Parliamentary Assembly
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Resolution 2288 (2019)[1]

Expenditure of the Parliamentary Assembly for the biennium 2020-2021

Parliamentary Assembly

1. In accordance with Committee of Ministers Resolution (53) 38 on the budgetary system of the Consultative Assembly and Article 24 of the Financial Regulations, the Parliamentary Assembly issues an opinion concerning the expenditure relating to its operation. The amounts allocated to the Assembly in the ordinary budget of the Council of Europe cover its expenditure on staff and the costs associated with its own functioning, including the functioning of its political groups. Since 2010, the Assembly has presented the opinion concerning its own expenditure in the form of a resolution.

2. The preparation of the Assembly's opinion on the budget and priorities of the Council of Europe and of the resolution on its own expenditure for the biennium 2020-2021 is taking place in a strange context. The Assembly is required to comment on Council of Europe priorities on the basis of the participation of the 47 member States in the Council of Europe's budget, whereas the reality of the situation should lead us to present an opinion based on the actual situation facing the Council of Europe, in other words without the funding from one of the five major contributors, namely the Russian Federation. The Assembly recalls that the Council of Europe is an international organisation of a political nature, without an economic or gainful aim, set up by sovereign States and which relies on contributions by its member States for its funding.

3. The Assembly is aware of the challenges of the budget for the next biennium, given the uncertainty surrounding the Russian Federation's non-payment of its contributions to the Council of Europe's budgets, and has taken note of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe's contingency plan of a €32.4 million reduction for the ordinary budget spread over a three-year period starting in the second half of 2019. In this context, the Assembly has been asked to proceed with a 15% reduction in its budget.

4. The Assembly points out that, at the meeting between the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and its Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs in January 2019, the General Rapporteur on the Budget made a proposal on identifying alternatives to a reduction in the budget, in particular the assignment of debt to a third party, a proposal which the Assembly's Presidential Committee supported at its meeting on 24 January 2019.

5. Before agreeing to any other cuts in its budget, the Assembly therefore calls for all alternative options, including the assignment of debt to a third party, to be studied seriously by the Secretary General and the Committee of Ministers.

6. Having made these preliminary comments, the Assembly refers to its Resolution 2277 (2019) "Role and mission of the Parliamentary Assembly: main challenges for the future" and recalls that it must continue to be the political driving force of the Council of Europe, notably by addressing challenges to human rights, the rule of law and democracy, both at national and at regional level, as well as the societal evolutions faced by its member States. As a forum for sharing best practices and experience, the Assembly provides national parliaments and States with the support and guidance they need to ensure well-functioning democracy and respect for the rule of law.

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1. *Assembly debate* on 25 June 2019 (21st Sitting) (see Doc. 14901, report of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs, rapporteur: Mr Mart van de Ven). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 25 June 2019 (21st Sitting).

7. The Assembly's action ties in with the three pillars of the Council of Europe's Programme and Budget, namely human rights, the rule of law and democracy. Its work must contribute to the implementation of various cross-sectoral multi-annual strategies adopted by the Council of Europe (in particular in the areas of children's rights, gender equality and internet governance) and, where appropriate, the Assembly may propose new standards in new areas or on emerging issues such as new technologies, digitisation or artificial intelligence.

8. The Assembly supports the efficient implementation at national level of Council of Europe standards and conventions and of the conclusions of the various monitoring bodies and mechanisms, in particular regarding the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5) and the role of national parliaments as guarantors of human rights in Europe.

9. The Assembly also encourages parliamentary involvement in the promotion and implementation of other key Council of Europe instruments by which it sets great store, namely the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210, "Istanbul Convention"), the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (CETS No. 201, "Lanzarote Convention") and the Council of Europe Convention on the Counterfeiting of Medical Products and Similar Crimes involving Threats to Public Health (CETS No. 211, "Medicrime Convention").

