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Expenditure of the Parliamentary Assembly for the financial year 2011

Report[1]
Committee on Economic Affairs and Development
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Summary

2011 must be regarded as a year of transition and the Assembly, aware of the current difficulties, wishes to assist the Secretary General in implementing the institutional improvements he envisages. For this reason, it can endorse the Secretary General's request that it restricts its expenditure to an amount of €15 089 000 (excluding inflation) to cope with the current budget deficits in the context of the zero real growth fixed by the member states. Nonetheless, it will remain vigilant regarding the choices and priorities proposed by the Secretary General and approved by the Committee of Ministers.

1. Standing mandate of the committee.

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A. Draft Resolution[2]

1. In pursuance of Resolution (53) 38 of the Committee of Ministers and Article 24 of the Financial Regulations, the Parliamentary Assembly issues an opinion each year concerning the expenditure relating to its operation. The amounts allocated to the Assembly in the ordinary budget of the Council of Europe cover its expenditure on staff and the costs associated with its own functioning and the functioning of its political groups.

2. When it elected Mr Jagland Secretary General of the Council of Europe by a significant majority, the Assembly gave him a clear mandate to help reform, revitalise and reinforce the Council of Europe. It also undertook to contribute to the institutional improvements envisaged by the Secretary General.

3. With this aim in mind, the Assembly has already begun to consider the place and role it should have on the European and international scene. This debate is consistent with the Assembly's desire to set itself clear priorities revolving around the Organisation's essential values while retaining a broad remit so as to better respond to the expectations and the new needs of European citizens.

4. The economic and social crisis which Europe is undergoing today shows that the Assembly must continue to constitute the pan-European forum for discussion and debate that it has been for over 60 years and thereby help to identify the best remedies to allay the ills afflicting Europe's citizens and ensure that "a government's human right pledges are not forgotten", as the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, said in 2008.

5. As the Swiss Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers pointed out "The Parliamentary Assembly, as the central pillar of the Council of Europe, confers unquestionable democratic legitimacy on our Organisation." However, the Assembly's action can be effective only if there is genuine, substantive and ongoing dialogue between the two statutory bodies, as the Assembly suggested in its Recommendation 1886 (2009) on the future of the Council of Europe in the light of its sixty years of experience.

6. It is for this reason that the Assembly has made tangible proposals to strengthen dialogue and co-operation with the Committee of Ministers so as to achieve improved understanding of the viewpoints of all concerned and thereby consolidate the Council of Europe's effectiveness. The Assembly is convinced that this dialogue must involve a search for synergies and probably a reform of the existing methods of consultation between the two bodies.

7. Nonetheless, to be in a position to deal with the many political problems that arise in the sphere of pan-European co-operation and to identify solutions to societal challenges, the Assembly must have sufficient financial resources at its disposal.

8. In recent years the Assembly has taken significant steps to rationalise its work and reduce its expenditure. The measures implemented, notably stringent management of committee meetings and other administrative rationalisation measures (in particular concerning publication of the Assembly's proceedings), have made it possible to absorb the various budget cuts without affecting core activities.

9. 2011 must be regarded as a year of transition and the Assembly, aware of the current difficulties, wishes to assist the Secretary General in implementing the institutional improvements he envisages. For this reason, it can endorse the Secretary General's request that it restricts its expenditure to an amount of € 15 089 000 (excluding inflation) - corresponding to a 2% reduction in relation to appropriations for 2010 - so as to cope with the current budget deficits in the context of the zero real growth imposed by the member states. Nonetheless, it will remain vigilant regarding the choices and priorities proposed by the Secretary General and approved by the Committee of Ministers.

10. However, with a 2011 budget reduced to the 2005 level, it is difficult to know whether the Assembly will be in a position to fulfil its many tasks. Yet, despite this constraint, the Assembly intends to maintain its parliamentary co-operation and assistance mechanisms with the aid of external contributions.

11. The experience gleaned from the co-operation programmes for the parliaments of Serbia and Montenegro and, very recently, Moldova, financed thanks to the European Commission's support, bears out the Assembly's decision to maintain parliamentary co-operation and assistance programmes so as to better meet the specific needs of the member states' parliaments, in co-operation with the European Parliament, in accordance with the terms of the agreement signed by the two European parliamentary institutions in 2007.

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2. Draft resolution adopted unanimously by the committee on 27 April 2010.

