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Vote II of the Budget for 1956 (Expenditure relating to the Consultative Assembly)

Report
Committee on the Budget and the Intergovernmental Work Programme
Rapporteur: Mr Jacques BICHET, France

A. DRAFT OPINION[1]

The Assembly

Having regard to the letter of the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, dated 10th May, 1955, transmitting to the President of the Assembly a preliminary draft of Vote II of the Budget for 1956 (Expenditure relating to the Consultative Assembly);

Having regard to Resolution (53) 38 of the Committee of Ministers,

Adopts the following Opinion :

Sub-heads (a) to (h) :

In conformity with the proposals of the Secretary-General.

Sub-head (i) — Entertainment expenses :

Estimate for 1956 : 3,000,000 francs.

This credit would be allocated as follows :

2,500,000 francs for entertainment, travelling and similar expenses incurred by the President and the Vice-Presidents of the Assembly;

500,000 francs for similar expenses incurred by the Chairmen and Rapporteurs of Committees.

Sub-head (j) :

In conformity with the proposals of the Secretary-General.

Sub-head (k) — Travelling expenses and allowances of experts

Estimate for 1.956 : 3,000,000 francs.

This sum should cover not only the travelling expenses and subsistence allowances of experts, but also their fees.

Sub-head (1) — Reimbursement of certain functional expenses

Estimate for 1956 : 2,500,000 francs.

This estimate is intended to cover various expenses incurred by members of the Consultative Assembly in the discharge of specific duties for the Council of Europe.

These would include but not be confined to :

a. travelling expenses and subsistence allowances of members of the Consultative Assembly required, in the discharge of specific duties for the Council of Europe, to travel to meetings of certain Committees of the Council held between sessions of the Assembly (Bureau of the Assembly, Joint Committee, Committee for liaison between the Council of Europe and O. E. E. C, Committees under the Committee of Ministers) ;

b. certain expenses incurred by Committee Chairmen and Rapporteurs for secretarial assistance, travelling and documentation.

Sub-heads (m) and (n) :

In conformity with the proposals of the Secretary-General.

1. See 10th Sitting, 9th July, 1955 (Draft Opinion adopted) and Opinion No. 16.

B. Explanatory memorandum - presented by M. BICHET, Rapporteur

1. Sub-heads (i) and (1)

The estimate under Sub-head (i) of the preliminary draft prepared by the Secre. I tariat-General is intended to cover the travelling expenses and subsistence . allowances of Representatives of the Assembly who are I members of the Bureau and Joint Committee.

The estimate under Sub-head (I) is intended for reimbursement of certain functional expenses, in particular the entertainment expenditure of the President, the Vice-Presidents and the Chairmen of Committees, as well as expenses incurred by Rapporteurs of Committee for secretarial assistance, travelling and documentation. The estimate will also cover the travelling expenses of Assembly Representatives who are members of the Committee for liaison between the Council of Europe and O. E. E. C.

It would seem desirable to re-distribute the items under Sub-beads (i) and (I) so that all travelling and other expenses incurred by members of the Assembly in tbe discharge of specific duties would be chargeable to a distinct Sub-head and all entertainment expenses to another.

With regard to the estimate for entertainment expenses, it should be noted that the Bureau of the Assembly, at its meeting of 8th July, 1954, requested that this be increased to 3,000,000 francs. The Committee of Ministers, however, would grant no more than 2,000,000 francs, on the ground that only a small portion of the appropriation had been spent in previous years.

The main reason for the unexpected balance was that some of the functional expenses of the President of the Assembly, particularly expenditure on his annual reception for Assembly Representatives, had hitherto been defrayed by the national delegation to which he was attached. It would be more reasonable for such expenditure to be borne entirely by the Council.

Taking into account the expenditure borne by the French delegation, the actual expenses for the purposes described under Sub-head (I)—other than the travelling expenses of representatives of the Assembly on the Committee for liaison between tbe Council of Europe and O. E. E. C.—amounted to more than 4,000,000 francs. The estimate of 2,000,000 thus falls far short of requirements. The Assembly puts forward once more the proposal made by the Bureau in 1954, i. e. to increase this estimate to 3,000,000 francs, specifying that 2,500,000 is intended for entertainment expenses of the President and Vice- ; Presidents of the Assembly, and 500,000 for similar expenses of Committee Chairmen and Rapporteurs.

2. Sub-head (k)

This estimate is intended to cover the travelling expenses and subsistence allowances of non-governmental experts who may be consulted b y organs of the Assembly.

As mentioned in its Opinion on the Special Message of the Committee of Ministers, the Assembly intends to seek the advice of independent experts when preparing some of its Recommendations. Hitherto, the Assembly has rarely called upon expert consultants in this way, but Assembly Committees are now likely to seek specialist advice to an increasing extent.

For instance : the Bureau of the Assembly recently instructed the Secretariat- General to produce a technical report on the peaceful use of atomic energy for the use of the Assembly; the Committee on Legal Questions decided at its last meeting to seek expert assistance in the preparation of a number of draft conventions (conventions on business arbitration, compulsory insurance for motorists and the liability of innkeepers) ; while the Committee on Cultural Questions intends to secure the technical advice of representatives of nongovernmental organisations when studying certain of its projects.

This approach holds out new prospects for the Assembly, and it would be useful if the latter had adequate funds at its disposal to meet any such requests received. Requests of this type will certainly become even more frequent after the adoption of the Programme of Work proposed b y the Committee of Ministers, for this includes quite a number of technical proposals.

In these circumstances, the estimate for Sub-head (k) should be increased to 3,000 000 francs, while it should be made clear that this sum covers not only the travelling expenses and subsistence allowances of experts, but also their fees.