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Budget and priorities of the Council of Europe for the biennium 2016-2017

Report¹

Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs
Rapporteur: Mr Rudy SALLES, France, Group of the European People's Party

Summary

The future priorities of the Council of Europe must respond to a crisis of a kind unprecedented since the end of the Cold War, with a consolidation of public finances in many member States, a rise in serious violations of the rule of law and human rights and increasing inequalities. The Council of Europe's wide-ranging reform process of recent years is intended to make the Organisation more responsive to the challenges facing Europe; nonetheless its effectiveness can be maintained only if the States' political and financial commitment is guaranteed. Turkey's decision to become a major contributor to the budgets of the Council of Europe is an encouraging sign given to the Organisation to enable it to meet these challenges.

1. Reference to committee: Bureau decision, Reference 4097 of 26 January 2015.



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A. Draft opinion²

1. Europe is experiencing political and economic tensions, characterised by the consequences of the economic and financial crisis of 2008, consolidation in the public finances of many member States and serious violations of the rule of law and human rights. These phenomena undermine democratic stability and contribute to the emergence of political extremism, racism and intolerance. The Parliamentary Assembly is convinced that the Council of Europe has the recognised authority and expertise, as well as the appropriate mechanisms, to be an indispensable partner in European co-operation aimed at confronting these challenges and assisting the member States to find effective solutions to the present problems.
2. The member States trust the Council of Europe to provide a coherent response to these crises, but, in exchange for their financing, they expect the Organisation to offer real added value as compared with its cost, that is to say to be effective and efficient.
3. The Assembly notes that, during his first term of office, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr Thorbjørn Jagland, implemented a series of measures intended to enhance the effectiveness of the Council of Europe while reducing its costs, in particular its wage bill, which led to a saving of €15 million over the period under consideration.
4. The Assembly also welcomes the Secretary General's efforts to reinforce the Organisation's capacity to raise extrabudgetary resources (voluntary contributions by member and non-member States and by the European Union, signature of joint programmes with the European Union and other sources of funds) so as to make the Council of Europe even more operational. In this connection, the Assembly would underline the importance of its co-operation programmes financed with this type of resources, which focus on the problems identified in the various reports it has adopted.
5. The Assembly nonetheless considers that the non-permanent nature of these additional resources and their increasing share in the overall budget of the Council of Europe may, in the medium term, jeopardise the Organisation's financial equilibrium and the planning of its activities. This is because such resources cannot be used to offset the costs inherent in their management or to cover financing needs in respect of traditional activities or essential expenditure on investments in the upkeep, modernisation and preservation of the value of the Organisation's assets (in particular for buildings maintenance and information technology needs).
6. In view of the challenges posed for Europe by violence and conflicts and the resulting democratic instability, the Assembly considers that the Council of Europe should have more means of fulfilling its role and is concerned about the repercussions, in the medium and the long term, of the Committee of Ministers' decision to continue to apply the principle of zero nominal growth to member States' contributions to the forthcoming budget for the biennium 2016-2017.
7. The Assembly would like the Committee of Ministers to adopt budgetary flexibility measures, as suggested in its previous Opinions on the budgets and priorities of the Council of Europe, namely the carryforward of unspent appropriations without restriction from one year to the next within a biennial budget and the creation in the Council of Europe's accounts of a reserve account to be used to cover investment expenditure, fed with the full amount, or a percentage to be determined, of any unspent balance at the end of a biennial budget period. Such a flexible approach to budget planning would enhance the effectiveness of the Council of Europe's activities and help make them better suited to the changing situations of beneficiary countries.
8. The Assembly welcomes the Turkish Government's decision to propose that Turkey become a major contributor to the budgets of the Council of Europe with effect from 1 January 2016 and thanks this country's government and parliament for their support in strengthening the Organisation's capacity to fulfil its role.
9. The Assembly has taken note of the motion for a recommendation tabled by several members concerning the allocation of seats in the Parliamentary Assembly in respect of Turkey, a proposal which aims to remedy the consequences of this country's under-representation (in terms of its population, Turkey ranks third among the Council of Europe member States) by setting the number of seats to which Turkey is entitled at 18 and by including Turkish among the Assembly's working languages.
10. The Assembly calls on the Committee of Ministers to accept the Turkish Government's proposal, without, however, reducing the amounts of the other member States' contributions to the Organisation's budgets.

