Opinion 93 (1979)[1]

Council of Europe budgets for the years 1977, 1979 and 1980

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Having taken note of the report stating an opinion on the Council of Europe budgets for the years 1977, 1979 and 1980, submitted by its Committee on the Budget and the Intergovernmental Work Programme (Doc. 4380);

2. Having regard to the texts relating to the Assembly's budgetary powers (1953-76);

3. Having examined the general accounts for 1977, the last financial year for which accounts have been prepared and approved;

4. Having regard to the Council of Europe budget for 1979, as adopted by the Committee of Ministers;

5. Agreeing with the views on the budget prospects for 1980 expressed by the Secretary General in his statement to the Assembly on 9 May 1979,

6. Adopts the following opinion :

a. The Assembly notes the finding by the Board of Auditors to the effect that the financial management during the year 1977 was sound and economical on the whole, and expresses with satisfaction that the amount of appropriations to be cancelled was lower than in the previous financial year, a fact which reflects improved use of the financial resources made available to the organisation;

b. With regard to the 1979 budget, the Assembly welcomes the establishment of four new A grade posts and the upgrading of two further A grade posts, as well as the strengthening of certain departments, including the Office of the Clerk of the Assembly, and the Visitors' Service in the Directorate of the Press and Information Services;

c. The Assembly regrets that the part of the budget which covers the Intergovernmental Work Programme does not show the substantial increase which it had desired;

d. The Assembly also regrets that the appropriations available for the reception of visiting groups have not been increased as it had wished;

e. The Assembly welcomes the very substantial growth (+ 45.69%) in the subsidiary budget for the European Youth Centre and the increase in the Centre's staff, involving the creation of six posts and the upgrading of two permanent posts;

f. With regard to the prospects for the financial year 1980, the Assembly asks the Committee of Ministers to increase appropriations to the Directorate of the Press and Information Services, so that it can extend its network of press correspondents and publish the review Forum in a fifth language; it also requests an increase in the appropriations for the reception of groups visiting the Council of Europe headquarters; finally, it would like the Paris and Brussels offices to play a more prominent role in the information field;

1. See Doc. 4380, report by Committee on the Budget and the Intergovernmental Work Programme

g. The Assembly again recommends a substantial increase in the resources intended for the implementation of operational programmes at intergovernmental level, so that current activities can be completed and new activities launched in sectors where the Council of Europe has a special part to play; specifically, it emphasises the desirability of strengthening the nature protection, environment and regional planning sectors, particularly by increasing the budgetary allocation to the Information and Documentation Centre;

h. The Assembly calls on the Committee of Ministers to do everything in its power to ensure that the European Youth Centre can carry out its own specific task effectively;

i. With regard to expenditure on staff, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers should convert into permanent posts a further group of temporary posts which have existed for some years and which carry functions which are plainly permanent in character;

j. Having noted that the translation and reproduction services are no longer always able to perform their tasks with the desirable speed and up to the requisite standards, the Assembly is of the opinion that its work should keep its priority, but without detriment to the principle of the Secretariat's unity, it expresses the wish that its session documents, particularly those reports of its committees that are available sufficiently far in advance of sessions, should henceforth be reproduced in offset form, and it asks the Committee of Ministers to make available to the Technical Services the necessary funds for the purpose;

k. The Assembly request that its opinions should henceforth be referred to in the introductory clauses of Committee of Ministers' resolutions adopting budgets, by which means suitable expression would be given to the procedure in force since 1962.