

# The Session

Secretariat of the  
Parliamentary  
Assembly,  
Communication Unit

Council of Europe  
Avenue de l'Europe  
F-67075 Strasbourg cedex

Tel. +33 3 88 41 31 93  
Fax +33 3 90 21 41 34  
e-mail: [pace.com@coe.int](mailto:pace.com@coe.int)  
<http://assembly.coe.int>



The Session is the information bulletin for plenary sessions of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE). It is published four times a year in the two official languages of the Organisation and is also available on the Assembly's website.



Wednesday 28th September 2005

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The final order of business will be decided by the  
Assembly at the opening of the session

# The 46

The Council of Europe brings together 46 democracies including 21 central and eastern European countries. Today, the Organisation has almost completed its enlargement but continues to increase its monitoring to ensure that all its members respect the obligations and commitments they entered into when they joined.



Member states: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

# The Parliamentary Assembly

The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 630 members (315 representatives and 315 substitutes) from the national parliaments of the 46 member states of the Council of Europe.

Countries that have joined the Council of Europe since November 1990: Hungary (1990), Poland (1991), Bulgaria (1992), Estonia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Slovak Republic, Czech Republic, Romania (1993), Latvia, Albania, Moldova, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Ukraine (1995), the Russian Federation, Croatia (1996), Georgia (1999), Armenia, Azerbaijan (2001), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2002), Serbia and Montenegro (2003) and Monaco (2004).

Applications for membership: Belarus (12 March 1993). The Special Guest status of the Belarus parliament was suspended on 13 January 1997.

The parliaments of Canada (1997), Israel (1957) and Mexico (1999) hold observer status with the Assembly.

# The political groups



209

Socialist Group (SOC)



184

Group of the European People's Party (EPP/CD)



99

Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)



75

European Democrat Group (EDG)



34

Group of the Unified European Left (UEL)

# The Assembly committees

## 83 seats

Political Affairs  
 Legal Affairs and Human Rights  
 Economic Affairs and Development  
 Social, Health and Family Affairs  
 Migration, Refugees and Population  
 Culture, Science and Education  
 Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs  
 Equal Opportunities for Women and Men  
 Honouring of obligations and commitments by member states of the Council of Europe (Monitoring)

## 51 seats

Rules of Procedure and Immunities



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# Monday 3 October 2005

## Afternoon (3 p.m.-7 p.m.)

### ◆ Opening of the fourth part of the 2005 Ordinary Session

Parliamentary Assembly President René van der Linden will open the fourth part of the 2005 Ordinary Session. The Assembly will begin by examining the credentials of any new members notified by national delegations and will deal with any changes in the membership of committees.

It will elect a Vice-President of the Assembly with respect to Moldova, before considering any requests for urgent or current affairs debates and then adopting its order of business.<sup>1</sup> Finally, the Assembly will adopt the minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee held in Monaco on 1 September 2005.

### Progress report of the Bureau of the Assembly and the Standing Committee

*Rapporteur: Konstantin Kosachev (Russia, EDG)*

The progress report covers the discussions held and decisions reached by the Bureau and the Standing Committee since the last part-session.

### ◆ Statement by Marian Lupu, Speaker of the Parliament of Moldova

### ◆ Co-development policy as a positive measure to regulate migratory flows

*Doc. 10654*

*Report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population*

*Rapporteur: Rudy Salles (France, ALDE)*

The starting point of this report is the belief that migrants, once established in their host countries, can become agents of change in the countries they have left – and that this is a positive process, which should be encouraged by European governments. Some 20 million foreign residents live in Europe, the majority of them from developing countries.

Many send money back to relatives, while others pick up professional or entrepreneurial skills, or ideas about democracy and human rights, which could help to boost development in their countries of origin. Diaspora communities could be privileged partners in this kind of “co-development”, the Migration Committee suggests, while women migrants could also be encouraged to take a lead role.

Ultimately those migrants who are responding to the needs of their countries of origin, and who want to return, could be helped to do so. Overall, governments should seek ways to integrate better their management of migration and their development policies.

Contact in the secretariat: Halvor Lervik, tel. 2121.

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1. The draft order of business as contained in this document has been updated to reflect modifications to be proposed to the Bureau at its meeting at 8.30 a.m. on Monday 3 October 2005. However the final order of business will be decided by the Assembly at the opening of the session.

## ◆ Enforced disappearances

*Doc. 10679*

*Report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights*

*Rapporteur: Christos Pourgourides (Cyprus, EPP/CD)*

The United Nations is currently negotiating a binding treaty for a world-wide ban on “enforced disappearances” – situations where people are abducted by the state, or groups acting with its acquiescence, followed by concealment of the fate of the disappeared person, leaving them outside the protection of the law.

A technique used systematically by the Nazis, and in certain Latin American countries during the 1970s and 80s, the Legal Affairs Committee considers it a very serious human rights violation on a par with torture and murder, and one which still exists in Europe. The committee makes reference to recent PACE reports on Chechnya, Belarus and Cyprus.

The Legal Affairs Committee calls on the UN to come up with the strongest possible legal framework: neither time-limits nor amnesties should be permitted for this crime, and it should be subject to universal jurisdiction, allowing perpetrators to be tried in other countries if their own governments cannot or will not do so. A failure to effectively investigate such disappearances should itself be made a crime, and the relevant Minister or head of department held liable for any such failure.

Governments should guarantee full reparations for the disappeared person or their relatives, who should be granted a “right to the truth”. Finally, the resulting treaty should be enforced through a strong international monitoring mechanism, which would also allow urgent interventions in individual cases.

Contact in the secretariat: Günter Schirmer, tel. 2809.

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# Tuesday 4 October 2005

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

## ◆ Election of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights

*Doc. 10661. Voting takes place from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the area behind the presidential rostrum.*

The Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights was established in 1999 as an independent institution within the Council of Europe to promote awareness of human rights, assist national human rights structures, identify shortcomings in human rights law and practice and promote respect for human rights across all the member states.

