



Doc. 11599
25 April 2008

Budgets of the Council of Europe for the financial year 2009

Report

Committee on Economic Affairs and Development
Rapporteur: Mr Paul WILLE, Belgium

Contents

	Page
A. Draft opinion	2
B. Explanatory memorandum, by Mr Wille	5
1. Introduction	5
2. Audit of the 2006 accounts	5
3. Overview of 2007	5
4. Prospects for 2009	6
Appendix –Trends in the ordinary budget of the Council of Europe by vote and by year	9



A. Draft opinion

1. For four years now, in its budgetary opinions, the Assembly has been constantly seeking to draw member states' attention to the worsening financial situation of the Council of Europe. It regrets that its repeated calls for an awareness of this deterioration have so far come to nothing.
2. In 2009 the Council of Europe will celebrate its 60th anniversary, and the Assembly is concerned to see the image of the Organisation, Europe's democratic conscience and human rights guardian, wilting like a plant without water.
3. The Assembly is aware of the budgetary difficulties that certain member states may be encountering, but refuses to consider this as a reason for further weakening the Council of Europe by starving it of resources through the maintenance of a policy based solely on the principle of zero real growth in the Organisation's budget.
4. In particular, the Assembly deems it regrettable that the zero budgetary growth principle is also applied to the partial agreements and would like them not to be subject to this rule in view of the success and the specific nature of their activities and, in some instances, their sources of funds.
5. It must be said that the financial burden is very unequally shared among the member states. For this reason, in its [Opinion No. 264 \(2007\)](#) on the 2008 budget and its [Recommendation 1812 \(2007\)](#) on the political dimension of the Council of Europe budget, the Assembly proposed to the Committee of Ministers a number of ways of adapting the budget of the Council of Europe to the current challenges and reviewing financing conditions and apportionment of the financial expense among the member states. It notes that it has unfortunately not yet received a reply to this recommendation.
6. The Assembly considers that efficient budget management must go hand in hand with a vision for the Organisation in the medium to long term. It accordingly calls on the Committee of Ministers to adopt, without delay, a multi-annual budget framework. In this connection, the Assembly invites the Committee of Ministers to refer to its [Opinion No. 256 \(2005\)](#) on the 2006 budget, in which it set out the benefits which argue in favour of such a measure.
7. A multi-annual budget framework will indeed make it possible to assess the financial implications of earlier decisions by the Committee of Ministers and thereby to be perfectly aware of the Council of Europe's expenditure needs in the short and medium term. The Assembly notes that a plan of this kind exists for investments (the 2007-2011 Investment Plan) and thinks it would not be unfeasible to apply a multi-annual approach to the Organisation's operating and activities budgets.
8. The fact is that the Council of Europe budget increases automatically each year by several million euros on account of the full-year effect of earlier decisions by the Committee of Ministers, in particular concerning the additional resources allocated to the European Court of Human Rights, compulsory adjustments to the salary scales of the Organisation's staff and other expenditure on buildings maintenance and modernisation.
9. In view of these requirements, the Assembly would like the Committee of Ministers to modify Article 70 of the Financial Regulations in order that any credit balance on closing the accounts for a financial year should be left systematically at the Organisation's disposal, so that it can either transfer it to a reserve account or use it to finance non-recurring expenditure in subsequent years.
10. For four years now, it has been clear from trends in the ordinary budget of the Council of Europe that the European Court of Human Rights' share of the budget is growing while, in parallel, the share of other sectors of the Organisation is decreasing, apart from expenditure on administrative and logistical support functions, linked in part to the growth in the Court's resources. It can be seen that the Court's budget has grown from 21.9% of the ordinary budget in 2005 to 25.3% in 2008.
11. Given the importance of the European Court of Human Rights to the Council of Europe and its member states, and in view of the financial efforts made in recent years by these states and the Organisation's various departments to enable the Court to fulfil its statutory obligations, the Assembly considers that the time has come to draw up a progress report on the Court, so as to take stock of what has been achieved with the additional resources it has received.
12. The Assembly, which is responsible for electing the judge representing each High Contracting Party to the European Convention on Human Rights and for issuing an opinion on the budget of the Council of Europe as a whole, underlines the essential need to ensure the efficacy and the proper functioning of the Court in the medium to long term.

