



Opinion 206 (1998)¹

Expenditure of the Assembly for the financial year 1999

Parliamentary Assembly

1. In its [Opinion No. 201 \(1997\)](#), the Assembly put forward budgetary proposals for the 1998 financial year amounting to just over 6 MF, representing a real terms increase of some 7.5%. In the light of overall budget restrictions, the Committee of Ministers, on the proposal of the Secretary General, granted the Assembly an increase of 1 MF, of which 700 000 F was for the Assembly's Co-operation Programme, and 300 000 F to finance the creation of a specific temporary administrator post to reinforce the secretariat of the Monitoring Committee. For the rest, the Assembly's proposals remained unsatisfied, even though they stemmed directly from the enlargement of the Organisation, in particular the human and financial resources necessary for the Assembly to fulfil its increasingly important political role.

2. In some senses, therefore, the Assembly's proposals for 1999 need to take account of this accumulated backlog, but they need also to be tailored to the future, notably in terms of the goals set at the second summit, and of the direction that the Organisation is likely to take on the advice of the Committee of Wise Persons. The Assembly has constantly been a strong advocate of reform, including statutory reform, and the structure and working methods of the Assembly itself should not escape its own close scrutiny. The Assembly's proposals for 1999 result from such close examination and form part of a longer-term strategy designed to achieve optimum rationalisation and use of existing resources, whilst ensuring that the Assembly has the appropriate capacity for it to function efficiently in the new architecture of the Organisation and for it to play a prominent role in the new millennium.

3. In 1998, the Assembly created a new, fourteenth committee without there being provision for the necessary financial and staff resources. Such expansion of activity is the legitimate consequence of a political body such as the Assembly, and whilst there is a clear obligation to deploy to the full the existing resources of the Assembly, it is obvious that such expansion cannot continue whilst remaining within the existing budget.

4. Certain minimum requirements have to be met, including, as a priority, providing the Office of the Clerk with the means to recruit, retain and motivate its highly qualified and efficient permanent staff. The Assembly's proposals for 1999 form part of a strategic restructuring of the Office of the Clerk, designed, over a number of years, to create a more coherent and efficient structure. The Assembly's priority for reinforcing its Secretariat also takes account of its wish to include nationals of all member states in its Secretariat and of its intention to pay closer attention to the potential of the mass and electronic media in supporting and furthering its activities. Provision is also necessary to enable greater recourse to temporary staff, on both secondment and fixed-term contract bases, as far as specific projects and activities are concerned.

5. The Assembly's political groups also need to be able to strengthen their secretariat resources, since their role in organising and preparing the deliberations of the Assembly is crucial now that membership of the Assembly is twice the size that it was a decade ago. Here, too, a staged increase is proposed to allow the political groups to become progressively more fully operational.

6. Within the budgetary package, there has also been an effort to re-deploy financial resources according to priorities and existing patterns of expenditure. It should however be borne in mind that the appropriations in the budgetary package have not been adjusted for the effect of price increases since 1993. Thus re-deployment cannot cover all needs and there remains a shortfall in appropriations for 1999.

1. See [Doc. 8099](#), report of the Committee on the Budget and the Intergovernmental Work Programme (rapporteur: Mr Martínez). Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 26 May 1998.



7. Finally, as concerns the Co-operation Programme of the Assembly, for both 1997 and 1998, the Assembly requested that resources available be restored to their 1996 level. The requested increase of 300 000 F for 1999 represents a final instalment on the re-establishment of this level, and is designed in particular to allow the Assembly to extend its scope to recruit programme staff on limited duration contracts in connection with specific programmes.

Appendix

Appended to this opinion are:

1. a table of requested increases for 1999 compared with the appropriations for 1998;
2. brief explanations of the changes.

VOTE III —EXPENDITURE OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

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HEAD 3.1 — Staff*Sub-head 3101 — Salary, allowances and social charges of the Clerk of the Assembly*

The 1999 appropriations for this sub-head should be maintained at the same level in real terms as in 1998.

