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P8_TA(2015)0376

General budget of the European Union for 2016 — all sections

European Parliament resolution of 28 October 2015 on the Council position on the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2016 (11706/2015 — C8-0274/2015 — 2015/2132(BUD))

(2017/C 355/22)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 314 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to Article 106a of the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community,
- having regard to Council Decision 2007/436/EC, Euratom of 7 June 2007 on the system of the European Communities' own resources ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to Council Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1311/2013 of 2 December 2013 laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2014-2020 ⁽³⁾ (MFF Regulation),
- having regard to the Interinstitutional Agreement of 2 December 2013 between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline, on cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management ⁽⁴⁾ (IIA),
- having regard to its resolution of 11 March 2015 on general guidelines for the preparation of the budget, Section III — Commission ⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 29 April 2015 on Parliament's estimates of revenue and expenditure for the financial year 2016 ⁽⁶⁾,
- having regard to the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2016, which the Commission adopted on 24 June 2015 (COM(2015)0300),
- having regard to the position on the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2016, which the Council adopted on 4 September 2015 and forwarded to Parliament on 17 September 2015 (11706/2015 — C8-0274/2015),
- having regard to its resolution of 8 July 2015 on the mandate for the trilogue on the 2016 draft budget ⁽⁷⁾,

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 163, 23.6.2007, p. 17.

⁽²⁾ OJ L 298, 26.10.2012, p. 1.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 884.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 373, 20.12.2013, p. 1.

⁽⁵⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0061.

⁽⁶⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0172.

⁽⁷⁾ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0263.

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- having regard to the Commission communication to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council of 23 September 2015 on managing the refugee crisis: immediate operational, budgetary and legal measures under the European Agenda on Migration (COM(2015)0490),
- having regard to Letters of amendment Nos 1/2016 (COM(2015)0317) and 2/2016 (COM(2015)0513) to the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2016,
- having regard to Rule 88 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgets and the opinions of the other committees concerned (A8-0298/2015),

Section III

General overview

1. Stresses that Parliament's reading of the 2016 budget fully reflects the political priorities adopted by an overwhelming majority in its abovementioned resolutions of 11 March 2015 on general guidelines and of 8 July 2015 on a mandate for the trilogue; recalls that those consist in internal and external solidarity, in particular an effective tackling of the migration and refugee crisis, as well as in boosting competitiveness through the creation of decent and quality employment and the development of enterprises and entrepreneurship across the Union (the 'three Es');
2. Highlights that the Union is currently facing a number of serious emergencies, notably the unprecedented migration and refugee crisis; is convinced that the necessary financial resources need to be deployed in the Union budget, in order to match the political challenges and allow the Union to deliver and effectively respond to those crises, as a matter of utmost urgency and priority; understands that the migration and refugee crisis cannot be solved by financial resources alone and that a comprehensive approach is needed to address both its internal and external dimension; considers that extraordinary times require extraordinary measures and that a strong political commitment is needed to secure fresh appropriations for this purpose; underlines in this context that solidarity is an underlying principle of the EU budget; is concerned that, in the refugee crisis, solidarity appears in an uneven way across Member States; asks the Commission to come up with a proposal on how the EU budget can prompt Member States towards a more balanced approach to solidarity;
3. Notes that Parliament has, from the outset, placed a particular focus on migration and refugees in the 2016 budget; recalls its earlier statements that the handling of migration flows lies at the crossroads of internal and external solidarity and that external financing instruments should also be mobilised, in an integrated approach, in order to address the root causes of the problems the Union is faced with; recalls common treaties and agreements such as the Schengen Acquis and the Dublin Regulation ⁽¹⁾ and the Commission proposal on a binding crisis mechanism for relocation (COM(2015)0450);
4. Decides, therefore, to immediately put forward a comprehensive package of amendments increasing the Draft Budget (DB) by EUR 1 161 million both on Heading 3 (Security and Citizenship) and Heading 4 (Global Europe), in order to provide an initial response to the migration crisis; stresses that, as regards the internal dimension of this crisis, Parliament's amendments already integrate fully and align the two packages on the relocation of asylum-seekers, while proposing additional increases for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the Union agencies in this field; highlights, as regards the external dimension, a number of additional reinforcements targeting specific programmes in Heading 4, such as the European Neighbourhood Instrument, the Development Cooperation Instrument, Humanitarian Aid and the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance;

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person (OJ L 180, 29.6.2013, p. 31).

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5. Underlines, however, that those amendments should be considered alongside the Commission's Letter of amendment No 2/2016, which includes, in addition to the second relocation package, the additional measures set out in the abovementioned Commission communication of 23 September 2015; regrets that Parliament and the Council do not have more time to examine the suitability of that Letter of amendment, but understands the need for an immediate response and the considerable time pressure; stresses that Parliament fully endorses these new measures and intends to defend their financing through fresh appropriations even to a higher extent than the level proposed in its own position on the 2016 budget;

6. Decides to also take action with regard to the ongoing crisis affecting European farmers, notably in the dairy sector, and to already integrate in its position on the 2016 budget the EUR 500 million support emergency measures announced by the Commission; trusts that the Commission's Letter of amendment No 2/2016 will allow the exact budget lines that will be reinforced in this context to be determined; welcomes the decision by the Commission to carry over unused appropriations of the crisis reserve from the 2015 budget to the 2016 budget and notes that these unspent funds will be used for reimbursements to the beneficiaries of direct payments as provided for in Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013;

7. Acknowledges that a lot more effort needs to be undertaken to address the shortcomings in the Union economy by boosting competitiveness, growth and quality jobs; emphasises the key role played by micro, small, medium-sized and social enterprises in this regard; reinforces therefore the COSME programme by EUR 16,5 million; decides also to propose new commitments in 2016 for the continuation of the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), whose entire financial envelope was frontloaded in the years 2014-2015; acknowledges the significant contribution of this programme to the fight against unemployment and is determined to ensure that the necessary appropriations are made available in order to prevent a funding gap in its implementation; adopts, therefore, a EUR 473,2 million increase for 2016, corresponding to the original instalment that was foreseen for the YEI on a yearly basis;

