

2019 EU budget: Council adopts its position

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The Council today adopted its position on the 2019 EU budget, confirming the agreement reached by EU ambassadors in July.

The Council's position amounts to a total of €164.1 billion in commitments and €148.2 billion in payments. This is an increase of 2.09% in commitments and 2.34% in payments compared to 2018.

This is a well balanced position with strong backing from the member states. The Council is looking to allocate adequate resources in support of EU priorities and flagship programmes. Additional funds are foreseen in several areas, including for the management of migration flows. At the same time, EU taxpayers need to get good value for their money. Member states have therefore had a careful look at the Commission's draft budget to see where adjustments could be appropriate.

Hartwig Löger, Austrian Federal Minister for Finance

Areas which receive increased support include research and innovation (Horizon 2020, +5.79%), youth exchanges (Erasmus+ programme, +10.37%), investments in infrastructure (Connecting Europe Facility, +26.46%), and environment and climate action (LIFE programme, +5.20%). More funds are also foreseen in the field of migration. This includes a strong boost to the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, which will receive €1.1 billion for migration management (+55.80%), as well as additional funding for the Central Mediterranean route and the Facility for Refugees in Turkey.

Compared to the draft 2019 budget presented by the Commission, the total commitments have been reduced by €1.6 billion and payments by €0.5 billion. The cuts have been proposed on the basis of a technical analysis and concern those budget lines where the Council considers that the Commission has over-estimated the actual needs. Administrative expenditure is among the areas where relatively significant reductions have been made.

Minister Löger will present the Council's position on the 2019 EU budget to the European Parliament at the September plenary. The EP is expected to adopt

its amendments to the Council's position on 24 October.

This will trigger a three-week conciliation period, which will start on 30 October and end on 19 November. The aim of this conciliation process is to reach an agreement between the Council and the European Parliament on the 2019 EU budget.

The Council today also approved €34 million of assistance to Bulgaria, Greece, Lithuania and Poland following various natural disasters that hit these countries last year.

Bulgaria will receive €2.3 million to deal with the damage caused by flooding in the south-eastern part of the country in October 2017. Greece will receive €2.5 million following an earthquake that affected the South Aegean region and the island of Kos in July 2017. Poland was hit by exceptionally violent storms and heavy rainfall in August 2017 and will receive €12.3 million to cover some of the related costs. The €16.9 million allocated to Lithuania is intended to help it repair the damage resulting from flooding caused by continuous rainfall during the summer and autumn 2017.

The aid, which comes from the EU Solidarity Fund, will become available once it has been confirmed by the European Parliament's plenary next week.

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