Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Opinion 201 (1997)[1]

Expenditure of the Assembly for the budgetary financial year 1998

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Since the Assembly adopted, in June 1996, Opinion No. 197 (1996) on its 1997 budget, Croatia has joined the Council of Europe. The number of Council of Europe member states is now forty and the number of members of the Assembly (Representatives and Substitutes) has grown to 572. In addition, the parliaments of four European countries enjoy special guest status, which means twenty special guest parliamentarians take part in the Assembly's activities.

2. It is vital to ensure the continued smooth functioning of its work both in the plenary session and in the committees, which requires further reinforcements in the Secretariat. For obvious reasons, given the limited number of Assembly staff, the priority is to increase the staff of the Table Office which currently relies essentially on the Head of the Table Office, who is combining these duties with those of the Deputy Clerk of the Assembly.

3. The Assembly wishes to use the new posts to pursue its policy of including nationals of the new member states into its Secretariat.

4. The Assembly's priority for reinforcing its Secretariat is also motivated by the importance it attaches both to the final phase of enlargement and to the monitoring of commitments.

5. The Assembly is completing the final phase of the Council of Europe's enlargement and is faced with a difficult situation which demands the assistance of an adequate secretariat capable of preparing the files and making the preparatory contacts for these future accessions.

6. Moreover, in 1997, the Assembly saw an increase in its activities and responsibilities in a field set to become a priority, namely the monitoring of compliance with the obligations and commitments undertaken by member states. On 25 April 1997, a new committee on monitoring was set up.

7. The Assembly also wishes to improve the functioning of its plenary sessions in particular by introducing electronic voting and developing its research and documentation resources to render its system of electronic management fully operational.

8. Lastly, following the decision taken in 1996 to use Russian as a working language, on a par with German and Italian, the Assembly considers that it must do its utmost to inform its members by circulating adopted texts in these working languages and ensuring more effective interpretation from and into these languages.

9. The Assembly wishes to continue to expand its programme of interparliamentary co-operation which makes a major contribution to the consolidation of democratic institutions in the member states.

10. The Assembly therefore thinks it necessary to increase its appropriations for:

10.1. the Table Office secretariat and the committee secretariats;

10.2. the documentation and research service;

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1. See Doc. 7817, report of the Committee on the Budget and the Intergovernmental Work Programme, rapporteur: Mr Theis. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 28 May 1997.

10.3. working conditions of the Assembly, particularly on a linguistic and technical (electronic voting) level;

10.4. its programme of interparliamentary co-operation.

11. The Assembly stresses that these proposals are prompted by expenditure resulting from enlargement and from the new states enjoying special guest status.

12. Appended to this opinion are:

12.1. a table of requested increases for 1998 compared with the appropriations for 1997;

12.2. brief explanations of the changes.