2. Draft opinion adopted unanimously by the committee on 26 March 2015.

11. Regarding the priorities for 2016 and 2017, the Assembly takes note of the Secretary General's strategic choices concerning the following priority fields:

11.1. strengthening the European Court of Human Rights and the principle of shared responsibility with the various Council of Europe bodies active in this field (institutional organs such as the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the Commissioner for Human Rights and other standard-setting mechanisms of the Council of Europe);

11.2. reinforcing co-operation with the member States;

11.3. upholding democratic principles;

11.4. enhancing assistance to neighbouring countries;

11.5. strengthening the European Social Charter (revised) (ETS No. 163);

11.6. strengthening cohesion between the Secretary General and the statutory organs, in particular the Parliamentary Assembly;

11.7. increasing the Council of Europe's operational capacity.

12. Following the terrorist attacks perpetrated in Paris, in Copenhagen and recently in Tunis, the Assembly gives its support to the Secretary General's initiatives for combating terrorism, radicalisation and extremism by making the best possible use of all the legal instruments of the Council of Europe and proposing new instruments.

13. The Assembly is firmly convinced that the Council of Europe's strategy for fighting terrorism should have a long-term vision and that it needs to encompass not just legal instruments, but also other activities of the Organisation, namely democratic governance, including the various aspects of elections, the fight against corruption, education, teaching, culture and inter-faith dialogue.

14. The Assembly would point out that it has acted at its own level by establishing the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance, a network of parliamentarians whose aim is to campaign against racism, hatred and intolerance in co-operation with their national parliaments, at the national and European levels, and a parliamentary anti-corruption platform.

15. The Assembly considers that all these activities must go hand in hand with the creation of a coherent, Europe-wide system of human rights protection and reinforced co-operation with member States in combating terrorism, while ensuring that States do not adopt measures which conflict with the principles and case law of the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5). In this connection, the Assembly wishes to underline the legislative role that its members must play as elected representatives sitting in the national parliaments of the member States.

16. With regard to the effectiveness of the European Convention on Human Rights and the follow-up given to the Brighton Declaration of 2012, the Assembly recalls the importance of giving the Council of Europe the financial means to fulfil its obligations without undermining its other activities and programmes, as the Assembly already proposed in its [Resolution 1856 \(2012\)](#) "Guaranteeing the authority and effectiveness of the European Convention on Human Rights" and in particular its [Recommendation 1812 \(2007\)](#) on the political dimension of the Council of Europe budget, where it suggested that minimum scales be set for member States' contributions so as to cover at least the administrative cost of a judge at the European Court of Human Rights.

17. In order to enable journalists from all member States, in particular States under monitoring procedure or post-monitoring dialogue with the Assembly, to freely and independently cover Council of Europe activities, the Assembly invites the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to reintroduce the funding of invitations for journalists to attend major events organised by the Organisation, including the part-sessions of the Assembly.

B. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Salles, rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. Since his first election in 2009, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr Thorbjørn Jagland, has implemented a series of measures intended to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the Council of Europe while reducing its costs, particularly its salary expenses. The measures taken to contain staff expenditure, namely the doubling of the period between seniority increments at the same grade for staff with a fixed-term or an indefinite-term contract and the elimination of 137 posts or positions in the Ordinary Budget since 2011, made it possible to generate €15 million in savings during Mr Jagland's first term of office.

2. In parallel with this savings effort, the Secretariat General has reinforced the Organisation's capacity to raise extrabudgetary resources (voluntary contributions by member and non-member States and by the European Union, joint programmes with the European Union and other sources of funds) so as to make the Council of Europe even more operational. These extrabudgetary resources are intended to be used in reinforcing the relevance and the impact of the co-operation activities implemented by the Secretariat General. Between 2009 and 2013, the amount of extrabudgetary resources grew by 33% in quantitative terms, from €27 million in 2009 to over €36 million in 2013.

3. However, these additional resources do not satisfy the financing needs for traditional activities and investment expenditure (buildings and information technology). The situation has become more critical since the Committee of Ministers decided to make zero nominal growth (ZNG) the rule for the 2014-2015 biennial budget (and for the 2016-2017 biennium). This means that member States' obligatory contributions are no longer adjusted by the rate of inflation recorded for France (the Organisation's host country).

4. This policy can have extremely prejudicial consequences for the Council of Europe. For example, if the member States' contributions are kept at their 2015 level over the next three years, with average inflation of 1.4% and a salary adjustment of 1.2% per annum over the same period, the differential (or shortfall) for the Organisation in terms of its revenues will total €22 million.

