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Expenditure of the Parliamentary Assembly for the biennium 2026-2027

Report[1]
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1. Reference to committee: Bureau decision. Reference 4866 of 7 April 2025.

A. Draft resolution[2]

1. Recalling the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government, held in Reykjavik, on 16-17 May 2023, the Parliamentary Assembly reaffirms the Council of Europe's key role in Europe's multilateral architecture and in guaranteeing democratic stability across the continent. It believes that in a rapidly evolving international political environment and against the background of democratic backsliding and war of aggression against one of its member States, the Council of Europe's contribution to upholding democracy, human rights and the rule of law throughout Europe and beyond, and to securing a fair and lasting peace and accountability, is relevant as never before.

2. The Assembly therefore welcomes the member States' political and financial commitment which resulted in an increase of the Organisation's financial resources within the framework of the 2024-2025 biennial budget. Reaffirming its position that member States' financial contribution should match their political ambition expressed at the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government, the Assembly firmly believes that the Organisation's means and capacities should be further strengthened, in order to enable the Council of Europe to effectively deliver on the 4th Summit's outcomes, thus fulfilling the political mission that member States have given to it. It trusts that the budgetary process for 2026-2027 will be guided by these considerations.

3. Within the framework of each programme and budget cycle, the Assembly adopts a Resolution on its expenditure, in accordance with Committee of Ministers Resolution (53)38 and in line with Article 20 of the Financial Regulations of the Council of Europe.

4. Resolution 2501 (2023) adopted within the framework of the 2024-2025 budget of the Council of Europe laid down the priorities and expenditure of the Assembly for the first biennium of the 2024-2027 Programme and Budget. The present resolution updates these priorities and the corresponding expenditure for the period 2026-2027.

5. For the period 2024-2027, the Assembly decided to focus its political priorities on contributing to the outcomes of the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government. Thanks to the additional resources granted within the framework of the 2024-2025 budgetary exercise (including in terms of Secretariat reinforcement), the Assembly was able to actively contribute to the implementation of the Reykjavik Declaration, notably by providing the parliamentary dimension of the Organisation's activities through recommendations, guidelines and targeted co-operation for national parliaments.

6. Accordingly, in line with a thematic approach, the Assembly contributed to the following chapters of the Reykjavik Declaration:

6.1. the consequences of the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine: political, legal and human rights aspects of the aggression; the situation of children of Ukraine, including the launching of a dedicated parliamentary network; missing persons, prisoners of war and civilians in captivity; supporting displaced persons; supporting reconstruction; counteracting erasure of cultural identity; reparation and reconciliation processes; the role of sanctions in counteracting aggression;

6.2. upholding democracy and counteracting backsliding: participatory and deliberative processes; relationship between the parliamentary majority and the opposition; the revised Code of Good Practice on Referendums; targeted support for democratic elections, including through country action plans and joint programmes with the European Union;

6.3. implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights: stepped up political dialogue with member States, providing a parliamentary dimension to this process;

6.4. youth perspective: establishing a PACE-Youth Participation Mechanism which provides for the participation of young Europeans in Assembly deliberations as well as for the appointment of Youth Rapporteurs in Assembly general committees;

6.5. the mainstreaming of the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right: parliamentary contribution to the Reykjavik process; safeguarding human rights for future generations; cultural heritage and climate change; adoption of the statutory opinion on the draft Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law;

2. Draft resolution adopted unanimously by the committee on 8 April 2025.

6.6. human rights and new technologies: adoption of the statutory opinion on the draft Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (CETS No. 225); setting up of a dedicated Sub-Committee on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights (within the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights); preparation of reports on artificial intelligence's impact on democracy, migration, gender equality, parliamentary work and international humanitarian law;

6.7. engaging with civil society from Belarus and the Russian Federation sharing the values and principles of the Council of Europe: institutionalising the participation of a representative delegation of democratic forces from Belarus in Assembly activities; launching dialogue with democratic forces from the Russian Federation;

6.8. media and freedom of information: addressing guarantees of media freedom and the safety of journalists; counteracting propaganda and safeguarding freedom of information; addressing risks and opportunities of the metaverse.

