Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 2377 (2021)[1]

Expenditure of the Parliamentary Assembly for the biennium 2022-2023

Parliamentary Assembly

1. In keeping with Committee of Ministers Resolution (53) 38 on the budgetary system of the Consultative Assembly and with Article 20 of the Financial Regulations, the Parliamentary Assembly issues an opinion on its expenditure each year. The sums allocated to the Assembly from the ordinary budget of the Council of Europe cover staff and operating costs, including those of the political groups. Since 2010 the Assembly has presented its opinion concerning its own expenses in the form of a resolution.

2. The Covid-19 pandemic made 2020 a very complicated year for the Council of Europe's member States and their populations, and the Assembly itself had to deal with the tremendous impact of the pandemic on its own work. It managed this by adapting its procedures and working methods, through the modification of its Rules of Procedure by Resolution 2349 (2020) "Modification of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure on alternative arrangements for the organisation of Parliamentary Assembly part-sessions" and Resolution 2350 (2020) "Modification of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure", enabling it to hold meetings of its committees and the enlarged Standing Committee as well as, since January 2021, its part-sessions in an alternative way.

3. New videoconferencing technologies (in particular the KUDO platform, with interpretation in five languages) made it possible for the Assembly to carry out its activities effectively in 2020 and to overcome the numerous restrictions on its members' movements. However, organising these long-distance meetings was a costly process for the Assembly. This additional financial burden was absorbed by savings made in other areas of the Assembly's spending.

4. The Assembly welcomes the Committee of Ministers' decision to implement a digital strategy to rise to the challenges created by the exponential increase in requests for videoconference meetings to ensure the continuity of its own business and that of the other sectors of the Council of Europe in times of crisis.

5. The Assembly hopes that once the new digital strategy is in place it will be free of the budgetary constraints linked to the use of the KUDO platform and will have computer tools that allow its parliamentarians to work more effectively. It has already taken steps towards technological modernisation with the online registration of members at committee meetings and part-sessions, along with speakers and substitutes, a secure electronic voting system to elect judges of the European Court of Human Rights and the highest officials of the Organisation, and it will continue this transformation with a view to becoming a paperless Assembly.

6. Recalling its Resolution 2349 (2020) and the importance of guaranteeing its permanent role as a pan-European forum for interparliamentary dialogue, the Assembly also stresses the importance of continuing to base its work on face-to-face meetings between its members, which allow for rich exchanges and are indispensable for the work of a multilateral organisation. Online meetings should be regarded as a complementary working method that allows for greater flexibility, and as an exceptional measure in the face of exceptional circumstances.

1. *Text adopted by the Standing Committee*, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 28 May 2021 (see Doc. 15283, report of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs, rapporteur: Mr Tiny Kox).

7. In addition, 2020 also proved to be a year for serious thinking, which gave rise to the drafting of a new strategic framework presented by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, reflecting the priorities of the Council of Europe's mission for 2022-2025. The Assembly, for its part, adopted Resolution 2369 (2021) "The Assembly's vision for the strategic priorities of the Council of Europe" at its April 2021 part-session.

8. The Assembly is pleased that this new four-year strategic framework implements the multiannual budgetary planning approach it called for over ten years ago in its Opinion No. 272 (2009) "Budgets of the Council of Europe for the financial year 2010", in which it argued that the Council of Europe should plan its work for the long term. Doing this results in better cohesion, continuity, stability, transparency and foreseeability.

9. As one of the two statutory bodies of the Council of Europe and the Organisation's political driving force, the Assembly intends to play its role effectively, and to do this it needs additional resources, especially after years of cost-cutting. That is why particular attention must be paid to the Assembly's needs in the budget for the next budgetary period. Additional means should not be considered as additional costs but rather as an investment that is essential to the effectiveness of the Council of Europe.

10. In this context, the Assembly takes note that the renovation of the Chamber of the Palais de l'Europe, provided for in the Capital Master Plan but deferred *sine die* because of the Covid-19 pandemic, will be carried out in the course of the biennium 2022-2023, so it should be possible for it to be used at full capacity in the second half of the four-year cycle 2022-2025.

11. The Assembly's budget should also contribute to the viability of the work done by the political groups, which are considered as the backbone of the Assembly. Discussions should take place in the Assembly on how to develop a flexible approach to the political groups' budgets and guarantee their financial viability, to make sure that the creation or disappearance of a political group does not affect the work of the existing groups. Creating one or more new political groups increases the Assembly's operating costs in a manner that could only be offset by an increase in the Assembly's budget. In the meantime, other solutions shall also be explored as soon as possible.

12. As a multilateral political platform, the Assembly brings together members of parliament from the 47 member States, observer States and partners for democracy to identify new problems and emerging challenges and develop recommendations and good practices for addressing them. In that context, it will intensify its efforts in the dynamic triangle of its normative, monitoring and implementation/co-operation activities by improving the synergies between its monitoring procedure and those of other monitoring or advisory bodies or mechanisms in other sectors of the Organisation.

13. The Assembly will continue to emphasise in its work the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic on the lives of Europe's citizens. The social challenges Europe's populations are facing today as a result of the pandemic will require more attention from the Council of Europe and its Assembly to make sure that Europeans' economic rights and social protection continue to be guaranteed. The Assembly will also continue to focus its thinking and its work on the new challenges related to the emergence of new technologies, especially artificial intelligence, to forestall any possible negative impact they could have on human rights, the rule of law and democracy. It has already provided the Committee of Ministers and the member States with a wide range of analyses, proposals and guidelines on these subjects.

