



**Opinion 273 (2009)<sup>1</sup>**

## **Expenditure of the Parliamentary Assembly for the financial year 2010**

### Parliamentary Assembly

1. In pursuance of Resolution (53) 38 of the Committee of Ministers and Article 24 of the Financial Regulations, the Parliamentary Assembly issues an opinion each year concerning the appropriations relating to its operation. The amounts allocated to the Assembly appear in Vote III of the ordinary budget of the Council of Europe and cover its expenditure on staff, the costs associated with the functioning of its political groups and its own operating expenses, including the interparliamentary co-operation programme.
2. As the Spanish Chair of the Committee of Ministers rightly pointed out, the Parliamentary Assembly gives the Council of Europe its political impetus. Over the sixty years of its existence as a debating forum and a sounding board for the concerns of Europe's citizens, its work has proved of vital importance in promoting the values of the Council of Europe throughout the continent and elsewhere.
3. The texts (opinions, resolutions, recommendations) adopted by the Assembly provide key guidelines for the Committee of Ministers and the member states' governments and parliaments. The Assembly is the driving force behind many international treaties or standard-setting instruments, such as the European Convention on Human Rights (the Convention – ETS No. 5). Its monitoring procedure and its election observation missions make a very important contribution to the defence of pluralist democracy in Europe.
4. Furthermore, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, recently stated that "parliamentarians have an important role to play in building a sustainable human rights culture in their own country. Moreover, their role is fundamental in ensuring that a government's human rights pledges are not forgotten."
5. However, if the Assembly is to be able fully to play its role of watchdog regarding the observance of democratic standards and rules, it must have the necessary financial resources. As it must always be ready to react, a fundamental principle governs the management of its budget: covering the funding needs of all its activities. The budget must accordingly be managed with sufficient flexibility to allow it to react in real time to political developments and issues, which are often unpredictable.
6. For this reason, at their 246th meeting in June 1975 the Ministers' Deputies decided that the budgetary package technique could be applied to that part of the Assembly's budget covering its operating costs. In this context they agreed that "the development of the Assembly's budget – which is an operating budget – cannot be linked with that of the Organisation as a whole, whose evolution often depends on decisions connected with the Organisation's work programme, and also on factors totally extraneous to operational expenditure which play their part in the annual variation of the budget total."
7. To date, thanks to thrifty management, no major activity envisaged by the Assembly or its bodies has been hindered for lack of funds, despite significant cuts in the appropriations allocated to it for the last three years.

---

1. *Text adopted by the Standing Committee acting on behalf of the Assembly on 29 May 2009 (see [Doc. 11912](#), report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, rapporteur: Mr Wille).*



8. This reduction in its budget has obliged the Assembly to make huge efforts to rationalise its operations and its working methods. For instance, the Assembly has speeded up its transition to the paperless age of the new technologies, notably by replacing the final printed version of the verbatim records of its proceedings with a DVD, eliminating the printed compendiums of the Assembly's official documents, creating an Extranet site for Assembly members' exclusive use (to do away with the transmission of documents in hard copy format) and gradually reducing the number of documents printed during part-sessions.

9. In parallel with these efforts, the Assembly has decided to limit meetings of its committees and to prefer Strasbourg and Paris as locations for meetings, principally so as to save on interpretation costs. Meetings are no longer held in Budapest, or in certain locations distant from the Organisation's traditional language basins.

10. The Assembly is aware of the budget problems faced by member states of the Council of Europe due to the global economic and financial crisis. It is therefore ready to review all of its expenditure with the aim of generating new savings not affecting its core operations, so as not to increase the burden of the contributions payable to the various budgets of the Council of Europe by the member states, some of which are confronted with serious budget difficulties.

11. In view of the exceptional circumstances, the Assembly is prepared to make a 2% saving on its operating expenditure for 2010. This will primarily concern document production and distribution, elimination of the verbatim records of debates in German and Italian, elimination of the minutes of plenary sittings – which will lead to a reorganisation of the Table Office – and a reduction in the number of meetings held outside Strasbourg or Paris by the 10 committees, on the basis of one external meeting per committee every two years. Only five committees will therefore be permitted to hold an external plenary meeting in 2010. The five others must hold their meetings in either Strasbourg or Paris. These changes will allow significant savings on interpretation costs and official journey expenses.

12. Despite these budget cuts, in 2010 the Assembly will continue its monitoring procedures and factfinding missions in a number of member states, the observation of elections in states subject to the monitoring or post-monitoring procedure and the interparliamentary co-operation programme spanning several years, in accordance with its [Resolution 1548 \(2007\)](#) on the progress of its monitoring procedure.

13. Nonetheless, the Assembly does not want to pave the way for its own weakening, since it is the only purely European parliamentary institution in which national delegations representing the 47 member states of the Council of Europe regularly come together. For this reason it is against proposing more significant reductions which would affect its core operations, namely a greater reduction in meetings of its committees, and possibly even their functioning, or a reduction in the duration of its part-sessions. This is because the Assembly remains the only European parliamentary forum that allows the national parliaments of member states to debate and work together with a view to finding solutions to the challenges confronting today's Europe.

