

European Communities

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EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

# Working Documents

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## Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Budgetary Control

on the rationalization of the operations of management,  
advisory and consultative committees, groups of experts  
and similar bodies financed from the EC budget

Rapporteur: Mrs B. BOSERUP

PE 89.377/fin.



On 16 September 1983 the European Parliament adopted an interim report on the cost to the EC budget and effectiveness of committees of a management, advisory and consultative nature (Doc. 1-446/83).

In the accompanying resolution<sup>1</sup> the Commission was asked to submit a report by 1 February 1984.

The Commission forwarded this report (COM(84) 93 final) on 21 February 1984.

The Committee on Budgetary Control, which had appointed Mrs BOSERUP rapporteur with responsibility for the sector of consultative, advisory and management committees at its meeting of 28 and 29 September 1982 and had confirmed her mandate at its meeting of 13 and 14 June 1983, considered the draft report at its meeting of 19 and 20 March 1984. The motion for a resolution was adopted unanimously.

The following took part in the vote: Mr AIGNER, chairman; Mrs BOSERUP, vice-chairman and rapporteur; Mr PRICE, vice-chairman; Mr ARNDT (deputizing for Mr KEY), Mr BATTERSBY, Mr COUSTÉ, Mr FRÜH, Mr GABERT, Mr GOERENS (deputizing for Mr JÜRGENS), Mrs LENTZ-CORNETTE (deputizing for Mr MARCK), Mr MART, Mr NOTENBOOM and Mr K. SCHÖN.

The report was tabled on 21 March 1984.

The deadline for tabling amendments to this report will be indicated in the draft agenda for the part-session at which it will be debated.

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<sup>1</sup>OJ No C 277, 17.10.1983, p. 195

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The Committee on Budgetary Control hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution, together with explanatory statement

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

on the rationalisation of the operations of management, advisory and consultative committees, groups of experts and similar bodies financed from the EC budget

The European Parliament

- having regard to its interim resolution of 16 September 1983<sup>1</sup>;
  - having regard to the written response of the Commission (Doc.COM(84) 93 final);
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Control (Doc. 1-40/84)
- A. wishing to ensure that the best possible use is made of taxpayers' funds spent through the EC budget;
  - B. recalling that, in the context of the 1983 budget, it set in motion procedures for a more economic operation of the management, advisory and consultative committees, groups of experts and similar bodies financed out of the Commission's part of the EC budget;
  - C. aware of the fact that the Commission, at the prompting of the European Parliament, has begun to take steps to ensure a rationalisation of these bodies;
    1. Approves of the follow-up given by the Commission, in this instance, to the clearly expressed wishes of Parliament;
    2. Notes with approval that the previous upward spiral in the number of committees and groups of experts has been halted and reversed by the dissolution or merger of 89 such bodies and the mothballing of 43 others representing a reduction of 21.9 per cent according to the Commission's calculations;
    3. Observes that, in this process, the Commission has identified potential savings of the order of 2.2 million ECUs;
    4. Finds it regrettable, however, that the Commission had not undertaken this operation without the repeated prompting of Parliament whose political action brought results only when recourse was had to the technique of blocking appropriations;

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<sup>1</sup>OJ No. C 277, 17.10.83, p. 195

5. Urges the Commission to continue to review the working of these bodies with a view to establishing where further savings could be effected, for instance, by restricting the meetings to the normal working places;
6. Invites the Commission to investigate how far meetings of such bodies could be dispensed with by way of consultations using modern communications techniques with resultant savings in experts' time and EC appropriations;
7. Believes that proper minutes of all meetings of such bodies should be kept showing the attendance, the duration of the meetings and the opinions delivered;
8. Invites the Commission to make a further brief report on the overall situation in regard to these bodies by early 1985;
9. Instructs its President to transmit this motion for a resolution to the Commission and the Council of the European Communities.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENTContext of the report

1. For several years the European Parliament has been concerned with the growing sector of committees and expert groups surrounding the Commission. In 1983, Parliament, took the decision to block in chapter 100 a substantial part of the appropriations in articles 250 and 251 (meetings in general and committee meetings). The unblocking of these appropriations was conditional on the outcome of investigations to be carried out by the Committee on Budgetary Control.