7. Moreover, the Assembly continued to work on transversal issues, such as the promotion of gender equality (including by launching the Vigdís Prize for Women's Empowerment) and combating discrimination (including by addressing human rights challenges facing LGBTI people through a unique parliamentary platform). Equally, human rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers remained top on the agenda, including the issue of human rights-compliance of asylum procedures; the theme of migration and asylum in election campaigns; as well as addressing migrant smuggling under a shared European approach.

8. As regards its statutory role, from 1 January 2024 until 30 April 2025, the Assembly elected 14 judges to the European Court of Human Rights, adopted opinions on three draft conventions and an opinion on an application for membership of the Council of Europe forwarded to it by the Committee of Ministers under Statutory Resolution (51)30.

9. Pursuing the modernisation of its working methods, the secretariat of the Assembly continued to enhance the functionalities of the Pace-Apps portal and application. Currently, Pace-Apps allows members to better organise their work in the Assembly, by providing online access to documents from committees and other Assembly bodies, and to exercise their right of initiative by electronically submitting motions, written declarations, and amendments to texts under discussion. This resulted in a significant reduction of printing costs and a decrease in the carbon footprint of the Assembly's activities. Moreover, the secretariat of the Assembly has piloted the use of artificial intelligence-powered technologies, notably by improving transcription processes of plenary debates and preparing summaries of adopted texts.

10. Against this background, for the 2026-2027 biennium, the Assembly will further sharpen the focus of its activities in the following areas:

10.1. strengthening support to Ukraine, focusing on accountability issues and on the situation of children, through the Parliamentary Network on the situation of the children of Ukraine;

10.2. launching initiatives to leverage the parliamentary dimension of the implementation of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, in particular through a parliamentary network;

10.3. contributing to the implementation of the Pact for Democracy, including by providing its parliamentary dimension, stepping up co-operation activities in the field of democratic elections, enhancing engagement with civil society, including with representatives of democratic forces from Belarus and the Russian Federation sharing the Council of Europe values and principles, as well as implementing the PACE-Youth Participation Mechanism;

10.4. building upon the role of parliamentarians as legislators, supporting the promotion and domestic implementation of key conventions, including the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law;

10.5. stepping up support for the Reykjavik process for the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right, including through the Parliamentary Network for a healthy environment;

10.6. further strengthening the Assembly's integrity framework including by implementing Resolution 2596 (2025) "Respect for the rule of law and the fight against corruption within the Council of Europe".

11. To support the implementation of readjusted political priorities, the Assembly will optimise the structure, flexibility and agility of its bodies, for example by sun-setting or putting on hold, if appropriate, certain sub-committees; and by further developing, using the operational savings thus generated, different structures and working methods, such as limited period networks or activities to follow-up reports.

12. Moreover, the Assembly will resume the modernisation of its working methods, including through digital transformation and the use of artificial intelligence-powered technologies, which will continue to generate efficiency gains. These include:

12.1. enhancing efficient processes for the organisation of part-sessions, thanks to online tools (Pace-Apps) and the automation of processes relating to the preparation of verbatim records with the support of artificial intelligence-powered tools; thus, resources will be redeployed to strengthen the staffing capacity in key areas such as communication and co-operation, so as to enable more outreach and visibility of the Assembly and Council of Europe work within national parliaments and towards related stakeholders;

12.2. the continuation of the development of Pace-Apps portal and app, and the deployment of artificial intelligence-powered tools currently being developed for the needs of the Council of Europe Secretariat. These measures will further reduce operational costs (including regarding printing and translation of documents); the savings generated will be reinvested into co-operation and capacity-building activities for national parliaments in particular to support their own use of artificial intelligence-powered technologies and tools in their activities.