14. Moreover, the Assembly points out that, under Article 22 of the European Convention on Human Rights, it elects the judges of the European Court of Human Rights (the Court) with respect to each high contracting party. It accordingly wishes to bring together within its secretariat all of the administrative functions relating to the procedure for electing the judges, currently performed by different parts of the intergovernmental sector. For this reason, so as to comply with the Convention and avoid delays in the procedure, the Assembly wishes to set up a unit which would be responsible for all communications with the high contracting parties.

15. Lastly, the Assembly notes that its request concerning the replacement of the vote display panels with large-format video walls has been included in the 2009-2013 investment plan with the expenditure scheduled for 2011.

Appended to this opinion are:

- i. a table of the requests for 2010, presented according to the resultsbased budgeting (RBB) method, the simplification of which led the secretariat of the Assembly to present the budget under a single activity area: functioning of the Assembly;
- ii. a brief explanation of the main items of expenditure;
- iii. a table setting out the Assembly's work programme according to the RBB method.

## Appendix 1

<b>Vote III of the ordinary budget – Expenditure of the Assembly</b>	<b>Appropriations for 2010 €</b>
<b>Head 0310 – Functioning of the Assembly</b>	
<b>Staff expenditure</b>	
Sub-heads	
0000001 – Remuneration of staff recruited on established posts	8 469 300
0000003 – Remuneration and accessory charges of temporary staff	680 100
0000046 – Remuneration of staff on position	415 100
0000005 – Salary, allowances and social charges of the Secretary General of the Assembly	257 100
0000007 – Overtime – statutory and other allowances	p.m.
0000013 – Secondment of national civil servants to the Assembly	p.m.
0000016 – Recruitment, arrival and departure expenses – Home leave	31 300
<b>Total staff expenditure</b>	<b>9 852 900</b>
<b>Supplies, services and other operational expenditure</b>	
Sub-heads	
0000054 – Equipment	12 900
0000080 – Official journeys	290 000
0000095 – Representational expenditure, other official expenditure and travelling expenses of members of the Assembly	350 000
0000115 – Interpretation	1 771 300
0000116 – Translation	514 800
0000124 – Publishing and printing	410 000
0000125 – Outsourced production of document	33 000
0000129 – Consultation of experts	131 600
0000162 – Expenditure pertaining to the Private Office of the President of the Assembly	60 000
0000163 – Official expenses of the President of the Assembly	90 000
0000166 – Expenses for inviting guests of the Assembly	p.m.
0000171 – Organisation of ad hoc conferences	125 000
0000204 – Modernisation of the Assembly's equipment	p.m.
0000205 – European prizes	83 000
0000206 – Operating and maintenance costs of the electronic voting system	41 8000
0000250 – Co-operation and monitoring programme	694 300
0000370 – Allocation to the Assembly's political groups	726 800
0000392 – Other expenditure not specifically provided for in this vote	100 000
<b>Total supplies, services and other operational expenditure</b>	<b>5 434 600</b>
<b>Total vote III</b>	<b>15 287 500</b>

<b>Election of judges</b>	<b>Appropriation for 2012 €</b>
<b>Head 0310 – Functioning of the Assembly</b>	
0000046 – Remuneration of staff on position	54 000
<b>Allocation to the special account "0186 PA Vote III</b>	
0000299 – Operational expenditure	20 000

## Appendix 2

### Vote III – Expenditure of the Assembly Staff expenditure

This appropriation corresponds to the basic salaries, allowances (non-recurring and periodic) and social cover of the permanent staff of the secretariat of the Assembly (87 posts, including one specially appointed official) and of temporary staff (including seven positions).

The Assembly currently has 10 committees, nine of which have 84 members (with 84 alternates, except for the Monitoring Committee), while the tenth has 27 members (with no alternates). On 1 January 2009 the secretariat comprised 87 permanent posts, seven positions and 1 specially appointed official, breaking down as follows:

<b>Permanent posts:</b>		
1 specially appointed official		
1 A7	1 B6	1 C4
2 A6	4 B5	
11 A5	16 B4	
10 A4	13 B3	
21 A2/A3	7 B2	
<b>Positions:</b>		
4 A1/2	1 B3	(1 B4/B5)
	2 B2	

At present, the secretariat of the Assembly is organised so that the 10 Assembly committees have 52 staff members working for them (30 A-grade and 20 B-grade) and 2 staff members on fixedterm positions (including 1 B4 assigned to an A-grade post).

The remaining 42 staff members (37 permanent posts and 5 fixedterm positions) work for the Bureau of the Assembly, the Private Office of the President of the Assembly, the Table Office, the Interparliamentary Co-operation and Election Observation Units, the Parliamentary Assistance Unit, the Administration, Human Resources and Finance Unit, the Communication Unit, the Information Technology Unit or the Research and Documentation Unit.

