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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.



Monday 22 January 2007

## 22 to 26 January 2007

### Monday 22

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- Communication from Council of Europe Secretary General Terry Davis, on the state of the Council of Europe
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- Honouring of obligations and commitments by Armenia

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- Joint debate: agriculture and illegal employment in Europe, and the situation of migrant workers in temporary employment agencies

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- Urgent debate: threats to the lives and freedom of expression of journalists
- Current affairs debate: threat to the European Court of Human Rights: urgent need for Russia to ratify Protocol No. 14
- Joint debate: HIV/AIDS in Europe, a future for HIV/AIDS children and AIDS orphans, the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic to women and girls in Europe, statement by Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Thomas Hammarberg
- Honouring of obligations and commitments by Albania

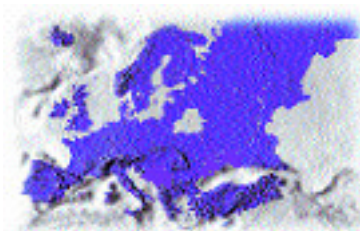
### Friday 26

- Towards responsible food consumption
- The precautionary principle and responsible risk management

**FINAL  
VERSION**

# 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, 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.

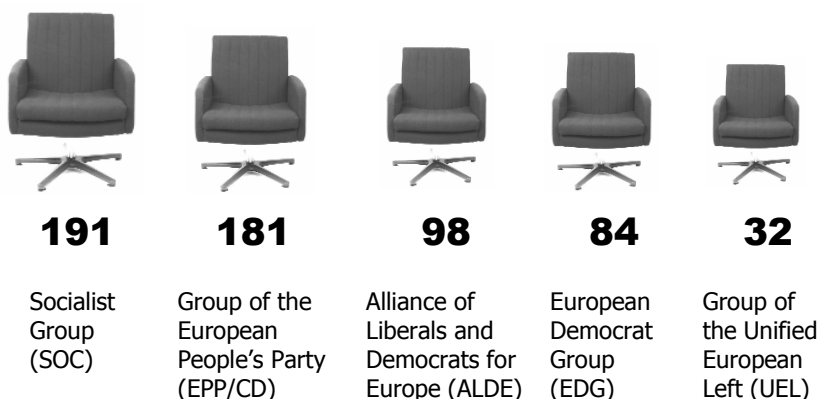
Countries that have joined the Council of Europe since November 1990: Hungary (1990), Poland (1991), Bulgaria (1992), Estonia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Slovak Republic, Czech Republic, Romania (1993), Andorra (1994), Latvia, Albania, Moldova, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Ukraine (1995), the Russian Federation, Croatia (1996), Georgia (1999), Armenia, Azerbaijan (2001), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2002), Serbia and Montenegro (2003), replaced by Serbia (2006), Monaco (2004).

Applications for membership: Belarus (12 March 1993) and Montenegro (6 June 2006).

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



# 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 22 January 2007

☞ Morning (11.30 a.m.-1 p.m.)

## ◆ Opening of the first part of the 2007 Ordinary Session

The *doyen d'âge*, or oldest member of the Assembly present, Miguel Barceló Pérez (Spain, EPP/CD), presided as provisional President until the election of the President of the Assembly.

## Examination of credentials

The credentials of the members of national delegations to the Assembly – submitted by national parliaments – were ratified by the Assembly.

## Election of the President of the Assembly

René van der Linden (Netherlands, EPP/CD) was re-elected President of the Assembly for a new term of one year.

## Election of the Vice-Presidents of the Assembly

The Assembly elected its twenty Vice-Presidents in accordance with the system for rotation of seats agreed by the Assembly. The Vice-Presidents elected are: Miloš Aligrudić (Serbia), Edita Angyalová (Slovakia), Aleksander Biberaj (Albania), Joan Farré Santuré (Andorra), Per-Kristian Foss (Norway), Serhiy Holovaty (Ukraine), Joachim Hörster (Germany), Erik Jurgens (Netherlands), Karol Karski (Poland), Konstantin Kosachev (Russian Federation), Darja Lavtižar-Bebler (Slovenia), Göran Lindblad (Sweden), Tony Lloyd (United Kingdom), Murat Mercan (Turkey), Cezar Florin Preda (Romania), Andrea Rigoni (Italie), Oliver Sambevski ("the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"), Walter Schmied (Switzerland), Bernard Schreiner (France), José Vera Jardim (Portugal).

