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DRAFT REPORT

on the Council position on the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2022
(11352/2021 – C9-0353/2021 – 2021/0227(BUD))

Part 1: Motion for a resolution

Committee on Budgets

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the Council position on the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2022 (11352/2021 – C9-0353/2021 – 2021/0227(BUD))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to Article 314 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),

– having regard to Article 106a of the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community,

– having regard to Council Decision (EU, Euratom) 2020/2053 of 14 December 2020 on the system of own resources of the European Union and repealing Decision 2014/335/EU, Euratom[1],

– having regard to Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014 and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012[2] (the 'Financial Regulation'),

– having regard to Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2020/2093 of 17 December 2020 laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2021 to 20272 (the 'MFF Regulation'), and to the joint declarations agreed between Parliament, the Council and the Commission in this context[3], as well as to the related unilateral declarations[4],

– having regard to the Interinstitutional Agreement of 16 December 2020 between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline, on cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management, as well as on new own resources, including a roadmap towards the introduction of new own resources[5],

– having regard to its resolution of 25 March 2021 on general guidelines for the preparation of the 2022 budget, Section III – Commission[6],

– having regard to its resolution of 29 April 2021 on Parliament's estimates of revenue

[1] OJ L 424, 15.12.2020, p. 1.
[2] OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p. 1.
[3] OJ C 444 I, 22.12.2020.
[4] European Parliament legislative resolution of 16 December 2020 on the draft Council regulation laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2021 to 2027, Annex 2: Declarations (Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0357).
[5] OJ L 433 I, 22.12.2020, p. 28.
[6] Texts adopted, P9_TA(2021)0106.

and expenditure for the financial year 2022[7],

– having regard to the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2022, which the Commission adopted on 9 July 2021 (COM(2021)0300) (the 'DB'),

– having regard to the position on the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2022, which the Council adopted on 6 September 2021 and forwarded to Parliament on 10 September 2021 (11352/2021 – C9-0353/2021),

– having regard to Rule 94 of its Rules of Procedure,

– having regard to the opinions of the committees concerned,

– having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgets (A9-0000/2020),

Section III

General overview

1. Recalls that, in its abovementioned resolution of 25 March 2021 on general guidelines for the preparation of the 2022 budget, Parliament defined clear political priorities for the 2022 budget to support the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis and lay the foundations for a more resilient Union; reaffirms its strong commitment to those priorities and sets out the following position to ensure an appropriate level of financing to deliver on them;

2. Believes that the Union budget must be equipped with the tools to enable it to respond to multiple crises simultaneously; reiterates Parliament's view that the 2022 budget should play a pivotal role in ensuring a positive and tangible impact on citizens' lives; against this background, supports increases to boost investment with a particular focus on SMEs, strengthen efforts towards the green and digital transitions, give fresh opportunities to young people in particular, build a strong European Health Union; reinforces, further, priorities in the fields of security, migration, fundamental rights, while acknowledging the recent deteriorating situation in external policy and humanitarian aid and the need to be able to react swiftly to the upcoming challenges;

3. Takes note of Council's position on the DB, cutting EUR 1,43 billion in commitment appropriations for the MFF headings compared to the Commission's proposal; considers that the cuts proposed by the Council follow the usual top-down approach of implementing an overall arbitrary reduction target, which is neither driven by an objective assessment of implementation trends nor absorption capacities; points out the contradiction with core shared policy priorities; concludes that the Council's position is far from Parliament's expectations for a recovery budget; decides therefore, as a general rule, to restore appropriations on all lines cut by the Council to the level of the DB, for

[7] Texts adopted, P9_TA(2021)0158.

both operational and administrative expenditure, and to take the DB as the starting point to build its position upon; accepts, however, to enter EUR 1 299 million in both commitment and payment appropriations in 2022 for the Brexit Adjustment Reserve (BAR) as this reflects the political agreement on the BAR Regulation;