Previous years' experience shows that the tasks of the 7 positions are not linked with the implementation of a programme but correspond to permanent work financed by the general budget of the Assembly. Therefore, to conform with reality, the 7 positions should be transformed into permanent posts.

Moreover, since the Assembly is responsible for electing the judges of the European Court of Human Rights with respect to each high contracting party, it wishes to set up a new unit within its secretariat to take charge of the entire election procedure, including communications with the high contracting parties. Part of the functions linked to this procedure are currently performed by the Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs. The transfer of these responsibilities would also require the transfer of a B4/B5 post to the Assembly secretariat or the creation of a position at the same grade.

### Supplies, services and other operational expenditure

Since 1975, following a decision by the Committee of Ministers, these allocations have been voted in the form of a single appropriation, which continues to be divided into sub-heads. If the Assembly wished to change the relative amounts in the package at a later date, either because of an overall reduction or for any other reason dictated by the implementation of the budget, such a change would be carried out by the Secretary General at the Assembly's request and in accordance with Article 31 of the Financial Regulations.

To sum up, the draft budget for 2010 amounts to €15 287 500 in real terms (not including inflation and salary adjustments for 2010). The cost of a B4/B5 post, estimated at €54 000, linked to the procedure for the election of judges and a

€20 000 allocation to the special account "0186", to meet the travel and subsistence expenses of candidates participating in the sub-committee's interviews, should be added to this amount.

The appropriations can be analysed as follows:			
Permanent and temporary staff:	€9 852 900	Unit for the selection of judges:	€54 000
Interpretation:	€1 771 300		
Translation:	€514 800		
Printing of documents:	€443 100		
Allocation to the political groups:	€726 800		
Sub-total	€13 308 900		
Activities:	€1 978 600	Allocation to special account:	€20 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>€15 287 500</b>		<b>€74 000</b>

Despite the reduction in its appropriations, in 2010 the Assembly will continue its monitoring procedures, its election observation missions in member states, its interparliamentary co-operation programme and the part of the programme concerned with training parliamentary officials of Council of Europe member states and of other parliamentary institutions. The objective of these programmes is to reinforce co-operation with the national parliaments, enhance the visibility of the Assembly's activities and respond to issues and problems identified in various Assembly reports, including those issued by its Monitoring Committee.

The Assembly has a particular role to play here. This is because it is the only purely European parliamentary institution in which national delegations representing the 47 member states of the Council of Europe regularly come together (for twenty days per year during the part-sessions in Strasbourg, plus seventy to eighty days' work between sessions on the occasion of the meetings of the committees and sub-committees, not to mention other meetings, such as Bureau meetings or those of the Standing Committee). The Assembly is the only organisation, apart from the European Parliament, that offers such a frequency and density of activity by members of national parliaments within a single international body.

The Assembly committees will continue to organise a number of thematic hearings and conferences (two or three major conferences in the course of the year). The Assembly will also continue to co-operate closely with the other European parliamentary assemblies (the European Parliament, those of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), etc.), or international parliamentary assemblies (the Pan-African Parliament, the Asian Parliamentary Assembly, the Latin American Parliament, etc.).

In addition, pursuant to [Resolution 1420 \(2005\)](#) on prospects for peace in the Middle East and the decision of the Assembly Bureau on 18 March 2005, the Sub-Committee on the Middle East will continue its co-operation with the Knesset and the Palestinian Legislative Council.

Lastly, the allocation to the political groups is based on a lump sum for secretarial assistance to each of the existing groups and an additional per capita amount, which varies according to membership.

## Appendix 3

Intervention logic	Functioning of the Assembly		Assumptions
	Performance indicators	Sources of verification	
<b>Activity area objective</b>			
Ensure the smooth functioning of the session and of the Assembly's various bodies.			
<b>Expected result 1</b> The partsessions are efficiently organised and run, and satisfy Assembly members' expectations.	At least 50% of registered speakers are given the floor. Adopted texts are transmitted to the bodies concerned.	List of speakers. Compilation of adopted texts. Minutes of the Bureau of the Assembly. Statement made by the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly to the Ministers' Deputies.	Support from secretaries of national delegations.
<b>Expected result 2</b> Committee meetings, seminars and conferences take place in accordance with members' decisions.	Committee meetings are planned. Meeting agendas, documents and reports are ready in good time.	Agendas, synopses and minutes of committee meetings. Proceedings of seminars and conferences.	Availability of members.
<b>Expected result 3</b> Interparliamentary co-operation (observation of elections and assistance for national parliaments) is managed taking due account of political developments.	Co-operation activities are brought into line with wishes and needs expressed. Election observation missions are organised in accordance with the decisions of the Bureau of the Assembly.	List of activities. Reports on election observation missions.	Support from parliaments and political groups.
<b>Expected result 4</b> Raising of the Assembly's external profile.	Media coverage of Assembly activities. Stock is taken of press releases and the number of visitors to the Assembly's website.	Press and news media (media analysis database, Factiva). Collection of statistics on media coverage.	