2. In June 1983, the Committee on Budgetary Control drew up an interim report. There were several reasons why the Committee could not then prepare a final report:-

- the rapporteur was provided with a vast amount of material, and clear conclusions could not easily be drawn from it;
- the assurances given to the Committee on Budgetary Control that everything in this sector was in order were not convincing;
- the Commission began to allocate the appropriations in such a way that the consultative committees were discriminated against and the management committees were favoured contrary to the wishes of Parliament.

3. On 16 September 1983, Parliament adopted a resolution on the cost to the EC budget and effectiveness of committees of a management, advisory and consultative nature. In this resolution<sup>1</sup>, Parliament reaffirmed its intention to rationalise this sector and favoured, as possible ways of rationalisation, the operation of strict rules on the frequency of meetings, the duration of meetings, the maximum number of members of such committees and the maximum number of members who can be reimbursed, and a regular review of the raison d'être of such committees. The resolution called on the Commission to report by 1 February 1984 to Parliament on the operation

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<sup>1</sup> See annex

of these committees in 1983 so as (a) to establish that the procedure of rationalisation was under way and (b) to indicate the way in which appropriations were managed during the period of 1983 in which funds were blocked.<sup>1</sup>

4. The Commission's report arrived on 20th February 1984 (COM(84)93 final).

5. The 1983 appropriations were unblocked in two stages. The first unblocking was for 75% of the appropriations - by the Committee on Budgets - transfer no. 11/83 and the second unblocking was by way of the supplementary and amending budget 2/83.

6. For the 1984 budget, the European Parliament decided - following an amendment of the Committee on Budgetary Control - to divide article 251 into two parts dependent on whether their consultation is compulsory in the procedure for drafting Community legislation or not. 40% of the funds were allotted to the management committees and 60% to the non-management committees and other non-compulsory ones. The Commission has been asked to adjust the list of committees published in the budget to the new sub-divisions when the first supplementary budget and/or amending budget is adopted. At the same time, the European Parliament deleted, by way of an amendment, two committees<sup>2</sup> from the list. These committees were ones which the Commission itself considered to be unnecessary. The Council, at the 2nd reading of the 1984 budget, was of the opinion that the Parliament had no right to interfere with this list.

<sup>1</sup> OJ C277, page 196, para. 9

<sup>2</sup> The consultative committee for honey and the management committee for bananas.

## Action taken by the Commission

7. As a result of the Committee on Budgetary Control's investigation and the blocked appropriations, the Commission created an investigatory group with members drawn from the departments most concerned and chaired by the President's Office. On the basis of the findings of the investigatory group, the Commission took the following measures:

### Measures to rationalise existing committees and groups:

- dissolution, merging or abolition of committees and groups.

The Commission claims to have reduced, in this way, the number of active committees and groups of experts by 132, i.e. a reduction of 21.9% according to their calculation;

- rationalisation of committees and groups in the research sector, leading to the dissolution of 36 committees or sub-committees. One-third of the cost of these committees was charged to article 251.

### Measures to improve the administrative and budgetary management of these committees and groups:

- the authorisation procedure was revised so that the vertical partitioning was less rigid. From now on, the full Commission, each year, will approve the list of the committees and groups of experts which will be active the following year;

- in April 1983, it was decided to limit reimbursements, in principle, to two government experts per Member State per meeting. This measure was retained;

- the reimbursement of expenses to non-government experts is from now on limited to a total of 20 experts per meeting;

- the Commission will try to organise a system of reduced fares for travelling tickets;

- the Commission will also be glad to introduce the practice of reimbursing government experts' expenses direct to ministries;
- improved organisation of meetings;
- computerized payment from and management of Articles 250 and 251;
- extension of the restriction on meetings held outside the provisional centres;

8. Parliament expects real savings from these reforms. In its report, the Commission estimates potential savings in the region of 2.2 million ECUs, resulting from the following measures:

- dissolution and merging of committees and groups	120,000 ECUs
- reduction of attendance of non-government experts	600,000 ECUs
- taking advantage of reduced fares systems	1,500,000 ECUs
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	2,220,000 ECUs
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In relation to the total appropriations under articles 250 and 251 in the 1984 budget, 12.6 MECUs, the potential savings are of the order of 18%. Nevertheless, as all these measures are not yet finally implemented by the Commission, the savings for 1984 may not reach that figure. As a first estimate the Commission has suggested a figure of 1.5 MECU for the savings to be secured this year.