## Appointment of members of committees

The Assembly appointed the members of its nine general committees and the Monitoring Committee.

## Requests for debates under urgent or current affairs procedure

The Assembly decided to hold an urgent debate on: "Threats to the lives and freedom of expression of journalists" on Thursday 25 January at 10 a.m. It decided to hold a current affairs debate on "Threat to the European Court of Human Rights: urgent need for Russia to ratify Protocol No. 14" on Thursday 25 January at around midday.

## Adoption of the order of business

The Assembly adopted its order of business, which will be published and made available to members at the document counter from Tuesday morning. This version of *The Session* has also been updated to reflect the final order of business.

**Adoption of the minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee  
(17 November 2006, San Marino)**

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

*Doc. 11123 parts 1 and 2, addendum*

*Rapporteur: Cezar Florin Preda (Romania, EPP/CD)*

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

♦ **Address by His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I**

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# Monday 22 January 2007

☞ Afternoon (3 p.m.-5 p.m.)

◆ **Communication from Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, on the state of the Council of Europe**

Following his address, the Secretary General will answer questions from members of the Assembly.

◆ **Sexual assaults linked to 'date-rape drugs'**

*Doc. 11038*

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

*Rapporteur: Maria Damanaki (Greece, SOC)*

*Doc. 11096*

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

*Rapporteur: Lajla Pernaska (Albania, EPP/CD)*

The Equal Opportunities Committee is alarmed at increasingly frequent reports of cases of sexual violence, the victims of which were, unknowingly, under the influence of drugs known by the name of "date-rape drugs", such as Rohypnol, GHB and Ketamine. Victims are in the great majority women and girls, most of whom are subjected to rape.

The drugs pass through the victim's body quickly – making it difficult for them to report the crime in time for physical proof to be found. To add insult to injury, the behavioural effects of these drugs can look to onlookers like the effects of voluntary alcohol consumption, making it difficult to prove that the attacker initiated sexual relations without the consent of the victim. As a result, this crime is amongst the most under-reported.

The Council of Europe should take the lead in raising awareness of date-rape drugs, and encouraging practical measures such as training bar-staff to spot signs of their use, and making urine testing kits more widely available. Police and forensic medicine techniques should be standardised, and laws on sexual violence should be changed across Europe so that a victim is required to have had "the freedom and capacity to consent" to sexual relations.

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

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# Tuesday 23 January 2007

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ **Child victims: stamping out all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse**

*Doc. 11118*

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

*Rapporteur: Jean-Charles Gardetto (Monaco, EPP/CD)*

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

*Rapporteur: Carina Ohlsson (Sweden, SOC)*

Children are, by definition, physically smaller, usually dependent on adults in various ways and do not have the same legal rights as their elders. This leaves them potentially vulnerable to many forms of violence and abuse – ranging from abuse in the home through to calculated and systematic sexual exploitation, such as child prostitution and pornography, or trafficking.

The Council of Europe is doing what it can to protect kids – in addition to its existing arsenal of legal weapons, it has started work on a multilateral treaty to fight sexual exploitation of children, and is mid-way through a three-year action programme, “Building a Europe for and with children” – but Europe’s governments could be doing plenty more, according to the Legal Affairs Committee.

They should make all interference with a child’s “bodily or spiritual integrity” a criminal offence, harmonising their laws and strengthening police co-operation, as well as extending jurisdiction so that perpetrators can be prosecuted for crimes committed abroad. The limitation period for serious offences should be suspended until the victim has reached the age of majority. Children should get special treatment in court, adapted to their needs, and should have access to child-friendly judges and ideally a Childrens’ Ombudsperson. Among other things, states could also provide freephone numbers and websites where children can themselves anonymously report violence or abuse.

