

Statement by Denmark, The Netherlands, Austria and Sweden

The agreement on the EU budget for 2020 reflects several priorities that we share, not least a greater focus on climate.

Financing priorities in a responsible manner requires real prioritisation. We regret that the agreement is not based on a more cautious approach to EU expenditure. We consider the record overall level of expenditure to be well above what is both necessary and appropriate in light of uncertainties facing us in 2020, including the transition to a Union of 27.

It is of great importance to preserve sufficient margins in 2020 for unforeseen needs. The agreement on the 2020 budget leaves little or no margin under several headings, and requires an extensive use of special flexibilities to circumvent the annual ceilings. This runs counter to point 8 of the Interinstitutional Agreement of 2 December 2013.

Annual increases to individual, larger programmes should be realistic and not go beyond what can be justified. Previous agreements should be respected. We regret that the agreement on the 2020 budget, being the final annual budget under the current MFF, does not deliver on the agreement on the midterm review of the MFF.

Finally, we regret the increased level of administrative expenditure and staff increases in various areas, including for the European Parliament. We urge the Parliament to fully implement the agreed 5 per cent staff reduction target, noting that the withdrawal of the United Kingdom necessitates that all institutions strictly limit their administrative expenditure.