4. Insists that new policy priorities or tasks must be accompanied by fresh resources, and that creating an agency or expanding its mandate should not come at the expense of existing programmes or agencies; reverses, therefore, reductions in appropriations for funding programmes proposed by the Commission to reinforce the financial envelopes of decentralised agencies;

5. Takes note, in this context, of the recent initiative on a European Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA); expresses deep concern over Parliament's exclusion from the decision-making procedure for establishing such an authority, and is strongly opposed to any financing architecture that would redeploy funds away from key objectives and actions initially planned under Horizon Europe, EU4Health and RescEU; underlines that the timing of such an initiative has not made it possible for Parliament to take it into account in its reading on the 2022 budget; calls for this issue to be addressed during the budgetary conciliation on the 2022 budget;

6. Stresses, also, that the Commission announced a package in favour of refugees from Syria and beyond after the publication of its DB; in that respect, calls for a comprehensive agreement to be found on the overall package in the budgetary conciliation on the 2022 budget, which would also include Draft Amending Budget No 5/2021; acknowledges that further measures will be needed to adequately respond to the recent events in Afghanistan, including support for citizens who do not have possibility to continue their work in Afghanistan; underlines that, given the changing situation and the lack of a comprehensive and longer-term needs assessment, these issues could not be fully factored into the Parliament’s reading and will be reassessed in the light of the Commission’s Amending Letter 1/2022 and subsequent information presented at a later stage;

7. Decides to reinforce lines that have an excellent implementation rate and the operational capacity to absorb the additional appropriations in 2022; indicates that, for the purpose of adequately financing the pressing priorities expressed above, the Flexibility Instrument needs to be fully mobilised, and a partial use of the Single Margin Instrument (amount offset against current year margins) will further be required;

8. Underlines the need to restore the level of the DB for the financing cost of the European Union Recovery Instrument (EURI) to avoid giving a negative signal towards the financial markets, pending any reassessment of forecasted needs by the Commission in conciliation;

9. Sets, therefore, the overall level of appropriations for the 2022 budget (all sections) at EUR 171 802 114 289 in commitment appropriations, representing an increase of EUR 2 709 847 787 compared to the DB; decides in addition to make available an amount of EUR 486 000 000 in commitment appropriations further to decommitments under Article 15(3) of the Financial Regulation; sets the overall level of appropriations for the

2022 budget (all sections) at EUR 172 277 719 551 in payment appropriations;

Heading 1 - Single market, Innovation and Digital

10. Considers that a successful research programme is essential for the Union's future prosperity; stresses that Horizon Europe, which has very high European added value, will make a critically important contribution to the Green Deal and efforts towards a climate-neutral economy, to a successful digital transition and to the recovery of the Union economy from the pandemic; highlights in particular the need to bolster Union investment in health research, including funding for cancer research; increases, therefore, the allocation of Horizon Europe over the level of the DB by EUR 305 million in commitment appropriations;

11. Supports the proposal in the DB to make available EUR 77,3 million in decommitments for the three clusters referred to in the relevant Joint political statement attached to the Horizon Europe regulation[8]; notes, however, that the remaining 2020 research decommitments amount to EUR 408,7 million; reiterates its strong conviction that this unexpectedly high amount of research decommitments, which was not forecast by the Commission during the MFF negotiations, should be made available in their entirety under Horizon Europe, in full compliance with Article 15(3) of the Financial Regulation; believes strongly that, in the light of the continuing health crisis, half of the remaining amount should go towards the Cluster Health;

12. Stresses that the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) plays an absolutely crucial role in the building of high-quality, sustainable, interconnected trans-European transport, energy and digital networks and is therefore at the heart of efforts to strengthen the Union economy and make a success of the green and digital transitions; recalls that CEF makes a very significant contribution to the overall target of at least 30% climate expenditure from the MFF and New Generation EU (NGEU); proposes therefore to increase the funding for the three CEF strands by a total amount of EUR 207,3 million in commitment appropriations above the level of the DB;

