



Doc. 11689

21 July 2008

Political dimension of the Council of Europe budget

Reply to Recommendation¹: Recommendation 1812 (2007)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers has examined [Recommendation 1812 \(2007\)](#) on the political dimension of the Council of Europe budget. It has brought it to the attention of the governments of member states and has communicated it to the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB).
2. At the 118th Session of the Committee of Ministers (Strasbourg, 7 May 2008), the Ministers reaffirmed the importance they attach to continued efforts as regards the complete implementation of the Warsaw Summit decisions and the achievement of the main aims of the Statute, both through streamlining activities in order to better focus on the Council of Europe's fundamental objective of preserving and promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and through the ongoing reform of its organisational structures and working methods for greater efficiency and transparency, in the framework of limited resources.
3. The Committee of Ministers underlines that the budgetary discussions and decisions cannot be disconnected from the overall budgetary situation in the member states. Nevertheless, the budget of the Council of Europe has known over the past years a slight growth relative to the principle retained of zero real growth. As regards the budget for 2008, additional resources have been provided for priority areas, in line with the decisions taken at Warsaw, through internal redeployment of resources and through carrying over those resources that remained unspent from the previous year.
4. Despite efforts to find additional resources for priority areas, the budgetary situation is such that all administrative entities of the Council of Europe have been called upon to make additional efforts. To this end, the Committee of Ministers invites all administrative entities to examine their respective budgets from the perspective of efficiency gains.
5. With regard to the specific proposals made by the Assembly in its recommendation, the Committee of Ministers has the following comments.

Multi-annual budget framework

6. The Deputies introduced, in 2007, a multi-annual perspective to the budget process. Multi-annual forecasts are now presented with the annual budget and, as from 2008, are included in the Secretary General's proposals for priorities for the following year. At the same time, the Programme of Activities is presented – and adopted – with programmes and projects clearly identifying the multiannual time frame for their overall implementation. The Committee of Ministers considers that this approach combines improved planning whilst maintaining a degree of flexibility.
7. The Committee of Ministers is aware of the constraints imposed by national budgetary rules, in particular that of annual budgeting; it is, however, willing to consider developing the use of a multi-annual budget framework in the light of these constraints. However, it also believes that it would be necessary to consider the needs of the European Court of Human Rights, in the light of the benefits expected from the entry into force of Protocol No. 14. As regards the Assembly's suggestion to separate the budget of the

1. Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 9 July 2008, at the 1032nd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies.



European Court of Human Rights from the rest of the ordinary budget, the Committee of Ministers is not sure of its added value for member states; it stands ready to consider this further in the light of any arguments the Assembly, or any other interested party, might like to put forward.

Method of calculating the scale of member states' contributions to the Council of Europe budgets

8. The Deputies have discussed revising the method on several occasions over the past years. The Committee of Ministers believes that such a matter must form the object of a consensus. It was clear from its different discussions that there is no consensus for any change to the current method.

Cost of national experts' participation in intergovernmental committee meetings

9. This question was examined at some length in the framework of the 2007 budgets where it became clear that there was not support amongst member states to change the principle of reimbursing the travel and subsistence expenses of national experts participating in intergovernmental committee meetings.

Budgetary decisions

10. The Committee of Ministers recalls that the budgetary calendar is set so as to enable consultations with the Assembly to take place before a decision is taken by the Deputies on the priorities and the level of member states' total contributions. It reiterates its view, expressed in its reply to [Recommendation 1728 \(2005\)](#) on the budgetary powers of the Parliamentary Assembly and [Recommendation 1763 \(2006\)](#) on the institutional balance at the Council of Europe, that the institutional balance at the Council of Europe does not require a reapportionment of responsibilities, in particular in budgetary matters.

Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB)

11. The Committee of Ministers refers the Assembly to the bank's comments that are appended to this reply, whilst underlining the exceptional nature of making a staff member available to the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights. It also informs the Assembly that the Council of Europe has established a Human Rights Trust Fund, upon a proposal by the Norwegian Government, with the bank. The trust fund is an innovative tool complementing existing instruments of resource mobilisation, such as the voluntary contributions mechanism, capable of assisting the Council of Europe to attain its objectives by supporting the efforts of its member states in the field of human rights. The initial contribution to the trust fund will be made by Norway, and other member states are encouraged to participate.

Appendix – Comments of the Governing Board of the Council of Europe Development Bank

The Governing Board:

- points out that the CEB has already given very concrete follow-up to the Warsaw Summit (and in particular to Point I-5 of the Action Plan) since the fields of action have been adapted to allow for the financing of bankable projects involving notably the training of magistrates and the construction of public service, administrative and judiciary infrastructure (Administrative Council [Resolution 1495 \(2006\)](#));
- therefore considers that the bank should pursue its effort in this direction, in particular through the appraisal of concrete banking projects corresponding to these enlarged fields of action;
- considers that these efforts can be undertaken in accordance with the bank's nature and within the framework of its current articles of agreement;
- recommends that, in this context, the bank should be able to contribute by granting loans for the development of social projects identified where appropriate by the Council of Europe, without the borrower being the Council of Europe itself;
- is, moreover, pleased at the creation, in partnership with the Council of Europe, of a Human Rights Trust Fund, initially fed by contributions by the Kingdom of Norway. The purpose of this fund is to provide support to national efforts for the implementation of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and for the promotion of the rule of law;
- also points out that, in line with the priorities of the Warsaw Summit, and in spite of the budgetary constraints weighing upon it, the bank has made an exceptional financial effort by making a staff member available to the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights.