

Article – Hohlmeier: fighting climate change is the priority for the EU's 2020 budget



The Parliament will vote on its position for next year's budget on 23 October. German EPP member [Monika Hohlmeier](#), chair of the budgetary control committee, talks about her budget proposals in our interview:

How would you describe your proposal for the EU's budget for 2020?

The overarching priority for the Parliament is that we wish to tackle the issue of climate change and in parallel combine it with possibilities to create new jobs and strengthen the competitiveness of our economy.

We wanted to give a clear statement that Parliament wants to significantly contribute to innovation, research and new, green technologies with next year's budget.

We also want to support digitalisation because for research on climate, we need good digital tools. Digitalisation not only helps with the EU's climate targets, but also enables us, for example, to improve research into severe illnesses or more efficient agriculture methods.

We want to give money to universities and research institutions that are conducting this type of research and collaborate successfully with industry.

The priority of climate and environmental protection continues in the area of the common agricultural policy and rural development with the successful [LIFE+ programme](#). Another important area is development policy, where we want to continue to reduce poverty, but also address issues such as plastic-free oceans and waste removal.

With our budget instruments, we can help tackle climate-related problems, for example, by supporting the use of renewables in countries where they could help solve the issue of access to sustainable energy and tackle the energy problem.

You have added €2 billion to the European Commission's proposal on climate spending for 2020. Will this be enough to reach the EU's 20% climate-related spending goal for 2014-2020?

No, we won't reach the target because in 2014 we had a contribution of less than 14% of climate-related expenditure, which we were unable to make up in the following six years of the current multi-annual framework [the EU's long-term budget].

Nevertheless, for 2020, my proposal is very clearly above the 20% target. We think that the young generation really has the right to tell us when it comes to climate "Please do something, do it quickly and don't just discuss the issue of what we could do."

We would also like to increase financial support for the successful [Youth Employment Initiative](#). The unemployment rate for young people is decreasing and this programme is contributing to helping them find work. We would also like to increase funding for [Erasmus+](#) to give more young people the opportunity to study abroad.

Will you be able to get the Council to agree with the priorities related to climate, young people and the future?

I think we definitely can get the Council on board. We have a special challenge because this is the last year of the current [long-term budget]. Some net paying countries want to cut the budget, while other member states would like to see more money in the area of cohesion or agriculture.

At the same time, Brexit is happening and we do not know what will happen after 31 October. I still hope that we will have a smooth Brexit. The cost of a hard Brexit for the EU would be €11 billion until the end of the current [long-term budget], something we should all want to avoid at any cost.

What would happen to the EU's budget in the case of a no-deal Brexit?

We are prepared. The UK cannot put us under pressure. If there is a hard Brexit, we would have to change the budget, but we already know that research teams in the UK are struggling to continue with their projects and cooperation with the EU.

I think the UK will end up contributing to many programmes, for example in the area of security and agriculture. There are lots of areas where they want

to be part of the EU, so the money will come back into the EU's budget the same way it does with Norway, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and other third countries.

Parliament wants to ensure that there is no cherry picking for the UK, because it can never be accepted that a country leaving the EU gets a better deal.