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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Opinion 103 (1980)[1]

Programme-budget for the operation of the Assembly in 1980 (supplementary opinion)

Parliamentary Assembly

The Assembly,

1. Recalling its Opinion No. 92 (1979), on the programme-budget for the operational expenditure of the Assembly in 1980 ;

2. Having regard to the reply given by the Committee of Ministers to its Opinions Nos. 92 and 93 ;

3. Having regard to the current financial state of the budget of the Assembly, and in particular the expenditure incurred in the first five months of 1980, which shows that it will become unavoidable to overspend the appropriations in at least two fields, namely : remuneration and accessory charges in respect of temporary staff (sub-head 91), and publishing and printing (sub-head 94),

4. Adopts, accordingly, the following supplementary opinion, concerning its operational expenditure for 1980 (Vote III of the Council of Europe budget), and recommends that the Committee of Ministers give it a favourable follow-up when considering the situation of the Council of Europe's 1980 budget later this year :

a. Sub-head 91 - Remuneration and accessory charges in respect of temporary staff

1. As pointed out in Opinion No. 92 (1979), the development of Assembly activities over the last years has made it clear that this appropriation was totally insufficient. In 1978, the appropriation was short of 280 000 F and in 1979 the deficit was 350 000 F. The Assembly therefore requested, for 1980, an increase of 290 000 F in real terms, only 200 000 F of which were granted by the Committee of Ministers. It must also be recalled that the Assembly, in its Opinion No. 100 (1980), on the programme-budget for the operational expenditure of the Assembly in 1981 (adopted in April this year), pointed out that it was at that time impossible to predict in detail the full impact in this regard for 1980, but that it was certain that the appropriation would prove insufficient. The Assembly further remarked, in the same opinion, that it could not accept the view of the Committee of Ministers to the effect that rationalisation in the use of temporary staff would make it possible to limit the expenditure under this sub-head. Experience has indeed shown that, in spite of all possible efforts to effectuate savings, the Assembly is faced with ever increasing amounts of expenditure. As a last resort, and in his capacity as the person responsible for passing Assembly expenditure, the Clerk could find himself in the position of having to limit additionally the use of the two working languages of the organisation (German and Italian). Such a measure would, however, be contrary to the explicit wishes of both the Committee of Ministers and the Assembly.

2. Up to 340 members of the Assembly meet in Strasbourg in the concentrated time of about nineteen days a year, which means that a considerable workload has to be assumed in certain periods. This makes it necessary to hire for the purpose a number of highly qualified, specialised supplementary staff, as well as to reinforce the general services of the Council of Europe for the

1. See Doc. 4567, report of the Committee on the Budget and the Intergovernmental Work Programme. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 3 July 1980.

specific needs of the Assembly. Although the new building with its many facilities is of course highly appreciated by all members of the Assembly, it must be recognised that more staff is now needed to service the Chamber and the premises surrounding it.

3. When considering the need for more temporary staff, one further circumstance must not be forgotten, namely the more and more frequent meetings here of the European Parliament. Hardly any expert committees of the Council of Europe can meet when the European Parliament is in session, and so these meetings have to be held at other times, including in weeks when the Assembly holds its plenary sessions. As a consequence, general permanent staff normally at the Assembly's disposal have to be backed up by a greater number of temporaries.

4. The above arguments should be seen as no more than supplementing those set out in Opinion No. 92 (1979) and Opinion No. 100 (1980). The latter, it will be recalled, focused, inter alia, on the increases in the costs of interpretation, the need to hold meetings also in the more distant member states, the enlarged membership of the Assembly and the one-day prolongation of annual mini-sessions. In the light of all the above considerations, the Assembly requests that an increase of at least 200 000 F be granted under sub-head 91 for the financial year 1980.

b. Sub-head 94 - Publishing and printing

1. The Assembly again wishes to refer to its Opinion No. 100 (1980), in which it explained why the appropriation for this sub-head was not by any means sufficient. In 1979 the shortfall was over 280 000 F, and in spite of all the endeavours made to reduce expenditure, a shortfall of approximately 200 000 F must be expected by the end of this year.

2. This sub-head, which forms part of the budgetary package and concerns the printing and publishing of official Assembly documents is, as has been said before, of an unavoidable character. Considering that it represents one-third of the total package, it is almost impossible to make the necessary transfers within this head. The Assembly therefore requests an increase of this sub-head for the financial year 1980 of 200 000 F.