The Commissioner is elected by the Parliamentary Assembly from a list of three candidates drawn up by the Committee of Ministers for a non-renewable six-year term of office. The three candidates, in alphabetical order, are Thomas Hammarberg (Sweden), Marek Antoni Nowicki (Poland) and Marc Verwilghen (Belgium).

To assist it in making its decision, PACE has asked its Sub-committee on Human Rights to make confidential recommendations based on personal interviews with all the candidates and assessments of their CVs. The document containing these recommendations is made available to members of the Assembly.

An absolute majority of votes cast is required in the first round of voting in the Assembly. If this is not achieved, a second round of voting will take place from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesday 5 October, for which a simple majority of votes cast will be sufficient.

## ◆ Election of the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly

*Doc. 10656. Voting takes place from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the area behind the presidential rostrum.*

The Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly is elected by the Assembly for a five-year term of office. The term of office of the current Secretary General, Bruno Haller, comes to an end on 31 January 2006.

A single candidate has been proposed by four Chairpersons and one Vice-Chairperson of the Parliamentary Assembly's political groups, and by the Permanent Representative of Spain, and recommended to the Assembly by the Committee of Ministers: Mateo Sorinas Balfegó, currently the Director General in the Assembly's Secretariat.

## ◆ Women and religion in Europe

*Doc. 10670*

*Report of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men*

*Rapporteur: Rosmarie Zapfl-Helbling (Switzerland, EPP/CD)*

Religion continues to play an important role in the lives of many European women. In fact, whether they are believers or not, most women are affected in one way or another by the attitude of different faiths towards women, either directly or through their traditional influence on society or the State. This influence is seldom benign, according to the Equality Committee: women's rights are often curtailed or violated in the name of religion.

At one end of the spectrum lie extreme violations such as so-called "honour" crimes, forced marriages and female genital mutilation, which – though still rare in Europe – are on the rise in some communities. At the other end are more subtle but more widespread forms of intolerance such as a refusal to question a patriarchal culture which holds up the role of wife, mother and housewife as the ideal.

European governments should ensure that women are not subjected to religiously-inspired policies and laws – notably in the area of family, divorce and abortion law – and should not allow respect for culture and tradition to justify, for example, forcing underage girls to submit to dress codes, curtailing their freedom of movement or barring their access to contraception. In short, the committee believes, they should make quite clear that freedom of religion is limited by respect for women's human rights.

### **Statement by Asma Jahangir, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief**

Contact in the secretariat: Tanja Kleinsorge, tel. 2906.

## ◆ Address by Miguel Angel Moratinos, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Co-operation of Spain

Following his address, Mr Moratinos will answer questions from members of the Assembly.

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# Tuesday 4 October 2005

☞ Afternoon (3 p.m.-7 p.m.)

## ◆ Address by Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference

The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) is an inter-governmental organisation grouping 56 states worldwide whose aims include "to strengthen solidarity and co-operation among Islamic States in the political, economic, cultural, scientific and social fields". Its first meeting took place in Rabat, Morocco, on 25 September 1969 (12 Rajab 1389H). The OIC is based in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

The organisation holds "Islamic Summits" every three years – attended by Heads of State and Government – to lay down policy, while its Foreign Ministers meet once a year. Information and Culture Ministers from the organisation's member states also meet periodically.

Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, an Islamic scholar and diplomat from Turkey, was elected Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in June 2004 (Rabiulthani 1425H).

Following his address, Professor Ihsanoglu will answer questions from members of the Assembly.

## ◆ Education and religion

*Doc. 10673*

*Report of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education*

*Rapporteur: André Schneider (France, EPP/CD)*

The Culture Committee begins this report by forcefully reaffirming that each person's religion – or the option of having no religion – is a strictly personal matter. But it believes that all European children should nonetheless have the opportunity to learn about different religions in school: knowledge of the different faiths is part of the history of civilisation, and an understanding of the history of conflicts carried out in the name of religion can help to overcome them. Even the values upheld by the Council of Europe, the committee points out, stem from values shared by the three monotheistic religions "of the Book".

But it is important that even countries where one religion predominates should teach about the origins of *all* religions rather than favour a single one. The history of the main religions, and the option of having none, should be taught with "complete impartiality", the committee says, while pupils should be taught that everyone has the same right to believe their religion is "the true faith". For their part, teachers of religion should be encouraged to teach their subject as "a cultural or literary discipline".

Contact in the secretariat: Joao Ary, tel. 2112.

## ◆ Functioning of democratic institutions in Moldova

*Doc. 10671*

*Report of the Monitoring Committee*

*Co-rapporteurs: Josette Durrieu (France, SOC) and André Kvakkestad (Norway, EDG)*

During its ten-year membership of the Council of Europe, Moldova has advanced significantly on the path of democratic reform but a number of important commitments have not yet been met in a satisfactory manner, according to the Monitoring Committee. The pace of reform has been slowed because, in parallel with working on its democratic institutions, Moldova has had to build its national identity and deal with a separatist regime in Transnistria.

The priorities now should be improving the functioning of those democratic institutions, reinforcing the independence and efficiency of the judiciary, ensuring the freedom and pluralism of the electronic media, strengthening local democracy, raising economic performance coupled with good social protection and fighting corruption and the trafficking of human beings and organs. The currently stabilised political situation offers an opportunity to achieve these objectives, which the country cannot afford to miss.

Finally, a peaceful solution to the Transnistrian conflict – one which fully respects Moldova's territorial integrity while reflecting the popular will – has to be found, since this continues to be a major obstacle to the further democratic and economic development of the entire country.

Contact in the secretariat: Bonnie Theophilova, tel. 3092.

