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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

The Session

THE INFORMATION GUIDE FOR PLENARY SESSIONS OF PACE

23-27 April 2012

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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 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, Republic of 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, Republic of 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 Parliament of Morocco (2011) and the Palestinian National Council (2011) hold "Partner for Democracy" status with the Assembly. The parliaments of Canada (1997), Israel (1957) and Mexico (1999) hold observer status with the Assembly.

The political groups



213

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



175

Socialist Group (SOC)



86

European Democrat Group (EDG)



85

Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)



34

Group of the Unified European Left (UEL)

The Assembly committees

84 seats

- Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy
- Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights
- Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development
- Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons
- Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media
- Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination
- Committee on the honouring of obligations and commitments by member states of the Council of Europe (Monitoring)

37 seats

- Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs



Monday 23 April 2012

☞ Morning (11.30 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ **Opening of the second part of the 2012 Ordinary Session**

Parliamentary Assembly President Jean-Claude Mignon opened the second part of the 2012 Ordinary Session and made an opening statement.

The Assembly examined credentials of new members, dealt with changes in the membership of committees, and elected Fernand Boden (with respect to Luxembourg) and José Maria Beneyto Pérez (with respect to Spain) as Vice-Presidents of the Assembly.

The Assembly also adopted its agenda. It decided to hold an urgent debate on "The situation in Syria" and a current affairs debate on "The future of the European Court of Human Rights and the Brighton Declaration".

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

Doc. 12902 Parts I and II, Addendum

Rapporteur: Liliane Maury Pasquier (Switzerland, SOC)

The progress report covers the discussions held and decisions reached by the Bureau and the Standing Committee since the last part-session, including reports on the Assembly's observation of:

- the presidential election in the Russian Federation (4 March 2012)
Rapporteur: Tiny Kox (Netherlands, UEL)

Monday 23 April 2012

☞ Afternoon (3 p.m.-5 p.m.)

- ◆ **Communication from the Committee of Ministers to the Parliamentary Assembly, presented by the Rt Hon. David Lidington MP, Minister for Europe, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, United Kingdom, representing the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers**

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

- ◆ **Free debate**

Among the changes recently agreed by the Assembly as part of its own process of reform was a decision to introduce one "free debate" during each part-session, similar to the practice in a number of national parliaments.

Members of the Assembly are free to speak on any subject they would like to raise, subject to the usual practice of members submitting their names in advance and the drawing up of a list of speakers according to the d'Hondt method.

This is in line with one of the main aims of the reform, namely to raise the visibility of the Assembly and its members, including in their national constituencies.

Tuesday 24 April 2012

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ **Election of a judge to the European Court of Human Rights in respect of Belgium**

Doc. 12789

Voting takes place from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., and from 4 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 obtained, a second round of voting will take place on Wednesday 25 April from 10 a.m. to midday, for which a relative majority of votes will be sufficient.

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

◆ **Lives lost in the Mediterranean Sea: who is responsible?**

Doc. 12895

*Report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons
Rapporteur: Tineke Strik (Netherlands, SOC)*

In March of 2011, at the height of the conflict in Libya and a week after air strikes began on Tripoli, a small rubber boat left the Libyan capital with 72 people on board, including women and babies, fleeing the fighting. By the time it washed up on the Libyan coast 15 days later, only nine people were still alive – even though distress messages giving its last known position had been regularly broadcast to all ships.

This report tells the harrowing story of the voyage as recounted by the survivors – one of many such voyages carried out by desperate “boat people” at the time. In this instance, following a nine-month inquiry, the Migration Committee finds a “catalogue of failures” that led to the 63 deaths, including a failure to react to distress calls and a “vacuum of responsibility” for search and rescue. Italian search and rescue authorities, NATO, the flag states of naval vessels in the area, the Libyan authorities and reckless smugglers are among those who should share responsibility, the committee concludes.

NATO, in particular, failed to react to distress calls in a military zone under its control, the committee points out, revealing that the Spanish Navy frigate *Méndez Nuñez*, under NATO command, was reported to be only 11 miles away from the last known position of the boat in distress. An Italian military vessel, the *Borsini*, was only 37 nautical miles away. A NATO official even admitted to the rapporteur that checking on the boat would have been “a piece of cake”. The survivors, whose testimony the committee found credible, also reported that they came into direct contact with a military helicopter and later a “large military vessel”, so far unidentified, both of which failed to rescue them.

