

Title In the current EU Budget, the EU broadly failed to match real funding to its sustainable development ambitions. The next, post 2013, EU Budget will be an important step to coherently and strategically support policies which will provide money for public goods. A better and more focused use of scarce financial resources is paramount. The European Parliament has a crucial role to play in determining the shape of the future budget. The Parliament powers on the budget are limited to approving (or not) the legal text decided by the council. The main tool it has to actually influence the content of the budget is an upcoming report being elaborated by a special committee (the SURE committee). MEP Garriga-Polledo, of the EPP group, presented his draft report entitled: "Investing in the future: a new Multiannual Financial Framework for a competitive, sustainable and inclusive Europe" on the 17th of March. Unfortunately, the report was vague and uninspiring. The report lacked ambition and took a minimal stance in all fields, a clear example of a report of the least common denominator. The report failed to deliver clear financial support for a sustainable Europe. Furthermore, the report made no mention of Natura 2000, and mentioned biodiversity just once under the section on the Common Agricultural Policy. This is deeply disappointing, at a time when citizens are faced with economic turmoil and a global ecological crisis. Fortunately, the important role of biodiversity was picked up again and emphasised across the political spectrum in many of the recently proposed amendments to the draft report. Many MEPs also expressed support for continuing the LIFE instrument. The LIFE fund, the only upfront environmental investment tool of the EU, is crucial to ensure that biodiversity and the Natura 2000 network continue to provide essential ecosystem services and ecosystem resilience benefiting European citizens. Through this report, the European Parliament has the opportunity to take a courageous stance and ascertain their ability to represent the interests of all European citizens. Hopefully, MEPs will show this courage during the voting round. The result will help shape the future of the EU but will also reflect the ability of the European Parliament to be a relevant force for change.