Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Recommendation 1728 (2005)[1]

Budgetary powers of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly recalls its Recommendations 1155 (1991) and 1344 (1997) on the powers of the Assembly in budgetary matters and its Opinions Nos. 256 (2005) and 257 (2005) concerning the budgets of the Council of Europe and the expenditure of the Assembly for the financial year 2006.

2. The Assembly considers that the budgetary powers of the Parliamentary Assembly contribute to the overall institutional balance at the Council of Europe and points out that a comprehensive report on this question is under preparation.

3. As regards the Council of Europe's overall budget, the Assembly regrets that the machinery in place gives it no influence over the size of the Organisation's budget or the implementation of its activities. In order to be able to assess the relevance of the Organisation's various activities and, if necessary, make recommendations to improve, correct, redirect or abandon certain activities, the Assembly should formally receive the same information as the Committee of Ministers, in line with the principle of transparency that should apply in such matters. The new results-based budgeting approach should facilitate this assessment.

4. The Assembly believes that in matters of budgetary powers, as in all other fields, the Committee of Ministers and the Assembly should be considered as partners and not as adversaries. The Assembly should define its role more in terms of the Organisation's policy and performance, and not content itself with a role of mere scrutiny and restriction.

5. Concerning its part of the budget, the Assembly considers its present situation of being supervised – by the Committee of Ministers – incompatible with the principles of true parliamentary democracy. It feels that the time has come for it to be given budgetary powers in line with its status as a parliamentary and political organ of the Council of Europe and with the normal prerogatives of a parliamentary assembly. It considers that its right to fix the annual amount of its operating expenditure, under a procedure to be agreed with the Committee of Ministers, should be acknowledged. That should include determination of the daily allowance paid to its members, which is currently decided unilaterally by the Committee of Ministers, contrary to the spirit of the decision taken in 1975 to apply the budgetary package technique to the part of the Assembly's budget comprising all its operating appropriations.

6. Greater involvement of the Assembly in the decisions concerning priorities and budget would help it maintain its institutional discipline and accountability. The Assembly should thus pursue the reforms already introduced for improving its own functioning and budgetary procedures.

7. To supervise the implementation of its budget, it will set up a specialist parliamentary body in the form of a board of auditors. The Assembly will also set up its own system for assessing its activities.

8. The Assembly will also ask its members to follow more closely the Council of Europe budget and intervene as appropriate in their respective countries.

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1. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 25 November 2005 (see Doc. 10720, report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, rapporteur : Mr Rigoni).

9. Finally, the Assembly recalls the simplified procedure for amending the Council of Europe Statute, Article 41.d of which stipulates that “amendments to Articles 23 to 35 [concerning the Assembly], 38 and 39 [concerning finance] which have been approved by the Committee and by the Assembly shall come into force on the date of the certificate of the Secretary General, transmitted to the governments of members, certifying that they have been so approved. This paragraph shall not operate until the conclusion of the second ordinary session of the Assembly”. In concrete terms, if the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly agree to modify the article in question, this can be done by using the simplified procedure which can be found in the Council of Europe Statute, rather than the usual procedure of signature and ratification by contracting parties. The Secretary General then has to inform the governments.

10. Accordingly, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers, based on Article 41.d of the Council of Europe Statute, amend Article 38 of the Statute by adding, after paragraph c, two new paragraphs as follows :

10.1. “The Assembly shall fix the amount of its expenditure, the annual increment being determined by agreement between the Committee of Ministers and the Assembly.

10.2. The Assembly shall be consulted by the Committee of Ministers before the latter fixes the amount of the overall budget of the Council of Europe for the coming year. This consultation shall take place at the earliest possible stage in order to allow the Assembly to take it into account in its opinion on the budget.”

11. The Assembly asks the Committee of Ministers to consult the Assembly by an ad hoc urgent procedure if and when a member state has not made its due contribution to the budget for a period in excess of six months.