**Statement by Ann M. Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF**

**Statement by HRH the Princess of Hanover, President of the World Association of Children’s Friends (AMADE)**

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

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

◆ **Address by Guy Verhofstadt, Prime Minister of Belgium**

Following his address, the Prime Minister will answer questions from members of the Assembly.

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# Tuesday 23 January 2007

☞ Afternoon (3 p.m.-7 p.m.)

◆ **Peril of using energy supply as an instrument of political pressure**

*Doc. 11116*

*Report of the Political Affairs Committee*

*Rapporteur: Marko Mihelson (Estonia, EPP/CD)*

*Opinion of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development*

*Rapporteur: Paul Wille (Belgium, ALDE)*

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

*Rapporteur: Ivan Ivanov (Bulgaria, EPP/CD)*

Europe needs energy – especially oil and gas – in ever-growing quantities, and will do for years to come. The Council of Europe, which brings together both importing and exporting countries, can and should do its best to encourage stable and predictable energy supplies, as well as transparent prices, since this will be strategically beneficial for all concerned.

According to the Political Affairs Committee, the way to avoid incidents such as the January 2006 reduction in the gas supply from Russia to Ukraine is to ensure a stable and reliable energy system, based on mutual, long-term commitments. Energy supply and transit should be based on market principles – where prices reflect supply and demand – and not dictated by political considerations. Diversifying energy imports and increasing the choice of supply routes would also help to achieve this aim.

The committee calls on Russia and Norway to ratify the Energy Charter Treaty and on Russia to complete the Energy Charter Protocol on Transit, which seeks to promote a free market in oil and gas. Meanwhile, there should be a serious and ongoing dialogue between Russia and the EU on establishing a fair and transparent energy system for Europe as a whole.

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

## ◆ **Honouring of obligations and commitments by Armenia**

*Doc. 11117*

*Report of the Monitoring Committee*

*Co-rapporteurs: Georges Colombier (France, EPP/CD) and Mikko Elo (Finland, SOC)*

In this report, the Monitoring Committee welcomes the steps taken so far to implement Armenia's constitutional reform which – despite irregularities in the November 2005 referendum leading up to it – has created a better balance of powers and brought the country into line with European constitutional standards.

However, it also warns that an improved political climate, and dialogue between the ruling coalition and opposition, will be necessary for the new constitution to work effectively. New legislation should be genuinely debated both inside and outside parliament, and then – once passed – effectively applied, which is not always the case at the moment.

Areas where greater effort is needed include reforming the judicial system, fighting corruption, ensuring an independent and pluralist media, and improving police conduct and detention conditions – and monitoring should continue until these efforts produce “tangible results”.

Finally the committee points out that, since Armenia joined the Council of Europe in 2001, there has not been a single free and fair election. The next ballot should at last comply with European standards, the committee says, if Armenia wishes to prove that it really is progressing along the road to democracy and European integration.

Contact in the secretariat: Despina Chatzivassiliou, tel. 3075.



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# Wednesday 24 January 2007

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ **Current situation in Kosovo**

*Doc. 11018 and Addendum*

*Report of the Political Affairs Committee*

*Rapporteur: Lord Russell-Johnston (United Kingdom, ALDE)*

The Political Affairs Committee believes that Kosovo's status should be defined as a matter of urgency in order to bring stability to the people of the region. Yet it fears that the outcome of the final status negotiations which have now begun may be deadlock: Serbia shows no sign of moving away from its demand for an autonomous Kosovo under Serbian sovereignty, while Kosovo Albanians are not stepping back from their demand for full independence.

While respecting Serbia's right to territorial integrity, the committee believes that Kosovo's independence – subject to certain conditions – is the solution which is liable to ensure the greatest chances of durable, long-term peace. Serbia – which has already faced a daunting few months – is encouraged to be more flexible and pragmatic, and to re-open discussion within its main institutions on the possible benefits of conditional independence for the Province.

