

# The Session

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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 29 September 2008

**Final version**

<http://assembly.coe.int>

## 29 September-3 October 2008

### Monday 29

- Opening statement by Assembly President Lluís Maria de Puig
- Address by UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations Jorge Sampaio
- Address by the President of the Council of Europe Congress Yavuz Mildon
- Address by the President of the Latin American Parliament Jorge Pizarro

### Tuesday 30

- Election of a judge of the European Court of Human Rights with respect to Luxembourg
- Urgent debate: the consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia
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- Communication from the Committee of Ministers to the Assembly, presented by Swedish State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Frank Belfrage
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- Honouring of obligations and commitments by Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Candidates for the European Court of Human Rights

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- Refreshing the youth agenda of the Council of Europe, and statement by Sweden's Minister of Integration and Gender Equality Nyamko Sabuni
- Reconsideration of the previously ratified credentials of the Russian delegation on substantial grounds
- The situation of national minorities in Vojvodina and of the Romanian ethnic minority in Serbia

### Thursday 2

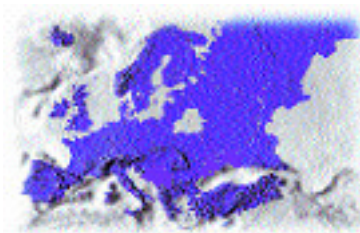
- Urgent debate: consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia (continued)
- Address by Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt
- Proposed 42 days pre-charge detention in the United Kingdom

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- Combating violence against women: towards a Council of Europe convention
- Joint debate: indicators for media in a democracy; for the promotion of a culture of democracy and human rights through teacher education
- Draft Council of Europe Convention on access to official documents

# The 47

The Council of Europe brings together 47 democracies including 22 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, Montenegro, 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 636 members (318 representatives and 318 substitutes) from the national parliaments of the 47 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), Montenegro (2007).

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



**203**

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



**186**

Socialist Group (SOC)



**97**

European Democrat Group (EDG)



**89**

Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)



**36**

Group of the Unified European Left (UEL)

# The Assembly committees

**84 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)

**27 seats**

Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs



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# Monday 29 September 2008

☞ Morning (11.30 a.m.-1 p.m.)

## ◆ **Opening of the fourth part of the 2008 Ordinary Session**

Parliamentary Assembly President Lluís Maria de Puig opened the fourth part of the 2008 Ordinary Session and made an opening statement.

The Assembly began by examining a request to reconsider, on substantive grounds, the previously ratified credentials of the Russian delegation (see Rule 9 of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure) and decided to refer the matter to the Monitoring Committee for report and to the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs for opinion, in view of a vote by the Assembly on Wednesday 1 October in the afternoon.

The Assembly also ratified the credentials of new national delegations from Georgia, Italy and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", and elected Vice-Presidents of the Assembly with respect to Italy and Spain.

Adopting its agenda, the Assembly also decided to hold an urgent debate on "the consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia", to take place on Tuesday 30 September and Thursday 2 October.

Finally, the Assembly adopted the minutes of proceedings of its sittings held on 26 June (afternoon) and 27 June (morning) 2008.

## ◆ **Address by Jorge Sampaio, United Nations High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations**

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

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# Monday 29 September 2008

☞ Afternoon (3 p.m.-5 p.m.)

◆ **Address by Yavuz Mildon, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe**

Following his address, Mr Mildon will answer questions from members of the Assembly (one question from each political group).

◆ **Address by Jorge Pizarro, President of the Latin American Parliament**

Following his address, Mr Pizarro will answer questions from members of the Assembly (one question from each political group).

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

*Doc. 11720 parts I and II, and addenda*

*Rapporteur: Andros Kyprianou (Cyprus, UEL)*

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

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## Tuesday 30 September 2008

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

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

*Doc. 11693*

*Voting takes place from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., and from 3 p.m. to 5 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 invites its sub-committee on the election of judges 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 only 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 1 October from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., for which a relative majority of votes will be sufficient.

◆ **Urgent debate: the consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia**

*Report of the Monitoring Committee*

*Co-rapporteurs: Luc van den Brande (Belgium, EPP/CD) and Mátyás Eörsi (Hungary, ALDE)*

*Opinion of the Political Affairs Committee*

*Rapporteur: Göran Lindblad (Sweden, EPP/CD)*

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

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

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

*Corien W.A. Jonker (Netherlands, EPP/CD)*

This report is due to be approved by the Monitoring Committee during its meeting at 8 p.m. on Tuesday 30 September.