**The second ever meeting of women members of the Assembly is due to take place at 7.15 p.m., or at the end of the sitting, in Room 9. The guest speaker is the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief Asma Jahangir. The first meeting took place in October 2004.**



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# Wednesday 5 October 2005

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ **Honouring of obligations and commitments by Ukraine**

*Doc. 10676*

*Report of the Monitoring Committee*

*Co-rapporteurs: Hanne Severinsen (Denmark, ALDE) and Renate Wohlwend (Liechtenstein, EPP/CD)*

In this monitoring report – the sixth on Ukraine since it joined the Council of Europe in 1995 and the first to assess developments since the Orange Revolution – the Monitoring Committee welcomes the “positive evolution” in the country under President Yushchenko and the achievements of his first government, but recognises that it has encountered numerous difficulties, originating in the rule of the previous authorities as well as internal conflicts within the administration.

The new leaders are urged to “preserve their steadfast resolve” in carrying out the crucial reforms which Ukraine badly needs. Priorities remain the fight against corruption and strengthening the rule of law. Among other things, the committee deeply regrets the Constitutional amendments of December 2004 which, while they halted the political turmoil, are incompatible with the rule of law.

Meanwhile, many of Ukraine’s commitments – for example, to adopt a Code of Criminal Procedure, to reform the prosecutor’s office, to establish a professional Bar Association and to ratify the Minority Languages Charter – remain unfulfilled. Monitoring should be continued for the time being, the committee proposes.

Contact in the secretariat: Ivi-Triin Odrats, tel. 2979.

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# Wednesday 5 October 2005

## Afternoon (3 p.m.-8 p.m.)

- ◆ **OECD and the world economy**

*Doc. 10645 prov.*

*Report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development*

*Rapporteur: Konstantinos Vrettos (Greece, SOC)*

*Contribution from the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee*

*Spokesperson: Michael Hancock (United Kingdom, ALDE)*

*Contribution from the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population*

*Spokesperson: Márton Braun (Hungary, EPP/CD)*

*Contribution from the Committee on Culture, Science and Education*

*Spokesperson: Pericleous Papadopoulos (Cyprus, ALDE)*

*Contribution from the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs*

*Spokesperson: John Dupraz (Switzerland, ALDE)*

Since 1962 PACE has acted as the parliamentary forum for the 30-nation Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, inviting parliamentarians from OECD member countries which are not members of the Council of Europe (Australia, Canada, Japan, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand and the United States) to join its members in an annual enlarged debate.

In this report, the Economic Affairs Committee welcomes overall solid growth in the world economy and notes well-contained inflation in the OECD area, but worries about the huge and steadily rising US deficit as well as timid growth in the eurozone, whose twelve countries seem to be diverging economically rather than converging. High and volatile oil prices pose a further risk, and OECD countries should do more to increase energy efficiency and diversify sources. On the other hand, extensive ongoing co-operation with Russia, and growing links with China, are welcomed.

The OECD could now give thought to further enlargement, the committee suggests, so as to include all countries in the world that meet its criteria. Helping rising economies, while laudable, is no longer enough: richer countries need help with tackling global challenges, such as the Millennium Development Goals, and lifting the world's poorest countries out of debt.

**Statement by Donald J. Johnston, Secretary-General of the OECD**

Contact in the secretariat: Kjell Torbiorn, tel. 2120.

◆ **Forced marriages and child marriages**

*Doc. 10590*

*Report of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men*

*Rapporteur: Rosmarie Zapfl-Helbling (Switzerland, EPP/CD)*

*Doc. 10678*

*Opinion of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee*

*Rapporteur: Helena Bargholtz (Sweden, ALDE)*

The Equality Committee considers it an outrage that, under the cloak of respect for the culture and traditions of certain communities, there are authorities which tolerate forced marriages and child marriages even though they violate the fundamental rights of each and every victim.

Forced marriage is defined as the union of two persons at least one of whom has not given their full and free consent to the marriage. Child marriage is defined as the union of two persons at least one of whom is under eighteen years of age. Such marriages should no longer take place in societies that uphold human rights and the rights of the child, the committee declares.

All Council of Europe member states should fix at or raise to eighteen years the minimum statutory age of marriage for women and men, make it easier for forced marriages to be prevented, detected and annulled, and bring to justice the perpetrators of rape within such marriages, as well as those who aided and abetted the contracting of such a marriage.

Contact in the secretariat: Jannick Devaux, tel. 3503.

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# Thursday 6 October 2005

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

- ◆ Statement by Volodymyr Lytvyn, Speaker of the Parliament of Ukraine
  
- ◆ The Council of Europe and the European Neighbourhood Policy of the European Union
  - Report of the Political Affairs Committee*  
*Rapporteur: Luc Van den Brande (Belgium, EPP/CD)*
  
  - Opinion of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development*  
*Rapporteur: Liudmila Pirozhnikova (Russia, EDG)*
  
  - Opinion of the Monitoring Committee*  
*Rapporteur: Emanuelis Zingeris (Lithuania, EDG)*

This report is due to be approved by the Political Affairs Committee at its meeting on Monday 3 October at 2 p.m. If this is the case, the deadline for tabling amendments would be Wednesday 5 October at 10.30 a.m.

**Statement by Elmar Brok, Chairperson of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament**

Contact in the secretariat: Agnieszka Nachilo, tel. 2905.

- ◆ Communication from the Committee of Ministers to the Parliamentary Assembly presented by Fernando d'Oliveira Neves, State Secretary for European Affairs of Portugal, representing the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers

Following his presentation, Mr d'Oliveira Neves will answer members' questions, which must be tabled at the latest by 3.30 p.m. on Tuesday 4 October.

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# Thursday 6 October 2005

☞ Afternoon (3 p.m.-6.30 p.m.)