5. In his report on the "State of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Europe", published in May 2014, Secretary General Jagland listed the Organisation's future priorities in the face of a crisis of a kind unprecedented since the end of the Cold War. It can be observed that serious violations of human rights are on the increase all over Europe, a situation exacerbated by the economic crisis and growing inequality. The wide-ranging reform process of recent years is intended to make the Organisation more responsive to the challenges facing Europe; nonetheless its effectiveness can be maintained only if the member States' political and financial commitment is guaranteed. This is the key strategic issue for the Council of Europe in the coming years.

2. Audit of the 2012 and 2013 accounts

6. The Council of Europe's budgetary management accounts and consolidated financial statements for 2012 and 2013 were audited by the French Cour des Comptes, as external auditor, which concluded that these accounts and consolidated financial statements, which had been prepared and presented in accordance with IPSAS,³ gave a true and fair view of the Council of Europe's financial situation. The external auditor was accordingly able to issue an unqualified opinion on the Organisation's accounts.

7. Staff expenses continue to represent a significant share of operational expenditure (72.6% in 2012, 72.2% in 2013). The slight decrease noted shows that the Secretary General's measures to stabilise staff expenses are beginning to have an impact. Moreover, the general budget surplus stood at €3.21 million in 2012 and €2.96 million in 2013. The Council of Europe also sold a building (the "B" building) to the European Parliament for an amount of €6.7 million, part of which (€2.5 million) was paid into the Pension Reserve Fund as an exceptional contribution, and the remainder (€4.2 million) was used to reduce member States' obligatory contributions (by €1.9 million in 2012 and €2.3 million in 2013).

8. Lastly, the Cour des Comptes also carried out a number of performance audits on various sectors of the Secretariat General. The three performance audits implemented in 2012 concerned the reorganisation of the Secretariat, communication policy and expenditure and the Department for the Execution of Judgments. In 2013, the external auditors carried out a performance audit of the Council of Europe Liaison Office in Brussels and an overall review of the implementation of all the recommendations they had made since 2009.

3. International Public Sector Accounting Standards.

9. During their mandate (2009-2013) the external auditors had made 86 recommendations concerning different aspects of the Organisation's functioning (22 relating to the audit of the financial statements and 64 to the performance audits). They noted with satisfaction that the vast majority of these recommendations had been acted upon. By 2013, only two out of all the recommendations had not been implemented, and 10 were in the course of being implemented.

3. 2013

10. In 2013, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe proposed a major reform of the Organisation's employment policy aimed at increasing the recruitment of staff under fixed-term contracts issued for a renewable five-year term. This type of contract is intended to permit the Organisation to respond to changes in its staffing needs, in particular for activities financed with extrabudgetary resources. Other schemes will also be implemented, for example the "junior professionals" programme, modelled on the young lawyers scheme at the European Court of Human Rights.

11. The other key decision by the Committee of Ministers concerned the application of the principle of zero nominal growth to the total of member States' contributions to the Ordinary Budget in the 2014-2015 biennium. The Committee of Ministers also appointed a new external auditor for the Organisation, the Polish Supreme Audit Office (Najwyższa Izba Kontroli – NIK), for a five-year term with effect from the financial year beginning on 1 January 2014.

12. In the wake of the Brighton Declaration (April 2012), the efforts made to reinforce the effectiveness of the system of the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5) at the European and national levels led to the signature, in 2013, of Protocols Nos. 15 and 16 (CETS Nos. 213 and 214) amending the Convention.

13. Three conferences of specialised ministers were also held in 2013: the 10th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers of Culture (15 and 16 April 2013, Moscow, Russian Federation), the 24th session of the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education (26 and 27 April 2013, Helsinki, Finland) and the first Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Media and the Information Society (7 and 8 November 2013, Belgrade, Serbia).

14. The Council of Europe also conducted multi-disciplinary and transversal activities to combat organised crime, cybercrime, trafficking in human beings, terrorism and counterfeiting of medical products. It adopted and promoted Europe-wide, mutually reinforcing standards in the criminal justice field and in other legislative spheres. Regarding cybercrime, mention can be made of the establishment of a Council of Europe Programme Office on Cybercrime in Bucharest.

15. Lastly, the holding of a new-format World Forum for Democracy in Strasbourg made it possible to bring together a broad range of targeted contributions and to hold substantive debates. However, while the Forum was well received by the individual participants and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the governments, European institutions and global agencies were more reserved.