13. Alongside these efficiency gains, the Assembly has identified the need for additional staffing resources in order to meet the heightened demands upon its structures. This will enable it to add a robust parliamentary dimension at the international and national level to meet the new and emerging challenges of today's context as targeted by the Pact for Democracy and other Reykjavik priorities. The additional resources outlined in the appendix to this resolution will thus be dedicated to ensuring a strong parliamentary contribution to the Pact for Democracy, to building up the Assembly's interaction with youth in all its work, to launching a new parliamentary network supporting the implementation of judgments of the Court, to implementing a robust integrity framework within the Assembly, and to designing and implementing a co-operation strategy with parliaments at the national level on the use of artificial intelligence in parliamentary activities.

14. Lastly, the Assembly welcomes the strengthening of the legal and financial basis of political groups during 2024-2025, notably through the adoption of a new rule on the status of group secretaries and assistants to bring their legal status and terms of employment in accordance with the overall new Council of Europe Staff Regulations. It equally welcomes the strengthening of the financial basis to enable the good functioning of the political groups and expects that the corresponding amount in its budgetary proposal for 2026-2027 will be adjusted to inflation, in line with the existing methodology and rules to maintain this new stability of functioning.

Appendix – Expenditure needs of the Assembly

1. Staff expenditure

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

2. In accordance with the 2024-2025 programme and budget, as adjusted for 2025, as of 1 January 2025, the secretariat of the Assembly has 84 jobs (including 47 A-grade jobs, 36 B-grade jobs, and 1 specially appointed official – Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly). It is recalled that, thanks to additional resources granted to the Assembly Secretariat for the 2024-2025 biennium, 3 A-grade jobs of committee secretaries and 1 B-grade job of committee assistant were created. Moreover, the Assembly secretariat benefits from the expertise of two seconded officials – an experienced lawyer from the Registry of the European Court of Human Rights and an experienced national civil servant from the French National Assembly.

3. The Assembly secretariat is organised around two directorates, namely “Democracy and Rule of Law” (Directorate 1) and “Inclusive and Sustainable Societies and Co-operation” (Directorate 2), the Table Office, Information Management and Events Department, and the Administration and Central Services Department.

4. With a view to fully permitting a robust parliamentary dimension to the implementation of the Reykjavik Declaration, the readjusted political priorities, as laid down in the present resolution, call for a reinforcement of the secretariat. Thanks to efficiency gains, the secretariat of the Assembly intends to redeploy resources allocated to the organisation of part-sessions to priority sectors, namely communication, visibility and co-operation. The new activities relating to the implementation of the Pact for Democracy, the building up the Assembly’s interaction with youth in all its work (including through the implementation of the PACE-Youth Participation Mechanism), the setting up of the parliamentary network supporting the implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, the strengthening of the Assembly’s integrity framework, as well as the launching of new co-operation activities which require specific expertise (use of artificial intelligence in parliamentary practices) will require additional resources, namely two administrator (A grade) jobs and two support staff (B grade, including one junior professional officer).

2. Operational expenditure

5. Thanks to the modernisation efforts, the Assembly secretariat has managed to considerably reduce the operational expenditure relating to the organisation of part-sessions. Efficiency gains generated have been reinvested into the upgrading of IT tools.

6. For the 2026-2027 period, in line with its readjusted political priorities and to respond to the needs in a adaptable and flexible manner, the Assembly intends to sunset or pause, where appropriate, certain sub-committees; different structures and working methods, such as limited period networks or follow-up to reports, will be further developed using the operational savings thus generated.

7. Moreover, thanks to efficiency gains generated by the development of IT tools and the integration of artificial intelligence-powered technology, new co-operation activities will be launched to allow parliaments to study and share good practices in the use of artificial intelligence in parliamentary activities.

8. Thanks to inflation adjustment of the envelope for operational activities, the secretariat of the Assembly has managed to cope with the increase in travel and subsistence expenses of parliamentarians and staff accompanying them.

9. To further optimise costs, the secretariat is considering, whenever possible, auditioning experts online. This allows the Assembly to benefit from top level international expertise, while at the same time improving cost-effectiveness and reducing the carbon impact, especially when experts would have had to travel long distance to attend an Assembly meeting in person.