14. The Assembly will also maintain its current priorities, including the implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5) and monitoring the execution of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights in all member States. It reiterates its strong support for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) defined in the United Nations Agenda 2030. Referring to its Resolution 2271 (2019) and its Recommendation 2150 (2019) "Strengthening co-operation with the United Nations in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", it intends, through its ideas and proposals, to contribute to an accelerated implementation of the SDGs by the member States and the success of Agenda 2030.

15. Lastly, the Assembly is fully ready to intensify interinstitutional co-operation with the Secretary General and the Committee of Ministers, and with the intergovernmental sector as a whole, and to explore every possible avenue to strengthen the overall impact of the Council of Europe in its member States, as well as in those with observer and partner for democracy status.

16. Appended to this Resolution is a brief explanation of the main Assembly expenditure.

Appendix – Expenditure of the Assembly

Staff expenditure

1. This budget covers basic salaries, allowances (both non-recurrent and periodical) and social insurance for permanent and temporary staff of the secretariat of the Assembly.

2. The information given is based on the present structure of the Assembly composed of nine committees. On 1 April 2021 the secretariat had 82 permanent posts and positions and 1 specially appointed official (Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly), broken down by grade as follows:

Permanent posts	
2 A6	6 B5
7 A5	9 B4
9 A4	17 B3
26 A2/A3	6 B2

3. At present the secretariat of the Assembly is organised in such a way that the nine committees have 43 staff members at their service (27 permanent A-grade staff and 16 permanent B-grade staff).

4. The other 39 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.

Operational expenditure

1. The Assembly has made substantial savings in recent years by rationalising its work to reduce its operational expenditure. Since 2020 the return of zero real budget growth at the Organisation (that is, budget growth only to cover inflation) has made it possible to stabilise the resources available to the Assembly for the 2020-2021 budget period. For the next four-year budget period (biennial budgets 2022-2023 and 2024-2025) the working hypothesis must remain that of zero real growth.

2. The functioning of the Assembly includes the following tasks:

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

– the meetings of the Standing Committee, held three times a year between the part-sessions of the Assembly;

– meetings held outside the four part-sessions of the Assembly by each of the nine general committees, sub-committees and ad hoc committees of the Assembly or the bureau;

– committee and sub-committee meetings held elsewhere than in Strasbourg or Paris;

– conferences, symposiums, seminars and parliamentary hearings;

– activities connected with the Assembly's interparliamentary co-operation programme;

– visits by rapporteurs to prepare reports, including visits to countries under the procedure to monitor the obligations and commitments of member States, or for post-monitoring dialogue;

– election observation;

as well as modernising its working methods with a view to becoming a paperless Assembly.

3. In 2022-2025 the Assembly will continue to carry out its priority missions and pursue its goals in keeping with its Resolution 2277 (2019) "Role and mission of the Parliamentary Assembly: main challenges for the future", and Resolution 2369 (2021), in particular by:

– continuing to be the political engine of the Organisation, addressing the challenges to human rights, the rule of law and democracy at both the national and regional levels, giving priority to measures to guarantee the smooth functioning of democracies under the rule of law;

– helping to effectively implement several new standards of the Council of Europe at the national level, inter alia through public awareness;

– ensuring the participation of parliamentarians in the promotion and implementation of the Council of Europe's key texts, including the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210) and the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (CETS No. 201);

– helping to implement the UN's Agenda 2030 sustainable development programme;

– helping to implement various multiannual cross-sectoral strategies of the Council of Europe (for example in the fields of children's rights, gender equality and internet governance);

– participating in the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023, including within the Assembly, with particular emphasis on human rights and the gender dimension and the elimination of violence against women;

– helping national parliaments to better monitor their countries' legislation, in conformity with the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights, and reinforcing their capacity to monitor that the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights are executed.

4. Where interparliamentary co-operation is concerned, the Assembly will continue to implement the different assistance and co-operation programmes adapted to the needs of the parliamentary institutions, in close collaboration with its committee secretariats. It is worth noting here that it is engaged in a joint co-operation programme with the European Union specifically concerning the Parliament of Morocco (which is an Assembly partner for democracy), the aim of which is to strengthen its role as a guarantor of parliamentary democracy.

5. The Assembly warmly thanks the member States and their parliaments (particularly Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, France, Georgia, Luxembourg, Portugal and Switzerland) which made it possible, through their contributions, for the Assembly to finance its activities in 2020-2021, and also the Government of the Czech Republic, the Václav Havel Library and the Charter 77 Foundation for their generous contributions to the renown of the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize.

6. In addition, over the next four-year period the Assembly will continue its search for funding for important specific projects to be carried out by some of its committees:

– parliamentary action to promote public health and to empower and protect children;

– the parliamentary network for the right of women to live without violence;

– the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance and its five priority themes: hate speech, antisemitism, Islamophobia, antigypsyism and transphobia.

7. Concerning the electoral process, the Assembly will continue to observe parliamentary and presidential elections in countries under its monitoring procedure, in close collaboration with the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission).

8. Lastly, the Assembly will continue to support its political groups through their budgetary allowance, calculated on a lump-sum basis for each group for administrative assistance plus an additional per capita allowance which varies with the membership of the group. The Assembly should give thought to a means of moving towards a flexible approach to the political groups' budgets and ensuring their financial viability, so that the creation or disappearance of a group does not affect the functioning of the existing groups. The creation of one or more new political groups would mean an additional burden on the Assembly's operational budget, which could only be covered by increasing the Assembly's budget.