16. The Assembly itself continued to give a new impetus to the political action of the Council of Europe. It received visits by a number of leading political personalities (in particular the President of Germany, Joachim Gauck, the President of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan, and the President of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili) and debated many reports, including on the honouring of obligations and commitments by certain member States (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria and the Republic of Moldova). It also awarded the first Václav Havel Human Rights Prize to Mr Ales Bialiatski of Belarus.

4. 2014

17. The main event to leave its mark on 2014 was, without doubt, the situation in Ukraine. The Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Secretary General were all very involved in this matter. For example, the Assembly signalled its disagreement with the policy of the Russian Federation, particularly the annexation of Crimea, by taking sanctions against the Russian parliamentary delegation, depriving it of certain rights for 2014. The Secretary General, for his part, set up an International Advisory Panel on Ukraine, whose task it was to ensure that the investigations into the violent incidents which had taken place from 30 November 2013 onwards in Ukraine met all the requirements of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Court's case law, and devised a series of immediate measures to complement the 2011-2014 Action Plan for Ukraine, reflecting the changes in the country's situation.

18. Among the other important events, it is worth noting the entry into force on 1 August 2014 of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210, "Istanbul Convention"). This convention would almost certainly not have come into force so quickly had it not been for the mobilisation of the members of the Parliamentary Assembly through a Parliamentary Network on Women Free from Violence, managed by the secretariat of the Assembly's Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination.

19. Two other conventions sponsored by the Assembly were adopted by the Committee of Ministers, namely the Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions (CETS No. 215), a new agreement which is a major step forward in safeguarding the integrity of sport and sports ethics and has been open for signature since 18 September 2014, and the Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs, which will soon be open for signature by the member States.

20. In this context, it is worth pointing to the existence of the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (CETS No. 201, "Lanzarote Convention"), which the Assembly actively supports through the work of its Network of Contact Parliamentarians to stop sexual violence against children, and to that of the Convention on the Counterfeiting of Medical Products and Similar Crimes involving Threats to Public Health (CETS No. 211, "MEDICRIME Convention"), not yet in force but which a growing number of member States are willing to sign.

21. As to the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (North-South Centre), it is regrettable that its survival has come under threat with the withdrawal of two member States (Slovenia and Italy),⁴ which will have a significant budgetary impact. The weakening of this Council of Europe body, a true link between the North and the South for which the Assembly called for support in [Recommendation 1893 \(2009\)](#), is difficult to understand at a time when co-operation between the Council of Europe and neighbouring Mediterranean countries, particularly Tunisia and Morocco, is being stepped up.

22. In the human resources field, the main features of 2014 were the entry into force of the revised contractual policy, whose aim is to increase the Organisation's staffing flexibility, and its two corollaries, which are a moratorium on granting indefinite-term contracts until the beginning of 2018 and the recruitment of staff on five-year fixed-term contracts. Questions can be raised, nonetheless, about the medium-term efficiency of such a policy, which could end up weakening the pensions system of the Organisation's permanent staff by depriving it of stable resources for want of contributions over the long term, and lead to a genuine loss in the attractiveness of the Council of Europe as an employer.

23. As to the financial resources made available to the Council of Europe, it is worth noting the increase in the overall volume of extraordinary receipts, particularly as a result of the establishment of closer links with the European Commission. In total, over €42 million in voluntary contributions were paid to the Council of Europe in 2014.

24. The Assembly, for its part, received €340 000 in voluntary contributions in 2014 for all its activities (the parliamentary dimension of the campaign for the promotion of the Istanbul Convention, the One in Five Campaign to stop sexual violence against children, the Europe Prize and the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize), along with €84 000 in connection with emergency measures for Ukraine. Thanks should be extended at this point to the member States and institutions which provide regular support for the Assembly's co-operation activities.

25. Lastly, 2014 was a year of many elections, both internally, with the election of Mr Thorbjørn Jagland for a second five-year term, and at an international level, with the observation by the Parliamentary Assembly of presidential and parliamentary elections in six member or non-member States. The Assembly also awarded its second Václav Havel Human Rights Prize to Mr Anar Mammadli (Azerbaijan).

5. Priorities for 2016-2017

26. The Council of Europe's next biennial budgetary cycle falls within a difficult context characterised both by public finance consolidation in the member States and by a growing number of serious human rights violations throughout Europe (particularly corruption, terrorism, attacks on freedom of expression, hate speech and conflicts). Yet, our Organisation has recognised expertise and authority, which make it an indispensable partner in European co-operation.