12. Lastly, to give the 636 parliamentarians from the Council of Europe's 47 member states the means to do their work under appropriate conditions it is necessary to update the Assembly's equipment, which dates from the construction of the Palais de l'Europe, by introducing modern communication tools. For this reason the Assembly would like the Secretary General and the Committee of Ministers to take into account the following investment requests, as already set out in its previous opinions, with a view to modernising the Assembly Chamber, a tribune of democracy:

12.1. Replacement of the vote display panels on either side of the President's rostrum with large-"video wall" type screens. This project is included in the Organisation's 2010-2015 investment plan and scheduled for implementation in 2011. The Assembly insists that the planned work must not be postponed;

12.2. Modernisation of the vote management system. The Assembly is currently using outmoded equipment, dating from the 1980s, which it inherited from the European Parliament;

12.3. Replacement of the mobile cameras used for filming debates with a television-style system adapted for use in the Assembly Chamber allowing filming of the speakers and broadcasting of debates on screens and via live webcasting;

12.4. Lastly, the refurbishing and modernisation of the Assembly Chamber (including the lighting to make energy savings, the President's rostrum and the seating).

13. These investments will be of benefit not to the Assembly and the Congress alone but also to all other potential users and will allow better use to be made of this unique meeting space.

Appended to this draft Resolution are:

i. a table of the requests for 2011, compared with the appropriations allocated in 2010;

ii. a brief explanation of the main items of expenditure;

iii. a table setting out the Assembly's work programme according to the results based budgeting method.

Appendix 1 – Requests for 2011, compared with the appropriations allocated in 2010

VOTE III of the ordinary budget – Expenditure of the Assembly **TITRE III du budget ordinaire – Dépenses relatives à l'Assemblée**	**Expenditure foreseen for 2010** **Dépenses prévues pour 2010** **EUROS**	**Appropriations for 2011** **Crédits demandés au budget de 2011** **EUROS**
HEAD 0310 – Functioning of the Assembly **CHAPITRE 0310 – Fonctionnement de l'Assemblée**		
Dépenses de personnel/Staff expenditure Sub-heads/Articles		
0000001 – Remuneration of staff recruited on established posts Rémunération du personnel recruté dans le cadre des emplois permanents	8 615 700 €	8 615 700 €
0000003 – Remuneration and accessory charges of temporary staff Rémunération et charges accessoires du personnel temporaire	853 100 €	584 950 €
0000046 – Remuneration of staff on position Rémunération du personnel sur fonction à durée déterminée	466 700 €	425 350 €
0000005 – Salary, allowances and social charges of the Secretary General of the Assembly Rémunération, indemnités et charges sociales du Secrétaire Général de l'Assemblée	262 100 €	267 100 €
0000016 – Recruitment, arrival and departure expenses – Home leave Frais de recrutement à l'arrivée et au départ – congé dans le pays d'origine	32 200 €	27 000 €
Total Dépenses de personnel **Total Staff expenditure**	**10 229 800 €**	**9 920 100 €**
Supplies, services and other operational expenditure Dépenses de matériel et autres dépenses de fonctionnement Sub-heads/Articles		
0000054 – Equipment Equipement	13 300 €	11 000 €
0000080 – Official journeys Frais de missions	261 200 €	261 200 €
0000085 – Journeys of the Table Office reinforcement staff Frais de déplacement personnel de renfort – Service de la séance	p.m.	200 000 €
0000095 – Representational expenditure, other official expenditure and travelling expenses of members of the Assembly/Dépenses de représentation, frais de fonction et déplacement des membres de l'Assemblée	160 000 €	160 000 €
0000115 – Interpretation Interprétation	1 863 500 €	1 883 400 €
0000116 – Translation Traduction	497 800 €	483 300 €
0000124 – Publishing and printing Publications et impressions	336 800 €	280 900 €
0000125 – Outsourced production of documents Production externalisée de documents	33 000 €	25 000 €
0000129 – Consultation of experts Consultation d'experts	148 600 €	148 600 €
0000162 – Expenditure pertaining to the Private Office of the President of the Assembly Dépenses du Cabinet du Président de l'Assemblée	61 700 €	60 000 €
0000163 – Official expenses of the President of the Assembly Frais de fonction du Président de l'Assemblée	92 500 €	90 000 €