Sub-head 3102 — Remuneration of staff recruited on established posts

This appropriation covers the basic salaries, allowances (both non-recurring and periodic) and social insurance of the staff of the Office of the Clerk, which comprises the following 74 posts:

3 A6 posts	1 B6 post	8 A5 posts	6 B5 posts	12 A4 posts	10 B4 posts	A2/A3 posts	15 B3 posts	2 B2 posts
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The proposed staffing changes for 1999 form part of a longer term strategy designed to rationalise the structure of the Office of the Clerk, and to provide it with the means to maximise its efficiency. These staffing changes may be considered in relation to the various operating units of the Office of the Clerk, as follows.

- a. Executive Assistant of the Clerk : The Clerk of the Assembly, who is one of the three highest ranking officials of Secretariat, currently works without the support of a full-time executive assistant to assist him in his functions. The responsibilities of this post of Executive Assistant to the Clerk is correspondent to an A4 grade (Principal Administrator). The pressing nature of this need is reflected in the inclusion of this proposal for 1999.

- b. Table Office

The request for the upgrading of a B5 post to B6 appeared already in [Opinion No. 201 \(1997\)](#) for the 1998 budget. It is repeated for the 1999 budget.

The responsibilities and workload of the person in charge of the administrative and secretarial unit of the Table Office have multiplied considerably in recent years. This staff member supervises a team of secretaries and is responsible for the registration and publication of all Assembly documents, especially those on the agenda of the Assembly plenary sessions and of Standing Committee meetings, and for the material preparation of amendments. By way of example, the number of documents increased from 237 in 1995 to 262 in 1996 and to 260 in 1997, whereas the number of amendments went from 261 to 404 and to 407 over the same period. This staff member is also responsible for compiling and updating the biographies of Assembly members, the list of national delegations and of committee and sub-committee membership.

- c. Committee secretariats:

- Further to [Resolution 1107 \(1997\)](#) on the committee structure of the Assembly, adopted in January 1997, and following the creation of the new Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (January 1998), there are now 14 general Committees of the Parliamentary Assembly, 9 with 65 members and 5 with 45 members.
- As already stated in Opinions No. 197 (1996) and No. 201 (1997), for these committees to be fully operational, it is necessary that:
 - the 9 committees with 65 members (and 65 alternates) to have at least 3 grade A staff (a secretary at A5 level and two co-secretaries, A4 or A2/3), one B4 administrative assistant and one B2/B3 official;
 - the 5 committees with 45 members (and 45 alternates) to have two grade A staff (one secretary, A4) and one co-secretary, A2/A3), one B4 administrative assistant and one B2/3 official.
- This would give a total of 37 grade A staff and 28 grade B staff, compared with the current establishment of 31 A-grade officials (6 A5, 10 A4, and 15 A2/A3) and 20 B-grade staff (2 B5, 7 B4, 9 B3 and 2 B2).
- Reform of the committee secretariats in conformity with the principles set out above would therefore entail the following creations of posts:

3 x A5 post	3 x A2/A3 posts	7 x B4 posts	1 x B2 post
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1. Media and Communication Unit

The communication Unit of the Assembly, which currently comprises 2 A2/A3 and 1 B5 posts, and which is responsible for the Assembly's Press, Media and communication activities, including Internet, is expected to continue to develop over the coming years. The creation of an A4 post to head this Unit and to direct the communication policy of the Assembly should be foreseen at an appropriate time in the development and expansion of the activities.

Such a widespread reform of the structure of the Office of the Clerk is, for a number of reasons, and not least that of budgetary feasibility, not to be achieved overnight. Accordingly, the Assembly proposes that these establishment changes be staggered over three financial years as follows:

2. Creation of Posts :

Year I	3 x B4	1 x A2/A3	1 x A4	1 x A5	Year II	2 x B4	1 x A2/A3	1 x A4	1 x A5	Year III	2 x B4	1 x A2/A3	1 x B2	1 x A5
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For 1999, therefore, the proposals involve the creation of 1 A5 posts of Secretary to 65-member Committees, one A4 post of Executive Assistant to the Clerk, one A2/A3 post of co-secretary to a Committee and 3 B4 posts of Committee Assistant, together with the up-grading of one B5 post to B6.