◆ **Address by Demetris Christofias, President of the Republic of Cyprus**

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

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## Tuesday 30 September 2008

☞ Afternoon (3 p.m.-8 p.m.)

◆ **Election of a judge to the European Court of Human Rights with respect to Luxembourg (continued)**

*Doc. 11693*

*Voting takes place from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., and from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m., in the area behind the presidential rostrum.*

◆ **Communication from the Committee of Ministers to the Parliamentary Assembly presented by Frank Belfrage, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, representing the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers**

Following his presentation, Mr Belfrage will answer questions from members of the Assembly.

◆ **Address by Haris Silajdžić, Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina**

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

## ◆ Honouring of obligations and commitments by Bosnia and Herzegovina

*Doc. 11700*

*Report of the Monitoring Committee*

*Rapporteurs: Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu (Turkey, EDG) and Kimmo Sasi (Finland, EPP/CD)*

Bosnia and Herzegovina has been steadily implementing the formal commitments it made when it joined the Council of Europe in 2002, according to the Monitoring Committee, but the complex political and constitutional set-up makes democratic transformation difficult. Only greater co-operation between State and Entity level structures will enable the country to benefit fully from the path of European integration it has begun.

Key reforms – especially on the Constitution – are not advancing as well as they should. The distribution of powers between Entities and State needs to be altered, entity voting in the House of Representatives and the veto system based on the “vital national interests” of constituent peoples in the House of Peoples need to be revised to discourage MPs from defending purely ethnic interests, and so-called “others” should be given equal rights to participate in the political process.

Overall, the increase in nationalist and ethnic rhetoric is worrying, while moves in Republika Srpska to undermine state institutions – such as the National Assembly’s recent resolution referring to a referendum on self-determination – should be condemned. Until these and many other issues have been properly addressed, Bosnia and Herzegovina should continue to be monitored by the Assembly, the committee proposes.

Contact in the secretariat: Artemy Karpenko, tel. 5209.

## ◆ Candidates for the European Court of Human Rights

*Doc. 11682*

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

*Rapporteur: Marie-Louise Bemelmans-Videc (Netherlands, EPP/CD)*

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

*Rapporteur: Lydie Err (Luxembourg, SOC)*

The Assembly has long been an ardent supporter of equality between the sexes, and has done its best to make sure that men and women are evenly represented on public bodies – not least on the European Court of Human Rights. In 2004 the Assembly took a bold step of positive discrimination, and resolved to accept lists of candidates put forward by states for election as a judge of the Court only if each list of three contained at least one member of “the under-represented sex”. This has had a positive effect, and today 17 of the 47 judges of the Court are women.

However some states, particularly smaller ones with a limited pool of qualified women candidates, have argued that in rare circumstances it is difficult to meet this criterion while also meeting Convention requirements. Eventually the Court itself, invited to give an advisory opinion by the Committee of Ministers, said that – while the Assembly’s general approach in promoting gender-equality was sound – applying the rule automatically in every case, *without allowing exceptions*, was not compatible with the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Legal Affairs Committee thus proposes to allow exceptions to the rule – but only when a Contracting Party demonstrates that it has tried and failed to find a qualified candidate from the under-represented sex.

Contact in the secretariat: Isild Heurtin, tel. 4100.



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# Wednesday 1 October 2008

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

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

*Doc. 11693*

*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.

◆ **Statement by Mehmet Ali Talat, leader of the Turkish Cypriot Community**

◆ **Situation in Cyprus**

*Doc. 11699*

*Report of the Political Affairs Committee*

*Rapporteur: Joachim Hörster (Germany, EPP/CD)*

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

*Rapporteur: Boriss Cilevičs (Latvia, SOC)*

Cyprus has been divided for more than thirty years, but there are signs that this may not last: President Christofias and Mr Talat, the leaders of the two Cypriot communities, have made a clear commitment to reach a settlement, and the resumption of inter-communal talks has already produced encouraging results, beneficial for all Cypriots. The recent opening of fully-fledged negotiations, under the auspices of the UN Secretary General, offer the best opportunity in many years to end the division of the island, according to the Political Affairs Committee – one which must not be wasted.

The committee points out that both sides will have to make difficult compromises, and stresses the need for confidence-building measures to run in parallel with the political talks. Political forces and civil society in the two communities should give their full support to the process, while the three guarantor states – Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom – must intensify their efforts to support the negotiations and create confidence between the two Cypriot communities, where mistrust still runs deep.