13. Believes that the Digital Europe Programme is a vital tool in increasing rates of digitalisation in the Union, thereby leading to significant productivity gains, and in helping to bolster investments in cybersecurity and artificial intelligence; recalls the need to support businesses, especially innovative digital SMEs; proposes therefore to increase the amount allocated to the programme by just over EUR 71 million;

14. Supports increases to the various strands of the Single Market Cluster by a total amount of just over EUR 37 million in commitment appropriations above the level of the DB; draws particular attention to the need to significantly increase the line dedicated to improving the competitiveness of enterprises and their access to markets, considering the severe and long-lasting consequences of the crisis on SMEs;

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8 Regulation (EU) 2021/695 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, laying down its rules for participation and dissemination, and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1290/2013 and (EU) No 1291/2013 (OJ L 170, 12.5.2021, p. 1)

15. Reiterates its long-standing request for a dedicated budget line and allocation for tourism, particularly considering the severe contraction that the sector has experienced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic; acknowledges that several EU programmes contribute to the long-term competitiveness and sustainability of the sector, but strongly believes that an EU tourism programme would ensure more coordinated, visible and transparent action;

16. Reinforces the European Union Agency for Railways (ERA), in line with the identified needs of this agency, to ensure it can adequately fulfil its role in supporting the transition towards the decarbonisation of transport modes;

17. Increases therefore the level of commitment appropriations for Heading 1 by EUR 668 593 067 above the DB (excluding pilot projects and preparatory actions), to be financed by using the available margin and mobilising the special instruments; moreover, makes available to the heading an overall amount of EUR 486 000 000 in commitment appropriations corresponding to de-commitments made under Article 15(3) of the Financial Regulation;

Sub-heading 2a - Economic, social and territorial cohesion

18. Decides to create a separate budget line under the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), to provide a special additional allocation to foster the implementation of the European Child Guarantee; reinforces, for this purpose, Sub-heading 2a by EUR 700 000 000 above the DB in commitment appropriations (excluding pilot projects and preparatory actions), to be financed by using the available margin and mobilising the special instruments;

Sub-heading 2b - Resilience and values

19. Emphasises, in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, the need to build up a strong European Health Union and strengthen resilience of the health systems; decides therefore to increase resources of the EU4Health Programme by EUR 80 million;

20. Emphasises that youth remains an overarching priority for the Union budget; reinforces therefore funding to meet increasing demand for the Erasmus+ programme by a total amount of just over EUR 137 million, as a 5% increase represents an additional 40,000 mobility exchanges; furthermore increases the European Solidarity Corps by EUR 5 million as the economic crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic should not adversely affect support for the youth;

21. Highlights the relevance of increasing the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (rescEU) by EUR 10 million, in particular in relation to the natural disasters in Europe, to enhance the protection of EU citizens and strengthen preparedness in the event of future disasters due to climate change;

22. Proposes, further, a reinforcement to the Culture strand of the Creative Europe Programme to support Europe’s cultural and creative sectors and creative industry,

particularly hit by the COVID-19 crisis, in the recovery;

23. Stresses the crucial role of the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme to strengthen European citizenship and democracy, equality and the rule of law in the Union, as well as to support victims of gender-based violence, and insists that additional appropriations are required to support these objectives; increases the Justice Programme to offset the proposed cut to finance increased tasks for the European Union Agency for the Operational Management of Large-Scale IT Systems in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (eu-LISA) under the e-CODEX proposal;

24. Decides to increase the budget for “Multimedia actions” and to create a reserve in order to encourage the Commission to provide more stability and predictability for radio networks covering EU affairs with funding covering at least two years; increases, also, appropriations on social dialogue in order to support in particular national social partners in the post-Covid response;

25. Deems it necessary to increase appropriations for the Turkish Cypriot Community budget line for the purpose of contributing decisively to the continuation and intensification of the mission of the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus, the wellbeing of Maronites wishing to resettle and that of all enclaved persons as agreed in the 3rd Vienna Agreement, and of supporting the bicommunal Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage, thereby promoting trust and reconciliation between the two communities;

