EU was "indulging in its favourite sport and past-time, that of navel-gazing". He wondered when Members would start "addressing the real issues of the EU budget", declaring it to be "totally flawed" and asking "do we need a budget at all?". He criticised the British Prime Minister Tony Blair for being "outwitted, outclassed, and outplayed by President Chirac" and getting a bad deal for British taxpayers. He asked why the UK should be paying for the underground systems of other countries, accusing the UK of pursuing "economics of a madhouse" by "subsidising its economic competitors". He closed by saying that the UK would not be doing so for much longer: "no British cheque will be coming to you in a few years, but we have enjoyed ourselves while being here".

Jean-Claude **MARTINEZ** (NI, FR) said that with the financial perspectives envisaged, the European Union would find it impossible to catch up with the US market. He spoke of a need of funds for hospitals, laboratories and high-speed trains, and accordingly lamented the lack of enthusiasm in European economic policy-making.