10. The Assembly, referring to its Resolution 2271 (2019) and Recommendation 2150 (2019) on strengthening co-operation with the United Nations in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, considers that various aspects of its work contribute to the achievement of this agenda and will help member States to assess progress when preparing their national reviews. In the context of the biennium 2020-2021, special effort will be made to increase parliamentary involvement in this process, to translate the Sustainable Development Goals into national action and raise the electorate's awareness about the impact they have on their daily lives.

11. Gender equality and gender mainstreaming will be key aspects of all Assembly policies and activities, as provided for in the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023. There will be a special focus on eliminating violence against women, and the Assembly will continue its activities aimed at promoting and protecting children's rights, promoting diversity and eliminating discrimination on all grounds.

12. In the area of election observation, the Assembly will continue to observe parliamentary and presidential elections in countries under its monitoring and post-monitoring dialogue procedures, in close co-operation with the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission). Special attention will be devoted to dispute-resolution procedures and the funding of political parties and election campaigns, as well as the abuse of public resources for the benefit of ruling parties.

13. The fight against corruption and money laundering will remain on the agenda of the committees, bearing in mind the implementation of the recommendations of the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) following the report by the Independent Investigation Body on the allegations of corruption within the Parliamentary Assembly (IBAC).

14. In the area of inter-parliamentary co-operation, the Assembly will continue implementing various assistance and co-operation programmes suited to the needs of parliamentary institutions, in close co-operation with the committee secretariats. It will continue to hold multilateral seminars for parliamentarians and parliamentary committee staff on supervision of the execution of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights.

15. Other co-operation activities will be carried out concerning, for instance, the parliamentary dimension of European Union–Council of Europe joint programmes, such as phase three of the South Programme (SPIII), which will end in 2020, and the inter-parliamentary co-operation programme for Morocco (2018-2021). The Assembly will continue its work in connection with the action plan drawn up for Ukraine and the component on strengthening parliamentary capacity to implement Council of Europe standards and policies in Ukraine (Phase II) and also the plan for Georgia, subject to available resources.

16. The Assembly will continue its policy of seeking financial resources from governments and parliaments with a view to implementing in 2020-2021 its programme entitled Promoting European and International Standards through Parliamentary Action, with particular focus on public health, empowering and protecting children, women's right to live free from violence and the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance.

17. In this connection, the Assembly wishes to express its sincere appreciation to those member States and their parliaments (in particular Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and Switzerland) which, through their contributions, have enabled it (during the biennium 2018-2019) to finance Assembly activities, and to the Czech Government, the Václav Havel Library and the Charter 77 Foundation, which contribute generously to the outreach and prestige of the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize.

18. In the coming biennium, the Assembly will continue to carry out the activities provided for in its Rules of Procedure, notably by holding various elections in accordance with statutory and convention requirements (Deputy Secretary General, Secretary General of the Assembly, judges of the European Court of Human Rights) and promoting the various European distinctions it awards (Europe Prize, Václav Havel Human Rights Prize and the Museum Prize).

19. In terms of external communication and visibility, the Assembly will enrich its website and enable parliamentarians and all other users to download the video recordings of debates during plenary sessions. The Assembly will also continue to develop new tools and content for its accounts on Facebook (five separate pages) and Twitter (six accounts), as well as audiovisual activities such as the television magazine, “The Session”, its own YouTube channel and a new weekly activities e-newsletter for members.

20. Regarding the efforts requested of the Assembly, it is worth noting that a 15% reduction in the Assembly’s budget compared to the appropriations foreseen in 2019 represents a cut of some €2.2 million (including €1.4 million on staff expenditure). It should be noted that redundancy payments for the early departure of staff are not included in the contingency plan, except for an amount set aside for this purpose in the framework of the Programme and Budget 2018-2019.

21. The implementation of the contingency plan means the freezing of permanent posts in the Assembly’s secretariat (with the 15% scenario) and a substantial reduction of appropriations to employ temporary staff.

22. The required savings in the operational activities budget for the year 2020-2021 could be achieved through:

– a possible change of the method of preparation of verbatim reports of plenary sessions;

– the possible suppression of Russian as a working language of the Assembly (in line with Rule 28.3 of the Rules of Procedure);

– possible further reductions in interpretation in working languages provided in committees;

– the possible reorganisation of plenary sessions of the Assembly (fewer days of plenary sittings of the Assembly per year).