The cost of these modifications to the establishment amounts to 2 925 000 F for the 1999 budget.

Following full implementation of these changes to the permanent establishment, the Assembly would propose a number of further changes, designed to produce a coherent hierarchical structure, and which would reduce the future charge to the budget.

Sub-head 3103 — Recruitment, arrival and departure expenses — Home leave

Sub-head 3104 — Overtime — Statutory and other allowances

The 1999 appropriations for sub-heads 3103 and 3104 should be maintained at the same level in real terms as in 1998.

Sub-head 3105 — Remuneration and accessory charges of temporary staff

Sub-head 3105 — Remuneration and accessory charges of temporary staff :

1. the increase in interpretation costs, resulting from the creation of the new Assembly's committee and from the need of reinforcement of the interpreters team during the sessions of the Assembly (600 000 F),
2. the cost of recruitment of temporary staff to operate the electronic voting system that the Assembly intends to take over from the European Parliament when the latter moves to its new premises at the end of 1998 (300 000 F).

Additionally, but as yet without budgetary provision since no decision has been taken by the Assembly, there is the need to bear in mind the financial consequences of various initiatives to have Assembly texts available in working languages ahead of their adoption by the Assembly. Such a proposal would of course facilitate comprehension of documentation by members of several delegations, but would greatly increase the administrative charge of the secretariat and increase the Assembly's translation costs.

Sub-head 3106 — Provision for adjustments to remuneration

The 1999 appropriation for sub-head 3106 should be maintained at the same level in real terms as in 1998.

Sub-head 3107 — Placement of national parliamentary officials on secondment to the Assembly

In 1997 the Assembly established new links with the national parliaments by inviting them to place their officials on secondment to the Assembly. This practice, which is continued in 1998, is proving to be very useful and successful. The seconded officials have contributed substantially to the work of Table Office and committee secretariats. The appropriation for 1998 assumed invitation of only two parliamentary officials.

Taking into account present and future needs of the Assembly, this number should be increased to three in 1999, and to four in the following year. An increase of 200 000 F for 1999 is therefore requested for this purpose.

HEAD 3.2

Sub-head 3201 — Allocation to the Assembly's political groups

The Assembly's political groups play an increasingly important role in the activities of the Assembly, and one which has been crucial in enabling the Assembly to maintain its operational capacity and organisational efficiency as it has had to absorb the practical consequences of the enlargement of the Organisation. However, for the political groups to play a full role, they need to be adequately staffed both in terms of level and numbers. In the medium term, a progressive increase over a number of financial years should aim to allow each group to recruit one staff member at Administrator level, and one secretarial assistant.

The allocation to Political Groups is calculated on the basis of a lump sum for secretariat assistance to each of the existing groups and additional per capita allocation according to the membership of each of the groups. Appropriations for 1997 and 1998 amounted to 4 030 000 F. Each group received a fixed allowance of 135 000 F and additional per capita allowance (some 6 000 F per member).

For 1999, an increase of 70 000 F in the fixed allowance of each group is requested in order to permit each group to remunerate the equivalent of one half-time Administrator post. The total increase requested is therefore 350 000 F (5 x 70 000 F), with the intention that this lump sum allocation for secretarial services will be gradually built up further in the years to come.

It should also be borne in mind for the future that with the increase in membership of the Assembly, there has been a parallel increase in the number of members who are not affiliated to an existing political group. Proposals for the possible creation of new political groups therefore cannot be ruled out. It is obvious that the existing appropriations under this sub-head would need to be revised accordingly.

HEAD 3.3 — *Supplies, services and other operational expenditure*

Since 1975, the appropriations under the following sub-heads have been voted in a lump sum (budgetary package). The various amounts in this package may subsequently be altered under Article 31 of the Financial Regulations.