13. To this end, the Assembly would like a study of the Court's functioning to be scheduled in 2009 so as to assess, *inter alia*, the implementation of the recommendations made by Lord Woolf, former Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales, who, at the request of the Secretary General and the President of the Court, conducted a review to consider what administrative measures could be taken, before the entry into force of Protocol No. 14 to the European Convention on Human Rights, to help the Court cope with its case-load.
14. This study could concern in particular the Court's working methods and future staffing needs. The Assembly is convinced that a study of this kind would be beneficial should the European Union accede to the European Convention on Human Rights if the Treaty of Lisbon is ratified by the 27 EU member states. The Council of Europe would thereby have a clearer idea of the additional resources the Court may need in coming years.
15. The Assembly would like the conclusions of this stocktaking exercise to be presented not only to the Committee of Ministers but also to itself. It is moreover convinced that, whatever the outcome, the member states will be unable to maintain the zero real growth policy and will be obliged substantially to increase their contributions to the Council of Europe's budgets.
16. The Assembly also urges the authorities of the Russian Federation to do everything in their power to enable the rapid ratification of Protocol No. 14, so as to permit the immediate implementation of certain measures proposed by the Group of Wise Persons appointed to consider the long-term effectiveness of the control mechanism of the European Convention on Human Rights. The entry into force of Protocol No. 14 is indeed an absolute priority if the aim is to give the Court the means to fulfil its statutory obligations more effectively.
17. The Assembly continues to regard the European Court of Human Rights as the Council of Europe's finest achievement, while being of the opinion that the Organisation's work should not be confined solely to the major pillars constituted by human rights, the rule of law and democracy, but should also cover other fields in which the Council of Europe is often a European leader and at which it excels, namely education, culture, sport, social cohesion and public health, all also matters of concern for the member states.
18. The Assembly remains convinced that the Council of Europe, with its wealth of standard-setting and other achievements, acknowledged by the member states and worldwide, has the full potential to offer these states ambitious, well-targeted, innovative work programmes in line with the Warsaw action plan and that the human and financial resources needed to implement such programmes exist.
19. An analysis of voluntary contributions paid to the Council of Europe by member states, non-member states and other institutional partners, such as the European Commission, indeed shows that between 2005 and 2007 nearly €59 million in additional resources were granted to the Organisation to support its various activity programmes.
20. However, although this confidence in the Organisation can but be welcomed by the Assembly, it would like to temper its satisfaction with the fact that it deems it illogical to propose that activities should be financed "à la carte" instead of fully concentrating resources on work programmes approved by all the member states' delegations. The Assembly wishes voluntary contributions to be paid into a fund earmarked for financing activities as defined by the operational Directorates and approved by the Committee of Ministers, but bearing in mind the donors' wishes.
21. The Assembly reiterates that the staff of the Council of Europe is undoubtedly one of its most precious assets, whose work to a large extent leads to the production of documents of a lasting and/or binding nature, destined to constitute authoritative standards or precedents long after the financial year in which the expenditure was incurred for their drafting. The Assembly accordingly reaffirms its concern to ensure that the staff of the Council of Europe is not considered a mere accounting variable that can be adjusted to balance the Council of Europe's finances.
22. For this reason, the Assembly calls on the member states fully to assume the consequences of their decisions and to honour their financial commitments, particularly as regards the pension reserve fund, so as to guarantee the sustainability of the pension scheme for Council of Europe staff, who are and remain citizens of the member states. The Assembly also reaffirms its attachment to the Council of Europe's continued membership of the existing co-ordinated system, as already set out in its [Opinion No. 259 \(2006\)](#).
23. Lastly, the Assembly reminds the Committee of Ministers of the desire it expressed in its [Opinion No. 264 \(2007\)](#) to see the formation of a genuine "European centre of excellence for democracy and human rights" in Strasbourg around the Council of Europe and its legal and political bodies.

24. The Assembly is the only European parliamentary institution that allows the national parliaments of the 47 member states of the Council of Europe to debate and work together with a view to finding answers to the challenges confronting today's Europe. It accordingly regrets the Committee of Ministers' refusal to involve it more in the decision-making mechanism concerning the Council of Europe's priorities and budgets, as it had suggested in its [Recommendation 1728 \(2006\)](#). It finds this attitude all the more incomprehensible in a context where many member states have shown their determination to reinforce the role played by their national parliaments in their countries' political systems and a number of international parliamentary institutions have been given broader remits.