VOTE III of the ordinary budget – Expenditure of the Assembly **TITRE III du budget ordinaire – Dépenses relatives à l'Assemblée**	**Expenditure foreseen for 2010** **Dépenses prévues pour 2010** **EUROS**	**Appropriations for 2011** **Crédits demandés au budget de 2011** **EUROS**
0000171 – Organisation of ad hoc conferences Organisation de conférences ad hoc	97 700 €	90 000 €
0000204 – Modernisation of the Assembly's equipment Modernisation de l'équipement de l'Assemblée	p.m.	p.m.
0000205 – European prizes Prix européens	85 300 €	80 000 €
0000206 – Operating and maintenance costs of the electronic voting system Coûts de maintenance et d'exploitation du vote électronique	43 000 €	39 000 €
0000250 – Co-operation and *monitoring* programme Programme de coopération et du suivi des engagements	637 300 €	549 700 €
0000370 – Allocation to Assembly's political groups Dotation des groupes politiques de l'Assemblée	726 800 €	726 800 €
0000392 – Other expenditure not specifically provided for in this vote Autres dépenses non spécialement prévues au présent titre	102 800 €	80 000 €
Total supplies, services and other operational expenditure **Total dépenses de matériel et autres dépenses de fonctionnement**	**5 161 300 €**	**5 168 900 €**
TOTAL VOTE III **TOTAL DU TITRE III**	**15 391 100 €**	**15 089 000 €**

Appendix 2 – VOTE III – Expenditure of the Assembly

Staff expenditure

1. This appropriation corresponds to the basic salaries, allowances (non-recurring and periodic) and social cover of the permanent staff of the secretariat of the Assembly (87 posts, including 1 specially appointed official) and of temporary staff (including 6 positions).

2. In 2009 and 2010 the Secretary General of the Assembly implemented a reorganisation of the secretariat. This resulted in the downgrading to the next lowest grade of a number of posts in categories A and B, the elimination of one position and a reduction in appropriations for the recruitment of temporary back-up staff. These measures however have no impact on the functioning of the ten committees: nine of these committees have 84 members (and 84 alternates, apart from in the Monitoring Committee), and the remaining one 27 (with no alternates). As at 1 November 2010 the secretariat will comprise 87 permanent posts, 6 positions and 1 specially appointed official, breaking down as follows:

Permanent posts:		
1 specially appointed official		
1 A7	1 B6	1 C4
2 A6	5 B5	
10 A5	13 B4	
8 A4	15 B3	
24 A2/A3	7 B2	
Positions		
4 A1/A2	1 B3	
	1 B2	

3. At present, the secretariat of the Assembly is organised so that the ten Assembly committees have 52 staff members working for them, including 30 A-grade permanent staff, 20 B-grade permanent staff and 2 staff on fixed-term positions.

4. The remaining 41 staff members (37 permanent posts and 4 fixed-term positions) work for the Bureau of the Assembly, the Private Office of the President of the Assembly, the Table Office, the Interparliamentary Co-operation and Election Observation Unit, the Parliamentary Assistance Unit, the Administration, Human Resources and Finance Unit, the Communication Unit, the Information Technology Unit and Research and Documentation Unit.

Supplies, services and other operational expenditure

1. Since 1975, following a decision by the Committee of Ministers, these allocations have been voted in the form of a single appropriation, which continues to be divided into sub-heads. If the Assembly wished to change the relative amounts in the package at a later date, either because of an overall reduction or for any other reason dictated by the implementation of the budget, such a change would be carried out by the Secretary General at the Assembly's request and in accordance with Article 31 of the Financial Regulations.

2. In recent years the Assembly has made substantial savings by rationalising its work to reduce its operational expenditure. The measures taken, in particular stringent management of committee meetings and the adoption of a new policy concerning publication of the Assembly's proceedings (which led to a drastic reduction in printed publications), enabled the Assembly to absorb the various austerity measures imposed on it.

3. Despite this budgetary pressure, the Assembly wishes to continue its interparliamentary co-operation programme and its training programme for staff of the parliaments of Council of Europe member states. To this end, it will have to make greater use than ever before of external financing, in particular support from the European Commission, as was the case with the specific co-operation programme for the parliaments of Serbia and Montenegro (2006-2009) and more recently the parliament of Moldova (2010-2011).

4. The Assembly has a prominent political role and place in Europe. This is because it is the only purely European parliamentary institution in which national delegations representing all the countries of Europe (apart from Belarus) regularly come together. The frequency of its meetings (twenty days per year during the part-sessions in Strasbourg, plus seventy to eighty days' work between sessions on the occasion of the meetings of the committees and sub-committees, not to mention other meetings, such as Bureau meetings or those of the Standing Committee) enable it to react to political developments in Europe and to offer its member states responses to societal challenges.

5. For this reason, despite the difficulties, the Assembly's committees will not cease to hold thematic hearings and conferences, which are essential to fuel their work. The Assembly will also continue to co-operate closely with other European parliamentary assemblies (the European Parliament, those of the OSCE and the CIS, etc.), or international parliamentary assemblies (the Pan-African Parliament, etc.).