8. Reiterates its conviction that the Union budget should not finance new initiatives to the detriment of existing Union programmes and policies and disregard political commitments already made; while acknowledging and fully confirming the large political and financial support to the launching of European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI), intends to deliver on the commitment that it made during the EFSI negotiations, namely to minimise to the maximum the impact on Horizon 2020 and the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) in the frame of the annual budgetary procedure; proposes, therefore, to fully offset the cuts of these two programmes — due to the provisioning of the EFSI Guarantee Fund — in 2016 (EUR 1 326 million), in order to allow them to fully accomplish the objectives agreed only two years ago with the adoption of their respective legal bases;

9. Stresses the importance of fully respecting the joint statement on a payment plan 2015-2016 agreed between Parliament, Council and Commission, following the shared commitment to reduce the backlog of outstanding payment claims for the 2007-2013 cohesion programmes to around EUR 2 billion by the end of 2016; criticises, in this respect, that the Council's proposed cuts are in direct contradiction with this payment plan; stresses, moreover, the need to avoid any future build-up of such an unsustainable backlog, and calls on the Commission to come up with concrete proposals to that effect; considers, for this reason, that unforeseen payment needs should be financed with fresh appropriations and that the frontloading of EUR 1 billion in 2016 for Greece should, therefore, be financed through the available MFF payments' ceiling; stresses its long-standing position that payments deriving from commitments mobilised under the Flexibility Instrument are counted over and above that ceiling;

10. Restores all cuts proposed by Council to the DB (EUR 563,6 million in commitments and EUR 1 421,8 million in payments); fails to understand the reasoning behind the proposed cuts, for example those to Horizon 2020 and CEF, two programmes already affected by redeployments to EFSI, and to development and neighbourhood policies, especially in light of recent events; is concerned that, by proposing such important cuts to the DB, Council is largely disregarding the undeniable added value of the Union budget; contests, in any event, Council's declared intention to target budget lines with a low execution rate or absorption capacity, as this is not substantiated by the actual implementation figures and ignores the varying implementation patterns of certain programmes;

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11. Regrets that Commission expert groups continue to lack balance as they are excessively dominated by corporate interests;

12. Concludes that, for the purpose of adequately financing these pressing needs, and considering the very tight MFF margins in 2016, all means available in the MFF Regulation in terms of flexibility, including the full mobilisation of the Flexibility Instrument, will need to be deployed; expects that the Council will share this approach and that an agreement will easily be reached in conciliation, allowing the Union to rise to the occasion and effectively respond to the challenges ahead; stresses, in this respect, that the global MFF margin for commitments from 2015 should be mobilised as soon as the legal conditions are fulfilled; expects to reach a pre-agreement with the Council and the Commission on this issue;

13. Recalls the Joint Declaration of the three Union institutions, in the context of the MFF political agreement, that the annual budgetary procedures will integrate, as appropriate, gender-responsive elements; emphasises that gender mainstreaming should underpin, as a horizontal principle, Union policies and calls for a comprehensive implementation of gender budgeting; welcomes, moreover, the first steps of the greening of the Union budget; points to the need to further advance this process in order to meet the agreed targets in climate and environmentally friendly spending;

14. Sets the overall level of appropriations for 2016 at EUR 157 427,3 million and EUR 146 459,3 million in commitment and payment appropriations respectively;

Sub-heading 1a — Competitiveness for growth and jobs

15. Criticises that, again this year, sub-heading 1a is severely affected by the Council's cuts with a reduction of EUR 140,9 million in commitments and EUR 435,4 million in payments as compared to the DB; highlights that around half of these cuts are targeted at Horizon 2020, which results in a further reduction for this programme in 2016 after that part of its appropriations have been redeployed to EFSI;

16. Underlines that, for the sake of a coherent approach, several cuts applied by the Council on the ground of a low absorption capacity on many sub-heading 1a programmes in June 2015 have now to be reversed due the strong acceleration in these programmes' implementation in September 2015; notes that this is a general trend, in line with the life cycle of these programmes; decides therefore to restore the DB level on the lines cut by the Council both in commitments and in payments;

17. In line with its priorities for 2016, Employment, Enterprises, Entrepreneurship, and after careful assessment of their absorption capacity so far, decides to propose, in addition to the full compensation of the EFSI-related cuts for Horizon 2020, and CEF, some selective increases above the level of the DB for COSME, Horizon 2020, EaSI and Erasmus+ programmes;

18. Stresses, in particular, that the frontloading of appropriations for COSME in 2014-2015 has proven to be truly beneficial given the constant increase in the SMEs' demand for support in access to markets and funding in the past few years; opposes, therefore, the decrease of COSME in the DB as compared to 2015 and decides to increase appropriations above the DB for this programme; recalls that the Commission has already pointed to a shortfall in the COSME financial instruments for 2015, 2016 and 2017, which demonstrates the gap between available commitments and expected demand; within COSME, asks for a substantial reinforcement of the appropriations for the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, given that the available resources are not sufficient to cover the substantial demand in participation;

19. Calls on the Commission to analyse the financial burden caused by fees and charges due within obligatory certification and licensing procedures; urges the Commission to provide a proper evaluation of the impact of those costs on the competitiveness of industrial companies and SMEs;

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20. Decides to increase above the DB appropriations for the three supervisory agencies (EBA, EIOPA and ESMA) as well as for ACER to provide them with adequate resources to face their increasing tasks;

21. Confirms its support for the ITER programme and is committed to securing its appropriate financing; is concerned, however, about possible further delays and additional costs of this programme as well as the related potential repercussions on the Union budget; regrets, therefore, that it was unable to assess the level of the 2016 ITER appropriations against the updated payment plan and schedule, which is only due to be presented in the ITER Council in November 2015; expects, however, that this revised plan will provide sufficient evidence that Parliament's recommendations, as set out in the relevant 2013 discharge resolution⁽¹⁾, have been properly taken into account and that financial soundness and spending efficiency will be ensured; intends to raise this matter in the 2016 budgetary conciliation; moreover, insists on the need for full transparency regarding the use of Fusion for Energy's contributions to the ITER programme; calls for a proper accountability mechanism giving a clear overview of the amount of financial resources provided to the international project and evaluating their efficient use;