For its part, the Council of Europe should make use of its expertise and experience both in the negotiations and to help bring the two communities together in practical ways, helping to build mutual confidence between them.

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

## ◆ **The OECD and the world economy**

*Doc. 11687 prov.*

*Report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development*

*Rapporteur: Anna Lilliehöök (Sweden, EPP/CD)*

*Doc. 11719*

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

*Spokesperson: Maria de Belém Roseira (Portugal, SOC)*

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

*Spokesperson: Andrej Zernoski ("the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", ALDE)*

*Doc. 11697*

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

*Spokesperson: Hendrik Daems (Belgium, ALDE)*

*Doc. 11712*

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

*Spokesperson: Rudi Vis (United Kingdom, SOC)*

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

In this latest provisional report – which is due to be updated during the session to reflect this month's market turmoil – the Economic Affairs Committee repeats the OECD's warning that its member countries are in for several quarters of weak growth and higher inflation, and endorses its advice to governments not to compensate for higher food and energy prices with market-distorting subsidies. They should step up aid to the world's poorest countries, continue removing trade barriers and combating corruption, reinforce credit institutions and pursue energy efficiency while preserving the environment. The committee also supports the OECD's focus on carbon-trading schemes and technology-based efficiencies to counter climate change.

Finally, noting that several countries have applied to join or engage with the OECD, it urges that membership be given only to those which respect democracy, human rights and international law.

### **Statement by Angel Gurría, Secretary-General of the OECD**

Contact in the secretariat: Simon Newman, tel. 2618.

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# Wednesday 1 October 2008

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

◆ **The OECD and the world economy (continued)**

◆ **Refreshing the youth agenda of the Council of Europe**

*Doc. 11696 rev.*

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

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

Young people in Europe are a decreasing percentage of the population, and their situation has changed a lot since the great youth debates of the 1960s. Yet the guiding principles of the Council of Europe's longstanding and successful work with young people – to tap their creative potential, to encourage their participation in civic and institutional life, and to involve them in a constant dialogue with government – remain as valid as ever.

Governments need to be talking about things that matter to young people, according to the Culture Committee, and finding new ways of interacting with them on issues such as employment, gender, inter-generational dialogue, the environment and new information technologies. They should put greater resources into this sector, shaping youth policies that encourage young people to get involved.

At the Council of Europe, priority should be given to constructive, forward-looking activities, co-managed with youth representatives, which associate young people with the Organisation, for example by building on the two European youth centres in Strasbourg and Budapest. Assembly members, for their part, could do more to involve young people directly in their work, whether at national or European level.

**Statement by Nyamko Sabuni, Minister of Integration and Gender Equality, Sweden**

Contact in the secretariat: Christopher Grayson, tel. 2114.

◆ **Reconsideration of previously ratified credentials of the Russian delegation on substantial grounds**

*Report of the Monitoring Committee*

*Rapporteur: Andreas Gross (Switzerland, SOC)*

*Opinion of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs*

This report is due to be approved by the Monitoring Committee during its meeting at 2 p.m. on Tuesday 30 September.

♦ **The situation of national minorities in Vojvodina and of the Romanian ethnic minority in Serbia**

*Doc. 11528*

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

*Rapporteur: Jürgen Herrmann (Germany, EPP/CD)*

Serbia is one of Europe's most multicultural countries, and the Vojvodina region one of the most diverse: the last census showed some 26 different ethnic groups living there, including a Hungarian minority which makes up nearly 15 per cent of the population, and a sizeable proportion of Serbia's Romanian minority. The Serbian authorities' reaction to ethnically-motivated incidents in 2003 and 2004 – directed mainly against the Hungarian minority – came too late, but the situation there is now satisfactory, according to the Legal Affairs Committee, with few and mild ethnic incidents.

A 2002 legislative package was a positive step towards protecting national minorities, the committee says, but shortcomings in implementation – sometimes leading to divergences between regions – still need to be corrected. A planned fund for minorities, a law against discrimination and the passing of the necessary missing legislation to make national councils for national minorities more effective would all help further.

As regards integration of the Romanian minority, the committee calls on Romanians and Vlachs – a group culturally and linguistically related to Romanians, but some of whom seek a separate identity – to combine their efforts and overcome internal disagreements to better protect their identity and rights. The Serbian Orthodox Church's role in preventing recognition of the Romanian Orthodox Church should be looked into, while Serbia's existing kin-state agreements with Romania, Hungary and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" should be properly implemented.