B. Explanatory memorandum, by Mr Wille

1. Introduction

1. The main purpose of the Assembly's annual opinions on the budgets of the Council of Europe is to improve parliamentarians' understanding of the Organisation and of political developments within it, to make recommendations concerning the Council of Europe's future policy directions and activities and, lastly, to give an opinion on the political implications of decisions taken by the Committee of Ministers regarding the Organisation's general budget.

2. In the same way as last year, I would like to comment not only on budget prospects for 2009, but also on the main events of 2007.

2. Audit of the 2006 accounts

3. The external auditor issued an unqualified opinion on the budgetary management accounts for 2006 and considered that the Council of Europe had made progress towards compliance with International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS). He also recommended that the Council of Europe introduce additional changes to allow full compliance with IPSAS, namely:

- producing consolidated accounts;
- recognising inventory in the accounts;
- considering provisions for questionable debts and for impairment of assets.

4. Regarding the results-based budgeting (RBB) system and the project management methodology (PMM), the external auditor suggested certain improvements to achieve a clearer alignment on strategy and rationalise the number of objectives, with a view to making them more appropriate and more measurable, thereby reducing the costs associated with the system and freeing up more time for staff to work on the activities proper.

5. As rapporteur on the budget, I fully concur with the external auditor's analysis, in particular his remark about reducing time spent by staff on administrative tasks so more attention can be paid to the Council of Europe's work programmes and activities.

3. Overview of 2007

6. Unlike in the previous year, the Committee of Ministers' discussions concerning the 2007 budget did not give rise to difficulties regarding its adoption, since the Secretary General espoused the approach of zero real growth in the budget, in line with the wishes of the Ministers' Deputies.

7. Human rights were a key issue in 2007. In terms of both intergovernmental and parliamentary activities, a number of flagship events were devoted to this theme, in particular the major debate on the state of human rights and democracy held by the Assembly during the April part-session and the colloquy organised by the San Marino chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers in March concerning future developments at the European Court of Human Rights in the light of the Group of Wise Persons' report, an exchange of views to which the Assembly contributed and which led to the principal conclusion that the entry into force of Protocol No. 14 to the European Convention on Human Rights remained an absolute necessity. In this connection, it is to be welcomed that the Committee of Ministers decided to ask the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) to look closely into the tangible follow-up that could be given to the Group of Wise Persons' recommendations.

8. Other key events during the year were the second Marty report on secret places of detention and the report on creationism. Two draft conventions were also referred to the Assembly for opinion: the draft convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, adopted by the Committee of Ministers in July, and the draft convention of the Council of Europe on the adoption of children (revised).

9. Furthermore, with its [Opinion No. 262 \(2007\)](#) the Parliamentary Assembly made a significant contribution to the draft memorandum of understanding between the Council of Europe and the European Union, which was finally signed in May 2007. Further to this Memorandum of Understanding, the Ministers'

Deputies appointed two Council of Europe representatives to sit on the organs of the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (Mr Guy de Vel, former Director General of Legal Affairs of the Council of Europe, as titular member and our former fellow Assembly member, Rudolf Bindig, as alternate).

10. Relations between the European Parliament and the Assembly were moreover stepped up, culminating in the signature, on 28 November 2007, of the agreement on reinforcement of co-operation between the two institutions.

11. Lastly, mention can also be made of the Summer University for Democracy held in Strasbourg in July. This programme of studies is fully in line with the desire voiced by the Assembly in its [Opinion No. 264 \(2007\)](#) to establish a genuine “European centre of excellence for democracy and human rights” in Strasbourg.

12. To conclude this overview of 2007, I wish to underline the initiative taken by the Committee of Ministers, acting on a proposal by Norway, to set up, in cooperation with the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB), a human rights trust fund to support the member states’ efforts in the human rights field, thereby contributing to attainment of the Council of Europe’s objectives. This approach is entirely consistent with Assembly [Recommendation 1812 \(2007\)](#) regarding the contribution the Council of Europe Development Bank could make to the Organisation’s activities.

4. Prospects for 2009

13. During his discussions with the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development at the meeting held on 17 March 2008 the Secretary General said little about his intentions concerning the 2009 budget. We know only that he has to find an additional amount of €2.5 million, corresponding to the full-year effect of earlier decisions concerning the additional resources allocated to the European Court of Human Rights and compulsory adjustments of salary scales. These two measures result in an automatic increase in the Organisation’s budget, without taking inflation into account.