22. Reserves part of the appropriations for the standardisation of financial reporting and auditing and calls for the implementation of the recommendations of the Maystadt report referring to the task and responsibilities of the European Financial Reporting Advisory Group (EFRAG), thereby also strengthening the Union's influence in international accounting standard-setting; is also concerned about the significant EU funding provided to the IFRS foundation not being matched by necessary improvements regarding accountability, transparency and democracy;

23. As a result, increases the level of commitment and payments appropriations for sub-heading 1a above the DB by EUR 1 405,5 million and EUR 491,5 million respectively (including pilot projects and preparatory actions), thus exceeding the ceiling for commitments by EUR 1 316,9 million, to be financed by all means available as regards flexibility in the MFF Regulation after exhaustion of the available margins;

Sub-heading 1b — Economic, social and territorial cohesion

24. Disapproves of Council's proposed cuts of EUR 3,1 million in commitments and, more importantly, EUR 220,1 million in payments under sub-heading 1b, including on completion lines; calls on the Council to explain how these cuts are compatible with the objective, on the one hand, of reducing the backlog of unpaid bills and, on the other hand, of avoiding negative repercussions and unnecessary delays for the implementation of the 2014-2020 programmes; recalls that cohesion policy represents the Union's main investment policy aimed at reducing disparities between European regions by strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion; underlines that instruments such as the European Social Fund, the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund or the Youth Employment Initiative are instrumental in fostering convergence, narrowing the development gap and supporting the creation of quality and sustainable jobs;

25. Notes the Commission's preliminary assessment, based on Member States' latest forecasts, that programme implementation in the area of cohesion policy is likely to be delayed in 2016; is alarmed that any significant underspending in the third year of implementation of the new European Structural and Investment Funds cycle, at a time when programmes should be reaching full swing, will not only have a detrimental effect on the timely achievement of results on the ground, but may also lead to serious pressure on payments in subsequent years, possibly reconstituting a backlog of unpaid bills; urges the Member States concerned to make speedy progress in tackling the underlying causes of these delays

⁽¹⁾ European Parliament resolution of 29 April 2015 with observations forming an integral part of the decision on discharge in respect of the implementation of the budget for the Joint Undertaking for ITER and the Development of Fusion Energy for the financial year 2013 (OJ L 255, 30.9.2015, p. 395).

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in implementation, such as through the prompt designation of programme authorities and the non-multiplication and simplification of national administrative procedures; in line with the payment plan, requests the Commission to closely monitor the evolution of payments under sub-heading 1b related to the 2014-2020 programming period, including through detailed, regularly updated forecasts to be discussed at dedicated interinstitutional meetings, and make appropriate proposals as needed;

26. Recalls that the Commission has not proposed any commitment appropriations for the Youth Employment Initiative in 2016 as a result of its frontloading in the years 2014-2015; decides, in line with the Regulation on the European Social Fund⁽¹⁾ which foresees the possibility of such a continuation, to provide the Youth Employment Initiative with EUR 473,2 million in commitment appropriations, namely an amount corresponding to the initial annual instalment foreseen for this programme; is convinced that funding for this important programme, which addresses one of the Union's most pressing challenges, should not stop in 2015; underlines that the additional funding should be used to scale up the programme, thus assisting a greater number of young people in their search for a decent and permanent job; urges the Member States to do their utmost to speed up the implementation of the Initiative on the ground, for the direct benefit of young Europeans; urges the Commission to report to Parliament on Union funded measures to combat youth unemployment and on the results achieved with those measures;

27. Taking account of pilot projects and preparatory actions, increases commitment appropriations for sub-heading 1b by EUR 482,7 million and payment appropriations by EUR 1 164 million above the DB, thus exceeding the ceiling for commitments by EUR 467,3 million to be financed by any means available as regards flexibility in the MFF Regulation;

Heading 2 — Sustainable growth: natural resources

28. Notes that the Council reduced appropriations also in Heading 2 by EUR 199,9 million in commitments and EUR 251,1 million in payments, including rural development, the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and the LIFE programme; considers that the Letter of amendment No 2/2016 should remain the basis for any reliable revision of European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) appropriations; restores the DB levels accordingly;

29. Welcomes the presentation by the Commission of a EUR 500 million comprehensive package of emergency measures to support European farmers, notably in the dairy sector amid falling commodity prices and greater milk production; stresses that the effects are most severe in remote areas where the socio-economic importance of the dairy sector is unquestionable; incorporates this amount in its reading as a show of support for the Commission's announcement, and looks forward to its full inclusion in the course of the conciliation procedure on the basis of the Letter of amendment No 2/2016; underlines that this package should add up to the range of measures aimed at addressing the losses and long-term effects on European farmers of the Russian embargo on agricultural products, Russia being thus far the second most important destination for Union agricultural exports;

30. Considers export refunds to be trade distorting and in contradiction to the EU development goals; supports therefore their complete elimination;

31. Reiterates that CAP appropriations or any other appropriations from the budget should not be used for the financing of lethal bullfighting activities; recalls that such funding is a clear violation of the European Convention for the Protection of Animals Kept for Farming Purposes (Council Directive 98/58/EC)⁽²⁾;

⁽¹⁾ Regulation (EU) No 1304/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the European Social Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1081/2006 (OJ L 347, 20.12.2013, p. 470).

⁽²⁾ Council Directive 98/58/EC of 20 July 1998, concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes (OJ L 221, 8.8.1998, p. 23).