Contact in the secretariat: Isild Heurtin, tel. 4100.

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## **Thursday 2 October 2008**

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

- ◆ **Urgent debate: the consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia (continued)**

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## Thursday 2 October 2008

☞ Afternoon (3 p.m.-6.30 p.m.)

◆ **Address by Fredrik Reinfeldt, Prime Minister of Sweden**

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

◆ **Urgent debate: the consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia (continued)**

◆ **Proposed 42 days pre-charge detention in the United Kingdom**

*Report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights  
Rapporteur: Klaas de Vries (Netherlands, SOC)*

This report is due to be approved by the Legal Affairs Committee during its meeting at 2 p.m. on Monday 29 September.

Contact in the secretariat: Andrew Drzemczewski, tel. 2326.

**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. The committee is due to discuss the consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia.**

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## Friday 3 October 2008

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

### ◆ **Combating violence against women: towards a Council of Europe convention**

*Doc. 11702*

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

*Rapporteur: José Mendes Bota (Portugal, EPP/CD)*

The Parliamentary Assembly – having pressed for a Council of Europe campaign to combat violence against women, including domestic violence – was fully involved in the resulting campaign and proud of what it helped to achieve. The Assembly mobilised some forty national parliaments and a European network of 56 contact parliamentarians who inspired, over two years, more than 200 activities throughout Europe to condemn domestic violence against women, raise awareness among parliamentarians and the general public, and change laws.

But despite these efforts, domestic violence continues to be one of the most widespread violations of human rights, affecting all Council of Europe member states, and the Assembly must remain mobilised on the issue, according to the Equal Opportunities Committee. It must continue to press for minimum standards in every member state to prevent domestic violence, punish perpetrators and protect victims, using its existing network of contact parliamentarians if necessary.

The committee believes it is now up to member states to take a further step and begin drafting a framework convention outlawing the severest and most widespread forms of violence against women, including sexual assaults (such as rape or "marital rape") and harassment, forced marriages, so-called "honour crimes" and female genital mutilation.

Contact in the secretariat: Sylvie Affholder, tel. 3551.

### ◆ **Joint debate**

#### **Indicators for media in a democracy**

*Doc. 11683*

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

*Rapporteur: Wolfgang Wodarg (Germany, SOC)*

Media freedom is at the heart of democracy, and the Council of Europe – through judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, standard-setting texts, election observation and much else – does what it can to ensure Europe's citizens are able to keep themselves well-informed through television, radio, newspapers and the internet, and have access to a kaleidoscope of differing opinions in all four.

But it is also up to member states – and their parliaments – to conduct periodic assessments of the state of their own media freedom, measuring their laws and practice against a range of basic principles, according to the Culture Committee. It proposes a list of such principles: national legislation

should guarantee free expression, without undue restriction from privacy and secrecy laws, and the courts should see that it is properly enforced. Journalists should never be imprisoned for critical comments, nor media outlets closed, and the confidentiality of their sources respected. Political parties should have fair and equal access to the media, media ownership structures should be transparent, state subsidies fairly distributed, and public service broadcasters protected. Journalists, for their part, should abide by ethical codes of conduct and regulate themselves carefully, according right of reply, corrections and apologies as necessary.

The Council of Europe should draw up a set of such indicators, the committee urges, and draw up periodical reports with country profiles of all member states.

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

### **The promotion of a culture of democracy and human rights through teacher education**

*Doc. 11624*

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

*Rapporteur: Ștefan Glăvan (Romania, ALDE)*

Helping children to understand what is meant by a culture of human rights and democracy has long been recognised as an essential element of European citizenship, preparing them for life in a democratic society, but this kind of teaching is most effective when teachers themselves have been well educated in the field.

The skills and knowledge needed for such teaching should be part of the curriculum for teachers of all subjects, the Culture Committee believes, while in-service training should be given to older teachers to help them adapt their thinking to rapidly-changing democratic societies. Existing Council of Europe tools and programmes could be more widely used.

Asking children to solve real-life democratic dilemmas, or role-play problems through direct experience, are often more effective techniques than rote-learning abstract concepts, the rapporteur suggests. Teachers can have greater impact in the classroom with ideas such as organising "pupil parliaments", using agendas and procedures that mirror the real thing, or inviting children to debate the rights and wrongs of human rights issues that are in the news, using imaginative techniques such as role-playing the experience of a person from an ethnic minority facing discrimination, a refugee seeking safety, or a terror suspect subjected to kidnap and torture.