## Appraisal of the measures

9. One must agree that the Commission, finally, took action as is shown by the list of measures above. Nevertheless, the Commission's presentation of the results already realised and those expected may prove to be over-optimistic:

- The Commission's conclusion in paragraph 10, based on table 2,<sup>1</sup> that considerable results were achieved in slowing-down the growth of the number of meetings, meeting-days and experts reimbursed is based on comparing the "abnormal" year 1983, where appropriations were blocked by the European Parliament, with 1982. It does not guarantee a continued slow-down in the future;

- Some of the measures are only at the stage of proposals and intentions.

But, all in all, some action has been taken and other measures, which are expected to produce results at a later stage, were proposed. Above all, the vertical partitioning between the different services and a certain inbuilt rigidity has been done away with.

10. From the debates in the committee and from the previous documents it seems to your rapporteur that further results could be achieved:

- by using, as far as possible, modern communication techniques;

- by having a look at the rules governing the different committees and having these rules harmonised (such an action has already been undertaken for certain committees in 1983);

- by asking for proper minutes to be kept of all meetings of such bodies showing attendance, the duration of the meetings and the decisions reached, so that effective controls may be carried out more easily.

11. Parliament wishes the Commission to continue with committees and groups in the manner originally intended. But care must be taken that these committees do not take over - or obstruct - the Commission's decisional powers, instead of facilitating them.

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<sup>1</sup> of COM(84)93final

12. It is regrettable that the Commission was not able to give a better estimate of the overall costs, i.e. of the costs not provided for under articles 250 and 251, than in its first replies to the rapporteur's questionnaire. However, the Committee on Budgetary Control notes with approval the beginning which has been made.

### Conclusion

13. Parliament succeeded in having set a rationalisation in motion. Most of the measures are in their initial stages only and their effective implementation will have to be verified. Also, on a previous occasion, although the growth of costs slowed down one year, it resumed the next. This time, the Committee wants to ensure a lasting improvement. Therefore, the Commission is asked to report back early in 1985.

Friday, 16 September 1983

## RESOLUTION

on the cost to the EC budget and effectiveness of committees of a management, advisory and consultative nature

*The European Parliament,*

- A. recalling the remarks in relation to Articles 250 and 251 of section III, Part A of the EC budget for the 1983 financial year (OJ No L 19, 24. 1. 1983),
- B. wishing to ensure a rationalization of the operations of management, advisory and consultative committees, groups of experts and similar bodies,
- C. noting the absence of clarity and transparency in regard to consultation activity of the Commission, terms of reference and methods of operation of the respective committees,
- D. concerned at certain disturbing developments in this sector,
- E. aware of the slowing-down in expenditure during the first half of 1983 which resulted from the reduced frequency of meetings of these committees and changes in arrangements for reimbursement for persons attending such meetings,
- F. having regard to the interim report of its Committee on Budgetary Control, (Doc. 1-446/83),
  1. Notes with astonishment that the Commission calculated its estimates for 1983 on the basis of an increase of 31 % in the number of consultative organs as compared with 1981 despite the clearly-expressed indications of the European Parliament in the guidelines resolution of 22 April 1982 for the 1983 budget (1);
  2. Observes with concern that its Committee on Budgetary Control has discovered, during its investigations, that the Commission has no effective centralized system for monitoring the activities of those committees;
  3. Notes that this situation has led to shortcomings, where consultation activities are to some extent autonomous and no longer fully under the Commission's supervision;
  4. Expresses its concern at these gaps in the Commission's management information system in relation to the operations and financing of management, advisory and consultative committees and groups of experts;
  5. Reaffirms its intention to secure a rationalization in this sector of activity and expects that the Commission will put in train immediately the necessary effort;
  6. Expresses its conviction that such a rationalization is possible without damaging the consultation function which is virtually a traditional routine of the Commission and which has certain positive and beneficial aspects;
  7. Believes that strict rules should operate, in relation to these committees and groups of experts, regarding *inter alia* the frequency of meetings, the duration of meetings, the maximum number of members of such committees and the maximum number of members who can be reimbursed, together with criteria governing the regular review of the *raison d'être* of such committees;
  8. Will ensure that the final appropriations in the 1984 budget for these budgetary lines will be in line with the desired rationalization;
  9. Calls on the Commission to report by 1 February 1984 to Parliament on the operation of these committees in 1983 so as (a) to establish that the procedure of rationalization is under way and (b) to indicate the way in which appropriations were managed during the period of 1983 in which funds were blocked;
  10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission and the Council.

(1) OJ No C 125, 17. 5. 1982, p. 119.