26. Reinforces the Employment and Social Innovation strand of ESF+ with a focus on advancing women's participation in the labour market;

27. Recalls the important role played by the decentralised agencies active under this Sub-heading; decides to increase funding for the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) and the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust) in line with the identified needs of those agencies; decides, also, to apply targeted reinforcements to the European Public Prosecutor’s Office (EPPO) to allow the body to fulfil its duties in line with the requirements to fulfil its mandate; increases, further, staffing levels for the European Medicines Agency (EMA), FRA, Eurojust and EPPO;

28. Reinforces Sub-heading 2b overall by EUR 296 065 210 above the DB in commitment appropriations (excluding pilot projects and preparatory actions), to be financed by using the available margin and mobilising the special instruments;

Heading 3 - Natural Resources and Environment

29. Observes that the COVID-19 pandemic has served to emphasise the strategic role that agriculture plays in avoiding a food crisis by providing safe, high-quality food at affordable prices; insists that additional support measures under some budget lines for selected agricultural sectors need to be funded in 2022 to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic;

30. Recalls, the importance of the LIFE programme in supporting climate action and environmental protection; calls for the level of budgetary support for LIFE to be increased across the various programme strands by 25% above DB; highlights that any annual reinforcement for the LIFE programme will imply progress towards the mainstreaming targets and ambitions in the areas of climate and biodiversity;

31. Stresses the need to significantly increase the budget of the European Environment Agency to provide sufficient financial and staff resources to enable full implementation of the European Green Deal and its related policies;

32. Calls, therefore, for a reinforcement of allocations under Heading 3 by EUR 212 750 473 in commitment appropriations above DB levels (excluding pilot projects and preparatory actions), to be financed by using part of the available margin;

33. Recalls that traditionally, an Amending Letter will still complete the picture regarding the availabilities for the EAGF and that the approach to amendments in Heading 3 can be adjusted accordingly in the course of the conciliation;

Heading 4 - Migration and Border Management

34. Underlines the importance of increasing appropriations for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, in particular in the light of the recent developments in Afghanistan; reverses, further, the decrease for the Border Management and Visa Instrument (BMVI) programmed by the Commission to finance new tasks for Europol under its enhanced mandate, as the necessary appropriations for Europol should be drawn exclusively from unallocated margins under the relevant MFF heading ceilings and/or through the mobilisation of the relevant MFF special instruments; against this background, offsets also the redeployment of BMVI for eu-LISA;

35. Underlines the need to increase funding and staffing levels for the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) in line with the tasks stemming from the political agreement on the European Asylum Agency; also increases staffing for eu-LISA in line with the agency's identified needs;

36. Strongly objects to Council's cuts to the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) as the agency must be adequately equipped to enable it to deliver in all areas of responsibility falling under its new mandate; decides, however, to place EUR 90 000 000 into the reserve subject to the recruitment of the remaining 20 fundamental rights monitors at AD grade, the recruitment of the three deputy executive directors and the adoption of a procedure for the implementation of Article 46 of Regulation 2019/1896[9];

37. Reinforces therefore Heading 4 by EUR 106 231 750 in commitment appropriations

[9] Regulation (EU) 2019/1896 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 November 2019 on the European Border and Coast Guard and repealing Regulations (EU) No 1052/2013 and (EU) 2016/1624 (OJ L 295, 14.11.2019, p. 1).

above DB levels (excluding pilot projects and preparatory actions), to be financed by using the available margin and mobilising the special instruments;

Heading 5 - Security and Defence

38. Stresses the importance of a progressive framing of the Union's common security and defence policy; underlines the importance of enhancing European cooperation in defence matters since it not only makes Europe and its citizens safer, but also leads to a cost reduction; calls for increased funding for the European Defence Fund and for military mobility in order to fully foster an innovative and competitive defence industrial base that will contribute to the much-needed strategic autonomy of the Union;

39. Recalls the important role played by decentralised agencies operating in the field of security and law enforcement, in particular with regard to the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL), the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol), and proposes targeted increases and/or staffing changes to allow them to properly perform their tasks;