14. Mr Davis also informed the committee that the Ministers’ Deputies had already made it clear to him that they would not accept proposals departing from the principle of zero real growth in member states’ contributions.

15. The situation is not catastrophic as it seems that, for the first time in several years, the Court registry is not requesting additional appropriations or posts for 2009. This should not be the case in 2010.

16. This lull in the Court’s requests is doubtless a good opportunity to draw up a progress report on it. I therefore propose a study concerning the Court’s working methods and future staffing needs.

17. As part of the follow-up action to the Group of Wise Persons’ report and in the light of the proceedings of the colloquy on future developments at the European Court of Human Rights, in which – I reiterate – our fellow Assembly member Ms Bemelmans-Videc played an active part on behalf of the Assembly, the Committee of Ministers indeed gave the CDDH ad hoc terms of reference to consider the tangible follow-up that could be given to the recommendations made by the Group of Wise Persons.

18. Our Assembly, which assumes an important responsibility by electing the Court’s judges, is also responsible for issuing an opinion on the Council of Europe budget as a whole and has to ensure the efficacy and the proper functioning of the Court in the medium to long term. It is therefore justifiable to ask ourselves where the Court is going and whether there is not a risk that it will take on even greater weight within the Council of Europe, thereby further weakening all the other sectors of the Organisation by starving them of financial resources, the bulk of which it monopolises.

19. This is also an essential step if the Council of Europe is to be able to give an honest and clear account of the Court’s financial and administrative situation and its future prospects, with a view to the eventuality of the European Union’s accession to the European Convention on Human Rights and the Court mechanism, which remains a possibility provided that the Treaty of Lisbon is ratified by the EU’s 27 member states.

20. However, we would be deceiving ourselves to believe that the European Union’s prospective accession to this Council of Europe mechanism could relieve the member states of their financial responsibility vis-à-vis the Organisation as a whole. The pursuit of a budget policy based solely on the zero real growth principle will inevitably cause the Council of Europe to reach an impasse.

21. It has to be one thing or the other. Either the member states stay on course and undertake to increase their contributions, which is ultimately where their decisions are leading in the medium to long term, or they assume responsibility for the demise of the Council of Europe as it exists today or for taking political decisions that completely overhaul the current European human rights protection system, as laid down in the European Convention on Human Rights.
22. There is therefore an urgent need to consider where the Council of Europe is heading. The best means of foreseeing the Organisation's financial needs in the short, medium and long term is to replace the current annual budget approach with a multi-annual budget framework. In its [Opinion No. 264 \(2007\)](#) the Assembly suggested that forward-planning should cover four to five years, coinciding with the term of office of the Organisation's Secretary General.
23. It is not unfeasible from an accounting standpoint to produce financial projections spanning several years. We know that the heaviest drains on the budget are staff salaries, together with the adjustments to the salary scales, and expenditure on maintenance and modernisation of buildings. The medium-term requirements of the European Court of Human Rights can also be calculated with a degree of precision.
24. It is possible to form a reasonable idea of the Organisation's own resources (estimated receipts other than member states' obligatory contributions), including the unexpended balance, which, year in, year out, can be estimated at between 0.5% and 1% of the ordinary budget.
25. The credit balance is increasingly a focus of concern. The question can be asked whether it reflects errors of management or constitutes an aid to good management. Either its origin is known, in which case radical measures have to be taken to eliminate fields of expenditure where underspending is chronic or to reduce their appropriations, or it is simply a result of careful management and strict compliance with the principles laid down in the financial regulations.
26. It must be said that, whatever its origin, this unexpended balance is used as a financial management tool. For this reason I believe it must remain the property of the Council of Europe and not be returned to the member states. I therefore propose that it be transferred to a reserve account or be used to meet non-recurring items of expenditure that constitute a burden on the budget in subsequent years.
27. With regard to member states' obligatory contributions, it is obvious at first sight that the financial burden is unequally shared among the member states. One of the reasons for this imbalance is that certain countries, known as the "major contributors" (France, Germany, Italy, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom) reached an agreement whereby they five alone cover almost 60% of the obligatory contributions to the ordinary budget. This was a purely political decision, since the method of calculating the scales of member states' contributions to Council of Europe budgets was laid down in Committee of Ministers Resolution (94) 31. It is based on two criteria, the first being population (as provided for in Article 38.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe) and the second gross domestic product (GDP). The resolution stipulated that the relative weightings of GDP and population would be 5 and 1 respectively. In its [Recommendation 1812 \(2007\)](#) the Assembly proposed that the Committee of Ministers substantially modify this calculation method so as to adjust the amounts of contributions and bring them more into balance.
28. As regards the Committee of Ministers' concerns about the automatic nature of the salary adjustment and salaries' growing share in the ordinary budget, prudence is called for. Firstly, the payroll is growing as a result of the creation of new posts at the Court and, secondly, it would be absurd to regard staff solely as an expense. They must be valued as one of the Organisation's most precious assets that no machine can replace. This intellectual capital could even be recorded in the Council of Europe balance sheet under intangible assets.
29. It is also true that the increase in the number of staff has a direct impact on the pensions budget and the pension reserve fund. The member states must take full responsibility for their decisions and immediately make provisions to cover their pension obligations, which, according to the financial statements of the Council of Europe, amounted to over €1 billion in 2006. This liability is in the end merely the outcome of the short-sighted policy pursued by the member states. By doing away with a fully funded pension scheme in 1974 (the Council of Europe Staff Pension Fund) and replacing it with a pension scheme common to the co-ordinated organisations based on budgetary financing, they thought they could save on contributions (the 14% contribution then payable by the employer), but finally found themselves obliged to finance a far larger debt thirty years later!
30. Lastly, this long-term liability must not provide the member states with an excuse for deciding to withdraw from the present co-ordinated system, which brings together six international organisations (the Council of Europe, the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts, the European Space Agency,

