

COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES

COM(85) 497 final

Brussels, 12 September 1985

REPORT ON COMMITTEES AND GROUPS OF EXPERTS

(Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament)

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction	3
Results in budgetary terms	4
. General analysis	4
. Results for 1984	6
Results in terms of meetings and experts convened	8
Evaluation of the main administrative and budgetary measures instituted by the Commission	9

INTRODUCTION

1. A report (COM(84)93 final) was addressed to Parliament in February 1984 reviewing measures adopted by the Commission on committees and groups of experts and the management of appropriations during the period of 1983 when funds were blocked.
2. On 10 April 1984, in its resolution "on the rationalization of the operations of management and consultative committees, groups of experts and similar bodies financed from the EC budget", Parliament approved the action taken by the Commission in response to its wishes and invited it to "make a further brief report on the overall situation in regard to these bodies" in 1985 (OJ C 127, 14.5.1984).
3. This report was drawn up in response to this invitation. It reflects the review of the impact of existing measures undertaken by the Commission.

RESULTS IN BUDGETARY TERMS

General analysis

EXPENDITURE ON MEETINGS
(million ECU)

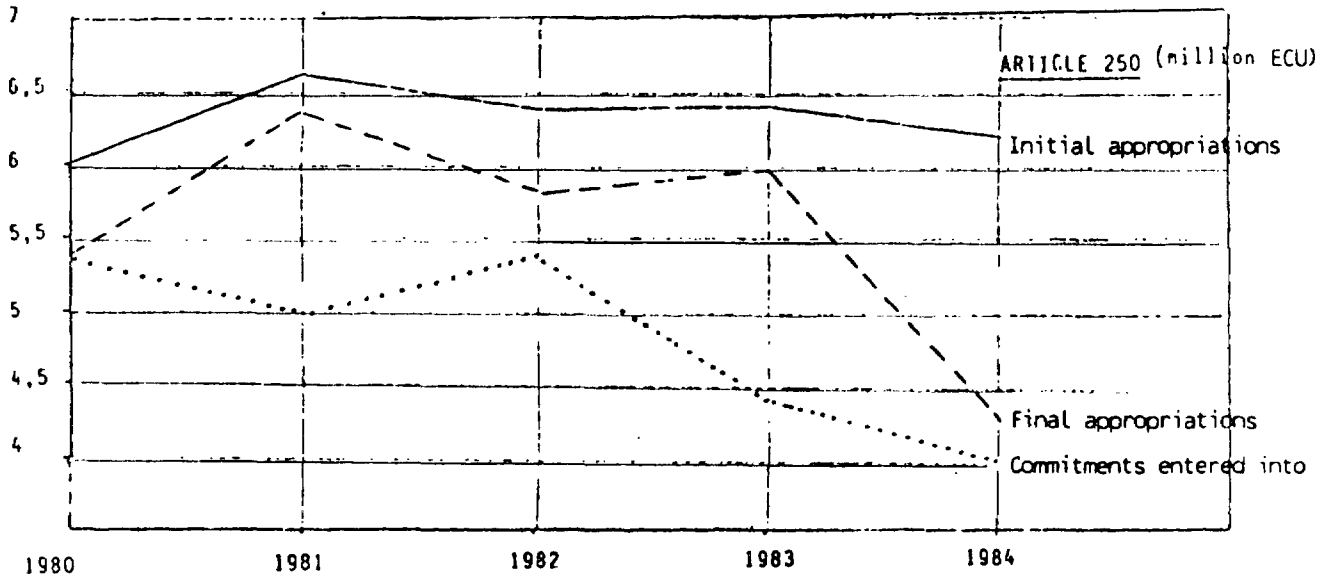
BUDGET ARTICLE	APPROPRIATION				OUTTURN			
	81	82	83	84	81	82	83	84
250 Meetings in general	7	6.5	6	6.3	5	5.4	4.5*	4.1
251 Committee meetings	4.2	5	4.8		4.3	5.4	5*	
2510 Compulsory consultation				2.5 ^o				4.5
2511 Non-compulsory consultation				3.8 ^o				0.9
	11.2	11.5	10.8	12.6	9.3	10.8	9.5	9.5

* Estimate

^o Breakdown approved by Parliament.