23. For the past several years the Assembly has contributed to the efforts called for to remain within a zero-nominal-growth budget. In 2018, the Assembly reduced its expenditure by €1.5 million following Turkey’s decision to discontinue its major contributor status. Over the last ten years, the share of the Assembly's budget in the Council of Europe's ordinary budget has decreased from 7.2% in 2009 to 6.5% in 2019 and the number of posts in the Assembly secretariat has decreased from 94 in 2009 to 84 in 2019.

24. The Assembly reiterates its call on member States to return to zero real growth, that is to say at least to include inflation in their contributions, so as to stabilise the Organisation’s resources and thereby enable the Council of Europe to continue to fulfil its mandate for member States.

Appended to this resolution are:

i. a brief explanation of the main items of expenditure;

ii. a table setting out the Assembly’s work programme according to the results-based budgeting method.

Appendix 1 – Expenditure of the Assembly

Staff expenditure

1. 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 and of temporary staff.

2. The information provided here is based on the current structure of the Assembly comprising 9 committees. As at 1 May 2019, the secretariat comprised 84 permanent posts and positions, and 1 specially appointed official (Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly), broken down as follows:

Permanent posts	
2 A6	1 B6
7 A5	5 B5
9 A4	10 B4
23 A2/A3	17 B3
	6 B2
Positions	
3 A2/A3	1 B3

3. At present, the secretariat of the Assembly is organised so that the 9 Assembly committees have 46 staff working for them (comprising 29 A-grade and 17 B-grade permanent staff members).

4. The remaining 38 staff members work for the Bureau of the Assembly, the Private Office of the President of the Assembly, the Table Office, the Election Observation Division, the Parliamentary Projects Support Division, the Central Division, the Communication Division and the Information Technology Unit.

5. Since 2009, due to the zero-growth policy in nominal terms and following Turkey's decision in 2018 to discontinue its major contributor status, the Assembly has reduced by 10 the number of its posts or positions.

6. Within the contingency plan, out of a current total of 84 permanent posts and positions (44 A and 40 B), several would have to be frozen already in 2019 (see the tables below):

Number of posts to be frozen – Scenario 15% budgetary cuts					
	2019	**2020**	**2021**	**2022**	**TOTAL**
Compulsory retirements	1	-	3	3	7
Other posts	2	4	2	-	8
TOTAL	3	4	5	3	15

Supplies, services and other operational expenditure

7. In recent years, the Assembly has made substantial savings by rationalising its work to reduce its operational expenditure. In particular in 2018, following Turkey’s decision to discontinue its major contributor status, the Assembly had to cut its budget by 9.47%, which led to the ending of the use of Turkish as a working language at the Assembly, as the funding for it was no longer available.

8. The functioning of the Assembly covers the following range of tasks:

– holding of the ordinary session divided into four part-sessions (taking place in January, April, June and September/October of each year);

– meetings of the Standing Committee between the part-sessions, held at a frequency of three meetings per year;

– meetings of the Bureau and the Presidential Committee;

– meetings, during and outside the four part-sessions of the Assembly, for each of the nine general committees, sub-committees and ad hoc committees of the Assembly and the Bureau;

– conferences, colloquies, seminars and parliamentary hearings;

– activities coming under the Assembly’s programme of inter-parliamentary co-operation;

– visits by rapporteurs in connection with the preparation of reports, including to countries subject to monitoring of the honouring of member States' obligations and commitments or to the post-monitoring dialogue;

– election observation.