the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Western European Union), so as to save money. This system remains one of the best means of recruiting, retaining and motivating highly trained, skilled, independent staff by offering them a competitive remuneration in comparison with the three recruitment markets constituted by the private sector, the national civil services and the international civil service.

31. In conclusion, 2009 will doubtless be a year of transition, but 2010 will be fraught with dangers. The Court will undoubtedly request new posts to cope with its growing caseload. These new posts will generate an increased need for office space. They will lead to an increase in the total payroll and hence in the Organisation's commitments regarding the pension scheme and the reserve fund. Lastly, they will have inevitable implications regarding the sums the member states are asked to contribute.

Appendix –Trends in the ordinary budget of the Council of Europe by vote and by year

Ordinary budget – Trends per vote and per year in euros				
	2005 budget	2006 budget	2007 budget	2008 budget
Vote I – General services	17 484 700	16 330 700	15 235 000	15 708 000
Vote II – Programme of activities	70 886 300	70 945 500	71 337 400	71 127 400
Vote III – Parliamentary Assembly	15 270 600	15 614 700	15 667 700	15 570 100
Vote IV – European Court of Human Rights	42 392 800	44 520 000	49 538 300	53 277 900
Vote V – Congress of Local and Regional Authorities	6 032 000	6 202 000	6 085 300	6 083 800
Vote VI – Administrative and logistical support	38 680 500	41 072 700	42 597 800	44 957 500
Vote VII – Other expenditure	– 1 918 000	– 1 301 300	– 1 474 500	– 844 000
Vote VIII – Investments	4 558 000	4 624 000	4 702 000	4 769 400
Total – Budget of expenditure	193 386 900	198 008 300	203 689 300	210 650 100
Budget of receipts				
Vote IX – Miscellaneous receipts	7 374 200	7 859 500	6 475 200	9 650 500
Total – Contributions by the member states	186 012 700	190 148 800	197 214 100	200 999 600
Ordinary budget – Trends per vote and per year in percentages				
	2005 budget	2006 budget	2007 budget	2008 budget
Vote I – General services	9.0 %	8.2 %	7.5 %	7.5 %
Vote II – Programme of activities	36.7 %	35.8 %	35.0 %	33.8 %
Vote III – Parliamentary Assembly	7.9 %	7.9 %	7.7 %	7.4 %
Vote IV – European Court of Human Rights	21.9 %	22.5 %	24.3 %	25.3 %
Vote V – Congress of Local and Regional Authorities	3.1 %	3.1 %	3.0 %	2.9 %
Vote VI – Administrative and logistical support	20.0 %	20.7 %	20.9 %	21.3 %
Vote VII – Other expenditure	– 1.0 %	– 0.7 %	– 0.7 %	– 0.4 %
Vote VIII – Investments	2.4 %	2.3 %	2.3 %	2.3 %
Total – Budget of expenditure	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %
Budget of receipts				
Vote IX – Miscellaneous receipts	3.8 %	4.0 %	3.2 %	4.6 %
Total – Contributions by the member states	96.2 %	96.0 %	96.8 %	95.4 %

Reporting committee: Committee on Economic Affairs and Development.