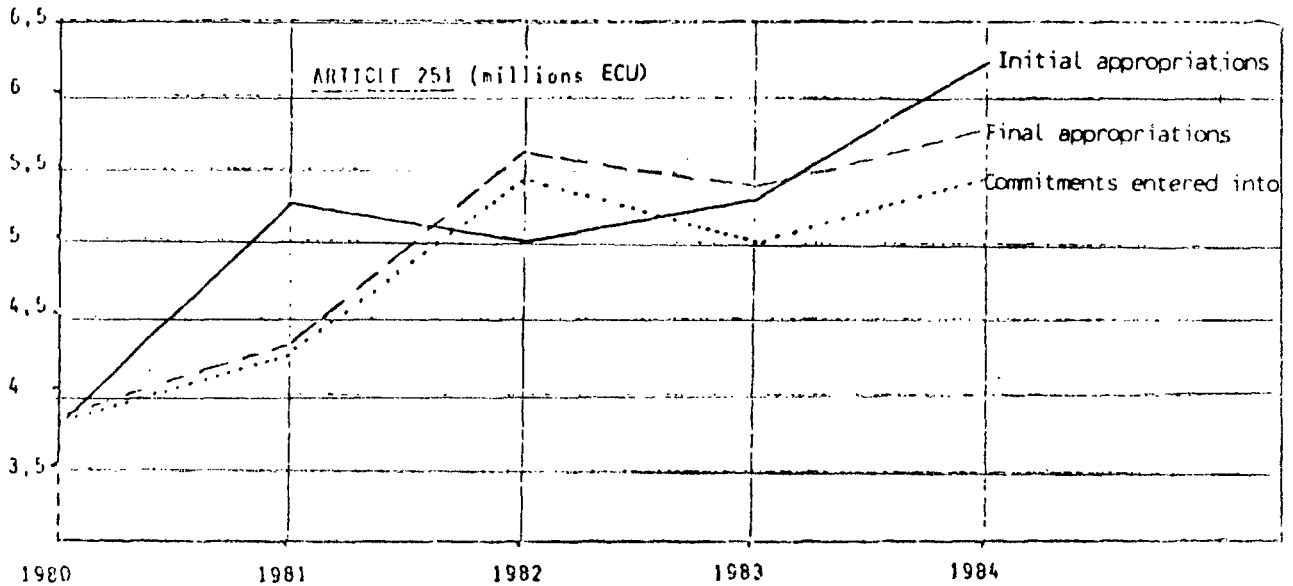
4. As far as Article 250 is concerned, initial appropriations for 1980 to 1984 were virtually the same and made no allowance for increases in transport costs. This alone represents a significant cut in expenditure. The curve for final appropriations (after transfers and/or amending budgets during the year) in the graph below shows that the utilization rate in 1984 was almost 20% lower than in 1980.

5. Commitments entered into - the most significant element in an in-depth study - have been declining since 1982, falling from 5.3 million ECU to 4.4 million ECU in 1983 and 4.1 million ECU in 1984 (see graph below).



6. Although the rationalization and economy measures applied since the end of 1983 have undoubtedly contributed to this state of affairs, it should not be forgotten that Parliament's action on the budget forced departments -irrespective of any internal discipline - to spend less in 1984 (entering of appropriations in Chapter 100, shortage of funds from the beginning of the financial year, and the ceiling on own resources).

7. As far as Article 251 is concerned, the curve for initial appropriations, final appropriations and commitments entered into - as depicted in the graphs and table on pages 4, 5 and 6 - show that the number of meetings of committees of government and/or private experts (Article 251) now exceeds the number of meetings in general (Article 250). This represents a reversal of previous trends.



Results for 1984

8. For Article 250 initial appropriations were slightly lower than in 1983, i.e. 6 470 000 ECU. Final appropriations were 4 333 000 ECU, i.e. 68.78% of the initial appropriation.

9. Four transfers of appropriations were made from Article 250. Three were within Chapter 25 and one, the largest at 1 311 900 ECU, was for aid to Ethiopia.