10. During 2024-2025, the Assembly continued to develop its targeted co-operation activities. In particular, as a result of the reorganisation of the Directorate General of Democracy of the Secretariat General of the Council of Europe, the secretariat of the Assembly integrated, as from 1 January 2024, the co-operation activities in the field of democratic elections. Thus, at the moment of the adoption of the present resolution, the Assembly is implementing five projects in the field of elections, in particular, in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, worth more than €4 million and funded by extra-budgetary resources. During 2026-2027, these activities will continue and expand further in line with new

requests from member States; they also form part of the Council of Europe's Electoral Cycle which aims to ensure a coherent and "end to end" co-ordination of all election-related activities throughout the Secretariat of the Organisation.

11. Ongoing parliamentary co-operation projects will be further strengthened, notably to support the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, address the situation of children of Ukraine, support the activities of parliamentary platforms and networks (rights of LGBTI people, women free from violence, No Hate parliamentary Alliance, the network for a healthy environment), as well as to engage with and support dialogue with the democratic forces and civil society from Belarus and from the Russian Federation, sharing the Council of Europe values and principles. New initiatives will be launched in the field of artificial intelligence and sport. Whenever possible, country-specific parliamentary co-operation activities will be integrated into action plans.

12. The Assembly will continue to observe parliamentary and presidential elections in countries under its monitoring procedure or engaged in post-monitoring dialogue, in close collaboration with the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) and the Assembly's international partners (the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Parliament within the framework of international election observation missions.

13. The Assembly secretariat will continue to support its political groups through a budgetary allowance, calculated on a lump-sum basis for each group which covers administrative assistance, plus an additional p*er capita* allowance which varies depending on the number of members of each group. Following on from the harmonisation of the legal status and terms of employment of group secretaries and assistants to better align them with the new Council of Europe Staff Regulations, the budgetary envelope dedicated to the political group functioning should be regularly adjusted to inflation, in line with existing rules and methodology.

B. Explanatory memorandum by Mr Christophe Brico, rapporteur

1. Context

1. Within the framework of each programme and budget cycle, the Parliamentary Assembly adopts a resolution on its expenditure, in accordance with Committee of Ministers Resolution (53)38 and in line with Article 20 of the Financial Regulations of the Council of Europe.

2. It is recalled that Resolution 2501 (2023) adopted within the framework of the 2024-2025 budget of the Council of Europe laid down the priorities and expenditure of the Assembly for the first biennium of the 2024-2027 Programme and Budget. The present report updates these priorities and the corresponding expenditure for the period 2026-2027.

3. The 2024-2027 programme and budget build upon the final declaration of the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe, held in Reykjavik, on 16-17 May 2023. As recommended by the Assembly in Opinion 301 (2023) "Budgets and priorities of the Council of Europe for the period 2024-2027", the political priorities set by the leadership of the Council of Europe member States are at the centre of the Programme and Budget.

4. To match the political ambition expressed by Heads of State and Government, the member States agreed, for the first time since 2007, to increase the Council of Europe's budget by 12%, in order to strengthen the Organisation's means, allowing it to effectively deliver on the outcomes of the 4th Summit.

5. The budgetary proposals of the Assembly were increased accordingly by 8.3%. Additional resources were allocated as follows:

– priority areas relating to the implementation of the Reykjavik Declaration (creation of 3 A-grade jobs of Committee secretaries and 1 B-grade job of committee assistant);

– adjustment of operational expenditure to inflation (notably, to compensate the increase in the costs of missions of parliamentarians and staff, and interpretation);

– increase of the overall allocation to political groups, to strengthen the groups' financial basis.