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32. Stresses the increasing tasks assigned to the Union as part of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund; therefore restores the level of appropriations of the 2015 budget for scientific advice and knowledge in fisheries due to the importance of data collection in decision-making, and reinforces the European Fisheries Control Agency (EFCA) budget to support its role in coordinating and implementing the Common Fisheries Policy;

33. Increases therefore commitment appropriations by EUR 510,4 million and payment appropriations by EUR 520,6 million (including pilot projects and preparatory actions), leaving a margin of EUR 647,2 million below the ceiling for commitments in Heading 2;

Heading 3 — Security and Citizenship

34. Recalls that the DB provided for reinforcements in the area of security and migration, including a EUR 150 million scheme for the relocation of 40 000 persons in need of international protection, leading the Commission to exceed the ceiling for this heading by EUR 124 million and to propose the corresponding mobilisation of the Flexibility Instrument; welcomes the fact that the Council has agreed to the principle of mobilising the Flexibility Instrument for this purpose; notes however that a long-term financial plan to respond to the refugee crisis is needed and considers that this shall also be addressed through the revision of the MFF;

35. Decides, in light of the current exceptional flows of migrants and refugees, to concentrate its reinforcements on strengthening the AMIF; strongly supports in this context the second EUR 780 million package on the relocation of an additional 120 000 persons; decides to incorporate the necessary funds in its reading, and to align the first relocation package with the second one by adding EUR 20 million to finance transport costs (EUR 500 per migrant to Italy and Greece); approves an additional increase of EUR 79 million for general reinforcement of the AMIF; highlights the necessity of also ensuring sufficient financing possibilities for the AMIF for the upcoming years; recalls that point 17 of IIA allows for an increase of more than 10 % in the amount foreseen for the entire duration of a programme when the new, objective, long-term circumstances arise;

36. Notes that such measures are only a first step towards the full implementation of the principle of solidarity on which the Union is based on; calls on the Commission and the Council to fully implement the plans proposed in the abovementioned Commission communication of 23 September 2015 and show a clear commitment to the respect for human rights, as stated in Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union; stresses the importance of proper financing of return operations in accordance with the Charter and the principle of 'non-refoulement' in order to achieve an effective return policy, preventing and reducing irregular migration; underlines the importance of supporting refugees close to their home countries and of facilitating asylum procedures in Member States;

37. Finally decides to reinforce the agencies with migration-related tasks for a total of EUR 26 million with the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) receiving the biggest increase of EUR 12 million above the DB; recalls that this agency plays a central, coordinating role in the implementation of the provisional measures in the area of international protection and is increasingly being called upon to assist concerned Member States;

38. Welcomes the Commission communication of 23 September 2015 and the corresponding measures reflected in the Letter of amendment No 2/2016, notably EUR 600 million of additional emergency funding for the most affected Member States; is satisfied that the Commission is taking leadership in that area and, in doing so, confirms the approach taken by Parliament in its reading; stands ready to consider further reinforcements in the course of the conciliation;

39. Deplores that the Council decreases commitment appropriations by EUR 25,1 million and payment appropriations by EUR 33,6 million compared to the DB; believes that these reductions jeopardise the proper implementation of programmes and actions under Heading 3; recalls in this context that though some of the proposed cuts may seem minor, one needs to keep in mind the relatively small size of several important and valuable programmes, making them particularly vulnerable to cuts; decides therefore to restore the level of the DB;

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40. Furthermore, deems it necessary, given their important role in supporting cultural and creative industries that represent key European values, to increase, by a total of EUR 10,5 million in commitment appropriations above the DB, the culture and media sub-programmes, including the Multimedia Actions, and the Cultural and Creative Sectors Guarantee Facility (CCSGF) planned for 2016 and intended to tackle the critical issue of access to finance for SMEs and organisations in the cultural and creative sectors;

41. Considers it also a priority to reinforce the Europe for Citizens' programme with EUR 1,5 million as well as modifying the budget nomenclature of the Europe for Citizens programme by dedicating a separate line to the implementation of the European Citizens' Initiative;

42. Notes that its reading (including pilot projects and preparatory actions) exceeds the ceiling of Heading 3 by EUR 1 055,1 million in commitments, with EUR 931,1 million above the DB, while increasing payment appropriations by EUR 586,5 million; proposes therefore to mobilise any means available in the MFF to finance the package of reinforcements linked to migration;

Heading 4 — Global Europe

43. Points to the fact that, of all headings, Heading 4 bears the biggest cuts by the Council both in commitments (- EUR 163,4 million) and in payments (- EUR 450,4 million); notes with surprise that the European Neighbourhood Instrument (notably poverty and security in the Mediterranean countries), the Development Cooperation Instrument (including the migration and asylum thematic objective) and the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (despite candidate countries hosting a considerable number of refugees or being located on major migration routes) are among the most affected; underlines that this approach is in blatant contradiction to the statements of the Council and the European Council on the migration agenda, on the refugee crisis and on cooperation with countries of origin and transit;

44. Against this background, decides to restore the level of appropriations provided for by the DB; notes that the payment situation of Heading 4 is still a matter of particular concern due to the rolling-over of a significant backlog of unpaid bills and the artificial postponing of contractual commitments to face a persistent underbudgeting in payments; reaffirms, therefore, that the increases in payment appropriations proposed by the Commission were merely necessary, notwithstanding the fact that the unprecedented migration and refugee crisis has meanwhile imposed additional challenges for the Union's external action;

45. Complements the package of amendments on migration and the refugee crisis by adopting targeted reinforcements in commitment appropriations first and foremost within the European Neighbourhood Instrument (+ EUR 178,1 million) but also in the Development Cooperation Instrument (+ EUR 26,6 million), Humanitarian aid (+ EUR 26 million), the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (+ EUR 11,2 million), the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (+ EUR 12,6 million) and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (+ EUR 1 million); while supporting, where necessary, reprioritisation within those programmes to address the most topical challenges, stresses that this must not lead to reduced efforts related to the initial objectives of the respective legal basis, thus risking the destabilisation of the European neighbourhood or other regions concerned; reiterates the need to adopt a comprehensive and human rights-based approach linking migration with development and working towards the integration of legal migrants, asylum seekers and refugees; emphasises the need to reinforce cooperation and commitment with countries of origin and transit to effectively tackle the current migration crisis, and in particular the needs of displaced persons in third countries in fields of health and education; considers, therefore, such reinforcements indispensable to the financing of additional initiatives, on top of the initial objectives of the respective legal bases;