The committee calls on NATO, as well as the parliaments of the states concerned, to conduct inquiries into this incident. NATO should also provide comprehensive answers to outstanding questions, while the European Parliament is asked to seek further information, including satellite imagery which could pinpoint the ships in the area at the time. Finally, there should be an overhaul of maritime regulations to clarify who is responsible when a state cannot carry out search and rescue in its assigned zone, and which state should be responsible for the disembarkation of those rescued at sea.

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

◆ **Address by Saad dine El Otmani, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Co-operation of Morocco**

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

Tuesday 24 April 2012

☞ Afternoon (4 p.m.-8 p.m.)

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

Doc. 12789

Voting takes place from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m., in the area behind the presidential rostrum.

◆ **Equality between women and men: a condition for the success of the Arab Spring**

Doc. 12893

Report of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination

Rapporteur: Fatiha Saïdi (Belgium, SOC)

Despite the absence of tangible improvements in women's lives since the beginning of the Arab Spring, the vast process of constitutional and legislative reform which has been undertaken by several countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean represents a unique opportunity for strengthening equality between women and men, according to the Equality Committee.

The measures taken by the authorities in Morocco and Tunisia not only to build on existing measures, but to go even further in the promotion of women's rights, should inspire the other countries in the region. Moreover, to have a tangible impact on the status of women, they should be followed by action to bring legislation into line with international human rights standards, to ensure the effective and consistent enforcement of the law and to remove the legal and practical obstacles which limit women's access to justice. The evolution of law and policy can have a durable and effective impact only if it is accompanied by an evolution of mentalities.

The Parliamentary Assembly should stand ready to contribute to building, in the Mediterranean, an area of democratic stability sharing the same values and the same commitment to pluralist democracy, human rights and the rule of law, in a spirit of dialogue and mutual respect, based on the conviction that human rights, of which women's rights are an integral part, are indivisible and universal.

Statement by Bassima Hakkaoui, Minister of Solidarity, Family, Women and Social Development of Morocco

Contact in the secretariat: Giorgio Loddo, tel. 59.08

◆ **The promotion of active citizenship in Europe**

Doc. 12898

Report of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

Rapporteur: Earl of Dundee (United Kingdom, EDG)

Involving citizens as far as possible in the decisions which affect them – by soliciting their active participation or consulting them – is good democratic practice which is likely to result in more harmonious communities. People whose ideas have been taken into account feel more respected and are more likely to have a stake in creating a positive outcome. In the longer term, this process could even help to address the current dissatisfaction with representative democracy and its institutions shown by, for example, low voter turnouts and widespread street demonstrations.

NGOs, charities, trade unions, religious groups and political parties all have their part to play, according to the Political Affairs Committee, as do community associations which mobilise groups such as women, the young or senior citizens. There is scope for making great strides at local level, where the knowledge, skills, ideas and experience of local people can be harnessed for local goals, including delivering public services – for example volunteers who run rural fire-fighting or lifeboat rescue services. “City diplomacy”, village or neighbourhood grant schemes, youth councils or parliaments, participatory budgeting initiatives, e-petitions and consumer-style websites which track public services are just some of the many ways of boosting active citizenship suggested in this report.

The Council of Europe is already setting the agenda in some respects, the committee suggests, but there could be tighter co-ordination of work on local and regional democracy, helped by longer-term planning across Chairmanships. For its part, the EU could do much more to realise its ambition of increasing citizen involvement in decision-making, for example by broadening the scope of the 2013 “European Year of Citizens”.

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

Wednesday 25 April 2012

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-midday)

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

Doc. 12789

Voting takes place from 10 a.m. to midday, in the area behind the presidential rostrum.

An absolute majority of votes cast is required in the first round of voting. If this is not obtained, a second round of voting takes place, for which a relative majority of votes will be sufficient.

◆ **Joint debate:**

Good governance and ethics in sport

Doc. 12889 and Addendum

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

Rapporteur: François Rochebloine (France, EPP/CD)

Sport can be a powerful vehicle for transmission of positive role-models and values, particularly for the young. Yet in the globalised world of modern professional sport, the large sums of money involved have increased the risk of abuse and criminality – be it doping, match-fixing or other forms of corruption. Moreover, the power stakes involved in governance at the highest levels of sport, and a certain opacity in decision-making – most notably, but not exclusively, in football – are a matter for concern, according to the Culture Committee.