6. For details, please see Appendix 2.

2. Assembly's contribution to the implementation of the Reykjavik declaration during 2024-2025

7. In line with Resolution 2501 (2023), the Assembly focused its political priorities on contributing to delivering the outcomes of the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government. Additional resources granted to the Assembly within the framework of the 2024-2025 budget (including secretariat reinforcement) were instrumental in stepping up activities in key sectors. Thus, in line with a thematic approach, the Assembly contributed to the following chapters of the Reykjavik Declaration:

– the consequences of the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine: political, legal and human rights aspects of the aggression; the situation of children of Ukraine, including the launching of a dedicated parliamentary network; missing persons, prisoners of war and civilians in captivity; supporting displaced persons; supporting reconstruction; counteracting erasure of cultural identity; reparation and reconciliation processes; the role of sanctions in counteracting aggression;

– upholding democracy and counteracting backsliding: participatory and deliberative processes; relationship between the parliamentary majority and the opposition; the revised Code of Good Practice on Referendums; targeted support for democratic elections, including through country action plans and joint programmes with the European Union;

– implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights: stepped up political dialogue with member States, providing a parliamentary dimension to this process;

– youth perspective: establishing a PACE-Youth Participation Mechanism which provides for the participation of young Europeans to Assembly deliberations as well as for the appointment of Youth Rapporteurs in Assembly general committees;

– the mainstreaming of the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right: parliamentary contribution to the Reykjavik process; safeguarding human rights for future generations; cultural heritage and climate change; adoption of the statutory opinion on the draft Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law;

– human rights and new technologies: adoption of the statutory opinion on the draft Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (CETS No. 225); setting up of a dedicated Sub-Committee on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights (within the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights); preparation of reports on artificial intelligence's impact on democracy, migration, gender equality, parliamentary work and international humanitarian law;

– engaging with civil society from Belarus and the Russian Federation sharing the values and principles of the Council of Europe: institutionalising the participation of a representative delegation of democratic forces from Belarus; launching dialogue with democratic forces from the Russian Federation;

– media and freedom of information: addressing guarantees of media freedom and the safety of journalists; counteracting propaganda and safeguarding freedom of information; addressing risks and opportunities of the metaverse.

8. Transversal issues, such as the promotion of gender equality and combating discrimination remained a standing priority. To note that during this period the Assembly launched, in partnership with the Government of Iceland, the Vigdís Prize for Women's Empowerment aiming at rewarding outstanding individuals or civil society groups that champion the empowerment of women in all their diversity. The Parliamentary Platform for the rights of LGBTI persons in Europe continued to contribute to promoting full and effective equality for LGBTI persons throughout the continent. Equally, the Assembly addressed the human rights challenges facing migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, by adopting recommendations and guidelines to improve human rights compliance of asylum procedures; at the same time, the themes of migration and asylum in election campaigns and migrant smuggling were addressed.

9. Moreover, it is important to recall that, thanks to extrabudgetary resources, during this period the Assembly continued to provide targeted support to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, in particular in the implementation of its statutory obligations regarding participation in and contribution to Assembly activities.

10. Furthermore, as a result of the reorganisation of the Directorate General of Democracy of the Secretariat General of the Council of Europe, the secretariat of the Assembly integrated, as from 1 January 2024, the co-operation activities in the field of democratic elections. Thus, as of April 2025, the Assembly is implementing five projects in the field of elections, in particular, in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, worth more than €4 million and funded by extra-budgetary resources. At the same time, the following parliamentary co-operation projects are currently being implemented, thanks to extra-budgetary support from national parliaments and governments of member States: addressing the situation of children of Ukraine, supporting activities of parliamentary platform and networks (rights of LGBTI persons, women free from violence, No Hate parliamentary Alliance, the network for a healthy environment), supporting dialogue with the democratic forces and civil society from Belarus and from the Russian Federation sharing the Council of Europe values and principles.

11. Furthermore, it is worth recalling that, fulfilling its statutory role, the Assembly elected 14 judges to the European Court of Human Rights for the period from 1 January 2024 to 30 April 2025, and adopted opinions on three draft conventions and an opinion on an application for membership of the Council of Europe forwarded to it by the Committee of Ministers under Statutory Resolution (51)30.