40. Reinforces Heading 5 overall by EUR 82 621 461 above the DB, to be financed by using part of the available margin;

Heading 6 - Neighbourhood and the World

41. Emphasises that at a time when external challenges and matters of international politics are gaining importance in international politics, the Union must ensure that the external dimension of its budget is appropriately funded and prepared to respond without delay to current, emerging as well as future challenges; insists on supporting agreed priorities under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-Global Europe) and Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III);

42. Emphasises the need to increase funding for Western Balkan countries and the countries of the Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood to support comprehensive political and socio-economic reforms and recovery from the COVID-19 crisis and its long-term economic consequences; points, in that context, to the need to ensure adequate funding for crucial areas such as democracy support, civil society and the rule of law;

43. Expresses deep concern about the ongoing situation in Afghanistan; believes that the humanitarian aid budget for Afghanistan and neighbouring countries should be significantly increased to support and protect vulnerable Afghans and their families; given the expected needs to be financed by the Solidarity and Emergency Aid Reserve, both internally and externally, that might lead to financial shortcomings, decides to reinforce the funding of the humanitarian aid by 20%;

44. Stresses the need to support developing countries in improving their health systems and accessing COVID-19 vaccines, particularly through the COVAX initiative; decides,

therefore, to earmark the amount of EUR 1 billion under the emerging challenges and priorities cushion of NDICI-Global Europe to this effect, as well as a further EUR 100 million under the line “People - Global Challenges”; requests that Member States fulfil the COVAX pledges already made and invites them to commit additional EUR 2 billion, either to COVAX or in vaccine doses, in the first semester of 2022;

45. Highlights the Union’s global support efforts for refugees and recalls the important role played by Turkey and the other host countries in welcoming refugees from Syria; reaffirms that the Union and its Member States must continue to provide effective and monitored aid to Syrian refugees in host countries; emphasises that the future funding for the needs of the Syrian refugees was not factored in the MFF or NDICI-Global Europe negotiations and should therefore not be borne by the programmed instruments, including the NDICI-Global Europe cushion, as the package in favour of refugees from Syria is not responding to a new crisis or unforeseen needs; requests that any successor of the EU Facility for Refugees in Turkey (FRT) shall be financed by fresh appropriations and by additional contributions from the Member States and should be accompanied by the corresponding revision of the MFF regulation to increase the ceiling of Heading 6 in order to reflect the actual financial needs for the EU external actions;

46. Emphasises that the protection and promotion of human rights and democracy globally continues to be of core interest for the Union’s external action; decides therefore, to increase the funding of these lines;

47. Decides to increase support for strategic communication, especially to measures aimed at countering global disinformation through the systematic tracking and exposing of disinformation spread by state and other actors;

Heading 7 - European Public Administration

48. Considers that Council’s cuts are unjustified and would not allow the Commission to fulfil their tasks; restores therefore the DB for the Commission administrative expenditure, including on its offices;

49. Stresses that, given the new legislative proposals, such as Fit for 55 package and increased Union spending due to NGEU and the Recovery and Resilience Facility, some services, in particular the Commission’s Directorate-General for Environment and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), will need staff reinforcements; asks the Commission to reassess these needs and to propose these reinforcements in its Amending letter, without undermining the actual human resources level in its other services;

Pilot projects and preparatory actions (PP-PAs)

50. Recalls the importance of pilot projects and preparatory actions (PP-PAs) as tools for the formulation of political priorities and the introduction of new initiatives that have the potential to turn into standing Union activities and programmes; having carried out a

careful analysis of all the proposals submitted and taking fully into account the Commission's assessment of their respect of legal requirements and implementability, adopts a balanced package of PP-PAs that reflects Parliament's political priorities; calls on the Commission to swiftly implement PP-PAs and provide feedback on their performance and results delivered on the ground;

Payments

51. Underlines the necessity to provide a sufficient level of payment appropriations in the 2022 budget and decides, therefore, to reverse Council's cuts and to reinforce payment appropriations on those lines which are amended in commitment appropriations;

