

The Session

**Secretariat of the
Parliamentary
Assembly,
Communication Unit**

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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 5 April 2006

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

10 to 13 April 2006

Monday 10

- Opening statement by the President of the Parliamentary Assembly
- Statement by Thomas Hammarberg, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights
- The place of mother tongue in school education
- Poverty and the fight against corruption in Council of Europe member states

Tuesday 11

- Election of a judge to the European Court of Human Rights with respect to Liechtenstein
- Debate on relations between the Council of Europe and the EU:
 - Address by Luxembourg Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker on his report on relations between the Council of Europe and the EU
 - Address by Romanian Prime Minister Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu, representing the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers
 - Address by Austrian Federal Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel, President of the Council of the EU
- Address by European Commission President José Manuel Barroso
- Situation in the Middle East
- Social reintegration of prisoners
- Human rights of members of the armed forces

Wednesday 12

- Possible urgent debate: stop trafficking in women before the FIFA World Cup
- Communication from the Committee of Ministers to the Assembly presented by Romanian Foreign Minister and Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers Mihai-Răzvan Ungureanu
- Address by the Prime Minister of "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" Vlado Buchkovski
- Combating the resurrection of nazi ideology

Thursday 13

- Joint debate on the follow-up to the Third Summit: relations between the Council of Europe and the EU:
 - Memorandum of understanding between the Council of Europe and the EU
 - The Council of Europe and the Fundamental Rights Agency of the EU
 - Statement by Council of Europe Secretary General Terry Davis
 - Statement by the Chair of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee Elmar Brok
- Refugees and displaced persons in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia

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), Andorra (1994), 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**



185

Socialist Group (SOC)



183

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



100

Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)



85

European Democrat Group (EDG)



36

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



Monday 10 April 2006

☞ Afternoon (3 p.m.-7 p.m.)

◆ **Opening of the second part of the 2006 Ordinary Session**

Parliamentary Assembly President René van der Linden will open the second part of the 2006 Ordinary Session and will make an opening statement. 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 Georgia, before considering any requests for urgent or current affairs debates and then adopting its order of business.¹ Finally, the Assembly will adopt the minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee held in Paris on 17 March 2006.

◆ **Progress report of the Bureau of the Assembly and the Standing Committee**

Rapporteur: Igor Ivanovski ("the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", SOC)

The progress report covers the discussions held and decisions reached by the Bureau and the Standing Committee since the January part-session. Renate Wohlwend (Liechtenstein, EPP/CD) will also present an addendum on the Assembly's observation of the parliamentary elections in Ukraine (26 March 2006).

Statement by Thomas Hammarberg, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights

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 10 April 2006. However the final order of business will be decided by the Assembly at the opening of the session.

◆ **The place of mother tongue in school education**

Doc. 10837

Report of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education

Rapporteur: Jacques Legendre (France, EPP/CD)

The Culture Committee believes young Europeans should be able to study in their mother tongue, while acknowledging they also have a duty to learn an official language of their country of citizenship. But how best to combine these two needs? Research shows that education based on a child's mother tongue significantly increases its chances of doing well at school. For children whose main language is different from the official one, this means that bilingual education based on their mother tongue is the basis for long-term success.

The Committee believes that "strong" models – which aim to give a future adult real proficiency in two or more languages – have advantages over "weak" models, which treat bilingualism merely as an intermediate stage on the path from mother tongue to official language. Real plurilingualism – the ability to speak and read more than one language with equal facility – benefits both the individuals concerned and society as a whole.

European governments should draw up an inventory of the different models of bilingual education and bring those involved in education policy and teachers together to discuss the options. They should also give strong support to children whose mother tongue is not an official language and do their best to promote threatened languages among parents and communities.

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

◆ **Poverty and the fight against corruption in Council of Europe member states**

Doc. 10834

Report of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee

Rapporteur: Alain Cousin (France, EPP/CD)

Corruption is very much present in certain European countries, according to the Social Affairs Committee, draining public services of resources, undermining the judicial system, threatening foreign investment and creating political instability. For ordinary citizens, it can make everyday life a nightmare, leaving them at the mercy of unscrupulous officials and undermining their faith in state institutions.

The rapporteur points out that the impact of corruption is greater in poor countries, where resources are redirected to fuel parallel economies. "Fighting corruption is not just a moral issue," he recalls, "it is also an effective means of combating poverty."