The total requests of the Assembly for the 1999 budgetary package amount to an increase of 400 000 F. However, the Assembly wishes to stress that since 1993, despite its request for inflation indexing of these appropriations, no such increase has been granted. Even with the relatively low annual rate of inflation during this period, the non-indexing of these appropriations has led to a loss in purchasing power of an amount that might conservatively be estimated at 1 MF for the budgetary package as a whole. The Assembly's 1999 requests in respect of the package should therefore be seen in this light, and it should be borne in mind that even with the proposed increase for 1999, the appropriations of the package would remain some 600 000 F lower, in purchasing power terms, than they were in 1993.

Sub-head 3301 — Publishing and printing

The cost of publishing and printing in 1996 and in 1997 amounted to 4 MF. Estimates for 1998 are similar. Since 1997 the Office of the Clerk has regularly prepared and published – in electronic and paper form – the newsletter "The Europeans". Additionally, in January 1998, a new publication "Info-Session" began to be distributed to all the members of the Assembly. With the constantly increasing number of Assembly documents to be printed, and with new publications of the Assembly coming on-stream, it is almost impossible to reduce the global cost of printing. Therefore an increase of 300 000 F under this sub-head is required.

Sub-head 3302 — Official expenses of the President of the Assembly

The 1999 appropriation for sub-head 3302 should be maintained at the same level in real terms as in 1998.

Sub-head 3303 — Expenditure pertaining to the Private Office of the President of the Assembly

The 1999 appropriation for sub-head 3303 should be maintained at the same level in real terms as in 1998.

Sub-head 3304 — Representational expenditure, other official expenditure and travelling expenses of members of the Assembly

The 1999 appropriation for sub-head 3304 should be maintained at the same level in real terms as in 1998.

Sub-head 3305 — Official journeys

The 1999 appropriation for sub-head 3305 should be maintained at the same level in real terms as in 1998.

Sub-head 3306 — Expenses for inviting parliamentary delegations of non-member states and other guests

The 1999 appropriation for sub-head 3306 should be maintained at the same level in real terms as in 1998.

The Assembly assumes that a separate, non-recurrent budgetary provision will be made to permit the Assembly to participate in an appropriate manner in celebrations in connection with the organisation's 50th anniversary.

Sub-head 3307 — Consultation of experts

The 1999 appropriation for sub-head 3307 should be maintained at the same level in real terms as in 1998.

Sub-head 3308 — Organisation of ad hoc conferences

The 1999 appropriation for sub-head 3308 should be maintained at the same level in real terms as in 1998.

Sub-head 3309 — Grant to the International Institute for Democracy

The 1999 appropriation for sub-head 3309 should be maintained at the same level in real terms as in 1998.

Sub-head 3310 — Other expenditure not specifically provided for in this vote

The 1999 appropriation for sub-head 3310 should be maintained at the same level in real terms as in 1998.

Sub-head 3311 — Modernisation of the Assembly's equipment - p.m.

Sub-head 3312 — European Prizes .

In December 1997, the Assembly decided to sponsor the "Young Europe" category of the "Prix Europe for Television". The cost of this prize amounts to 75 000 F annually. Additionally an increase of 25 000 F would enable the activities of the Council of Europe and the Assembly to be publicised more effectively at the presentation ceremonies for these prizes and the flags or plaques of honour. Therefore a total increase of 100 000 F is necessary under this sub-head.

HEAD 3.4 — Interparliamentary activities

Sub-head 3401 — Co-operation programme of the Assembly

The Parliamentary Assembly's activities have grown considerably in the field of monitoring of commitments and co-operation with national parliaments (training of civil servants, parliamentarians, co-operation in the legislative field, assistance or observation missions, etc). This programme has made a major contribution to the consolidation of democratic institutions in the member states. In order to allow parliamentarians from all member states to participate without discrimination, and to ensure adequate secretariat input to these activities, an increase in the order of 300 000 F would be necessary. This increase would restore the Assembly's budget for the co-operation programme to its 1996 level, (the budget being reduced in the years 1997-98).