10. The 15% reserve applied in 1984 to take account of budgetary constraints imposed by the ceiling on own resources was 945 000 ECU. More than 2.2 million ECU, i.e. 35% of the initial appropriation, were saved in 1984. If 15% is regarded as imposed from outside, the 20% must be attributed to a large extent to the rationalization measures (limitation of the number of participants reimbursed, elimination of non-essential meetings, etc.).

11. For Article 251 initial appropriations for 1984 were identical to those for Article 250, representing an 18.8% increase on 1983.

12. The 15% reserve was used in its entirety for aid to Ethiopia at the end of the year.

13. Measures to improve management of expenditure on committee meetings made it possible - leaving the 15% reserve aside - to keep spending in 1984 within availabilities.

14. It should be pointed out that delays in convening committees as a result of budgetary constraints cannot always be made good during the year because technical facilities (meeting rooms, interpretation, etc.) are saturated rapidly.

RESULTS IN TERMS OF MEETINGS AND EXPERTS CONVENEED

15. The table below demonstrates quite clearly that there has been a significant fall-off in the number of meetings and experts convened since 1982. Although the figures are rough - pending the creation of a tailor-made data base - they do make it possible to evaluate the results obtained.

	1982	1983	1984
TALKS (up to 5 persons)	725	571	545
MEETINGS (6 persons and over)	2 148	2 317	2 133
MEETING-DAYS	3 720	3 468	3 364
EXPERTS REIMBURSED	29 194	26 477	25 083
of which:			
- GOVERNMENT EXPERTS	17 233	15 699	15 657
- NON-GOVERNMENT EXPERTS	11 961	10 778	9 426
AVERAGE NUMBER OF EXPERTS PER MEETING	14	11	11

EVALUATION OF THE MAIN ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MEASURES INSTITUTED BY THE COMMISSION

16. As Parliament was informed (see Report from the Commission to the European Parliament on committees and groups of experts, COM(84)93 final, 21.2.1984, p. 4 et seq) the measures taken by the Commission to improve the administrative and budgetary management of meetings relate to:

- annual approval of committees and groups authorized to meet in the following year;
- the number of experts who can be reimbursed and arrangements for reimbursement;
- the organization of meetings;
- budget management.

17. On the whole, these measures have proved satisfactory and the Commission has just confirmed them, subject to a number of technical improvements and additions. The Commission would draw Parliament's attention to the following aspects of each of these measures.

18. Of the four measures instituted, the annual authorization procedure is the most effective in terms of rationalization. So far the procedure has been applied twice, in 1984 and in 1985. On the first occasion it was confined to meetings charged to Articles 250 and 251 and 607 committees and groups of experts were authorized. On the second occasion the procedure was extended - as planned - to all meetings; 673 committees and groups funded by Articles 250 and 251, and 113 funded by other budget headings or the research budget, were authorized. The increase in the number of committees and groups funded by Articles 250 and 251 (66 more than in 1984) is largely attributable to "ephemeral" groups of experts and, to a lesser extent, committees.

19. Limiting the number of government and non-government experts reimbursed per meeting has also proved to be an effective way of making savings. In the case of non-government experts, however, this measure has provoked much discussion, particularly among professional organizations.

20. To avoid a cutback of this order leading to inadequate representation of the interests of the various organizations concerned, the Commission has opted for a measure of flexibility. It has confirmed its decision to limit reimbursement of expenses to 20 non-government experts per meeting but it has agreed that an exception can be made in all cases where the constitution of the committee provides for a membership of more than 20, on the understanding that numbers would not be increased following enlargement.

21. As for the internal organization of meetings in general and Parliament's suggestion that the number of meetings held outside the provisional centres be reduced in particular, the Commission is pleased to say that meetings in 1984 were 13% down on 1983, as can be seen from the table below.

	1983	1984	% reduction
Number of meetings held in places other than the provisional centres	239	208	13
Attendance by government experts	1 935	1 384	28
Attendance by non-government experts	5 670	3 017	47
Average number of experts per meeting	32	21	34

22. The budgetary management measures discussed in the Commission's 1984 report to Parliament (see Report from the Commission to the European Parliament on committees and groups of experts, COM(84)93 final, 21.2.1984, p. 10 et seq.) have been instituted and are operating satisfactorily. They should be further improved by the imminent computerization of the arrangements for reimbursing experts' expenses.