3. Readjusted priorities for 2026-2027

12. For the 2026-2027 period, the implementation of the Reykjavik Declaration should remain at the core of the political priorities of the Assembly. To meet new and emerging challenges, in particular as targeted by the Pact for Democracy, as well as to further strengthen the parliamentary dimension of the Organisation's activities, the Assembly should further sharpen its political priorities.

13. In particular, the following themes and priority activities have been identified:

– strengthening support to Ukraine, focusing on accountability issues and on the situation of children, through the Parliamentary Network on the situation of the children of Ukraine;

– launching initiatives to leverage the parliamentary dimension of the implementation of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, in particular through a parliamentary network;

– contributing to the implementation of the Pact for Democracy, including by providing its parliamentary dimension, stepping up co-operation activities in the field of democratic elections, enhancing engagement with civil society, including with representatives of democratic forces from Belarus and the Russian Federation sharing the Council of Europe values and principles, as well as implementing the PACE-Youth Participation Mechanism;

– building upon the role of parliamentarians as legislators, supporting the promotion and domestic implementation of key conventions, including the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law;

– stepping up support for the Reykjavik process for the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right, including through the Parliamentary Network for a healthy environment;

– further strengthening the Assembly's integrity framework including by implementing Resolution 2596 (2025) "Respect for the rule of law and the fight against corruption within the Council of Europe".

14. Moreover, the Assembly will continue fulfilling its statutory role, in particular by ensuring the timely and efficient election of judges to the European Court of Human Rights: according to the schedule, at least seven elections could be held during 2026-2027, subject to transmission of lists of candidates by State Parties to the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5). At the same time, the Assembly will respond, within the statutory deadlines, to requests for opinions on draft conventions or draft additional protocols to conventions, to be submitted to it by the Committee of Ministers. In this context, building upon the role of parliamentarians as legislators, it should continue promoting the signing and ratification of key and new conventions, relying on an active role and contribution of national delegations.

15. Ongoing parliamentary co-operation projects will be further strengthened, including by launching new initiatives in the field of artificial intelligence (AI) and sport. Whenever possible, country-specific parliamentary co-operation activities will be integrated into action plans.

16. Moreover, the Assembly will expand co-operation activities in the field of democratic elections, responding to new requests from member States. These activities form part of the Council of Europe's Electoral Cycle which aims at ensuring a coherent and "end to end" co-ordination of all election-related activities throughout the Secretariat of the Organisation.

17. The Assembly will continue to observe parliamentary and presidential elections in countries under its monitoring procedure or engaged in post-monitoring dialogue, in close collaboration with the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) and the Assembly's international partners (the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Parliament) within the framework of international election observation missions.

4. Efficiency gains and expenditure needs for 2026-2027

18. In line with its modernisation policy, during 2024-2025, the secretariat of the Assembly implemented several measures aiming at optimising working methods and improving digital tools, including through the use of AI-powered technologies. These included:

– further development of Pace-Apps: the web app allows members to better organise their work in the Assembly, by providing online access to documents from committees and other Assembly bodies, and to exercise their right of initiative by electronically submitting motions, written declarations, and amendments to texts under discussion. This resulted in a significant reduction of printing costs and a decrease in the carbon footprint of the Assembly's activities;

– enhancing the efficiency of processes relating to the organisation of part-sessions, thanks to online tools (Pace-Apps) and the automation of processes relating to the preparation of verbatim records with the support of AI-powered tools;

– piloting of AI-powered tools to promote the visibility and accessibility of Assembly resolutions and recommendations, notably, by the preparation of summaries of adopted texts.

19. It is suggested that, during 2026-2027, resources generated by efficiency gains through the use of digital tools and AI-powered technology should be redeployed to strengthen the secretariat's staffing capacity in key areas such as communication and co-operation, so as to enable more outreach and visibility of the Assembly and Council of Europe work within national parliaments and towards related stakeholders (namely three B-grade jobs).

