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<Commission>{AFET}Committee on Foreign Affairs</Commission>

<RefProc>2022/0212(BUD)</RefProc>

<Date>{15/09/2022}15.9.2022</Date>

<TitreType>OPINION</TitreType>

<CommissionResp>of the Committee on Foreign Affairs</CommissionResp>

<CommissionInt>for the Committee on Budgets</CommissionInt>

<Titre>on the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2023</Titre>

<DocRef>(2022/0212(BUD))</DocRef>

Rapporteur for opinion: <Depute>Michael Gahler</Depute>

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Foreign Affairs calls on the Committee on Budgets, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

A. whereas the growing instability and the rise in unprecedented challenges in the international environment increases the demands on the Union to act and pursue a feminist foreign policy with a flexible budget fit for purpose;

B. whereas the stepping up of the Union’s financial support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in 2023 is necessary in order to help the UNRWA to fulfil its mandate and to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of vital services, including education and humanitarian assistance, to one of the most vulnerable populations in the Middle East;

C. whereas the Union must both continue to strengthen its support to Ukraine and respond quickly to other urgent global needs as they evolve; whereas, in particular, the provision of aid to Ukraine should not result in the diversion of Union funds earmarked to address humanitarian situations that are growing ever worse in the rest of the Union’s neighbourhood;

1. Highlights the necessity of adapting financial instruments in order to provide the geopolitical Union with a sound financial foundation and enable it to fulfil expectations as a credible and reliable geopolitical actor; stresses the need to increase the humanitarian aid budget line (HUMA) meaningfully to address the unprecedented level of humanitarian needs worldwide, aggravated by the Russian aggression in Ukraine and its global economics repercussions, notably in terms of food insecurity worldwide;

2. Is concerned about the mounting challenges to our multilateral systems and recalls the importance of those systems, as they constitute the vehicle to ensure peace and stability globally;

3. Underlines its undivided solidarity with the people of Ukraine; welcomes therefore the mobilisation of the EUR 4,2 billion already proposed and asks for additional funds, also for reconstruction;

4. Notes that the purpose of European cooperation in defence matters is to make Europe and its citizens safer and reduce costs by creating synergies; highlights that the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) has been deeply impacted by Russia’s war; notes that the European Peace Facility (EPF) has enabled unprecedented support from Member States, including weapons, amounting to EUR 2 billion by the end of May 2022, but regrets that this is off-budget which does not allow for parliamentary scrutiny;

5. Calls on the Commission to present proposals on how to integrate into the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III) funding for the 2024 budgetary cycle the new candidate countries, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, as well as the aspiring applicant Georgia, on their path to Union membership;

6. Stresses the urgent need to increase the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI-Global Europe) funds that are available for the thematic programme on Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention in light of the spread of armed conflict and instability in the Union's neighbourhood and beyond;

7. Calls for continued and substantial support for civil society organisations in the Eastern Partnership countries, in particular those advocating and defending the rights of the LGBTIQ+ community, for civil society organisations in Belarus and abroad providing assistance to persecuted persons and political prisoners, for Ukrainian organisations which have been forced to restructure their activities as a result of Russia’s war of aggression, and which will have to acquire the skills necessary for Ukraine's reconstruction, for organisations contributing to the fight against corruption, and for independent media which help to expose disinformation and propaganda;

8. Notes that the majority of external action spending is concentrated under NDICI-Global Europe and IPA III, which has ring-fenced budget allocations per geographical region providing flexibility but due to the unprecedented pressure sees the urgent need for new initiatives and proposals to be put forward;

9. Asks for additional resources to be allocated to the Southern Neighbourhood in order to support political, economic and social reforms; welcomes the recent announcement of the Union’s continued commitment to multiannual funding to UNRWA, in light of the crucial role it plays in protecting and ensuring the essential needs of Palestine refugees as well as contributing to their human development; therefore calls on the Commission to meet UNRWA’s request for an increase in the Union’s annual contribution by EUR 60 million in commitments and payments for 2023;

10. Underlines the importance of continued support to allies, among others in the Rojava region in Syria, in the fight against the terrorist organisation ISIS;