FIFA, in particular, needs to take the necessary steps to fully investigate the facts underlying the various scandals which, in recent years, have tarnished its image and that of international football. Among other things, it should publish in full any judicial and other documents it may have relating to the case of Swiss sports promoter ISL, whose collapse in 2001 gave rise to allegations of kickbacks to FIFA officials in return for television rights. It should also open an internal investigation into whether the candidates in its recent election for President – and particularly the successful candidate – exploited their institutional positions to obtain “unfair advantages for themselves or for potential voters”.

The committee proposes a comprehensive set of guidelines on good governance and ethics in sport, including on combating corruption, which it calls on international and national sports bodies as well as governments to apply. These aim to discourage gross financial inequalities between clubs, which can distort competition, protect young sportsmen and women and improve the way sport is run. Among other things, the commercial transfer of sportspeople aged under 16 should be banned, and the purchase of clubs using money of unknown origin prevented.

Contact in the secretariat: Roberto Fasino, tel. 2373.

The need to combat match-fixing

Doc. 12891

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

Rapporteur: Anne Brasseur (Luxembourg, ALDE)

Match-fixing – the bribing of players or officials to “throw” matches in order to win high-stakes illegal bets – is now big business, according to the Culture Committee, a sinister form of corruption which taints the value of sport and jeopardises the rule of law. Highly organised criminal syndicates, operating from anywhere in the world, are now able to make large sums betting on even amateur or junior competitions in a wide range of sports. According to some experts, this is injecting a rottenness into the heart of sport that could potentially kill it.

The solution is determined action on a number of different fronts, the committee believes. Sportspeople, especially young ones, need to be coached in the risks of accepting money in return for altering their performance, and helped to resist pressure or blackmail, while being subject to serious deterrent penalties if they succumb. The authorities need to work with bookies to detect suspicious bets and limit risky ones with high initial stakes at long odds. If necessary, betting on sports events most vulnerable to corruption, such as junior or amateur competitions, or – for some sports such as football – lower-division professional competitions, should be banned. Every country should set up a national authority to regulate betting, and work towards international harmonisation of both detection and penalties.

The Council of Europe, with its existing conventions on corruption and the laundering of dirty money, is ideally placed to lead the way in fighting this scourge, together with the IOC. It should now build on a February 2012 feasibility study by Council of Europe experts, and on the conclusions of the latest Conference of European Ministers responsible for Sport, to urgently draft an international convention to combat match-fixing.

Contact in the secretariat: Roberto Fasino, tel. 2373.

The Joint Committee, which is the organ of co-ordination between the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly, meets at 12.30 p.m. in Room 5. Items on the agenda include reform of the European Court of Human Rights and the election of the Deputy Secretary General.

Wednesday 25 April 2012

☞ Afternoon (3.30 p.m.-8 p.m.)

◆ **Address by Zlatko Lagumdžija, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina**

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

◆ **The protection of freedom of expression and information on the Internet and online media**

Doc. 12874 and Addendum

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

Rapporteur: Zaruhi Postanjyan (Armenia, EPP/CD)

With its vast array of diverse opinions, the internet has swiftly become a global forum for free expression, a welcome development which – among other things – makes it much more difficult for non-democratic regimes to deprive their citizens of information and suppress criticism or dissent. Moreover, journalists increasingly rely on raw data from the internet – such as video uploaded from areas of conflict – to pinpoint human rights violations or expose misgovernment and corruption. For “whistleblowers” who want to bring to light information of public concern, the ease and universal access of the web has made their courageous task easier.

However, under the case-law of the European Convention on Human Rights, freedom of expression has its limits: racist or religious hatred or incitement to violence are forbidden, for example, whether online or not, and personal data also need protection. As well as striking this balance themselves, governments have a duty to make sure that internet service providers, mobile phone companies and other private intermediaries who provide access to digital networks do likewise.

The Culture Committee is concerned that such private companies may breach their users’ rights by refusing them access or blocking their access to information, for commercial or other reasons. Moreover, seeking redress in court might be awkward because of the complex interconnected technical and corporate structure of the web, and the difficulty of establishing jurisdiction in cyber-space.

The solution, according to the committee, is for such intermediaries to be fully transparent about their policies and technical capabilities, and to create and enforce self-regulatory codes of conduct that guarantee freedom of expression within the appropriate limits. Finally, it is up to governments to make sure that these intermediaries can be held fully liable in courts of law for any violation of their users’ rights.