20. Moreover, the continuation of the development of Pace-Apps will further reduce operational costs (including regarding printing and translation of documents) as well as contribute to reducing the carbon impact of the Assembly's activities. It is suggested that the savings generated by digital modernisation should be reinvested into co-operation and capacity-building activities for national parliaments in particular to support their own use of AI-powered technologies and tools in parliamentary activities.

21. Furthermore, to optimise operational costs, the secretariat should propose, whenever possible, organising online expert hearings during committee meetings. This would allow the Assembly to benefit from top level international expertise, while at the same time improving cost-effectiveness and reducing the carbon impact, especially when experts have to travel long distance to attend an Assembly meeting in person.

22. Equally, the Assembly should continue optimising the structure, flexibility and agility of its bodies, in particular, to be able to address more effectively the readjusted political priorities. For example, the Assembly could consider sun-setting or putting on hold, if appropriate, certain sub-committees. At the same time, different structures and working methods, such as limited period networks or activities to follow-up reports, could be developed, using the efficiency savings generated by the sun-setting of some activities.

23. That being said, it appears that efficiency savings alone will not be sufficient to effectively meet the heightened demands upon the Assembly structures. Thus, additional staffing resources should be allocated to the Assembly secretariat, to enable it to add a robust parliamentary dimension to the implementation of the Reykjavik priorities. Additional resources, namely the creation of two administrator (A grade) jobs and two support staff (B grade, including one junior professional officer) jobs, should be dedicated to ensuring a strong parliamentary contribution to the Pact for Democracy, to building up the Assembly's interaction with youth in all its work, to launching a new parliamentary network supporting the implementation of judgements of the Court, to implementing a robust integrity framework within the Assembly, and to designing and implementing a co-operation strategy with parliaments at the national level on the use of AI in parliamentary activities.

24. Lastly, the strengthened financial basis for political groups, as well as the harmonisation of the legal status and terms of employment of group secretaries and assistants with the new Staff Regulations of the Council of Europe, should be welcomed. Thus, within the framework of the 2024-2025 budget, the overall allocation to political groups was increased from €818 000 to €1 018 000 per year. Allocations to each political group are calculated on a two-fold basis: firstly, a fixed lump-sum allowance which covers administrative assistance (corresponding to the standard cost of one full-time group secretary); secondly, an additional *per capita* allowance which varies depending on the number of members of each group, to cover the various activities (and staff needs) of political groups. Following on from the harmonisation of the legal status and terms of employment of group secretaries and assistants, the budgetary envelope dedicated to the functioning of political groups should be regularly adjusted to inflation, to ensure that the salaries of group secretaries and assistants are adjusted in line with existing rules and methodology.

25. The Assembly's expenditure needs and proposals for 2026-2027 are presented in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1 – Anticipated expenditure for 2026-2027 (ordinary budget)

Parliamentary democracy – Expenditure of the Assembly	Estimated spending 2026 (€)	Estimated spending 2027 (€)
Functioning of the Assembly		
Staff expenditure		
Remuneration of staff recruited on jobs	€10 283 900	€10 341 800
Remuneration and accessory charges of temporary staff	€351 300	€351 300
Salary, allowances and social charges of the Secretary General of the Assembly	€336 700	€336 700
Placement of national civil servants on secondment	€55 000	€55 000
Arrival and departure expenses – Home leave	€27 500	€27 500
Contribution to the Pension budget	€1 882 100	€1 889 100
Total staff expenditure	**€12 936 500**	**€13 001 400**
Committees and session		
General operational expenditure		
Equipment – telecommunication costs	€15 000	€15 000
Official journeys	€332 600	€332 600
Representational expenditure, other official travelling expenses of members of the Assembly	€231 400	€231 400
Election procedure for judges at the European Court of Human Rights *	pm	pm
Prepress	€40 000	€40 000
Interpretation for committees	€517 800	€517 800
Videoconference and hybrid meetings	€10 000	€10 000
Translation	€340 600	€310 600
Publishing and printing	€100 000	€100 000
Consultation of experts	€11 000	€11 000
Other expenditures	€12 100	€12 100
Expenses linked to the session		
Expenses linked to part-sessions	€357 600	€357 600
Interpretation linked to part-sessions	€1 279 200	€1 279 200
Expenditure of the Assembly Presidency		
Official expenses of the President of the Assembly	€112 500	€112 500
Political Groups of the Assembly		
Allocation to the political groups	€1 070 600	€1 070 600
European prizes		
European prizes expenditure	€131 300	€131 300
Co-operation		
Co-operation activities	€176 900	€206 900
Official journeys	€10 200	€10 200
Observation elections		
Observations Elections activities	€165 100	€165 100
Official journeys	€54 300	€54 300
Communication		
Communication activities	€40 700	€40 700
Offical journeys	€12 200	€12 200