Other Sections

Section I – European Parliament

52. Maintains unchanged the overall level of its budget for 2022, in line with its estimates of revenue and expenditure adopted by the Plenary on 29 April 2021, at EUR 2 112 904 198; incorporates budgetary-neutral technical adjustments to reflect updated information which was not available earlier this year;

53. In line with its abovementioned resolution of 29 April 2021 on its estimates of revenue and expenditure for the financial year 2022:

   a) takes note of the upcoming mid-term review of the Environmental Management System (EMAS) Mid-Term Strategy; reiterates its call to amend its current CO2 reduction plan for reaching carbon neutrality by 2030, using an internal carbon price;

   b) takes note that one of the main focus areas for EMAS in the medium term will be reducing emissions resulting from transport of persons; reiterates its call for a reasonable decrease of travel for meetings that can be effectively conducted remotely or in hybrid mode and for promoting a shift to low carbon alternatives for all remaining travel, provided that this does not affect the quality of legislative and political work;

   c) welcomes the expansion of voluntary teleworking for Parliament staff; reiterates its call for a preference to be given to hybrid meetings or fully remote meetings when they do not involve political decision making, such as hearings and exchanges of views or internal and preparatory meetings; reiterates its call for fully remote preparatory meetings and post-mission debriefings for all official delegation visits as a condition for authorisation, and the limiting of authorisation of delegations to only those within entitlements from 2022; reiterates its call on the Bureau to ensure that extraordinary committee meetings in Strasbourg are strictly limited to exceptional circumstances and that they are required to be duly justified before they are approved in each individual case;

d) welcomes the on-going process to revise the mission rules; reiterates its call for a proper needs-based approval and for using of low carbon modes of transport whenever possible; reiterates its call to revise the missions rule for APAs following the same principles;

e) encourages Members to use low carbon transport alternatives; reiterates its call to revise the implementing measures of the Statute for Members to reimbursement of flexible economy airline tickets when travelling within the Union except for duly justified exemptions;

f) reiterates its call for the Parliament to closely collaborate with the relevant local authorities and especially the Brussels Region in its efforts to be a frontrunner in sustainable urban mobility by taking a proactive role in the implementation of the GoodMove Plan, in particular as regards parking spaces; reiterates its calls for the expansion of the service bike scheme within Parliament and for official cars to be used to transport Members, staff and APAs with mission orders between Brussels and Strasbourg; reiterates its call for an appropriate increase in the number of car parking spaces reserved exclusively for electric vehicles;

g) welcomes the future proposal for a revision of the rules governing visitor groups; calls for the revised rules to be in line with Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy – putting European transport on track for the future (COM(2020)0789), in particular its paragraph 9;

h) notes that feasibility studies are in progress to assess the cost effectiveness of the installation of new photovoltaic panels in several buildings in Brussels and at the same time reiterates its call for the installation of state of the art rooftop photovoltaics for the maximum potential in Brussels by 2023; reiterates its call for a halt to upgrading of fossil fuel heating installations and for a roadmap to phase out fossil fuels with specific milestones to be adopted in 2022 to avoid stranded assets and for an analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of using heat pump systems and other relevant technologies in line with EMAS objectives; reiterates its call in parallel for the gradual replacement of Guarantees of Origin procurement with local renewable energy source;

i) recalls the support of the vast majority of Parliament's Members for a single seat to ensure that Union taxpayers' money is spent efficiently and for Parliament to assume its institutional responsibility to reduce its carbon footprint; recalls that according to the Treaty on the European Union, the European Parliament is to have its seat in Strasbourg; notes that permanent changes would require a Treaty change for which unanimity is needed;

j) welcomes that the EMAS Action Plan 2021 provides for an obligatory consultation of the "Green Public Procurement Helpdesk" for all procurement procedures in the priority product categories, if deemed appropriate; reiterates however its call for an obligation to consult the Green Public Procurement Helpdesk for procurement above EUR 15 000;