9. In 2020-2021, the Assembly will continue to carry out its priority tasks and pursue its objectives in accordance with its Resolution 2277 (2019), namely:

– continuing to be the political driving force of the Council of Europe, notably by addressing challenges to human rights, the rule of law and democracy, both at national and at regional level, while giving priority to measures to ensure the proper functioning of democracy and respect for the rule of law;

– supporting the efficient implementation of several groundbreaking Council of Europe standards at national level, through public awareness raising;

– ensuring parliamentary involvement in the promotion and implementation of key Council of Europe instruments, in particular the Istanbul Convention, the Lanzarote Convention and the Medicrime Convention;

– contributing to the achievement of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

– contributing to the implementation of various cross-sectoral multi-annual Council of Europe strategies (in particular in the areas of children's rights, equality between women and men and internet governance);

– taking part in the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy for 2018-2023, including within the Assembly, with a special focus on human rights and the gender dimension, as well as on eliminating violence against women;

– helping national parliaments to check the conformity of legislation with the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights more effectively and strengthen their ability to monitor the execution of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights.

10. In addition, the Assembly will continue over the next biennium to seek financing for specific major projects to be carried out by some of its committees:

– promoting public health through parliamentary action and empowering and protecting children through this action;

– the Parliamentary Network Women Free from Violence;

– the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance and its five priority themes: hate speech, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, anti-Gypsyism, homophobia and transphobia.

11. With regard to the other co-operation activities, the Assembly will continue its awareness-raising work among parliaments concerning their role in supervising the execution of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights and its specific co-operation activities in connection with the parliamentary dimension of several European Union–Council of Europe joint programmes, such as phase three of the South Programme (SPIII), which is due to end in 2020, the inter-parliamentary co-operation programme for Morocco (2018-2021) and the action plans for Georgia and Ukraine.

12. Regarding the electoral process, the Assembly will continue to observe parliamentary and presidential elections in countries under its monitoring and post-monitoring dialogue procedures, in close co-operation with the Venice Commission. Special attention will be devoted to dispute-resolution procedures and the funding of political parties and election campaigns, and the abuse of public resources for the benefit of ruling parties.

13. Lastly, the Assembly will also continue to support its political groups through their allocation, which is based on a lump sum for secretarial assistance paid to each of the existing groups along with an additional per capita amount which varies according to their membership.

14. To sum up, the draft budget for 2020 and 2021 is the same as the budget approved by the Committee of Ministers for 2019 (it does not take account of the three-year contingency plan for the ordinary budget which might take effect on 1 July 2019). It amounts to:

Year	Staff[2]	Other expenditure	Total
2020	€9 690 900	€4 987 900	€14 678 800
2021	€9 690 900	€4 987 900	€14 678 800

9. If the contingency plan were to be implemented, the requested reduction in the budget of the Assembly would be the following for the years from 2019 to 2022.

15% reduction

Year	Staff	Other expenditure	Total
2019	–€214 800	–€118 800	–€333 600
2020	–€504 100	–€278 900	–€783 000
2021	–€388 700	–€394 400	–€783 100
2022	–€324 200		–€324 200
TOTAL	–€1 431 800	–€792 100	–€2 223 900

2. Based on the 2019 budget (excluding pension contributions).

Appendix 2 – Functioning of the Assembly

Intervention logic	Performance indicators
Expected result 1 – Sessions/committees The part-sessions, committee meetings, hearings and conferences were organised by an efficient secretariat in line with members' expectations.	Percentage of registered speakers able to take the floor (target: 70%). Number of meetings per committee held each year. Number of conferences and hearings organised with committee meetings. Degree of satisfaction of parliamentarians about the assistance provided before, during and after part-sessions and committee meetings.
Expected result 2 – Co-operation Parliaments of relevant member States have benefited from inter-parliamentary co-operation programmes implemented to respond to specific needs and priorities of the Council of Europe and national parliaments.	Number of co-operation programmes drawn up. Evidence of the quality and relevance of organised activities.
Expected result 3 – Election observation The Assembly and parliaments of relevant member States have received observation reports which evaluate parliamentary or presidential elections and include targeted recommendations.	Number of election observation mission reports submitted to the Assembly. Evidence of improvement (change in national law and practices) between visits.
Expected result 4 – Communication and visibility Public opinion in member States has been informed of the activities of the Assembly and of its members through traditional and social media.	Number of articles published in print media in which activities of the Assembly are reflected. Percentage increase in the number of external users of the Assembly's website. Number of interviews via Media Box.