Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 2208 (2018)[1]

Modification of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure: the impact of the budgetary crisis on the list of working languages of the Assembly

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly expresses its great concern at the unprecedented budgetary crisis affecting the Council of Europe as a whole.

2. The Council of Europe must face a cumulative financial risk of €42.65 million for the first time in its history. This risk may increase in the course of 2018. Turkey's decision to renounce the status of major contributor to the budget has resulted in a €20 million reduction in the Organisation's budgetary resources. In parallel with Turkey's decision, since July 2017 the Council of Europe has been confronted with a decision by the Russian Federation to suspend payment of two thirds of its contributions due under the 2017 budget, amounting to €22.65 million. Lastly, the Committee of Ministers, by maintaining a strict zero nominal growth policy for 2018 and 2019, is obliging the Organisation to identify additional savings in the ordinary budget.

3. The draconian reduction in the Assembly's budget for 2018 and 2019, a consequence of Turkey's decision to revert to its initial status of ordinary contributor to the Council of Europe budget, calls for drastic measures. The first of these is to no longer cover, out of the Assembly budget, the cost of interpretation in Turkish in plenary sittings and in committee meetings or the publication of the reports of debates in Turkish and the translation of adopted texts into this language, since these expenses – €700 000 per year – are no longer financed in the Assembly budget by the payment of the corresponding grant from the Council of Europe's ordinary budget.

4. In this context, the Assembly refers to the clear position it adopted, notably in Resolution 2058 (2015) on the allocation of seats in the Parliamentary Assembly with respect to Turkey, making the introduction of Turkish as a working language of the Assembly strictly conditional upon the Committee of Ministers' decision to approve Turkey's request to become a major contributor to the Council of Europe's budget and to allocate the corresponding funds to the Assembly.

5. The Assembly's budgetary difficulties have been worsened by the decisions taken by the Committee of Ministers and the Russian Federation's refusal to pay the first third of its contribution to the 2018 budget. Out of a total budget of just under €17.5 million, the Assembly shall freeze €1.5 million of its appropriations in 2018, that is nearly 9% of its total budget; with respect to 2019, however, the amount of €1.5 million might have to be permanently removed from the budget altogether. The Assembly can only express its strongest dissatisfaction at being forced to make such massive cuts to its own budget, which has already been considerably weakened by a decade of budgetary restrictions.

1. *Text adopted by the Standing Committee*, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 16 March 2018 (see Doc. 14511, report of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs, rapporteur: Ms Petra De Sutter).
See also Recommendation 2124 (2018).

6. In the light of the above considerations, the Assembly decides to amend its Rules of Procedure concerning the languages, as follows:

6.1. replace Rule 28.3 with the following sentence: “The working languages of the Assembly shall be those of the member States which are major contributors to the Council of Europe budget, provided that the necessary appropriations for their funding are entered in the Assembly’s budget”;

6.2. replace Rule 30.1 with the following: “Interpretation during the meetings of the committees and the Bureau shall be provided in the official languages and, for working languages, under the conditions stipulated in Rule 28.3. Interpretation at meetings of the Committee on the Election of Judges to the European Court of Human Rights and in sub-committees shall be limited to official languages.”

7. The Assembly decides that the changes to the Rules of Procedure set out in this resolution shall enter into force as from their adoption.

8. It recalls that, in accordance with Rule 29.2 of the Rules of Procedure, the Turkish parliamentary delegation can return to the practice followed prior to 2016 and continue to benefit from interpretation in Turkish as long as the cost is borne by the Turkish Parliament.

9. The Assembly considers that it has not been able to present the Committee of Ministers with an informed opinion on the Council of Europe’s 2018-2019 budget. It therefore decides to closely monitor the Organisation’s budgetary situation and reserves the possibility to address further recommendations on this matter to the Committee of Ministers, in particular if the Russian Federation maintains its position, in 2018, to refuse to fulfil its financial obligations.