46. Notes that the Union Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis and the Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa were created because the Union budget lacks both the necessary flexibility and funding to allow for a rapid and comprehensive response to the crisis; stresses that a more holistic solution needs to be found in the MFF review/revision on how to make support from the Union

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budget for humanitarian assistance and development more effective and more readily available and how to successfully merge it with the European Development Fund and bilateral aid offered by Member States; calls for the extra appropriations for the programmes under Heading 4 to be used in particular to increase the funding for the two Trust Funds as well as for immediate assistance via the UNHCR and the World Food Programme; calls on the individual Member States to turn words into deeds and bring the necessary additional contributions to match the Union funding linked to the Trust Funds and to close the funding gap of the UN agencies without further delay; notes that the pipeline of projects potentially funded by the Trust Funds further weakens the Council's case for an alleged lack of absorption capacity in Heading 4;

47. Reinforces by EUR 40 million the budget line for support for the peace process and financial assistance to Palestine and to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA); notes that UNRWA plays an effective role in supporting the growing number of Palestinian refugees suffering directly from the Syrian crisis, which poses an additional burden on the agency; is concerned about the funding gaps faced by UNRWA and calls for those additional appropriations to be channelled to its General Fund in support of basic education, social and health services;

48. Recalls that in order to alleviate damaging long term effects that stem from humanitarian crisis it is essential to ensure that children affected continue to receive an education; therefore increases funding for supporting education in the Humanitarian aid budget so that it accounts for 3 % instead of 1 %, with the aim of reaching a threshold of 4 % by 2019;

49. Approves a symbolic reinforcement of the CFSP budget to support any initiative aimed at making migration a specific component of CSDP civilian missions, while giving full support to the EUNAVFOR Med military mission aimed at fighting human smugglers and traffickers;

50. Appreciates the ongoing reflection process taking place in the EEAS on the future of EU Special Representatives and their relationship with the EEAS; considers that any change to the budget line for EU Special Representatives should only take place after the current reflection process is concluded;

51. Deems it necessary to increase appropriations for the Turkish Cypriot Community budget line (+ EUR 2 million) for the purpose of contributing decisively to the continuation and intensification of the mission of the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus and of supporting the bicomunal Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage, thus promoting trust and reconciliation between the two communities;

52. Emphasises that the implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement reached at the 9th Ministerial Conference of the WTO will require increased funding support for the least developed and developing countries; stresses the need for coordinated efforts between the Commission and the Member States with regard to international financial institutions in order to avoid reduced appropriations for Aid for Trade and multilateral initiatives as well as irregularities in relation to cooperation with certain partners leading to reduced spending effectiveness, and to ensure the Trade Facilitation Agreement works for development;

53. Decides, together with pilot projects and preparatory actions, to exhaust the margin of EUR 261,3 million left by the DB below the ceiling for Heading 4 in commitments and not to go any further at this stage; increases also payment appropriations by EUR 132,5 million; looks forward to a fruitful conciliation on the basis of these amendments, also taking the Letter of amendment No 2/2016 into account; stresses, however, that this ceiling might be insufficient given that it has been set well before major developments in Ukraine, Syria, Tunisia and more generally throughout the neighbouring countries, the Middle East and Africa; calls, therefore, for a full use of the potential of the Emergency Aid Reserve and remains open to any further mobilisation of the flexibility provisions foreseen in the MFF for addressing the external dimension of the migration and refugee crisis;

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Heading 5 — Administration; Other headings — administrative and research support expenditure

54. Notes that Council cuts in this heading amount to EUR 31,2 million, of which EUR 19,3 million concerns the Commission's administrative budget notably for its buildings, equipment, and above all for its staff as a consequence of increasing the standard flat rate abatement to 4,3 %; does not see any justification for Council's reading and recalls that, following constant restraint these past years, Commission's proposed administrative expenditure for 2016 was kept close to the expected level of inflation i.e. stable in real terms and that Commission implements a continued reduction of its staff;

55. Considers moreover these cuts arbitrary in view of the foreseeability of this type of expenditure largely based on contractual obligations, and in view of its very high implementation as reported by the Commission; notes in particular that the occupation of the Commission establishment plan reached a record high on 1 April 2015 with 97,8 % posts actually occupied; regrets that in addition, in headings other than Heading 5, Council cut the administrative and research support expenses by a total of EUR 28 million, despite these being key to ensuring success of the programmes in the different Union policy areas;

56. Decides consequently to restore the DB on all the lines of administrative and research support expenditure in policy areas and on all the lines in Heading 5 decreased by the Council, as well as to approve a limited number of small reinforcements;

57. Asks the Commission to ensure that the combined budget of the OLAF Supervisory Committee and its Secretariat is specified in a separate line of the OLAF budget for 2016;

Agencies

58. Endorses, as a general rule, the Commission's estimates of the budgetary needs of agencies; notes that the Commission has already considerably reduced the initial requests of most agencies;

59. Considers, therefore, that any further cuts proposed by the Council could endanger the proper functioning of the agencies and would not allow them to fulfil the tasks they have been assigned by the legislative authority;

60. Decides to increase, within the overall package on migration, the appropriations for the main agencies working in this field: the European Asylum Support Office, Frontex, Europol, Eurojust, eu.LISA, Cefop and the Fundamental Rights Agency for a total of EUR 26 million, as these agencies are vital to address the current pressing problem of migratory flows in an effective manner; welcomes the additional appropriations and additional 120 establishment plan posts for agencies in Amending Budget No 7/2015 and expects this decision to also impact the 2016 budget as well as the budgets for the following years; highlights the quickly deteriorating crisis situation and huge increase in migratory flows; urges the Commission to provide updated and consolidated information about the agencies' needs before budgetary conciliation; calls on the Commission to propose a medium-term and long-term strategy for the justice and home affairs agencies' actions: objectives, missions, coordination, development of hot spots and financial resources;

61. Decides furthermore to increase the 2016 budget appropriations for the three financial supervisory agencies due to their additional tasks and increased workload; invites the Commission to submit by 2017 a proposal for a fee-based financing concept replacing completely the current contributions from member states, as a means of securing the European authorities' independence from their national member authorities;

62. Decides to also increase the appropriations for the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators, the European Fisheries Control Agency and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, in order to better match the available resources with the agencies' tasks;

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63. Cannot accept, however, the Commission's and the Council's approach to agencies' staffing, and therefore modifies a substantial number of establishment plans; underlines once more that each agency should cut 5 % of posts over 5 years as agreed in the IIA, but that new posts that are needed to fulfil additional tasks due to new policy developments and new legislation since 2013 have to be accompanied by additional resources and need to be counted outside the IIA staff reduction target;

64. Emphasises therefore again its opposition to the concept of a redeployment pool amongst agencies, but reaffirms its openness to free posts by means of achieving efficiency gains between agencies through increased administrative cooperation or even analyse the possibilities of mergers where appropriate and through pooling certain functions with either the Commission or another agency;

65. Underlines once more that posts financed from industry have no impact on the Union budget and therefore should not be subject to any staff reduction; emphasises that it should be left to the discretion of the agency concerned to balance fluctuating workload by not filling all posts at their disposal;

66. Modifies therefore a number of establishment plans of agencies in line with the priorities described above to align staffing with additional tasks, modifies others to bring them more in line with a real 5 % cut over 5 years and to treat fee-financed posts differently; recalls that the 5 % cut over 5 years was introduced in order to decrease the costs of the administration; highlights in this context that additional posts in the establishment plan do not have an automatic financial impact on the Union budget since agencies fill their posts according to their needs and agencies therefore do not always have all posts in their establishment plans filled;

Pilot projects and preparatory actions (PP-PAs)

67. Having carried out a careful analysis of the pilot projects and preparatory actions submitted — as regards the rate of success of the on-going ones and excluding initiatives already covered by existing legal bases, and taking fully into account the Commission's assessment of the projects' implementability, decides to adopt a compromise package made up of a limited number of PP-PAs, also in view of the limited margins available;

Payments

68. Stresses once again the importance of the joint payment plan 2015-2016 agreed, ahead of the budgetary procedure, by Parliament, the Council and the Commission, which reflects the commitment of the three institutions to reduce the backlog of outstanding payments; notes that the three institutions agreed to cooperate fully in view of authorising a level of payment appropriations in the 2016 budget which allows reaching such a goal, and that payment appropriations requested for 2016 were calculated by the Commission accordingly; considers that any action to manage the risk of an unsustainable backlog should be complemented by efforts to ensure a more productive exchange of opinions and improve the cooperative spirit between the Council on the one hand and Parliament and Commission on the other hand; recalls that, according to Article 310 TFEU, the revenue and expenditure shown in the Union budget shall be in balance;

69. Deplores that, despite the resulting moderate increases and comfortable margins proposed by the Commission, the Council decided to cut down payment appropriations by EUR 1,4 billion, targeting both completion lines and programmes reaching full swing, thus jeopardising the phasing out of the abnormal backlog; recalls that, for programmes under direct management, shortages of payment appropriations are not only reflected in the evolution of the backlog but also in artificial delays in the implementation of programmes, for example delaying calls for proposals and/or the signature of new contracts;

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70. Decides to restore the DB in payments on all lines cut by the Council, on the assumption that the payment levels proposed by the Commission in its DB are the ones needed to achieve the objectives of the payment plan;

71. Reinforces, by an appropriate ratio, payment appropriations on all those lines which are amended in commitment appropriations, taking into account areas with a fast disbursement profile or a high degree of urgency namely Erasmus+, the two relocation schemes, UNRWA and humanitarian aid; increases payment appropriations by a further EUR 1 billion to fully cover by fresh appropriations the frontloading of payments for Greece; also decides, in view of past implementation, to increase payments for the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund;

Other sections

Section I — European Parliament

72. Recalls that Parliament's estimates for 2016 were set at EUR 1 823 648 600, which corresponds to a 1,6 % increase over the 2015 budget; recalls, in addition, that EUR 15 million has been earmarked for urgent investments in security and cybersecurity, setting the overall level of its 2016 budget at EUR 1 838 648 600;

73. Points out that as of 15 June 2015, after Parliament's estimates for 2016 were adopted, a new political group has been created and that, due to these changes in the organisation of Parliament, supplementary appropriations are needed to ensure that all political groups are treated equally;

74. Fully compensates these reinforcements by reducing the appropriations in the budget lines for contingency reserve, the general Members' allowance, further training, fitting out of premises, energy consumption, computing and telecommunications — investment in projects and furniture;

75. Notes the Bureau conclusions of 7 September 2015 in view of the parliamentary reading on the 2016 budget, which proposes to transpose its recent decisions and technical adjustments into the budget; approves these limited technical changes proposed by the Bureau, which involve budget-neutral adjustments to appropriations and to the establishment plan, and updates to certain aspects of the budgetary nomenclature;

76. Maintains therefore unchanged the overall level of its budget for 2016, as adopted by the plenary on 29 April 2015, at EUR 1 838 648 600;

77. Underlines that the activities of the political groups do not correspond to administrative work; confirms that, for this reason, the total level of staff in political groups shall be exempted from the 5 % staff reduction target in line with the decisions taken by it in respect of the financial years 2014 ⁽¹⁾, 2015 ⁽²⁾ and the estimates for 2016 ⁽³⁾;

78. Recalls that political groups have had a recruitment freeze in place since 2012 and that their needs were only partially covered in the preceding budgetary years;

79. Reiterates its commitment to implement point 27 of the IIA and to reduce its staff by 1 %;

⁽¹⁾ European Parliament resolution of 23 October 2013 on the Council position on the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2014 (Texts adopted, P7_TA(2013)0437).