Contact in the secretariat: Christopher Grayson, tel. 2114.



## ◆ **Draft Council of Europe Convention on access to official documents**

*Doc. 11631*

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

*Rapporteur: Klaas de Vries (Netherlands, SOC)*

For a democracy to work well, the people must know what their government is doing – and access to official documents is one important way to make the work of public authorities more transparent, throwing a shaft of light onto how decisions are made, encouraging critical debate and even potentially exposing corruption. This draft Council of Europe convention, the fruit of many months' work by government experts, should be welcomed as the first binding international treaty to lay down such a general right of access, according to the Legal Affairs Committee.

Yet it also has shortcomings: the definition of "public authorities" in the draft is too narrow, allowing some public bodies to continue operating in the shadows, no time-limits are laid down, which would allow authorities to delay publication of awkward information until it had lost its value, and review bodies are not given the power to order disclosure of a requested official document where access has initially been refused. Finally, member states can opt out of parts of the treaty by entering wide-ranging reservations when they sign it.

The committee believes these issues are important enough to justify more work – and therefore makes the rare request that the draft be sent back to its drafting experts for further consideration.

Contact in the secretariat: Isild Heurtin, tel. 4100.

## ◆ **Closure of the fourth part of the 2008 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 groups 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.

**Agenda:** For each part-session the Bureau prepares a draft agenda listing the sittings at which the items will be examined. **The draft agenda** 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 agenda (Rule 26.4 of the Rules

of Procedure). A member may propose an amendment to the draft agenda drawn up by the Bureau. The adoption of such a motion requires a majority of the votes cast (Rule 26.5). Once adopted, the agenda 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 agenda is published (Rule 26) 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 30 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 23 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

Twice a day a "**notice paper**" is produced, setting out the agenda for the sittings of the day. It also contains other useful information relevant to the proceedings and procedure.

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 January 2008 in two parts, the Rules and complementary texts in one part, and the Statute of the Council of Europe in another part. They are available in bilingual versions (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 100 of the Rules of Procedure and forward), 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 29 September: Monday 29 September at 12 noon;
- for debates on Tuesday 30 September: Monday 29 September at 4 p.m.;
- for all other debates (except urgent debates, unforeseen debates or as otherwise indicated on the agenda): 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 one hour before the scheduled end of the sitting preceding that in which the debate begins.

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 24.2). 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.

For motions tabled during a part-session, the Bureau has decided that only those motions which have been tabled by **12 noon on the Tuesday of a part-session** 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 25.2). 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. If the national parliament cannot make all such appointments in time for the opening of a new Ordinary Session, it may decide, for a period of not more than six months after the election, to be represented in the Assembly by members of the existing delegation (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, of one or more political groups, 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 draft 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 50.4).

An urgent debate is based on a written report and gives rise to a vote, whereas a current affairs debate is not based on a report.

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 draft agenda. The request must be made in writing to the President of the Assembly in time for the last meeting of the Bureau before the opening of the part-session. The possible choice between several requests is made by the Bureau, a decision which needs to be endorsed 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. Although there is no vote on any text, 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.

## **11. 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.

## 12. 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 (Beejul Tanna, Room 1074, 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.

## 13. 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 only 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.

## 14. 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 106 and 108 of the Rules of Procedure.

**Speaking time** is limited to a total of 13 minutes for committee rapporteurs (to present the report and to reply to the debate) and 3 minutes for rapporteurs for opinion, to present the opinion or to reply to the debate. Other speakers on the list normally have a maximum of 5



minutes, although this may be reduced depending on the number of speakers on the list. 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.

## **15. Questions to invited guest speakers**

For most invited guest speakers, the draft agenda 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 agenda is published and the name of the guest speaker appears, unless the draft agenda specifies that there is only one question from each political group. For most 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 of written questions 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. In this context, a precise deadline is specified in the draft agenda. The written questions for oral answer by the Chairperson are then published as an Assembly document. In addition, subject to the consent of the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, the final fifteen minutes of the questions for oral answer may be reserved for spontaneous questions. A separate list, mutually exclusive of the list of written questions, is kept by the Table Office for this purpose.

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.

## **16. 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 39.9 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.

## **17. 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.

## **18. 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.

## **19. Mobile phones**

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

# Directory

## Secretariat of the Assembly

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## Table Office

(Speakers' lists, questions and amendments)

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## Directorate of Communication

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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 Kléber: 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.