◆ Possible urgent debate

A request for a debate under urgent procedure on *The draft Framework Convention of the Council of Europe on the value of cultural heritage for society* has been submitted by the Committee of Ministers, which has forwarded the text of the draft Framework Convention to the Assembly for opinion. A second request is expected for an urgent debate on *Europe and bird flu: preventive measures*. The Assembly will take the final decision on both requests – or any others received – at the opening of the session.

◆ Serious human rights violations in Libya – inhuman treatment of Bulgarian medical staff

*Doc. 10677*

*Report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights*

*Rapporteur: Tony Lloyd (United Kingdom, SOC)*

Five Bulgarian nurses were arrested by the Libyan police in February 1999 and, together with a Palestinian doctor, charged with deliberately contaminating some 426 children at the paediatric hospital in Benghazi by injecting them with the HIV/AIDS virus. To date 51 of the children have died. The medics were found guilty of premeditated murder and, in May 2004, sentenced to death. The Libyan Supreme Court, which is hearing an appeal, will deliver its judgment on 15 November 2005.

An investigation carried out by distinguished independent medical experts clearly showed that the infection had broken out a year before the Bulgarians worked there. On the basis of this and other evidence, the committee believes the Bulgarian nurses and the Palestinian doctor should be regarded as completely innocent. They have also been subject to many human rights violations including torture, detention *incommunicado* and violation of the right to a fair trial.

Libya should now settle this case, the committee says, by releasing the medics or at least ensuring them a fair trial, and investigate the allegations of torture. European governments should contribute to the EU fund which has been set up as an act of solidarity with the Libyan children, and apply pressure on Libya to settle this question speedily.

Contact in the secretariat: Valérie Clamer, tel. 2106.

**The Joint Committee, which is the organ of co-ordination between the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly, meets at 6.30 p.m. or at the end of the sitting in Room 5. Items on the draft agenda include follow-up to the Third Summit. The Joint Committee is composed of a representative of each member government and a corresponding number of Assembly members, made up of Bureau members plus one representative from each national delegation not represented on the Bureau.**

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# Friday 7 October 2005

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ Language problems in access to public health care in the Brussels-Capital region in Belgium

*Doc. 10648*

*Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee*

*Rapporteur: Minodora Cliveti (Romania, SOC)*

*Opinion of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights*

*Rapporteur: Boriss Cilevics (Latvia, SOC)*

This reports stems from two petitions to PACE, one alleging discrimination against Dutch-speakers in hospitals in Brussels and the surrounding area and the other alleging discrimination against French-speakers. Dutch-speaking patients complain they are not treated by Dutch-speaking staff in the majority of Brussels hospitals, although it is by law a bilingual city. Unable to communicate in their mother tongue, they are sometimes put at risk medically and are left with the impression that they are "second-class patients", according to the petition. The second petition also alleges discrimination, pointing out that French-speaking women in some areas are excluded from free breast cancer screening.

Having visited Brussels and spoken to all parties, the rapporteur concludes that the solution lies not in changing existing legislation – which is the result of a careful compromise – but rather in applying it more effectively, by encouraging bilingualism generally and in particular prompting more medical staff in Brussels to learn and speak Dutch. Bilingual staff should be placed in hospital receptions where possible, she suggests, while a network of bilingual doctors could be set up and medical schools encouraged to teach languages. Above all, both sides should show the goodwill, openness and tolerance necessary to arrive at a pragmatic solution.

Contact in the secretariat: Geza Mezei, tel. 2143.

## ◆ The costs of the Common Agricultural Policy

*Doc. 10649*

*Report of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs*

*Rapporteur: Paul Flynn (United Kingdom, SOC)*

The EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was designed to safeguard post-war Europe's food supply. It has fulfilled that aim, as well as guaranteeing income for farmers and promoting rural development, but circumstances today have significantly changed: agriculture is in decline and environmental concerns have come to the fore, while the CAP is starting to have negative effects on countries in the developing world. Large subsidies to already highly profitable European sugar companies, for example, are unfair to producers in developing countries.

European consumers, meanwhile, foot the bill through taxes yet still pay higher prices in the supermarket. Even the distribution of subsidies raises concern – large, wealthy farmers benefit more than small ones – while intensive farming encouraged by the CAP is threatening animal habitats. The recent reform package is a welcome tentative step, according to the Environment Committee, but more can be done.

It is time to shift focus, perhaps drawing on lessons from New Zealand or Switzerland, towards protecting the environment. Farmers should be increasingly rewarded for their non-economic services – such as looking after animals and the environment, or contributing to the social fabric of outlying communities. Any reform, the committee concludes, should take account not just of farmers' interests, but those of the whole community.

Contact in the secretariat: Carolina Lasen-Diaz, tel. 3716.

## ◆ Accelerated asylum procedures in Council of Europe member states

*Doc. 10655*

*Report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population*

*Rapporteur: Pedro Agramunt (Spain, EPP/CD)*

Procedures for processing asylum applications quickly – used in some countries when, for example, the application is manifestly unfounded, or when applicants come from a known "safe" country, or arrive with no documents or forged documents – should not be at the expense of assessing them unfairly or inconsistently, the Migration Committee believes. It warns that because of the high number of such "accelerated" cases, and the diversity of procedures for dealing with them in different European countries, there is a risk of a lottery developing.

Guidelines on best practice should be developed – going beyond the minimal standards laid out in the current EU draft Directive – which would allow swift, positive but above all consistently fair decisions. All the procedural safeguards of international migration law should still apply, even in fast-tracked cases. Certain groups – such as separated children, unaccompanied minors and victims of torture, sexual violence or trafficking – should never be fast-tracked.

Contact in the secretariat: Mark Neville, tel. 2341.

## ◆ Closure of the fourth part of the 2005 Ordinary Session

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# Practical information

## 1. Meetings of committees and political groups

The list of meetings held by the committees and the other organs of the Assembly (Bureau, political groups, etc.) appears in the notice paper (*bulletin*) published before each sitting.