k) reminds that following the 2018 Bureau decision on the General Expenditure Allowance (GEA), subsequent plenary decisions have been taken and therefore reiterates its demands to the Bureau to introduce changes to the rules governing the GEA by the end of 2021;

l) regrets that the Bureau refuses to implement the will of the Plenary expressed on numerous occasions to take action for the full alignment of the allowances rates of officials, other civil servants and APAs in respect of duty travel between Parliament's three places of work; reiterates its call on the Bureau to address this issue without any further delay and to take the necessary measures to remedy that inequality as soon as possible;

m) takes note of the Bureau decision on 8 February 2021 regarding voting under the remote participation regime; notes that voting remotely in the absence of a decision by the President establishing extraordinary circumstances is currently not possible; reiterates its call on the Bureau to allow Members to exercise their right to vote while benefiting from maternity or paternity leave, during a long-term illness or in cases of force majeure;

n) recalls the inherent risks for information security and privacy of using third-party-dependent solutions and the positive impact of using open source software; insists that users should be enabled to use open source software on Parliament's devices, and the need for decentralised, open source solutions for virtual meetings and instant messaging; highlights the need to properly train users with a special focus on cybersecurity; stresses the need for automatic language transcription and translation software to support the equal diffusion of information in all official languages;

o) takes note of the Cloud strategic orientations adopted by the Bureau in June 2020; reiterates its call for measures to ensure that Parliament's procurement of software and digital infrastructure, including cloud solutions, avoid vendor lock-in effects through portability and full interoperability requirements and use open source software and earmarks procurement for SMEs and startups;

p) takes note of the approximate costs of outsourcing the translation of key foreign policy resolutions into the official language of the country concerned; reiterates its call to draw up translation of such documents, with a view to enhancing the impact and outreach of the Parliament's foreign affairs activities, and to ensure that sufficient appropriations are made available for that purpose;

q) reiterates its request to the Bureau to make known its decision on the PHS building including a detailed breakdown of costs and the supporting documents;

r) takes note of the actions taken by the Parliament to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the cleaning and catering service providers; reiterates its call on the Bureau to reconsider Parliament's externalisation policy as regards cleaning and catering services.

Other Sections (Sections IV-X)

54. Notes that, in the main, the DB reflects the estimates of the various institutions falling within the other sections of the budget and therefore matches, with some exceptions, their financial requirements; considers that the systematic cuts proposed by the Council would therefore have a deleterious effect on the working of the institutions concerned and consequently on the vital contribution they make to the functioning of the Union; on that account, proposes to restore the levels of the DB in almost all cases, including with regard to the establishment plan of the Committee of the Regions; in line with the gentlemen's agreement, does not modify the Council's reading concerning the Council and the European Council;

55. Considers that, in some cases and taking into account the institutions' estimates, it is necessary to increase lines above the DB; proposes therefore:

    a) in relation to the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Economic and Social Committee, to increase the appropriations above the DB for lines related to remuneration and entitlements of staff, including with regard to the establishment plans, so as to maintain a level of appropriations in line with their estimates;

    b) in relation to the European Court of Auditors to increase the appropriations above the DB for line 1200 "Remuneration and allowances", including with regard to its establishment plan, so as to maintain a level of appropriations deemed necessary by the European Court of Auditors, in particular to cover additional audit tasks linked to increased Union funds (Recovery and Resilience Facility and NGEU);

    c) in relation to the European External Action Service to increase the appropriations above the DB for the line 2214 "Strategic Communication Capacity" and line 1200 "Contract staff" to step up further the fight against disinformation, in particular in the Far East region; in addition, to reinforce line 1100 "Basic salaries", few additional related lines and its establishment plan to allow the European External Action Service to replace seconded national experts with statutory staff and to fulfil its functions under the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime.

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56. Instructs its President to forward this resolution, together with the amendments to the draft general budget, to the Council, the Commission, the other institutions and bodies concerned and the national parliaments.