

Opinion 187 (1995)¹

Programme-budget for the operational expenditure of the Assembly in 1996

Parliamentary Assembly

1. While the 1995 budget was a transitional one, full account will have to be taken in the 1996 financial year of the enlargement of the Council of Europe. As the Parliamentary Assembly stated in [Recommendation 1250 \(1994\)](#) on the enlargement of the Council of Europe and the budgetary prospects, the zero growth imposed on the 1995 budget totally contradicted the political will expressed at the Vienna Summit concerning the Council's pan-European role.
2. The Assembly has consistently championed this pan-European role since it introduced special guest status for central and east European parliaments in 1989. It will continue to do so in 1995 and in the years ahead until the area of democracy embodied by the Council of Europe extends to the entire continent.
3. Accordingly, the recent accessions of Andorra and Latvia could be followed by others in 1995.
4. In this connection, the Assembly continues to pursue and intensify its co-operation with the parliaments of the new member states and of the applicant countries, which will involve wide-ranging activities going far beyond visits by legal experts or rapporteurs.
5. With regard to Russia, whose application procedure has just been suspended by the Assembly, contacts will, in fact, be stepped up, as the aim is to re-open the procedure on a new footing as soon as possible.
6. At the same time, the recent decision by the Bureau of the Assembly to proceed with the examination of the applications for special guest status submitted by the Parliaments of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia should lead to the arrival of three new parliamentary delegations in the course of the year.
7. Accordingly, the current total of 478 parliamentarians who take part in the Assembly's work (members and substitutes) - alongside six observers and sixty special guests - could well rise in the course of 1995, and the forecasts for the years ahead put the total at over 600 members.
8. In order to deal with this increase and pave the way for more active participation by the parliamentarians, the Assembly has begun reviewing its committee structures and should fix its position before the end of the year. The current total of thirteen committees could be increased to sixteen or even seventeen in 1996.
9. The increase in the level of activity, the number of parliamentarians and the number of committees will inevitably have an impact in terms of Assembly staff.
10. The political groups will have to be given the resources needed to enable them to fulfil their role in consolidating democracy and conducting exchanges with the political parties in the new democracies. Moreover, it is essential that they be provided with computer equipment connected to the Council of Europe's network and that provision be made for additional staffing of their secretariats.

1. See [Doc. 7303](#), report of the Committee on the Budget and the Intergovernmental Work Programme, Rapporteur: Mr Schreiner. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 22 May 1995.



11. The Assembly wishes to set up an electronic document and information distribution network. In this respect, it needs the necessary appropriations for the modernisation of its computer equipment.
12. As in previous years, the Assembly's opinion is in two parts:
 - 12.1. table of requested increases in real terms in 1996 compared with initial appropriations for 1995;
 - 12.2. detailed explanation of the changes requested.