Unless a committee decides otherwise, committee meetings are not public.

Monday and Wednesday mornings are reserved for political group meetings.

## 2. Languages

The official languages of the Assembly are English and French. German, Italian and Russian are working languages. Speeches made in plenary session in any of these five languages are interpreted simultaneously into the other official and working languages. Members may, however, speak in languages other than English, French, German, Italian and Russian, provided that their delegation arranges for interpretation into one of the official or working languages. During sittings this is generally the case for Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese and Greek.

## 3. Assembly documents

The following documents are available in French and English at the document counter (on the first floor, to the right of the top of the main staircase, near lift No. IV).

### Official documents

The main official documents are:

**Reports:** All items on the agenda are debated on the basis of a report by one of the Assembly's committees (with the exception of current affairs debates, elections, appointments, statements by guest speakers and communications from and questions to the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe).

Committee reports comprise one or more draft texts for adoption (recommendations, opinions, resolutions) and an explanatory memorandum prepared by the rapporteur. Only draft texts can be amended and adopted by the Assembly.

**Amendments:** Amendments to draft texts must be tabled in keeping with the relevant rules of procedure, particularly Rule 34 (see section 4 below). They are distributed at the document counter. They must be signed by at least five Representatives or Substitutes, unless they are being submitted on behalf of a committee seized for report or opinion.

**Order of business:** For each part-session the Bureau prepares a draft order of business listing the sittings at which the agenda items will be examined. **The draft order of business** is made available to members of the Assembly two weeks before



the opening of the part-session. The Assembly is required to adopt the draft order of business (Rule 25.7 of the Rules of Procedure). A member may propose an amendment to the draft order of business drawn up by the Bureau. The adoption of such a motion requires a majority of the votes cast (Rule 25.8). Once adopted, the order of business can be altered only by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast.

Once it has been approved by the Assembly at the first sitting of the part-session, the order of business is published (Rule 25) and made available to the members at the document counter.

**Minutes of proceedings:** Generally, after each sitting of the Assembly, the **minutes of proceedings** are produced. They list the Assembly's decisions and record speakers' names, the results of votes on texts and amendments, and points of order raised. At the start of the sitting the President submits the minutes of proceedings of earlier sittings to the Assembly for approval. If the minutes of proceedings are objected to, their approval may be postponed to the following sitting, at which the President may put to the Assembly any necessary modification (see Rule 29 of the Rules of Procedure).

**Report of debates:** A **provisional report of debates** is issued after each sitting. The French version of the provisional report (pink pages) contains the full text of all speeches made in French and a summary in French of speeches made in other languages. The English version (yellow pages) contains the full text of speeches in English and summaries in English of speeches in other languages. Speeches in German or Italian are also reported verbatim in a separate publication (green pages). Speakers may make corrections to the provisional report of debates within 24 hours of publication.

Representatives and Substitutes who were entered on the list of speakers and present in the Chamber but were unable to speak because of lack of time may hand in their typewritten texts for inclusion in the report of debates. They should do so within 24 hours of the end of the debate concerned at the Table Office (Room 1083).

**Adopted texts:** The texts adopted by the Assembly are also published after each sitting, separately in English (yellow pages) and French (pink pages).

The texts adopted by the Assembly are:

- Recommendations (proposals addressed by the Assembly to the Committee of Ministers, for implementation by that Committee or the governments);
- Opinions (addressed to the Committee of Ministers);
- Resolutions (embodying a decision by the Assembly on a question of substance which it is empowered to put into effect, a point of view for which it alone is responsible, or a question of form, transmission, execution or procedure);

The other official documents (Rule 22 of the Rules of Procedure) are:

- reports, communications, requests for an opinion or further consideration transmitted by the Committee of Ministers;
- questions addressed to the Committee of Ministers;
- communications from the Secretary General of the Council of Europe;
- reports of international organisations;
- written declarations.

## Other documents

Before each sitting a **notice paper** is produced, setting out the orders of the day. It also contains other information relevant to the proceedings, including:

- time limits for tabling amendments;
- time limits for lists of speakers;
- procedural notices, for example concerning elections;
- information about meetings of committees and other Assembly bodies;
- information about changes in the membership of committees.

For each part-session the following lists are published:

- List of Representatives
- List of Substitutes
- List of national delegations
- List of the Secretariat officials, giving office locations and contact telephone numbers for the part-session.

A new edition of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly has been made available in a bilingual version (English/French) since the opening of the 2005 Session, including two updates.

## **4. Tabling amendments**

Members who wish to table amendments or sub-amendments to the draft texts before the Assembly should submit them to the Table Office (Room 1083). Amendments and sub-amendments must be **signed by at least five Representatives or Substitutes**, unless they have been submitted on behalf of the committee submitting the report or an opinion.

Under the provisions on the organisation of debates (page 88 and ff. of the Rules of Procedure), the **time limits for tabling amendments** are the following (where appropriate the Bureau may decide to change these limits, in particular for urgent debates):

- for debates on the afternoon of Monday 3 October: Monday 3 October at 12 noon;
- for debates on Tuesday 4 October: Monday 3 October at 4 p.m.;
- for all other debates (except urgent debates and the OECD debate): 23 and a half hours before the opening of the sitting at which the debate is to begin.

Sub-amendments must be tabled at least two hours before the opening of the sitting at which the debate is to begin.

The procedure for tabling, examining and voting on amendments and sub-amendments is set out in Rule 34 of the Rules of Procedure.

## **5. Motions for resolutions and recommendations**

Motions for resolutions and recommendations must be signed by ten or more Representatives or Substitutes from at least five national delegations (Rule 23.2). The President decides which motions are admissible.

Any motion considered admissible is printed and distributed as soon as possible. The Bureau then decides whether it should be referred to one or more committees, or forwarded to one or more committees for information, or that no further action should be taken. The Bureau's decision must then be ratified by the Assembly or the Standing Committee.

For Motions tabled during a Part-Session, the Bureau has decided that the Friday meeting of the Bureau at the end of that Part-Session will only consider those Motions which have been tabled by **12 noon on Tuesday of the Part-Session**. Motions received after that deadline are examined by the Bureau meeting after the Part-Session.

A document may be referred to only one committee for report but to any other committee for opinion (Rule 24.2). The opinion of the latter concerns the report of the former committee. The report concerned must therefore be made available to the committee whose opinion has been sought in good time for it to prepare its opinion. Committee opinions may be presented orally or in writing. An opinion presented in writing must contain a chapter at the beginning entitled "Conclusions of the committee" and an explanatory memorandum by the rapporteur (Rule 49.3 of the Rules of Procedure).

## **6. Written declarations**

Written declarations may be tabled provided that they:

- do not exceed 200 words;
- are on subjects within the competence of the Council of Europe;
- are signed by at least twenty Representatives or Substitutes belonging to four national delegations and two political groups.

They are neither referred to a committee nor debated in the Assembly (Rule 53 of the Rules of Procedure).

Any representative or Substitute may add his signature to such a declaration, in which case the declaration will be distributed again two weeks after the end of the part-session, with the names of all the members who signed it.

A written declaration which has not received any new signatures before the opening of the following part-session is closed to further signature.

## **7. Opinions of the Assembly (to the Committee of Ministers)**

According to the Statute of the Council of Europe, or to other texts of a statutory character, the Committee of Ministers seeks the Assembly's opinion on such matters as the accession of new member states, draft conventions or the Council of Europe's budget. These requests for opinions are debated in the Assembly, following which the Assembly votes on the opinion to be transmitted to the Committee of Ministers (Rule 57).

## **8. Changes in the membership of national delegations or committees**

Members of the Assembly are appointed for the whole Ordinary Session. Following parliamentary elections, the national parliament concerned or other competent authority shall make appointments to the Assembly within six months of the elections (Rule 10.2 and 3).

Should any seat on a national delegation fall vacant in the course of a session as a result of death or resignation, the president of the national parliament concerned, or the Minister for Foreign Affairs, presents the credentials of the member who is to fill the vacant seat to the President of

the Parliamentary Assembly, who submits them to the Assembly or the Standing Committee for ratification at the first sitting or meeting following their receipt (Rule 6.4).

The chairperson of a national delegation informs the President of the Assembly of any proposed change(s) in committee membership concerning that delegation's members. The President of the Assembly submits the proposed change(s) to the Assembly, the Standing Committee or, failing that, the Bureau for ratification (Rule 43.6).

## **9. Requests for debates under urgent procedure or current affairs debates**

At the request of the Committee of Ministers, of the committee concerned, or of twenty or more Representatives or Substitutes, a debate may be held on an item which has not been placed on the Assembly's agenda. Requests for debates under urgent procedure must be addressed to the President of the Assembly. The President submits them to the Bureau, which makes a proposal to the Assembly. The adoption of urgent procedure requires a two-thirds majority of the votes cast (Rule 50).

At least twenty members, or one political group or national delegation may request a current affairs debate (Rule 52) on a subject which is not on the Assembly's agenda. The request must be made to the President of the Assembly at least a week before the start of the part-session. The Bureau decides whether or not to grant the request, subject to approval by the Assembly. A current affairs debate may not exceed one and a half hours. The debate shall be opened by one of the members who requested it, chosen by the Bureau. The first speaker has ten minutes speaking time, other speakers five. A current affairs debate does not give rise to a vote, though the Bureau of the Assembly may subsequently propose that the subject be referred to the appropriate committee for report.

## **10. Electronic voting, notification of Substitutes, list of speakers, and quorum**

All votes in the Assembly, except elections, take place by electronic voting.

### **Voting cards**

Voting cards issued to all members are simultaneously used for identification and voting.

Distribution of voting cards is ensured by the Protocol Service of the Council of Europe. In principle, this distribution is organised via secretaries of each national delegation. Members who do not have their card (in case a card has been lost or forgotten, or when the Parliamentary Assembly database does not contain the member's photo) should present themselves at the Protocol desk at the main entrance of the Palais de l'Europe in order to receive their card. Protocol staff, before delivering a new card, will invite the member to present his or her identification document. If a third and consecutive card is issued to the same member during the same calendar year for whatever reason, loss or otherwise, the national delegation will be required to pay the cost (6 euros per card).

Voting cards as distributed by the Protocol Service do not give an automatic right to vote. In order to enjoy such a right, the member's card has to be validated. This operation will be carried out by the Assembly Secretariat.

## Notification of Substitutes

In principle all Representatives at the opening of the first sitting (on Monday, at 3 p.m.) have their cards validated, but not Substitutes unless the Secretariat of the Assembly is properly informed about substitutions. Therefore secretaries of national delegations have the duty to inform the Secretariat of the Assembly about all cases of substitution. If this is not done, Substitutes attending the sitting do not have speaking and voting rights.

Notice of substitutions has to be given before the opening of the sitting concerned (if possible by the previous day and at the latest before 8.30 a.m. for a morning sitting and before 1 p.m. for an afternoon sitting). This notification, including the names of Substitutes, the names of Representatives to be substituted and the length of substitution, must be given in writing for each sitting to the Secretariat of the Assembly (Mrs Jocelyne Gibert, Room 1076, fax during session weeks 27-27, fax outside session weeks 37-95).

If the Substitute is replacing the Representative for one or more consecutive sittings, the substitution for each sitting must be notified. Substitutions are never carried automatically over to the following sitting.

When the correct notification has been given, Substitutes will have their voting cards validated. At the same time, cards of Representatives who are to be replaced by Substitutes will become invalid, preventing them from speaking in the debate and voting, including in elections.

## Register of attendance

Members shall continue to sign the register of attendance before entering the Chamber for a sitting (Rules 11.2 and 39.1). A duly designated Substitute will find his or her name in the register next to the name of the Representative for whom he or she is substituting. If, in the register of attendance, no name is found next to the Representative's name, it means that no substitution was notified for the Representative for that particular sitting and therefore the Representative is authorised to speak in the debate and vote.

All members of the Assembly – Representatives and Substitutes as well as Observers – have access to the Chamber at any time of the sitting, regardless of their speaking and voting rights. Therefore, all Members, even those who are not authorised to speak in the debate or vote, are invited to sign the register of attendance if they attend the sitting.

## Speakers' register

Members who wish to speak in a debate must enter their names on the list of speakers. They may do this by post in advance of the part-session, or in person during the part-session at the Table Office (Room 1083). The list is closed one hour before the scheduled end of the previous sitting, except in the case of the first sitting of a part-session when the deadline is two hours before the start of the sitting. It should be noted that in any one part-session members may enter their names on the list for a maximum of **five debates** but may take the floor **not more than three times** (this limit does not apply to members appointed as political group spokespersons or as rapporteurs). A substitute whose name has not been notified to the secretariat before a sitting cannot participate in the debate.

The order of speakers on the list for each debate is determined according to criteria set by the Bureau and can be found on pages 92 to 96 of the Rules of Procedure.

**Speaking time** is limited to a maximum of 8 minutes for committee rapporteurs and 3 minutes for rapporteurs for opinion. Other speakers on the list normally have a maximum of 5 minutes. At the start of each sitting the President announces the speaking arrangements.

Only authorised members – i.e. Representatives or their duly appointed Substitutes – may speak in debates or submit questions for oral reply to the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers or to guest speakers. The list of speakers is verified accordingly.

### **Questions to invited guest speakers**

For most invited guest speakers, the draft order of business indicates whether there is the possibility for members to ask questions. Where there is that possibility, members are encouraged to register their names with the Table Office as soon as the draft order of business is published and the name of the guest speaker appears. For guest speakers other than the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, members are invited to submit the subject of their question. For the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, the name of the member wishing to ask a question is only registered on the list if accompanied by the full written text of the question. The names of persons wishing to ask a question are published and listed in chronological order.

For the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, a precise deadline is specified in the draft order of business. The written questions for oral answer by the Chairperson are published in a Doc. of the Assembly. For the other guest speakers, there is no formal deadline as such as the questions are "spontaneous". However, members have an interest in registering their names as early as possible as there is usually not enough time to answer all questions.

### **Electronic voting**

While they are sitting in the Chamber, members are invited to keep their voting cards inserted in the voting terminals. However, when they leave, they should take their cards with them.

Voting cards should be inserted correctly into the terminals (the photo side of the member's card is facing the President's table; then the card is pushed down until a "click" is heard). A card correctly inserted is signalled by its number being displayed on a small screen in the voting terminal. Any malfunctioning or error message displayed on the voting terminal screen should be immediately reported to the Secretariat present in the Chamber.

The opening of a vote by the President is confirmed by a small green light on the voting terminal.

After the opening of a vote, members should vote by putting their hands into the small booth of the voting terminal and by pressing one of the three voting buttons (stickers which are on the top of voting terminals are put there only for information in order to indicate the positions of the "for", "abstention" and "against" buttons). The chosen vote is confirmed by a coloured light on the terminal: green ("for"), white ("abstention") or red ("against").

Rule 39.8 indicates that a member cannot modify his or her vote after the voting is closed.

### **Quorum**

The Assembly may deliberate, decide the orders of the day, approve the minutes of proceedings, decide upon procedural motions, and agree to adjourn, whatever the number of Representatives present.

All votes other than votes by roll-call shall be valid whatever the number of members voting, unless, before the voting has begun, the President has been requested to ascertain whether there is a quorum. At least one sixth of the Representatives authorised to vote, belonging to at least five national delegations, must vote in favour of the request. To ascertain whether there is a

quorum, the President invites Representatives to mark their presence in the Chamber using the electronic voting system.

The quorum is one third of the number of Representatives of the Assembly authorised to vote (Rule 41.3).

A vote by roll-call shall not be valid unless one third of the Representatives authorised to vote took part. The President may decide to ascertain whether there is a quorum before proceeding to a vote by roll-call.

In the absence of a quorum, the vote shall be postponed until the next sitting or, on a motion from the Chair, until a subsequent sitting.

### **Majorities required**

A majority of two-thirds of the votes cast is required for the adoption of a draft recommendation or a draft opinion to the Committee of Ministers, for the adoption of urgent procedure, for an alteration to the order of business, for the setting up of a committee and for the fixing of the date for the opening or resumption of Ordinary Sessions. For the adoption of a draft resolution and for any other decision, a majority of the votes cast is required, in the case of a tie the question being rejected.

### **Mobile phones**

Members are reminded that mobile phones must be switched off at all times in the Chamber and during committee meetings.

# Directory

## Secretariat of the Assembly

Secretary General of the Assembly  
Bruno Haller, office 6213, tel. 2091, [bruno.haller@coe.int](mailto:bruno.haller@coe.int)

*Head of the Office of the Secretary General of the Assembly*  
*Simon Newman, office 6174, tel. 2618, [simon.newman@coe.int](mailto:simon.newman@coe.int)*

*Secretary to the Secretary General of the Assembly*  
*Danièle Gastl, office 6213, tel. 2092/3165, [daniele.gastl@coe.int](mailto:daniele.gastl@coe.int)*

Director General  
Mateo Sorinas, office 6217, tel. 2115, [mateo.sorinas@coe.int](mailto:mateo.sorinas@coe.int)

Director, General Services  
Wojciech Sawicki, office 6201, tel. 3630, [wojciech.sawicki@coe.int](mailto:wojciech.sawicki@coe.int)