6. In addition, pursuant to Resolution 1420 (2005) on prospects for peace in the Middle East and to the decision of the Assembly Bureau on 18 March 2005, the Sub-Committee on the Middle East will continue its co-operation with the Knesset and the Palestinian Legislative Council.

7. The Assembly will also continue to support its political groups through their allocation, which is based on a lump sum for secretarial assistance paid to each of the existing groups along with an additional per capita amount which varies according to their membership.

8. To sum up, the draft budget for 2011 amounts to €15 089 000 in real terms (not including inflation and salary adjustments for 2011).

The appropriations can be analysed as follows:

Permanent and temporary staff	€ 9 920 100
Interpretation	€ 1 883 400
Translation	€ 483 300
Printing of documents	€ 305 900
Allocation to the political groups	€ 726 800
Sub-total	€ 13 319 500
Activities	€ 1 769 500
Total	€ 15 089 000

9. The reduction in the Assembly's appropriations is considerable and its budget is returned to the 2005 level. This is no longer zero real growth but genuine degrowth. This significant decrease in the Assembly's appropriations will doubtless lead it to make further changes to its working methods, procedures and structure so as to enhance its activities' relevance and effectiveness.

10. Nonetheless, although the financial situation is tense, the Assembly very much wishes that the work to modernise the Assembly Chamber should be carried out. This highly symbolic venue, in which regular maintenance work is undertaken, has indeed not undergone any major renovation since it was built in the mid-1970s. In particular, the vote display panels should be replaced with video walls, as planned, while the outdated (DOS based) vote management system, the system for filming debates and, lastly, the Chamber's fixtures and fittings (lighting, rostrum and seating) should be renewed.

Appendix 3 – Assembly's work programme

Functioning of the Assembly			
Intervention logic	**Performance indicators**	**Sources of verification**	**Assumptions**
Activity area objective Ensure the smooth functioning of the session and of the Assembly's various bodies			
Expected result 1 The part-sessions are efficiently organised and run, and satisfy Assembly members' expectations.	At least 50% of registered speakers are given the floor. Adopted texts are transmitted to the bodies concerned.	List of speakers. Compilation of adopted texts. Minutes of the Bureau of the Assembly. Statement made by the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly to the Ministers' Deputies.	Support from secretaries of national delegations
Expected result 2 Committee meetings, seminars and conferences take place in accordance with members' decisions.	Committee meetings are planned. Meeting agendas, documents and reports are ready in good time.	Agendas, synopses and minutes of committee meetings. Proceedings of seminars and conferences.	Availability of members
Expected result 3 Interparliamentary co-operation, observation of elections and assistance for national parliaments is managed taking due account of political developments.	Co-operation activities are brought into line with wishes and needs expressed. Election observation missions are organised in accordance with the decisions of the Bureau of the Assembly.	List of activities. Reports on election observation missions.	Support from parliaments and political groups
Expected result 4 Raising of the Assembly's external profile.	Media coverage of Assembly activities. Stock is taken of press releases and the number of visitors to the Assembly's website.	Press and news media (media analysis database, Factiva) Collection of statistics on media coverage.	

B. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Cebeci, rapporteur

1. Explanatory memorandum

1. This report gives a complete overview of the Assembly's expenditure and requests for budget year 2011. Under the new budget presentation prepared by the Secretary General, the Assembly's expenditure is included in the "Democracy" chapter of the ordinary budget of the Council of Europe. This covers all costs inherent in the Assembly's functioning, including expenditure on staff and costs associated with the functioning of the political groups. On the other hand, the budgetary appropriation does not cover telephone bills, office supplies and equipment or other consumables, which are items of expenditure common to all departments within the Organisation.

2. The proposals regarding the amount to be allocated to the Assembly for 2011 have been made in accordance with the budgetary procedures in force. The Assembly leaves it to the Directorate of Finance to assess, in due course, the adjustments that are, or may need to be, made to its allocation for 2011 as a result of changes in salary scales and the provisions that need to be made for salary adjustments in 2011. Similarly, it is for the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to adjust the other allocations, in due course, to take account of inflation.