⁽²⁾ European Parliament resolution of 22 October 2014 on the Council position on the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2015 on (Texts adopted, P8_TA(2014)0036).

⁽³⁾ European Parliament resolution of 29 April 2015 on Parliament's estimates of revenue and expenditure for the financial year 2016 (Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0172).

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80. Stresses that Parliament and the Council must address the need for a roadmap to a single seat, as requested by a large majority in this Parliament in several resolutions, in order to create long term savings in the Union budget;

Changes to the establishment plan

81. Reduces the establishment plan of its General Secretariat for 2016 by 57 posts (1 % staff reduction target) as follows: 4 AD14, 13 AD13, 2 AD12, 1 AD9, 2 AD8, 1 AD5, 2 AST11, 1 AST10, 3 AST9, 8 AST8, 7 AST7, 4 AST6, 3 AST5, 2 AST4, 1 AST3, 1 AST1 permanent posts and 2 temporary AST4 posts; recalls that the budgetary impact of this measure was already taken into account in the estimates;

82. Transforms, in accordance with the new Staff Regulations, 80 AST permanent posts (25 AST11, 10 AST10, 5 AST8, 15 AST7, 5 AST6, 5 AST5, 5 AST4, 5 AST3 and 5 AST2) into 80 AST/SC1 posts;

83. Proceeds to the following technical corrections: deletes three AST7 posts and three AST6 posts and adds six AST5 posts and deletes the footnote n°1 to the establishment plan, given that the relevant procedure has not been used in the recent past;

84. Authorises the creation of 43 new temporary posts (2 AD7, 19 AD5, 5 AST5, 5 AST3 and 12 AST1) and the upgrading of one temporary post AD10 to an AD14 for the supplementary needs relating to the creation of the new political group;

5 % staff reduction

85. Recalls that Parliament is implementing the 5 % staff reduction target for the third consecutive year with a due respect for the letter and spirit of the IIA; underlines that, to this end, 171 permanent posts have been removed from its establishment plan since 2014 ⁽¹⁾; stresses that, in order to fully comply with the 5 % staff reduction target, two further annual reductions of 57 posts ⁽²⁾ should be made by 2018;

86. Underlines that, in accordance with point 27 of the IIA, the 5 % reduction target is a compensation in terms of staff, related to the increase in the working hours from 37,5 to 40 a week as compared to the establishment plan of 1 January 2013; considers that this reduction must apply to a constant workload and that, consequently, new responsibilities and missions must be exempted from this calculation;

87. Notes that, in line with the strengthening of its prerogatives and new tasks Parliament has undergone since 2013, important structural changes, such as internalisation processes which have been staffed as far as possible by internal redeployments, new posts were only created when strictly necessary; decides to exclude these additional posts from the effort to reduce staff numbers by 5 %;

88. Urges the Commission, when monitoring the implementation of the staff reduction target by Parliament, to take account of the new additional considerations such as the constant workload, exemption of political groups, internalisations offset by reductions in external services budget lines, and new prerogatives and tasks;

89. Stresses that the implementation of the 5 % staff reduction should not jeopardise the proper functioning of Parliament and the exercise by Parliament of its core powers, nor alter its legislative excellence or the quality of the working conditions for Members and staff;

90. Recalls that no agreement can deprive Parliament and the Council of its sovereign freedom of evaluation and of its power to decide every year on the content of the budget;

⁽¹⁾ - 67 posts in 2014, - 47 posts in 2015 and - 57 posts in 2016.

⁽²⁾ Since a political decision on excluding the political groups from this calculation has been taken, this reduction is being applied to the Secretariat's part of the establishment plan (reference number of posts (1 %): - 57).

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Other staff related issues

91. Recalls that the need for new posts in the Secretariat should be covered by internal redeployment, unless the need for creating new posts is duly justified and demonstrated;

92. Recalls that any reorganisation of parliamentary work or of procedures should not lead to a deterioration in the working conditions and social rights of staff, regardless of their position;

93. Reiterates that, in order to ensure adequate support to Members for the accomplishment of their parliamentary activities, a new balance is necessary between accredited parliamentary assistants and local assistants; takes note of the fact that the Secretary-General has made a proposal to the Bureau in order to achieve this goal; notes the agreement reached in the Bureau which corresponds, in essence, with the request made by the European Parliament in its abovementioned resolution of 29 April 2015 on Parliament's estimates; welcomes the decision to immediately implement this agreement;

94. Reiterates its commitment to support multilingualism in parliamentary work through high standards of interpretation and translation; asks the Secretary-General to present to the Committee on Budgets the results of the analysis and assessment he launched after the non-agreement on new working conditions for interpreters (spring 2015); expects the Secretary-General to use all flexibility required to ensure high quality interpretation and translation services for Members;

95. Asks the Secretary-General to provide a detailed overview of all posts in Parliament in the years 2014-2016, including distribution of posts by service, category and type of contract;

Property policy

96. Recalls that the Committee on Budgets should be informed on a regular basis about new developments in Parliament's building policy and should be consulted in due time, that is before a contract is obtained, on any building project having financial implications; confirms that the financial impact of all building projects will be closely scrutinised;

97. Believes that decisions related to building projects should be subject to a transparent decision making process;

98. Reiterates once again its call for the new mid-term building strategy to be presented to the Committee on Budgets as soon as possible and at the latest by early 2016, in time for the preparation of Parliament's estimates for the financial year 2017; invites the Secretary-General to present to the Committee on Budgets a possible long-term strategy until 2025 early in advance before Parliament's reading of the budget in the autumn 2016;

99. Notes that since 2014 no appropriations have been provided for investment in the construction of the Konrad Adenauer building (KAD) in Luxembourg; recalls that the 2016 estimates included only appropriations to cover works and services to be paid directly by Parliament, principally for the project management, technical expertise and consultancy; invites the Secretary-General to evaluate, before the end of this year, the funds not used in the 2015 budget and to commit them to the KAD project, via a transfer request at year-end 2015, in order to avoid future building-related interest payments as far as possible;