Parliamentary democracy – Expenditure of the Assembly	Estimated spending 2026 (€)	Estimated spending 2027 (€)
General Management expenditure		
Offical journeys	€110 500	€110 500
Information Technology	€147 700	€147 700
Total supplies, services and other operational expenditure	**€5 279 300**	**€5 279 300**
Total expenditure of the Assembly	**€18 215 800**	**€18 280 700**
*This activity is covered from the special account for the hearing of candidates for the post of judge at the European Court of Human Rights.		

Appendix 2 – Appropriations of the Assembly for 2025 in comparison with 2024 (ordinary budget)

Parliamentary Democracy – Expenditure of the Assembly	Appropriations 2024 (€)	Appropriations 2025 (€)
Functioning of the Assembly		
Staff expenditure		
Remuneration of staff recruited on jobs	€9 857 300	€9 938 300
Remuneration and accessory charges of temporary staff	€517 700	€532 200
Salary, allowances and social charges of the Secretary General of the Assembly	€335 100	€336 700
Placement of national civil servants on secondment	€55 000	€55 000
Arrival and departure expenses – Home leave	€27 500	€27 500
Contribution to the Pension budget	€1 707 200	€1 840 700
Total Staff Expenditure	€12 499 800	€12 730 400
Committees and Sessions		
General operational expenditure		
Equipment – telecommunication costs	€15 000	€15 000
Official journeys	€319 700	€332 600
Representational expenditure, other official travelling expenses of members of the Assembly	€217 000	€231 400
Election procedure for judges at the European Court of Human Rights*	pm	pm
Prepress	€46 000	€40 000
Interpretation for committees	€467 500	€517 800
Videoconference and hybrid meetings	€21 500	€10 000
Translation	€378 600	€390 600
Publishing and printing	€142 800	€100 000
Consultation of experts	€11 000	€11 000
Other expenditures	€19 600	€12 100
Expenses linked to the session		
Expenses linked to part-session	€476 100	€357 600
Interpretation linked to part-session	€1 266 400	€1 279 200
Expenditure of the Assembly Presidency		
Official expenses of the President of the Assembly	€80 600	€112 500
Political Groups of the Assembly		
Allocation to the political groups	€1 018 000	€1 070 600
European Prizes		
European prizes expenditure	€103 900	€131 300
Co-operation		
Co-operation activities	€142 800	€126 900
Official journeys	€11 300	€10 200
Observation Elections		
Observation Elections activities	€135 400	€165 100
Official journeys	€53 500	€54 300
Communication		
Communication activities	€26 700	€40 700
Official journeys	€11 500	€12 200

Parliamentary Democracy – Expenditure of the Assembly	Appropriations 2024 (€)	Appropriations 2025 (€)
General Management expenditure		
Official journeys	€77 100	€110 500
Information Technology	€75 600	€147 700
Total supplies, services, and other operational expenditure	**€5 117 600**	**€5 279 300**
Total expenditure of the Assembly	**€17 617 400**	**€18 009 700**
Ordinary budget contribution to CoE/EU joint co-operation programmes	**€308 200**	**€463 800**
Budget of the Assembly as approved by the Committee of Ministers	**€17 925 600**	**€18 473 500**
*This activity is covered from the special account for the hearing of candidates for the post of judge at the European Court of Human Rights.		