

## EU council puts down marker on budget cuts

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EUOBSERVER / BRUSSELS - The EU Council is planning to cut its €540 billion internal budget by 4.4 percent in 2012 in a move causing potential embarrassment for the European Parliament.

The council unveiled its decision at a meeting of EU diplomats last week. It is set to see 20 job cuts and less money spent on interpreters and travel expenses.

Its secretary general, Pierre de Boissieu, in a letter to the Hungarian EU presidency dated 7 March and seen by this website, said: "I am acutely aware of the difficult economic situation in member states and of the important efforts under way to consolidate national finances. It is my view that the European institutions must rally to this effort."

He added: "I assume the other institutions will also follow this overall approach to budgetary discipline."

The council decision comes after budget commissioner Janusz Lewandowski in February called for EU institutions to limit growth in 2012 expenses to 1 percent.

The European Commission's own numbers are due out on 20 April, but Lewandowski spokesman Patrizio Fiorilli has said he is sure the commission's various departments will fall in line.

The European Parliament's budget committee is due to vote on its proposal on Thursday (24 March).

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