Contact in the secretariat: Rudiger Dossow, tel. 2859

Thursday 26 April 2012

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ **Urgent debate: the situation in Syria**

Report of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

Opinion of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons

The Political Affairs Committee is due to approve this report at its meeting on Tuesday 24 April at 8.30 a.m. Deadline for tabling amendments: Wednesday 25 April at 4 p.m.

Thursday 26 April 2012

☞ Afternoon (3.30 p.m.-7.30 p.m.)

◆ **The situation of IDPs and returnees in the North Caucasus region**

Doc. 12882

Report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons

Rapporteur: Nikolaos Dendias (Greece, EPP/CD)

Doc. 12899

Opinion of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Rapporteur: Marieluise Beck (Germany, ALDE)

The Migration Committee recognises the efforts made by the federal, regional and local authorities in the North Caucasus since 2004 to deal with the humanitarian situation of the population internally displaced by the armed conflicts in Chechnya and North Ossetia-Alania. Indeed, the authorities in Moscow, as well as in North Ossetia, Ingushetia and Chechnya, appear to have an increasingly practical and realistic approach to normalising the living conditions of these people.

Yet there is still plenty to be done: towards the end of 2011, there were still at least 19,000 internally displaced persons in the region, as well as 350,000 returned IDPs. The security situation in the region remains volatile, as does the human rights situation. Finding durable solutions continues to be hampered by flourishing corruption and the inadequacy and ineffectiveness of compensation schemes. There is insufficient political will to deal with ordinary citizens, and the expectation at the local government level is that solutions should be provided by the central government. In addition, the narrow focus on housing assistance has not always been adequate or consistent.

The first task is to properly define, count and monitor IDPs in the region so that the response is based on accurate data. Some have difficulties with registering, in practice needed to access certain rights, and housing is still sub-standard. UN agencies left the North Caucasus in 2011, and the Russian authorities have not entirely replaced their work, leading to fears that the living standards of some may continue to worsen. On the other hand, the committee points out, Russia is wealthy and capable. With sustained political will, resources and stronger state institutions, as well as a rights-based process with transparent procedures that fully involves IDPs, the country is in a position to resolve the remaining problems.

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

◆ **Current affairs debate: the future of the European Court of Human Rights and the Brighton Declaration**

This debate will be opened by Hans Franken (NL). No report is prepared for a current affairs debate, and there is no vote.

◆ **Follow-up by the Committee of Ministers to the work of the Parliamentary Assembly**

Doc. 12887

Report of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs

Rapporteur: Serhiy Holovaty (Ukraine, ALDE)

The Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly – as the only two statutory bodies of the Council of Europe – have a shared responsibility to make sure the Organisation does its job effectively, the Rules Committee points out. However vital the initiatives of the parliamentary branch, they cannot become a reality without the support of the executive branch.

Inter-institutional relations have improved since 2009, and recent accords are a good basis for open and active dialogue, the committee believes, but they now need to be put into practice – a good working partnership will be all the more essential if the current process of reform is to meet its aims of making the Council of Europe more streamlined and more effective.

For its part, the Assembly undertakes to ensure that its recommendations are politically relevant, clearly and succinctly drafted and set out coherent proposals in keeping with overall Council of Europe priorities – without prejudice to its traditional role of exploring new issues and putting forward fresh ideas.

In return, it hopes that the Committee of Ministers will enhance its consultation of the Assembly, taking more seriously the Assembly's opinion on new draft legal instruments, and consulting national parliamentary delegations on priorities ahead of new Chairmanships. It would also like to see a substantial reply to its recommendations within six months, better co-ordination with CM rapporteur groups and subsidiary bodies, and increased synergies in the Joint Committee.

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

Friday 27 April 2012

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ **Promoting an appropriate policy on tax havens**

Doc. 12894

Report of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development

Rapporteur: Dirk van der Maelen (Belgium, SOC)

Council of Europe member states lose billions every year due to tax avoidance, tax evasion and tax fraud that are facilitated by offshore tax havens and “secrecy jurisdictions” deliberately set up to enable wealthy individuals and companies from beyond the jurisdiction to avoid tax. This massive tax cheating is not only unfair to ordinary tax-payers and drains public finances, but also threatens good governance, macroeconomic stability and social cohesion. Thanks to growing public pressure, the international community – including the G20 – is finally beginning to close the loopholes and press for tax justice at global, European and national levels but the situation is still far from satisfactory.