The committee calls for more transparency and financial accountability, ensuring that public officials are adequately paid and supported, giving fiscal autonomy to local and regional authorities, guaranteeing an independent media and organising better training for judges and law enforcement officials. Complaints against corruption should also be efficiently dealt with.

Contact in the secretariat: Agnès Nollinger, tel. 2288.

Tuesday 11 April 2006

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ **Election of a judge to the European Court of Human Rights with respect to Liechtenstein**

Doc. 10852

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

According to the European Convention on Human Rights, judges are elected by the Parliamentary Assembly from a list of three candidates nominated by the High Contracting Party concerned.

To assist it in making its decision, the Assembly has asked its sub-committee on the election of judges to the European Court of 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 exclusively to members of the Assembly.

An absolute majority of votes cast is required in the first round of voting. If this is not achieved, a second round of voting will take place on Wednesday 12 April from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., for which a relative majority of votes will be sufficient.

◆ **Relations between the Council of Europe and the European Union**

Address by Jean-Claude Juncker, Prime Minister of Luxembourg, on his report on the relations between the Council of Europe and the European Union

Mr Juncker's address will be followed by comments from the Chairpersons of the political groups.

Address by Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu, Prime Minister of Romania, Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

Address by Wolfgang Schüssel, Federal Chancellor of Austria, President of the Council of the European Union

These addresses will be followed by the debate.

◆ **Address by José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission**

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

Tuesday 11 April 2006

☞ Afternoon (3 p.m.-7.30 p.m.)

◆ **Situation in the Middle East**

Report of the Political Affairs Committee

Rapporteur: Mikhail Margelov (Russia, EDG)

Opinion of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

This report is due to be approved by the Political Affairs Committee at its meeting on Monday 10 April at 2 p.m. If this is the case, the deadline for tabling amendments would be Tuesday 11 April at 10.30 a.m.

Representatives of the Israeli Knesset and the Palestinian Legislative Council have been invited to take part in the debate.

◆ **Social reintegration of prisoners**

Doc. 10838

Report of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee

Rapporteur: Ali Rıza Gülçicek (Turkey, SOC)

Prison is for punishing offenders and placing them where they can do no harm, but it is also supposed to prepare them for subsequent release and reintegration into society. Yet in most Council of Europe member states, this second objective is not achieved: a large number of former inmates reoffend within five years of their release. By destroying prisoners' ties with their families, friends and the rest of society, long prison terms may even make things worse, leaving them "desocialised".

Prisoners should be encouraged to lead socially responsible lives in jail, according to the Social Affairs Committee, with possibilities to learn new skills or study, keep up with events in the outside world through newspapers, radio and television and receive regular visits, including conjugal visits.

First-time and young offenders should be separated from other inmates, and alternatives to custodial sentences – such as placements, conditional release or electronic tagging – should be used in appropriate cases. Finally, when it comes to releasing long-term prisoners, a system of conditional releases, prison leave and day releases would help to ensure they re-integrate into society successfully.

Contact in the secretariat: Agnès Nollinger, tel. 2288.

◆ **Human rights of members of the armed forces**

Doc. 10861

Report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Rapporteur: Alexander Arabadjiev (Bulgaria, SOC)

The Legal Affairs Committee is horrified and appalled by the situation of servicemen in some member states' armies, who are subjected to abuse, brutality, institutionalised bullying, violence, ill-treatment and torture in, for example, the "initiation ordeals" (*dedovshchina*) which remain common practice in some former Soviet countries. The committee calls for urgent measures to put an end to this scandalous situation, including a "zero tolerance" approach from member states.

The situation is far from satisfactory in other areas too, according to the committee. Service men and women are entitled – within the limits imposed by the specific exigencies of their military duties – to the same fundamental rights as any other citizen, particularly if they are to be expected to respect human rights in their own operations. Yet many are not permitted to join a trade union or political party, while a great many female soldiers are subjected to sexual harassment.

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

The award ceremony for the 2006 Council of Europe Museum Prize will take place at 8 p.m. in the Palais Rohan in Strasbourg city centre. The President of the Assembly will present the award to this year's winner, the Churchill Museum in London.

Wednesday 12 April 2006

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ **Election of a judge to the European Court of Human Rights with respect to Liechtenstein (possible second round)**

Doc. 10852

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

Under the Assembly's Rules of Procedure, a second round of voting takes place only if an absolute majority of votes cast is not achieved in the first round. A relative majority is sufficient in the second round.

◆ **Possible urgent debate: stop trafficking in women before the FIFA World Cup**

Report of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men

If the Bureau's proposal to hold an urgent debate on this subject is approved by the Assembly, the Equal Opportunities Committee should adopt this report at its meeting on Monday 10 April at 2 p.m. If this is the case, the deadline for tabling amendments would be 10.30 a.m. on Tuesday 11 April.

◆ **Communication from the Committee of Ministers to the Parliamentary Assembly presented by Mihai-Răzvan Ungureanu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Romania and Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers**

Following his presentation, Mr Ungureanu will answer parliamentarians' questions, which must be tabled at the latest by 10.30 a.m. on Tuesday 11 April.

Wednesday 12 April 2006

Afternoon (3 p.m.-6.30 p.m.)

◆ **Address by Vlado Buchkovski, Prime Minister of “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”**

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

◆ **Combating the resurrection of Nazi ideology**

Doc. 10766

Report of the Political Affairs Committee

Rapporteur: Mikhail Margelov (Russia, EDG)

The Political Affairs Committee recalls that Nazism, its policies and actions were irrevocably condemned by the Nuremberg tribunal and that modern Europe has been conceived as a total rejection of all the Nazis stood for. Yet public awareness of the danger of Nazi ideology appears to be weakening, as seen in worrying developments such as daubing of swastikas on graves, the use of Nazi symbols and attempts to deny the holocaust. It points out that Hitler’s ideas, however outrageous they look today, found sympathy in many European countries.

The committee calls for urgent co-ordinated action to combat any resurgence in Nazi ideology including a major international conference to develop a common response to Nazi, racist and xenophobic trends in European societies.

Contact in the secretariat: Pavel Chevtchenko, tel. 3835.

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 relations between the Council of Europe and the European Union, implementation of the Juncker report, the Council of Europe’s 2007 budget and relations with Belarus. 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.

Thursday 13 April 2006

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ **Joint debate on follow-up to the Third Summit: relations between the Council of Europe and the European Union**

Memorandum of understanding between the Council of Europe and the European Union

Report of the Political Affairs Committee

Rapporteur: Konstantin Kosachev (Russia, EDG)

This report is due to be approved by the Political Affairs Committee at its meeting on Tuesday 11 April at 2 p.m. If this is the case, the deadline for tabling amendments would be 2.30 p.m. on Wednesday 12 April.

The Council of Europe and the Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union

Report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

This report is due to be approved by the Legal Affairs Committee at its meeting on Tuesday 11 April at 2 p.m. If this is the case, the deadline for tabling amendments would be 2.30 p.m. on Wednesday 12 April.

Statement by Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe

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

Thursday 13 April 2006

☞ Afternoon (2 p.m.-3.30 p.m.)

◆ **Refugees and displaced persons in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia**

Doc. 10835

Report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population

Rapporteur: Boriss Cilevičs (Latvia, SOC)

The existence of large numbers of refugees and displaced persons in these three countries – resulting from the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and conflicts in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Chechnya – continues to be a serious obstacle to economic and socio-political development. These people still face poverty, especially in rural areas, malnutrition and unemployment, as well as poor living conditions and inadequate health services, and are still in need of international aid.

The Migration Committee welcomes steps that have been taken in the region to promote local integration but notes that only settlement of the conflicts, particularly the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, will enable progress to be made on the issue of returns.

For its part, the international community should continue to provide financial support, press for settlement of the underlying conflicts and prepare the ground for returns.

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

◆ **Closure of the second part of the 2006 Ordinary Session**

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.

The latest edition of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly was published in April 2006 and is available in a bilingual version (English/French).

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 10 April: Monday 10 April at 12 noon;
- for debates on Tuesday 11 April: Monday 10 April at 4 p.m.;
- for all other debates (except urgent debates, unforeseen debates or as otherwise indicated on the order of business): 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 meeting of the Bureau on the last day 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 next Bureau meeting after the Part-Session. During the April 2006 part-session, the last meeting of the Bureau will be held on Thursday, following the end of 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

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Table Office

(Speakers' lists, questions and amendments)

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Services

Internet access

Terminals with free broadband access are available in the lobby of the debating chamber and outside the 2nd 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 cafeteria (ground floor).

Bus

Free shuttle service departing from Allée Spach 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.