11. Continues to see the merit-based integration of the Western Balkans as a geopolitical priority, especially in the context of Russia’s unprovoked aggression against Ukraine, which resonated strongly across the region, but insists on the conditionality requirements regarding rule of law for every euro committed in the 2023 budget;

12. Asks that the budget for election observation missions be increased, given their role in consolidating democratic institutions and bringing stability in fragile countries, as well as to reinforce the budgets for the preservation of human rights, including by supporting women activists, and the assistance to civil society organisations, including the ones committed to women's empowerment;

13. Calls for additional support for actions to promote fundamental rights, human rights and democracy, in particular to promote gender equality and to ensure women's and girls' access to education, public life and the labour market, and calls for tangible results to be achieved in terms of providing educational opportunities for girls and women in Afghanistan;

14. Calls for the securing of adequate resources for timely and effective implementation of the new agenda for the Mediterranean, based on the stated priorities dealing with human development, good governance and the rule of law for the benefit of both the Union and Southern Neighbourhood countries and their populations;

15. Stresses that the humanitarian aid budget for Afghanistan and neighbouring countries should be strongly increased to support and protect vulnerable Afghans and their families, including internally displaced people and refugees, and to enhance resettlement; demands that, unless the respect for human rights and especially the rights of women and girls can be guaranteed, development assistance to the Afghan regime remains suspended and is redirected towards and limited to independent development and humanitarian organisations in line with Union external action objectives;

16. Calls for additional funding to address both the fragility of supply chains and agri-food systems and the eroded macro-economic stability of many countries; notes that Russia’s unjustifiable, unprovoked and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine has further stressed the global system already impacted by the COVID-19 crisis; calls for the strengthening of the European Endowment for Democracy (EED), including the support for local women's organisations active in the Afghanistan crisis;

17. Calls for additional funding to address the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in vulnerable countries, especially in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, to contribute to fostering a green, digital and sustainable international economic recovery as well as the Union’s resilience and strategic autonomy;

18. Calls for a discussion on Heading 6 to be urgently launched, with a view to proposing further measures; notes that the funding for external action has been lagging behind the geopolitical necessities;

19. Increases therefore the level of commitment appropriations for Heading 6 by EUR 1 349 866 376 above the levels set out in the draft budget (excluding pilot projects and preparatory actions), to be financed by using the available margin and mobilising the special instruments;

20. Calls for the extension of the pilot project ‘Towards a European Diplomatic Academy’ by one year in order to provide a more solid basis, thereby ensuring the sustainability of the project, through the extension of the study for the creation of a European Diplomatic Academy, which should also focus on target groups of a future academy, including the possibility for those who are not Member States’ diplomats to become Union diplomats in the future, as well as by organising a second pilot academic year;

21. Calls for the provision of sufficient and sustainable funding for civil society organisations and their protection, with particular attention for those working on environmental and climate protection, gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), as well as with the LGBTIQ+ community;

22. Underlines the urgent need for reinforcing and speeding up the Union’s financial contribution to the global action against the climate crisis and biodiversity loss in view of calamitous consequences of ongoing climate change;

23. Welcomes the Union’s readiness to tackle most pressing global challenges by investing in the sustainable development of the global infrastructure, in particular in green technologies and digital connectivity through the Union Global Gateway, while fully respecting the sustainable development goals, the Paris Agreement and the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities; calls on the Commission to work on an effective governance of the Global Gateway strategy which has to be taken forward under the overall steer of the President of the Commission, and to coordinate closely in this regard with the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the European External Action Service (EEAS), the Council and the European Parliament, making sure that active ownership is given to the Union institutions and to Member States under the Team Europe approach;

24. Highlights the importance of an increase in funding for including and streamlining the fight against malicious interference and disinformation within the Union policy approach, Union external action and Union countermeasures, in particular in light of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and its repercussions; welcomes the increase of EUR 1,7 million proposed for the information policy and strategic communication for external action line; emphasises the relevance of coordination among the Union institutions and sufficient funding for a structure that serves as a focal point for civil society organisations, research organisations and other relevant actors; stresses the need for the EEAS StratCom Task Forces to have a stable funding source and for an increase of funding to address emerging challenges of foreign interference, especially from Russia and China;