While a mutually negotiated solution is best, if long-term deadlock leads to continuing insecurity and instability, the committee believes an internationally-imposed solution may have to be envisaged as a last and extreme resort. Whatever solution is found, it must ensure that minorities are specially protected – the situation of Kosovo's Serbs is of primary concern – and that human rights principles are upheld throughout the Province.

**Statement by Martti Ahtisaari, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for the future status process for Kosovo**

Contact in the secretariat: Eliza Pieter, tel. 3137.

◆ **Address by Kostas Karamanlis, Prime Minister of Greece**

Following his presentation, the Prime Minister will answer parliamentarians' questions.

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# Wednesday 24 January 2007

Afternoon (3 p.m.-7.30 p.m.)

◆ **Communication from the Committee of Ministers to the Parliamentary Assembly presented by Fiorenzo Stolfi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of San Marino, Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers**

Following his presentation, the Foreign Minister will answer parliamentarians' questions.

◆ **Joint debate**

**Agriculture and illegal employment in Europe**

*Doc. 11114*

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

*Rapporteur: John Dupraz (Switzerland, ALDE)*

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

*Rapporteur: Alain Cousin (France, EPP/CD)*

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

*Rapporteur: Mimount Bousakla (Belgium, SOC)*

Even with new intensive mechanised methods, modern agricultural production still needs large quantities of manpower, especially at seasonal peak times. Yet the rush to achieve lower prices – driven by trade liberalisation in agriculture – has led to the widespread use of cheap, undeclared labour by less scrupulous entrepreneurs, leading to the total denial of many farm workers' social rights. The situation is made worse by international traffickers, taking advantage of economic migrants prepared to go to any lengths for the chance of better living conditions for themselves and their families.

The committee believes that all agricultural workers – whether permanent or seasonal, foreigners or nationals – should be entitled to the same rights as other workers, in line with national and international labour laws. European governments should draw up collective labour agreements for different categories of farm workers, covering wages, working time, accommodation and arrangements for renewing contracts. Such agreements should be rigorously supervised, and any breaches of labour law strongly sanctioned.

Meanwhile, states should strengthen and harmonise their labour laws by making proper use of existing international legal instruments – from the Council of Europe and elsewhere – and work together more effectively to combat traffickers.

Contact in the secretariat: Marine Trevisan, tel. 3716.

## **The situation of migrant workers in temporary employment agencies**

*Doc. 11109*

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

*Rapporteur: Doug Henderson (United Kingdom, SOC)*

*Opinion of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development*

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

As globalisation bites, increased labour mobility in the EU's internal market, and between CIS countries, has led to flows of cheap migrant labour from the east and south-east of Europe, and beyond. Many migrant workers are being recruited through temporary employment agencies of some form.

However – with rules in many Council of Europe member states ensuring basic rights for temporary and migrant workers – such agencies need to be carefully registered and licensed, to ensure that the rules are properly applied, and that temporary migrant workers receive equal treatment to local workers in terms of wages, working conditions and social rights. Agencies should also be encouraged to work with labour inspectorates, trade unions, NGOs and police to identify and prosecute “gangmasters” who abuse national labour laws.

The committee also encourages member states to implement the many Council of Europe and other international legal instruments which set standards and provide scope for joint action.

Contact in the secretariat: Dana Karanjac, tel. 4877.

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# Thursday 25 January 2007

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ **Urgent debate: threats to the lives and freedom of expression of journalists**

*Doc. 11114*

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

*Rapporteur: Andrew McIntosh (United Kingdom, SOC)*

*Opinion of the Political Affairs Committee*

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

The Culture Committee is due to adopt a draft text at its meeting on Monday 22 January at 2 p.m.

Contact in the secretariat: Rüdiger Dossow, tel. 2859.

◆ **Current affairs debate: threat to the European Court of Human Rights: urgent need for Russia to ratify Protocol No. 14**

Dick Marty (Switzerland, SOC), Chair of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, which submitted the request for this debate, will be the first speaker.

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# Thursday 25 January 2007

☞ Afternoon (3 p.m.-6.30 p.m.)

## ◆ Joint debate

### **HIV/AIDS in Europe**

*Doc. 11033*

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

*Rapporteur: Christine McCafferty (United Kingdom, SOC)*

In 2005 more than three million people, of whom 570,000 were children, died of AIDS-related illnesses, and globally the number of people living with HIV/AIDS is increasing. Though Sub-Saharan Africa continues to be the worst-affected area, there have been sharp increases in eastern Europe: in Russia, Ukraine and Estonia, more than 1 per cent of the population is now estimated to be HIV positive.

From the beginning, HIV/AIDS has been a "politically charged" disease, according to the Social Affairs Committee. Because it originally affected marginalised or vulnerable groups – such as sex workers or intravenous drug users – there was a widespread belief that it primarily concerned 'others' or 'foreigners', leading to stigma and discrimination. For this reason, the committee believes, HIV/AIDS is not just a health issue, but also a human rights issue – and strategies for tackling it must be linked to raising human rights generally.

Governments and parliaments should do all they can to protect people living with HIV/AIDS from all forms of discrimination, giving them equal access to high-quality treatment – including affordable anti-retroviral drugs – as well as improving education (particularly of girls), raising awareness and stepping up research. HIV/AIDS testing should be voluntary only, and the wilful transmission of HIV/AIDS should be criminalised.

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

### **A future for HIV/AIDS children and AIDS orphans**

*Doc. 11113*

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

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

Worldwide, five million children under the age of 15 live with HIV, and about fifteen million have lost one or both parents from AIDS, statistics show. Although Africa has borne the brunt of this tragedy, Europe has not been spared, particularly eastern Europe, where there is a worrying growth in the disease. In Western Europe, transmission from mother to child had practically disappeared, but migration has led to a resurgence of cases of infected children.

Council of Europe member states should introduce a child dimension into their strategies for combating HIV/AIDS, according to the Social Affairs Committee. Policies should aim at systematic free screening of infants before they are 18 months old, automatic screening for all future mothers, free access to anti-retroviral treatment for mothers and children, and psychological support as well as medical treatment for infected children.

Finally, European governments should give priority to helping children in their development aid, and support African health systems in particular.

Contact in the secretariat: Christine Meunier, tel. 2123.

## **The spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic to women and girls in Europe**

*Doc. 11108*

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

*Rapporteur: Catherine Fautrier (Monaco, EPP/CD)*

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

*Rapporteur: Christine McCafferty (United Kingdom, SOC)*

More and more newly diagnosed HIV infections are in women, particularly young women, according to the Equal Opportunities Committee. Women are physiologically more prone to the virus than men, while many are placed in situations – because of a deadly cocktail of economic dependence on male partners, sexist attitudes or domestic violence – where refusing sexual relations, or insisting on a condom, is not an option.

A key factor in fighting HIV/AIDS in Europe is therefore the empowerment of women, according to the committee. Girls and women need clear information on the risks, and must be free to act on what they learn. The Council of Europe should take a gender perspective in all its work on HIV/AIDS, and should consider running an AIDS awareness-raising campaign in the near future.

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

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

### **◆ Honouring of obligations and commitments by Albania**

*Doc. 11115*

*Report of the Monitoring Committee*

*Co-rapporteurs: Leo Platvoet (Netherlands, UEL) and David Wilshire (United Kingdom, EDG)*

In this report, the Monitoring Committee welcomes the progress made by Albania since its last assessment in 2004, and in particular the measures it has already taken to enforce zero tolerance of organised crime, trafficking and corruption, improve the execution of final court decisions and increase the transparency of the government's work. It also praises the open and constructive policy which Albania has maintained towards Kosovo.

However, the Monitoring Committee regrets that Albanian political life has continued to be dominated by confrontation and obstructionism. The poor political climate has again delayed major and urgently required reforms, in particular in the field of election legislation and the media. The committee points out that the forthcoming local elections will be a major test for the capacity of the Albanian authorities to organise free and fair elections.

In the meantime, the Albanian authorities should pursue further reform in the fields of election legislation, local and regional government, the fight against corruption, domestic violence and trafficking in human beings, the judiciary, the electronic media, the prevention of torture and respect for minority and children's rights. For its part, the Assembly should pursue its monitoring until measures taken or planned in these fields have produced tangible results.

Contact in the secretariat: Despina Chatzivassiliou, tel. 3075.

**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, institutional balance at the Council of Europe, and the situation in Belarus.**

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# Friday 26 January 2007

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

## ◆ **Towards responsible food consumption**

*Doc. 11010*

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

*Rapporteur: Renzo Gubert (Italy, EPP/CD)*

Food is a basic human need, common to us all, yet until recently few have considered the wider impact of their own food consumption on the environment around them, or on the human beings who produce it. But building on the principle of "sustainable development" in other spheres, citizens are starting to look harder at the way the food they consume is produced and distributed – and make choices which respect both the environment and human dignity in all its dimensions. "Fair trade" is one good example of this trend.

The Council of Europe should encourage this process of "responsible food consumption" where it can, the Environment Committee suggests, by boosting partnerships of solidarity between producers and consumers, and encouraging young people to develop an ethos of responsible food consumption. In the long run, it hopes synergies will develop between government, businesses and citizens which will help to sustain a whole new culture of socially-responsible eating.

Contact in the secretariat: Marine Trevisan, tel. 3716.

## ◆ **The precautionary principle and responsible risk management**

*Doc. 11119*

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

*Rapporteur: Johannes Randegger (Switzerland, ALDE)*

Reducing risks for society without undermining the advancement of science, or preventing innovation, is a constant challenge for policy-makers, who must find the appropriate balance, the Culture Committee points out.

Yet in spite of being referred to in more than fifteen international agreements, there is no single definition of "the precautionary principle". This report suggests a definition that would allow, or in some cases justify, regulatory action in the absence of complete scientific evidence about a particular risk scenario – though any action should always be dependent on reasonable, albeit not complete, evidence of considerable potential risk.

The committee supports most of the European Commission's 2000 criteria for applying the precautionary principle – any action should be proportional, non-discriminatory, consistent with existing measures, subject to a cost-benefit analysis and reviewable – but does not think that those against whom the principle is invoked should be asked to produce scientific evidence justifying their stance. More generally, the public needs to be involved in this debate: both a "culture of precaution" and critical thinking – based on a better public understanding of science – should be encouraged.

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

## ◆ **Constitution of the Standing Committee**

## ◆ **Closure of the first part of the 2007 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.

Meetings of political group take place on Monday morning and late afternoon as well as Wednesday morning.

## 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), with an update of January 2007.

## **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 or debates on general policy):

- for debates on the afternoon of Monday 22 January: Monday 22 January at 12 noon;
- for debates on Tuesday 23 January: Monday 22 January 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 only those Motions which have been tabled by **12 noon on Tuesday of the Part-Sessions** will be 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 Badge 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 welcome Protocol desk at the main entrance of the Palais de l'Europe in order to receive their card. Staff of the Badge Service, 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 Badge 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 11.30 a.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). For the first sitting on Monday at 11.30 a.m., the deadline is 10 a.m. 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 (Jocelyne Gibert, Room 1076, fax during session weeks +33 3 88 41 27 27, fax outside session weeks +33 3 88 41 27 33).

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 one and a half hours before the start of the sitting (i.e. at 10 a.m.). 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 Chairperson 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 normally specified in the draft order of business. The written questions for oral answer by the Chairperson are then 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.

The names of Assembly members who participate in votes as well as how they voted in each case are published on the Assembly's website.

### **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.











## Secretariat of the Assembly

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## Table Office

(Speakers' lists, questions and amendments)

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## Protocol

Director of Protocol  
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## Services

### Internet access

Free Wi-Fi access is available in most areas of the Palais building. Terminals with free broadband access are also available in the lobby of the debating chamber and outside the second 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.