



Opinion 301 (2023)¹

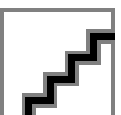
Provisional version

Budgets and priorities of the Council of Europe for the period 2024-2027

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly's Opinion on the budget and priorities of the Council of Europe for the period 2024-2027 has been prepared under unprecedented circumstances. The war of aggression waged by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, a Council of Europe member State, since 24 February 2022 is a violation of international law and a grave violation of the Statute of the Council of Europe (ETS No. 1), in particular of the principles enshrined in Article 3.
2. As a result of this war, the Russian Federation was expelled from the Council of Europe on 16 March 2022, by a unanimous decision of the Committee of Ministers acting under Article 8 of the Statute and on the basis of the unanimously adopted [Opinion 300](#) of the Assembly.
3. The 2024-2027 programming and budgeting process is thus taking place in the context of political, legal and international transformations unfolding in Europe and beyond. These transformations require a re-examination and re-assertion of the place and role of the Council of Europe in today's European and global multilateral architecture and a new focus in its political and budget priorities.
4. In this context, the Assembly welcomed the 4th Council of Europe Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Reykjavik on 16-17 May 2023. It expresses appreciation of the political commitment of Council of Europe member States, witnessed by the participation, at the highest level, of their political leaders in the Summit and the adoption of the Reykjavik Declaration.
5. The Assembly endorses the Reykjavik Declaration and its Appendices which give priority and direction to the Council of Europe's work. It welcomes the recommitment by member States to the fundamental values enshrined in the Council of Europe Statute – democracy, human rights and the rule of law.
6. The Assembly reiterates the importance of the member States' commitment to the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5) and their respect for the authority of the European Court on Human Rights, whose judgments they are bound to implement. The implementation of the Court's judgments must remain one of the key priorities of the Council of Europe during the next quadrennial programme and budget period. For its part, the Assembly shall continue to strengthen the parliamentary dimension of the implementation of judgments, in particular through high-level political dialogue and its regular thematic reports.
7. The Assembly stands together with the leaders of Council of Europe member States in unity for Ukraine and accountability for the crimes committed against a member State. It welcomes the establishment of an Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Register of Damage and calls on all member and observer States, as well as any other States that are eligible according to the Register's Statute, to join as a Participant or Associate Member. At the same time, the Assembly believes that efforts to ensure accountability and prevent impunity should be further pursued, including through the establishment of an international ad hoc tribunal, as recommended in [Resolution 2482 \(2023\)](#).

1. *Assembly debate* on 21 June 2023 (17th sitting) (see [Doc. 15780](#), report of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs, rapporteur: Ms Ingjerd Schou). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 21 June 2023 (17th sitting).



8. Particular attention should be paid to addressing the situation of children of Ukraine, in line with the Declaration adopted at the 4th Summit, as well as to ensuring release of civilians, in particular children, forcibly transferred or unlawfully deported to the territory of the Russian Federation or areas under its temporary occupation or control, in accordance with Assembly [Resolution 2495 \(2023\)](#) and [Recommendation 2253 \(2023\)](#).

9. Equally, the Assembly supports the Council of Europe's commitment to provide concrete, tangible and targeted support to Ukraine through the Action Plan "Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction" (2023-2026). For its part, it will continue to support the Verkhovna Rada in fulfilling Ukraine's statutory obligations, and will provide relevant expertise and peer-to-peer exchanges for parliamentarians. It calls on governments and parliaments of member States to support these co-operation activities by providing additional extrabudgetary resources.

10. The Assembly welcomes the commitment of member States to strengthening democracy and good governance at all levels, as well as counteracting democratic backsliding. It will support member States in delivering on the Reykjavik Principles of Democracy. The Assembly believes moreover that among the political priorities for the next quadrennial cycle, efforts should be continued to provide early warning and rapid reaction, and to provide relevant and targeted support to member States.

11. In its support for more active engagement with civil society and democracy actors, the Assembly emphasises the need to further invest into working with human rights defenders, democratic forces, independent civil society and free media from Belarus and the Russian Federation, who are fighting for the values and principles of the Organisation, including the territorial integrity of sovereign member States. Similarly, the Assembly believes that the strengthening of the youth perspective in the Council of Europe should be given every priority as a means to revitalise democracy and enhance young people's participation in democratic and political processes.

12. Addressing new and emerging human rights challenges must be among the Organisation's priorities during the 2024-2027 programme and budget cycle. Special attention should be paid to initiatives to uphold a right to a clean, safe, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right, including through the strengthening of the relevant legal framework. Equally, it supports the Summit's commitment to initiate the Reykjavik process and looks forward to contributing to it. Legal and human rights aspects of the use of artificial intelligence and emerging digital technologies should remain in the focus of the Council of Europe agenda, including the finalisation of the Council of Europe's Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence.

13. The Assembly is at the disposal of the Committee of Ministers to feed into the vision that will underpin the establishment of the intergovernmental committee on environment and human rights (Reykjavik Committee), which the Assembly recommends be established as of 1 January 2024. With a view to contributing to the realisation of the human right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment at national, European and international level, the Assembly recommends that the Reykjavik Committee benefit from multidisciplinary and multisectoral expertise, start with a stock-taking exercise of existing instruments and mechanisms at European and international level to inspire synergies and avoid duplication of work, and serve as a platform for the exchange of good practice at all levels.

14. Combating inequalities and discrimination, as well as upholding gender equality, including combating violence against women and promoting the ratification and implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210, "Istanbul Convention"), must remain at the forefront of the Council of Europe agenda. Alongside its work on this topic, the Assembly is committed to enhancing equality between women and men in its own structures and working arrangements.

15. The Council of Europe should continue to act as the United Nations Organisation's regional pillar supporting the delivery of Sustainable Development Goals, which should continue to be mainstreamed in all Council of Europe activities. It welcomes the Summit's commitment to strengthening institutional partnership with the European Union and calls for a speedy completion of the process of accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights.

16. Given the depth and ambition of the priorities set by the leaders of the member States at the 4th Summit, it is clear that the Council of Europe should be granted resources that are commensurate with the level of member States' political ambition for the Organisation. To effectively deliver on the Summit outcomes, the Organisation's resources should be increased over and above the zero real growth perspective. The sustainability of the Council of Europe's action requires unwavering commitment and investment in the financial contributions from our member States.

17. Therefore, the Assembly calls upon the member States to invest sufficient additional resources into the Organisation to allow it to deliver the results which the Summit has indicated. It is convinced that the need to match resources to ambition will remain at the forefront of the discussions in the Committee of Ministers during the 2024-2027 budgetary process.

18. The Assembly welcomes all the work put in over recent years to modernise and reform the working methods and governance of the Council of Europe, led by the Committee of Ministers, the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General, including the introduction of the Result-based Management Strategy as well as the implementation of the People Strategy. It welcomes the approval by the Committee of Ministers of the Capital Master Plan which, *inter alia* provides for the refurbishment and modernisation of the Assembly Chamber through 2023-2024.

19. The Assembly recalls its own initiatives to modernise the Assembly's tools and working methods, including through the pace-apps application, with a view to attain the objective of "paper-less" operation, thus reducing the Assembly's – and the Council of Europe's – costs as well as its carbon footprint in an overall effort to address the environmental challenge. Digital modernisation will therefore continue to be high on the Assembly's own list of priorities during the 2024-2027 programme and budget period, as will the best-practice management of its staff and budgetary resources in line with the reforms put in place in the whole Organisation.