4. Croatia acceded to the North-South Centre on 18 February 2015.

27. However, while the member States consider that the Council of Europe can provide a coherent response to the violations described above, they also expect it, in exchange for their financing, to be both efficient and effective, in the sense that the Organisation offers real added value compared with its cost.

28. When it adopted the budget for the 2014-2015 biennium, the Committee of Ministers imposed on the Organisation the principle of ZNG, more specifically in member States' contributions. The Committee of Ministers has renewed its commitment to ZNG for the 2016-2017 biennial budget. It applies to the general budget, but not to salaries, which are managed at the overall level of the six co-ordinated organisations.⁵

29. Consequently, the main challenges which the Council of Europe must face are of a budgetary and financial nature and are centred on five main issues:

- the need to finance the lack of budgetary resources caused by the ZNG policy, which would lead to a shortfall of €22 million by 2021, a figure which corresponds to the budgets of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities combined;
- the need to finance new activities generated by emerging themes and deriving from new legal standards (anti-terrorism measures, freedom of expression, corruption, Internet governance, etc.);
- the need to finance current and future investment needs. The shortfall in investment is estimated at €34 million and current capital expenditure appropriations, capped at €4.9 million per year, are not enough to cover the needs, particularly in new information technologies and in the upkeep of the Council of Europe's buildings in Strasbourg;
- the need to raise extrabudgetary resources. These have increased by a third since 2010, but the administrative levies of 7% made by the Organisation on these contributions do not cover all the costs charged to the Ordinary Budget for the support functions relating to the activities;
- the need to operate with flexibility in a constrained budget environment.

30. Given the growing difficulties, budgetary flexibility measures are needed. In its Opinions on the budgets and priorities of the Council of Europe,⁶ the Assembly proposed that the unspent balance at a financial year end should not be returned to the member States but be left at the Organisation's disposal and placed in a reserve account. Moreover, in [Opinion 281 \(2011\)](#) on budgets and priorities of the Council of Europe for the financial years 2012-2013, the Assembly also asked that it should be possible to carry forward any unspent appropriations without restriction from one year to the next. These suggestions by the Assembly were rejected by the Committee of Ministers.

31. Against this background, the Committee of Ministers asked the Secretary General to draw up proposals on the long-term budgetary sustainability and efficiency of the Organisation in the context of his reform process.

32. The action planned or already taken by the Secretary General to meet the Committee of Ministers' demands is centred on two requirements:

- The need to increase budgetary flexibility by several means:
 - the establishment of an Emergency Fund to respond to emerging crisis situations and any unplanned event requiring rapid action and funding;
 - the carrying forward of unspent appropriations from one year to the next within the biennial budget (see above);
 - the use of cash resources as an internal loan facility to finance investment projects (this principle has been applied in the past to finance voluntary staff redundancy schemes);
 - an innovative strategy to finance investment needs through the creation of an Investment Fund;
 - the establishment of a "Headquarters Utilisation Fund" based on the facilities set up by other international organisations (such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)).

5. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the European Space Agency (ESA), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Council of Europe, the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) and the European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT).

6. See, in particular, [Opinions 268 \(2008\)](#), [279 \(2010\)](#) and [281 \(2011\)](#).

- The need to increase the long-term efficiency and effectiveness of the Council of Europe, in particular:
 - its organisational performance (as already initiated through the rationalisation of governmental structures, the review of Council of Europe conventions, the establishment of the Office of the Directorate General of Programmes in charge of overall planning and co-ordination of co-operation activities financed with extrabudgetary resources, and an orientation towards results);
 - its governance and organisational structures (better co-ordination between institutions and restructuring of the Secretariat). In this respect, it should be noted that the Assembly has already satisfied this requirement by means of a reform in 2011;
 - its human capital (the right people and the right competences) and cost containment (rationalisation of operational spending and control of the wage bill).

33. During his first term of office, Secretary General Jagland, already implemented a large number of reforms intended to enhance the Council of Europe's efficiency and effectiveness. Most of the organisational reforms have been completed; the challenge now is to gauge the efficiency of the Council of Europe's activities.

