

Opinion 89 (1978)¹

Council of Europe budgets for the financial years 1976, 1978 and 1979

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Having taken note of the report giving an opinion on the Council of Europe budgets for the financial years 1976, 1978 and 1979, presented by its Committee on the Budget and the Intergovernmental Work Programme ([Doc. 4186](#)) ;
2. Having regard to the texts relating to the powers of the Assembly in budgetary matters (1953-76) ;
3. Having examined the general accounts for 1976, the last financial year for which the accounts have been closed and for which discharge has been given ;
4. Having regard to the Council of Europe budget for 1978 as adopted by the Committee of Ministers.
5. Adopts the following opinion :
 - a. Note is taken of the general accounts for 1976 which were approved by the Board of Auditors of the Committee of Ministers and who discharged the Secretary General from his financial responsibility ; it is to be welcomed that the Board of Auditors found considerable improvement in the financial management resulting in an even more efficient use of appropriations.
 - b. With regard to the 1978 budget, it is to be regretted that the Committee of Ministers did not give a more positive follow-up to [Recommendation 811 \(1977\)](#) on the budgetary resources of the Council of Europe ; the Assembly recalls that the accession of a new member state should be accompanied by an increase in the budgetary resources made available to the Council of Europe, so that it may cope more adequately with its growing political responsibilities ; the political arguments put forward by the Assembly should have overridden the purely financial and budgetary notion according to which an additional source of receipts does not justify in itself a parallel and equivalent increase in expenditure.
 - c. In the context of the arguments set out in paragraph b above, particular attention is drawn to the fact that, now that Spain has become the twentieth member state of the Council of Europe and the fifth largest contributor to the ordinary budget, the contributions of some other countries have decreased by up to 0.57 %.
 - d. The Assembly welcomes the creation of five new posts and four up-gradings in the A-grade category, out of which one creation and one up-grading concerned the Office of the Clerk.
 - e. It is also a matter for satisfaction that appropriations were included in the 1978 budget to cover the cost of the basic installation of a television studio, for the external and internal refurbishment of B building, and for the construction of a footbridge between the new building and B building ; it is hoped that a decision concerning the equipment of the television studio will be taken in the near future, so as to make it operational as soon as possible.

1. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 7 July 1978. See [Doc. 4186](#), report of the Committee on the Budget and the Intergovernmental Work Programme.



- f.* The Assembly observes a 25% increase in the extraordinary budget for annual repayments on loans contracted for constructing the new building to approximately 30 million francs, and to which the European Parliament, which benefits greatly from these new premises, contributes only to a very moderate extent.
- g.* As far as the prospects for the 1979 budget are concerned, the Assembly wishes to reiterate its concern over the disproportionate administrative costs of the new building, and recalls the importance of putting increased resources at the disposal of the Intergovernmental Work Programme : the widening of the geographic framework of the Council of Europe fully justifies increased resources for the operational programmes carried out at intergovernmental level, in particular for all those undertakings for which the Council of Europe is the only suitable forum. The Assembly is conscious of the need to avoid unnecessary duplication with the activities of other European organisations and institutions, but feels that if member states were prepared to increase their contributions even slightly, the expert committees of the Committee of Ministers could provide more positive and speedier follow-up to the recommendations addressed by the Assembly to the Committee of Ministers, and thus significantly improve and reinforce the medium-term plan.
- h.* The Assembly finally urges the Committee of Ministers to increase the funds available for groups of visitors who come to visit the Council of Europe headquarters in Strasbourg, thus enabling them to take home a better and clearer image of an organisation which has been working for closer European co-operation for nearly thirty years.