In this report, the committee lists the root problems concerning tax havens, such as bank secrecy on tax matters, lack of transparency and effective public oversight, regulatory dumping, predatory tax arrangements and abusive accounting techniques inside multinational enterprises. It calls on the IMF and the OECD, as well as Council of Europe member states, to take a series of steps to more closely supervise the offshore financial system, harmonise national tax regimes (especially within the EU), push for greater corporate social responsibility and increase tax accountability and transparency.

Contact in the secretariat: Aiste Ramanauskaite, tel. 3117.

◆ **Decent pensions for all**

Doc. 12896

Report of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development

Rapporteur: Denis Jacquat (France, EPP/CD)

As populations in Europe age, the traditional method of providing retirement pensions – an inter-generational contract in which current workers fund the pensions of those who are no longer working – has become less and less sustainable. Add to that the austerity programmes which many countries have had to put in place following the economic and financial crisis, and it is little surprise that pension systems in practically all Council of Europe member states have recently undergone significant changes.

If European governments are to continue providing a decent standard of living to their pensioners – as spelled out in the revised European Social Charter that many have signed up to – national systems will increasingly have to be based on a mix of several sources, including both funded and pay-as-you-go elements. Retirement ages and contribution levels should be adjusted to take account of increased life-expectancy, pay-levels set so that individuals in work have enough to set aside money for their retirement, and, where possible, access to early retirement schemes restricted. Part-time work for older people who wish to keep working should be made easier.

The state should continue to play a central role as the bedrock of pension systems, preserving inter-generational solidarity and allocating resources to pension systems that match modern lifestyles and the increase in life-expectancy. Minimum pensions should be at least equal to the national poverty threshold. Finally, governments must provide special support to those less able to prepare for their retirement, such as people with disabilities or those looking after dependants.

Contact in the secretariat: Maren Lambrecht-Feigl, tel. 4778.

◆ Closure of the second part of the 2012 Ordinary Session

Practical information

1. Meetings of committees and political groups

The list of meetings held by the committees and the other organs of the Assembly (Bureau, political groups, etc.) is published on the Assembly's website 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, Greek and Turkish.

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 or 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 33 (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.

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 2012 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, 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 23 April: Monday 23 April at 12 noon;
- for debates on Tuesday 24 April: Monday 23 April 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 33 of the Rules of Procedure.

5. Motions for resolutions and recommendations

A motion for a recommendation or resolution, not exceeding 300 words, must be signed by at least 20 Representatives or Substitutes belonging to 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 or her signature to a written declaration up to the close of the next part-session, after which no further signatures may be added. The declaration shall be issued with the names of all members who have signed it.

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 or the same time as for speakers during the sitting. 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. 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.

11. Register of attendance

Members shall continue to sign the register of attendance before entering the Chamber for a sitting (Rules 11.2 and 19.2). 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 and Partners for Democracy – 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.

12. 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 in 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). Rapporteurs for opinion, to present the opinion or to reply to the debate, shall have the same speaking time to present their opinions as the speakers registered for the debate concerned. Other speakers on the list normally have a maximum of 4 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.

13. 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 written question is registered if accompanied by the full written text of the question. In this context, a deadline is specified in the draft agenda. The written questions to the Chairperson are published as an Assembly document.

In accordance with established practice, the Bureau has agreed that written questions will receive a written reply from the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers. These replies will be published in the report of the sitting. The Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers has indicated that he or she is prepared to give an oral reply to spontaneous questions at the end of his address. Rule 58.2 of the Rules of Procedure states, however, that "no Representative or Substitute may table more than one question for oral answer at any one part-session." Members may therefore register on one of the two lists by completing and returning the appropriate form (either "written question for oral reply" or "spontaneous question").

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.

14. Electronic voting

All votes in the Assembly, except elections, take place by 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 Presidential dais; 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.

15. 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 building 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.

16. 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.

17. 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.

18. Mobile phones and laptop computers

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

Laptop computers may be used discreetly in the Chamber and each desk has an electronic socket for charging.

Directory

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(Speakers' lists, questions and amendments)

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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 midday 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 11.30 a.m. and from midday to 5.45 p.m., tel. 3712, librairie.kleber@coe.int

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

Just off the entrance hall, open from 8.30 a.m. to the end of the sitting, tel. 2442.

Newsagent

Just off the entrance hall, open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., tel. 2442.

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.