34. Although the budgetary situation for 2016-2017 is tight, there are positive signs nonetheless which could result in a loosening of the financial stranglehold in which the Council of Europe finds itself. Through a letter from its foreign minister, Turkey has expressed the desire to become the sixth major contributor to the Ordinary Budget, on the same footing as the five current ones.⁷ At the same time, a motion for recommendation was tabled by Assembly members to increase the number of representatives of the Turkish Parliament in the Parliamentary Assembly to 18 and to make Turkish one of the Assembly's working languages.

35. If Turkey becomes a major contributor to the Ordinary Budget from 1 January 2016 onwards, its contribution will represent a windfall of some €20 million for the Council of Europe, taking all the budgets together. This increase would allow the Organisation to face the 2016-2017 biennium with more equanimity.

36. It remains to be seen, however, whether the Committee of Ministers will formally accept Turkey's request to become a major contributor to the Ordinary Budget and whether it will decide to maintain the current level of contributions of all the member States, including the current major contributors. We know already that some States would like to impose a freeze of the upper limit on the Ordinary Budget for the 2016-2017 biennium. If a majority of member States were in favour of this, it is almost certain that Turkey would no longer want to become a major contributor to the Ordinary Budget.

37. The member States might also take this opportunity to review the amounts of some of the minimum scales applied to the Ordinary Budget, as the Assembly suggested in [Recommendation 1812 \(2007\)](#) on the political dimension of the Council of Europe budget. In its report on "Guaranteeing the authority and effectiveness of the European Convention on Human Rights" ([Doc. 12811](#)), the rapporteur, Ms Marieluise Bemelmans-Vidéc, indicated an estimate of €333 667⁸ as the annual cost to the Council of Europe's budget of employing a judge at the European Court of Human Rights, which is more than the annual contribution made by 15 member States.⁹

38. If we turn now to the activities and priorities for 2016-2017, in his Statutory Declaration following his re-election and his speech to the Assembly on 29 January 2015, the Secretary General set out the main lines of his strategic vision¹⁰ and his action for the forthcoming months:

- strengthening the European Court of Human Rights and the principle of shared responsibility with the Council of Europe bodies active in this field (institutional organs such as the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the Commissioner for Human Rights and other standard-setting mechanisms of the Council of Europe);
- reinforcing co-operation with the member States;
- upholding democratic principles;
- enhancing assistance to neighbouring countries;

7. France, Germany, Italy, Russian Federation and United Kingdom.

8. Calculated by adding the cost – to the Organisation – of a judge, plus the cost of one-third of a B3 staff member and the cost of one A2 staff member.

9. See the table of national contributions to the Council of Europe budgets for 2014 (document CM(2014)1).

10. Information document SG/Inf(2014)34 of 16 September 2014.

- strengthening the European Social Charter (revised) (ETS No. 163);
- strengthening cohesion between the Secretary General and the statutory organs, particularly the Parliamentary Assembly;
- increasing the Council of Europe's operational capacity.

39. However, the main topical theme, particularly after the attacks in Paris and Copenhagen at the beginning of this year, is probably the fight against terrorism, radicalisation and extremism. The Council of Europe has legal instruments to combat this scourge, focusing on three main areas:

- strengthening legal action against terrorism through the legal arsenal which the Organisation already possesses or is in the process of building up through its conventions against terrorism¹¹ and its intergovernmental committees (such as the Committee of Experts on Terrorism, CODEXTER);
- safeguarding fundamental values through existing legal instruments and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights;
- tackling the causes of terrorism through cultural dialogue or the No Hate Speech Movement and tangible measures in the fields of education, prisons and the Internet to combat radicalisation.

40. The Assembly fully supports these three areas of action and has already acted at its own level by establishing, in particular, a network of 39 parliamentarians, inspired by the No Hate Speech Movement, called the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance. The network will work under the responsibility of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination and its aim is to campaign against racism, hatred and intolerance, in co-operation with their national parliaments, at national and European level.

41. All of our activities must, moreover, go hand in hand with the creation of a coherent Europe-wide system of human rights protection and reinforced co-operation with member States to combat terrorism, while ensuring that they do not adopt measures which conflict with the principles of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Court's case law. As a result, it is important to continue negotiations with the European Union bodies to enable the European Union to accede to the Convention.¹²

11. The European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism (ETS No. 90) and the protocol thereto ((ETS No. 190, not yet in force); the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism (CETS No. 196).

12. In December 2014, the Court of Justice of the European Union issued an opinion in which it found that the current draft of the agreement on the accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights was not compatible with European Union law.