3. The functioning of the Assembly covers the following range of tasks:

– holding of the ordinary session divided into four part-sessions (taking place in January, April, June and September/October of each year);

– meetings of the Bureau and the Standing Committee between the part-sessions, held at a frequency of three meetings per year;

– meetings in either Strasbourg or Paris, lasting one or more days, at times other than the four part-sessions of the Assembly, for each of the 10 general committees, the sub-committees, the ad hoc committees of the Assembly or of the Bureau and specialised working parties;

– committee or sub-committee meetings outside Strasbourg or Paris;

– conferences, colloquies, seminars and parliamentary hearings;

– activities coming under the programme of interparliamentary co-operation;

– visits by rapporteurs to countries subject to monitoring of the honouring of member states' obligations and commitments or to the post-monitoring dialogue.

– election observation.

4. Having examined the Assembly's *modus operandi* and current structure, the rapporteur wishes to draw attention to its general strategy aimed, firstly, at maintaining the quality of its work and its ability, as a political body, to respond efficiently and rapidly to unforeseen events, and, secondly, at reinforcing in the medium and long term its assistance and co-operation capacities in respect of the national parliaments of the 47 member states of the Council of Europe.

5. In this context a reinforcement of the parliamentary assistance and co-operation mechanisms can be envisaged. The experience gleaned from the co-operation programmes for the parliaments of Serbia and Montenegro and, very recently, Moldova, financed thanks to the European Commission's support, is sufficiently telling to justify a reinforcement of the parliamentary co-operation and assistance structure, so as to better meet the specific needs of the member states' parliaments, in co-operation with the European Parliament, in accordance with the terms of the agreement signed by the two European parliamentary institutions in 2007.

6. For five years now the secretariat of the Assembly has had to adapt to budget restrictions which have been imposed on it against the Assembly's wishes. Choices have therefore had to be made so as to maintain a constant level of service to the Assembly's bodies.

7. In particular, the Assembly has taken significant steps to rationalise its work and reduce its expenditure. The measures implemented, notably stringent management of committee meetings and other administrative rationalisation measures (in particular concerning publication of the Assembly's proceedings), have made it possible to absorb the various budget cuts without affecting core activities.

8. Constraints arising from automatic adjustments, the decrease in income from investments and the likelihood that it will not be possible to use all or part of the unexpended balance of the 2009 budget are again having a heavy impact on the 2011 budget preparation process. I therefore propose that the Assembly should not turn down the Secretary General's request to restrict its budget for 2011 to €15 089 000 (excluding inflation), which corresponds to the amount it had at its disposal in 2005. In agreeing to this effort, the Assembly aims to assist the Secretary General in implementing the institutional improvements he is proposing. 2011 must therefore be regarded as a year of transition. Nonetheless, it will be necessary to remain vigilant regarding the choices and priorities proposed by the Secretary General and approved by the Committee of Ministers and to continue to press for a reversal of the current policy of zero real growth imposed by our member states.

To sum up, the appropriations can be analysed as follows:

Permanent and temporary staff	€9 920 100
Interpretation	€1 883 400
Translation	€483 300
Printing of documents	€305 900
Allocation to the political groups	€726 800
Sub-total	€13 319 500
Activities	€1 769 500
Total	€15 089 000

9. The reduction in its resources has led the Assembly to review its role and further adapt its working methods, procedures and structure (including the downgrading to the next lowest grade of a number of posts in categories A and B, the elimination of one B-grade position and a reduction in appropriations for temporary back-up staff) so as to enhance the relevance of its activities. However, I do not wish the Assembly to abandon the broad mandate conferred on it by the Organisation's Statute as it must remain the pan-European forum for discussion and debate that it has been for the last sixty years and continue to be among the vanguard of originators of innovative ideas for Europe.

10. However, the effectiveness of the Assembly's action cannot really be manifested without a reinforcement of the dialogue with the Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General. It is therefore necessary to lay the foundations for a mutual understanding of the viewpoints of all concerned while respecting their individual competences. United by a common objective, we will then be better able to reinforce the relevance and effectiveness of the Council of Europe.

11. Lastly, a few words on the Assembly's equipment. The visibility of the Assembly's work would doubtless be raised if it had more up-to-date means of communication better suited to today's world. It has at its disposal a Chamber which is a fantastic tribune, but which has not undergone any major renovation work since it was built. In particular, the Assembly uses outmoded and increasingly defective equipment (the voting system, the vote display panels and an outdated debates broadcasting system), not to mention the far-from-economic lighting.

12. For this reason the Secretary General should include the appropriations necessary to modernise the Assembly Chamber in his medium-term investment plans. In its previous opinions the Assembly set out the objective arguments that plead in favour of these investments, which will enable optimal use to be made of this unique meeting and debating venue.

13. In conclusion, it should be noted that Appendix III of the draft resolution shows the Assembly's activities according to the results-based budgeting method.