Members' expenses

100. Reiterates the appeal for greater transparency regarding the general expenditure allowance for the Members; calls on Parliament's Bureau to work on a definition of more precise rules regarding the accountability of the expenditure authorised under this allowance, without generating additional costs to Parliament;

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101. Requests an assessment on the results of the voluntary approach chosen by the Joint Working Group to limit business class flights by Members and staff as well as on the possible ways to obtain more advantageous tariffs with a view to reducing Member and staff travel expenses;

Section IV — Court of Justice

102. Deplores that, despite the continued increase in the volume of judicial activity and the planned reform of the General Court, the Commission has reduced staffing by 20 posts, thereby risking creating bottlenecks and jeopardising the proper functioning and prompt dispensation of justice; decides therefore to reinstate the 20 posts initially requested by the Court;

103. Regrets that Council has raised the standard abatement rate applied to the appropriations for staff remuneration from 2,5 % to 3,2 % which is equivalent to a reduction of EUR 1,55 million and contradicts the extremely high rate of occupation of posts of the Court (98 % at the end of 2014) and the high budget implementation rate (99 % in 2014); therefore readjusts the standard abatement rate to the level of the draft budget and cancels the related reduction in appropriations in order to ensure that the Court can deal adequately with the substantial increase in the number of cases and make full use of the posts granted to it;

104. Decides furthermore to reinstate the seven posts originally requested by the Court in order for it to meet the twofold requirement of strengthening the Safety and Security section of the Court to better protect staff, visitors and documents, and at the same time implementing the new Article 105 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Court which requires a highly secure system to be set up in order to enable parties involved in certain cases to provide information and material pertaining to the security of the Union, the Member States or to the conduct of their international relations;

105. Underlines in the same context the need for resources for security and surveillance of the Court's buildings and decides therefore to restore the cuts proposed by Council in this area back to the level of the draft budget;

106. Removes the existing reserve regarding missions and replaces it with a new one, to be released when the Court publishes information on the external activities of Judges, as requested by Parliament in its 2013 discharge resolution related to the Court⁽¹⁾;

Section V — Court of Auditors

107. Readjusts the standard abatement rate to its initial level of 2,76 % in order to allow the Court of Auditors to meet its needs in respect of the establishment plan;

108. Restores all other lines cut by Council for the Court of Auditors to implement its work programme and deliver the planned Audit Reports;

Section VI — European Economic and Social Committee

109. Readjusts the standard abatement rate to its initial level of 4,5 % in order to allow the Committee to meet its needs and cope with the continued reduction of staff in the context of the cooperation agreement between Parliament and the Committee;

110. Decides further to restore the draft budget regarding travel and subsistence allowances;

⁽¹⁾ European Parliament resolution of 29 April 2015 with observations forming an integral part of the decision on discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2013, Section IV — Court of Justice (OJ L 255, 30.9.2015, p. 118).

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Section VII — Committee of the Regions

111. Reduces on the one hand the remuneration and allowances by an amount corresponding to 66 upgrades and four additional posts not already accounted for in the draft budget to reflect the transfer of those posts to Parliament;

112. Increases on the other hand a number of lines (outsourcing of translation, third parties, communication, representation expenses, communication of political groups, missions and cleaning and maintenance) more in line with the Committee's own estimates in order for the Committee to carry out its political work and fulfil its obligations;

113. Finally, restores the cuts by Council regarding security and surveillance of the Committee's buildings to ensure sufficient financing for security measures in the event of increased security threat level ('yellow') during 2016;

Section VIII — European Ombudsman

114. Notes with regret that the Council has decreased the draft budget of the Ombudsman by EUR 135 000; underlines that this reduction would impose a disproportionate burden on the very limited budget of the Ombudsman and would have a major impact on the institution's capacity to serve Union citizens effectively; therefore restores all the budget lines cut by Council in order to enable the Ombudsman to fulfil her mandate and commitments;

Section IX — European Data Protection Supervisor

115. Notes with regret that the Council has decreased the draft budget of the European Data Protection Supervisor by EUR 135 000; underlines that this reduction would impose a disproportionate burden on the Data Protection Supervisor's very limited budget and would have major impact on the institution's capacity to serve the Union institutions effectively; therefore restores all the budget lines cut by Council in order to enable the Data Protection Supervisor to fulfil his obligations and commitments;

Section X — European External Action Service

116. Believes that, in order to be able to cope with the challenges posed by geopolitical uncertainty and to ensure the Union's role across the world, due financing of the EEAS needs to be ensured; restores therefore the draft budget on all lines and deletes the reserves adopted by Council related to the fluctuation of the Euro exchange rate;

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117. Is convinced that the Union budget can contribute to addressing effectively not only the consequences but also the root causes of the crises that the Union is currently facing; takes the view, however, that unforeseen events with an Union-wide dimension should be tackled by pooling efforts and putting additional means at Union level rather than by calling past commitments into question or reverting to the illusion of purely national solutions; stresses, therefore, that flexibility provisions are there to enable such a joint and speedy response and should be used to the full in order to make up for the tight constraints of the MFF ceilings;

118. Underlines that, barely two years after the beginning of the current MFF, the Commission has had to twice request the mobilisation of the Flexibility Instrument, as well as the deployment of the Contingency Margin, in order to cover pressing and unforeseen needs that could not be financed within the existing MFF ceilings; also notes that the Global Margin for Commitments in 2015, the first year of its operation, was immediately utilised to its full extent while the resources of two important Union programmes needed to be reduced to allow for the financing of new initiatives; underlines that, due to the frontloading in 2014-15, several Union programmes have less or even no commitments available as of 2016; clearly sees, therefore, that the MFF ceilings are too tight in many headings and paralyse the Union in areas of greatest need, while the available MFF flexibility mechanisms have already been pushed to their limits; considers that these developments make the case for a genuine MFF mid-term revision; eagerly anticipates the ambitious Commission proposals to that effect in 2016;

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119. 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.