Reference to committee: Standing mandate.

Draft opinion unanimously adopted by the committee on 15 April 2008.

Members of the committee: Mr Márton **Braun** (Chairperson), Mr Robert Walter (Vice-Chairperson), Mrs Doris **Barnett** (ViceChairperson), Mrs Antigoni **Papadopoulos** (Vice-Chairperson), Mr Ruhi **Açikgöz**, Mr Ulrich Adam, Mrs Veronika Bellmann, Mr Radu Mircea Berceanu, Mrs Guðfinna Bjarnadóttir, Mr Vidar **Bjørnstad**, Mr Jaime Blanco (alternate: Mrs Elvira **Cortajarena**), Mr Luuk Blom (alternate: Mr Tuur **Elzinga**), Mr Pedrag Bošković (alternate: Mrs Valentina **Radulović-Šćepanović**), Mr Patrick **Breen**, Mr Gianpiero Carlo Cantoni, Mr Erol Aslan **Cebeci**, Mr Ivané Chkhartishvili, Mr Valeriu Cosarciuc, Mr Ignacio Cosidó Gutiérrez, Mr Joan Albert Farré Santuró, Mr Relu Fenechiu, Mr Carles Gasóliba i Böhm, Mr Zahari Georgiev, Mr Francis **Grignon**, Mrs Arlette Grosskost (alternate: Mr Alain **Cousin**), Mrs Azra Hadžiahmetović, Mr Norbert **Haupt**, Mr Stanislaw **Huskowski**, Mr Yury Isaev, Mr Ivan Nikolaev Ivanov, Mr Jan Jambon, Mr Miloš Jeftić, Mrs Nataša Jovanović, Mr Antti Kaikkonen (alternate: Mr Kimmo Sasi), Mr Serhiy Klyuev (alternate: Mr Volodymyr **Vercherko**), Mr Albrecht **Konečný**, Mr Bronislaw Korfanty (alternate: Mrs Danuta **Jazłowiecka**), Mr Anatoliy **Korobeynikov**, Mr Ertuğrul **Kumcuoğlu**, Mr Bob Laxton, Mr Harald Leibrecht,

Mrs Anna **Lilliehöök**, Mr Arthur **Loepfe**, Mr Denis MacShane (alternate: Baroness Gloria **Hooper**), Mr Yevhen **Marmazov**, Mr JeanPierre Masseret, Mr Ruzhdi Matoshi, Mr Miloš **Melčák**, Mr José **Mendes Bota**, Mr Mircea **Mereuță**, Mr Attila Mesterházy, Mrs Olga **Nachtmannová**, Mrs Hermine **Naghdalyan**, Mr Gebhard **Negele**, Mrs Mirosława **Nykiel**, Mr Mark **Oaten**, Mrs Ganira Pashayeva, Mrs Marija **Pejčinović-Burić**, Mr Manfred Pinzger, Mr Viktor Pleskachevskiy, Mr Claudio Podeschi, Mr Jakob Presečnik, Mr Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando, Mr Maximilian Reimann, Mr Roland Ries, Mrs Maria de Belém **Roseira**, Mrs Gitte **Seeberg**, Mr Samad Seyidov, Mrs Sabina Siniscalchi, Mr Giannicola Sinisi, Mr Leonid Slutsky (alternate: Mrs Natalia **Burykina**), Mr Serhiy **Sobolev**, Mrs Aldona Staponkienė, Mr Christophe **Steiner**, Mr Vjaceslavs Stepanenko, Mr Vyacheslav Timchenko, Mrs Arenca Trashani, Mrs Ester Tuiksoo, Mr Miltiadis **Varvitsiotis**, Mr Oldřich **Vojtíš**, Mr Konstantinos **Vrettos**, Mr Harm Evert Waalkens, Mr Paul **Wille**, Mrs Gisela Wurm, Mrs Maryam **Yazdanfar**.

NB: The names of the members present at the meeting are printed in bold.

See Standing Committee, 29 May 2008 (adoption of the draft opinion, as amended); and [Opinion No. 268](#).