Director, Interparliamentary and Institutional Relations,  
Special Adviser to the President  
Jan Kleijssen, office 6167, tel. 2116, [jan.kleijssen@coe.int](mailto:jan.kleijssen@coe.int)

## Private Office of the President

Head of the Private Office  
Petr Sich, office 1064, tel. 2127, [petr.sich@coe.int](mailto:petr.sich@coe.int)

Deputy Head of the Private Office  
Liri Kopaci-di Michele, office 1079, tel. 2258, [liri.kopaci-dimichele@coe.int](mailto:liri.kopaci-dimichele@coe.int)

Secretariat of the President and of the Head of Private Office  
Janice Ludwig, office 1070, tel. 2094, [janice.ludwig@coe.int](mailto:janice.ludwig@coe.int)

## Table Office (speakers' lists, questions and amendments)

Head of the Table Office  
Horst Schade, office 1.087, tel. 2075, [horst.schade@coe.int](mailto:horst.schade@coe.int)

Deputy to the Head of the Table Office  
Linda Nylund, office 1.080, tel. 2800, [linda.nylund@coe.int](mailto:linda.nylund@coe.int)

Mark Hutton, office 1.083, tel. 4283  
Philippe Hurtevent, office 1083, tel. 4283

Notification of substitutes  
Jocelyne Gibert, office 1.074, tel. 3273

## Communication Unit of the Assembly

Head of Unit  
Micaela Catalano, office 6187, tel. 2595, [micaela.catalano@coe.int](mailto:micaela.catalano@coe.int)

Francesc Ferrer, office 6.189, tel. 3250, [francesc.ferrer@coe.int](mailto:francesc.ferrer@coe.int)

Angus Macdonald, office 6.166, tel. 3439, [angus.macdonald@coe.int](mailto:angus.macdonald@coe.int)

Secretariat  
Catherine Becarmin, office 6170, tel. 3193, [catherine.becarmin@coe.int](mailto:catherine.becarmin@coe.int)

## Secretaries of political groups

Socialist Group:  
Marlène Albanese, office 5099/5101, tel. 2675, [marlene.albanese@coe.int](mailto:marlene.albanese@coe.int)

Group of the European People's Party:  
Denise O'Hara, office 5141/5143, tel. 2676, [denise.ohara@coe.int](mailto:denise.ohara@coe.int)

Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe:  
Peter Kallenberger, office 5081, tel. 2682, [peter.kallenberger@coe.int](mailto:peter.kallenberger@coe.int)

European Democrat Group:  
Daniela Nord, office 5117, tel. 2677, [daniela.nord@coe.int](mailto:daniela.nord@coe.int)

Group of the Unified European Left:  
Hélène de Assis, office 5158/60, tel. 3684, [helena.deassis@coe.int](mailto:helena.deassis@coe.int)

## Secretary General

Secretary General of the Council of Europe  
Terry Davis, office 3003, tel. 2050, [terry.davis@coe.int](mailto:terry.davis@coe.int)

Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe  
Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, office 3011, tel. 2382,  
[maud.deboer-buquicchio@coe.int](mailto:maud.deboer-buquicchio@coe.int)

Spokesperson and media relations  
Matjaz Gruden, office 3012a, tel. 2118, [matjaz.gruden@coe.int](mailto:matjaz.gruden@coe.int)

## Directorate of Communication and Research

Director  
Seda Pumpyanskaya, office 0.015B, tel. 3162, [seda.pumpyanskaya@coe.int](mailto:seda.pumpyanskaya@coe.int)

Audiovisual Service, tel. 3500.

## Protocol

Director of Protocol  
Muammer Topaloglu, office 0149, tel. 2137, [muammer.topaloglu@coe.int](mailto:muammer.topaloglu@coe.int)

## Services

### Internet access

Terminals with free broadband access are available in the lobby of the debating chamber and outside the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor meeting rooms. The Assembly's website and the Council of Europe portal, including other language portals, can be accessed here.

### Badges

Wearing badges is compulsory for admittance to the Chamber. Voting cards are used as ID badges. Contact the Protocol desk in the entrance hall.

### Bars and restaurants

Parliamentarians' Bar: 1st floor, opposite the Chamber, open from 8.30 a.m. to the end of the sitting. Restaurant Bleu: ground floor, for official meals (tel. 3704 for reservations). Palais cafeteria: ground floor, open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Palais self-service: ground floor, lunch from 12 a.m. to 2 p.m.

### Bank

Société Générale, in the entrance hall, open from 8.15 a.m. to 5.30 p.m., tel. 7060. A cash dispenser is located opposite the philatelic counter off the entrance hall.

### Bus

Free shuttle service departing from Allée Spach, outside the Press Centre, to the railway station via downtown (and vice versa). Badges must be shown. Time schedules are available at the reception desk.

### Bookshop

Librairie Klébér: In the entrance hall, open from 9.30 a.m. to 12.45 p.m. and from 1.30 p.m. to 5.45 p.m., tel. 3712.

### Philatelic agency

Council of Europe stamps and, since 1949, philatelic envelopes commemorating every session of the Parliamentary Assembly, tel. 03 88 35 08 88.

### Post office

La Poste: in the entrance hall, open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., tel. 3463.

### Medical centre

Entrance hall, open from 8.30 a.m. to the end of the sitting, tel. 2442.

### Newsagent

Just off the entrance hall, open from 7.30 a.m. to 7.00 p.m., tel. 3549.

### City of Strasbourg information desk

The City of Strasbourg is represented at the reception desk in the entrance hall, providing lists of hotels, restaurants and local events, flight/train times etc, tel. 3838. For accommodation or transport, call 03 88 52 28 38.

### Travel agent

Carlson Wagonlit: Palais, ground floor, near the Restaurant. Open from 9.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and from 1.30 p.m. to 5.00 p.m., tel. 3714.