25. In order to strengthen the Union’s strategic sovereignty, strategic solidarity with like-minded countries, and the Union’s ability to contribute to international stability, security and peace, in particular as regards the promotion and respect for international law, in close cooperation with the United Nations, NATO, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, African Union and partner countries, or if needed, alone and to promote the Union’s values through its partnerships;

26. Stresses the need for regular monitoring of the impact of the Union budget on gender equality and for effectively implementing gender budgeting in Union external action; calls to increase funding to seek to reduce inequalities, particularly for women and young people, and promoting SRHR worldwide; calls for an increase in the budget to effectively implement the Union institutions’ commitment to EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III in their structures, including by ensuring sufficient resources for the EEAS’ Gender and Diversity Adviser, the presence of dedicated gender advisers across the institutions, and to implement mandatory trainings on gender equality across the EEAS, Union delegations and CSDP missions and operations, including on harassment.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

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| **Date adopted** | 12.9.2022 |  |  |  |
| **Result of final vote** | +:–:0: | 5072 |
| **Members present for the final vote** | Alexander Alexandrov Yordanov, François Alfonsi, Maria Arena, Petras Auštrevičius, Traian Băsescu, Reinhard Bütikofer, Fabio Massimo Castaldo, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Anna Fotyga, Michael Gahler, Raphaël Glucksmann, Bernard Guetta, Sandra Kalniete, Peter Kofod, Dietmar Köster, Andrius Kubilius, Jean-Lin Lacapelle, Nathalie Loiseau, Leopoldo López Gil, Lukas Mandl, Pedro Marques, David McAllister, Vangelis Meimarakis, Francisco José Millán Mon, Javier Nart, Matjaž Nemec, Gheorghe-Vlad Nistor, Urmas Paet, Demetris Papadakis, Giuliano Pisapia, Thijs Reuten, Nacho Sánchez Amor, Isabel Santos, Mounir Satouri, Andreas Schieder, Jordi Solé, Dragoş Tudorache, Hilde Vautmans, Thomas Waitz, Charlie Weimers, Isabel Wiseler-Lima, Salima Yenbou, Bernhard Zimniok, Željana Zovko |
| **Substitutes present for the final vote** | Vladimír Bilčík, Engin Eroglu, Markéta Gregorová, Robert Hajšel, Andrzej Halicki, Javi López, Alessandra Moretti, Javier Zarzalejos |
| **Substitutes under Rule 209(7) present for the final vote** | Janina Ochojska, Sira Rego, Karlo Ressler, Eugenia Rodríguez Palop, Helmut Scholz, Miguel Urbán Crespo, Bettina Vollath |

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

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| 50 | + |
| NI | Fabio Massimo Castaldo |
| PPE | Alexander Alexandrov Yordanov, Traian Băsescu, Vladimír Bilčík, Michael Gahler, Andrzej Halicki, Sandra Kalniete, Andrius Kubilius, Leopoldo López Gil, David McAllister, Lukas Mandl, Vangelis Meimarakis, Francisco José Millán Mon, Gheorghe-Vlad Nistor, Janina Ochojska, Karlo Ressler, Isabel Wiseler-Lima, Javier Zarzalejos, Željana Zovko |
| RENEW | Petras Auštrevičius, Engin Eroglu, Bernard Guetta, Nathalie Loiseau, Javier Nart, Urmas Paet, Dragoş Tudorache, Hilde Vautmans, Salima Yenbou |
| S&D | Maria Arena, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Raphaël Glucksmann, Robert Hajšel, Dietmar Köster, Javi López, Pedro Marques, Alessandra Moretti, Matjaž Nemec, Demetris Papadakis, Giuliano Pisapia, Thijs Reuten, Nacho Sánchez Amor, Isabel Santos, Andreas Schieder, Bettina Vollath |
| VERTS/ALE | François Alfonsi, Reinhard Bütikofer, Markéta Gregorová, Mounir Satouri, Jordi Solé, Thomas Waitz |

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| ECR | Charlie Weimers |
| ID | Jean-Lin Lacapelle, Bernhard Zimniok |
| THE LEFT | Sira Rego, Eugenia Rodríguez Palop, Helmut Scholz, Miguel Urbán Crespo |

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| 2 | 0 |
| ECR | Anna Fotyga |
| ID | Peter Kofod |

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention