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Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs

Participation of members in Parliamentary Assembly plenary sessions and committee meetings

Information memorandum¹

prepared by the Secretariat

1. Introduction

1. In Resolution 1583 (2007) on “Improving the participation of members in Assembly plenary sessions and committee meetings”, the Parliamentary Assembly adopted measures aimed at promoting improved participation by Assembly members in its activities and those of its committees. Paragraph 7 of the resolution provides for follow-up to the measures taken:

“7. The Assembly:

7.1. invites its Secretary General to continue observing closely the level of participation of members of national parliamentary delegations at plenary sessions, including during votes, and in the general committees of the Assembly, and to inform the Bureau of the Assembly and the Committee on Rules of Procedure and Immunities regularly thereon;

7.2. invites the President of the Assembly to examine, with the speakers and political groups of the parliaments concerned, the possible consequences if, during one year following the adoption of this resolution, the average level of participation of national delegations in Assembly sittings, as shown by the signatures in the register of attendance, falls below 50% of their nominal strength;

7.3. resolves to review the Assembly’s committee structure, including the possible merger of committees, if, during the same period, there is no improvement in the level of participation in committees.”

2. The purpose of this memorandum is therefore to allow the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs, in compliance with paragraph 7.1 of Resolution 1583, to consider relevant statistics on the following points:

- participation of members of national parliamentary delegations in plenary sessions,
- participation of members of national parliamentary delegations in votes during plenary sessions,

¹ Approved by the committee at its meeting on 25 January 2017

- participation of members of national parliamentary delegations in the Assembly's general committees.

3. The memorandum also contains an initial analysis of these statistics, which may provide material for the discussion by the committee and the Bureau of the Assembly on the conclusions to be drawn.

4. It should be recalled that, in 2011, the Assembly undertook a reform of its organisational structure and mode of operation, the aims of which included, in particular, strengthening its efficiency, as well as its political visibility and relevance, and improving the commitment and participation of its members. The reform led to several measures, including overhauling the structure of the committees and their terms of reference, reorganising plenary sittings, with trimming of the agenda, improving the planning and grouping of committee meetings outside part-sessions.

5. The last modifications made to the Rules of Procedure in 2015 led to the setting up of a ninth Assembly committee – the Committee on the Election of Judges to the European Court of Human Rights – and to the increase to eighteen of the number of seats allocated to the Turkish parliamentary delegation (as from the June 2015 part-session); in 2016, some committees have increased the number of their seats (Monitoring Committee to 93 seats, Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights to 90 seats and the Committee on Rules of Procedure to 38 seats) since the chairpersons of political groups as well as the immediate past President have been granted the status of ex officio members.

6. It is recalled that the Russian Federation decided not to present the credentials of its parliamentary delegation for the whole 2016 session. This has been duly taken into account in the analysis of statistics mentioned in this document concerning the participation in plenary sessions and in committee meetings. As a reminder, in 2015, the Russian parliamentary delegation decided to no longer take part in the work of the Assembly and its committees, following the adoption of Resolution 2034 on 28 January 2015, by which the Assembly deprived members of the Russian delegation of their right to vote and some rights of representation and participation.

2. Statistics

2.1. Participation of members of national parliamentary delegations in plenary sessions

7. Statistics on the level of participation of national delegations for the four 2016 part-sessions (see Appendix I) show that the overall average level of participation of the members of the 46 delegations was 55.59% (it was 55.60% in 2015, 55.08% in 2014, 57.84% in 2013, 56.45% in 2012, 57.99% in 2011, 58.76% in 2010, 58.23% in 2009 and 56.92% in 2008). Participation rates were over 50% for all the part-sessions, with the highest level at the January part-session (59.79%) as in the previous six years.

8. It shall be again pointed out that these “participation” rates are based on the signatures in the register of attendance and they do not reflect the actual presence of parliamentarians in the Assembly chamber or their actual participation in the debates. Members do not necessarily remain throughout the sitting for which they have registered, and this is not dependent on whether they are called on to speak.

9. A survey of the level of participation of the national delegations in the 2016 Assembly session shows large disparities between delegations, but there is no correlation between the level of participation and the size of the delegation. Some delegations' participation rates are consistently very high and six have an average participation rate of more than 80% (Andorra with 98.61%, Switzerland with 95.37%, Norway with 81.67%, Turkey with 81.48%, Liechtenstein with 80.55% and Sweden with 80.09%). Eight delegations were in this situation last year (six in 2014, seven in 2013, eight in 2012 and seven in 2011). However, 15 of the 46 delegations' average participation rates are less than 50% (the figure was also 15 in 2015, 17 in 2014, 11 in 2013, 17 in 2012, 15 in 2011, 13 in 2010, 17 in 2009 and in 2008).

10. The 15 delegations affected by the measure provided for in paragraph 7.2 of Resolution 1583, with an average participation rate of less than 50%, are:

- Croatia (17.22% – and not a single representative at the January part-session)
- the Slovak Republic (18.33% – and not a single representative at the April, June and October part-sessions; 30% in 2015, 40% in 2014 and 35% in 2012)
- Malta (26.85% – and not a single representative at the April part-session; 33.33% in 2015 and 2014, 40.74% in 2013 and 30.56% in 2012)
- Montenegro (35.19%)
- Bulgaria (39.81%; 36.11% in 2015, 25.93% in 2014, 38.89% in 2013)
- Albania (40.97%; 36.11% in 2005, 38.19% in 2014, 13.89% in 2013, 34.03% in 2012 and 36.11% in 2011)
- Georgia (41.11%)
- Romania (41.95%; the rate was also less than 50% in 2014, 2012, 2011, 2010, 2009 and 2008)
- Germany (43.05%; 42.90% in 2015, 35.65% in 2014, 37.50% in 2013, 43.67% in 2012 and 44.91% in 2011)
- Denmark (43.33%; 30.56% in 2015, 32.78% in 2014, 43.89% in 2013, 37.78% in 2012 and 32.22% in 2011)
- Ireland (44.44%)
- Hungary (46.82%; 29.37% in 2014 and 48.81% in 2013)
- Slovenia (47.22%; the rate was also less than 50% in 2014, 2012 and 2008)
- Monaco (48.61%; 44.44% in 2015 and 36.11% in 2014)
- and United Kingdom (49.69%; 49.54% in 2015).

11. Looking at the last six years, it is worth noting that some delegations have a consistently high level of participation (Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, Andorra, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, Armenia, Lithuania, Finland, Turkey, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Latvia), while conversely others have a low or very low level of participation over the long term (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Denmark, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Romania, the Slovak Republic, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”).

12. It is also a matter of concern that the participation level of some large delegations (Germany and United Kingdom) remains consistently below the expected 50%. Germany’s average participation level between 2008 and 2016 was 43.32% and Italy’s was 44.85% – although the situation has improved in 2016 (51.85%, compared to 37.50% in 2015, 49.38% in 2014, 32.10% in 2013, 36.27% in 2011) –, while two other large delegations with 18 members (France and Turkey) consistently achieve regular higher participation levels over the same period (France’s average participation level between 2008 and 2016 was 65.10% and Turkey’s 75.48%).

13. Moreover, it shall be noted that almost none of the delegations which had a participation rate less than 50% in 2015, 2014, 2013 or 2012 was able to curb the trend on the long-term, Belgium, San Marino, Serbia and Ukraine being the exceptions. In 2016, the level of participation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Portugal and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” also improved, going above the 50% threshold.

2.2. *Participation of members of national parliamentary delegations in voting at plenary sessions*

14. There is still a very significant difference between the number of members signing the register of attendance and the number who actually take part in the votes at the sitting for which they have registered. In 2016, the participation rate of Assembly members in votes in plenary sittings was 32.43%, in sharp decline compared to the previous three years (it was 36.35% in 2015, 34.25% in 2014, 36.78% in 2013, 30.38% in 2012, 26.62% in 2011, 23.89% in 2010, 28.70% in 2009 and 29.37% in 2008). One cannot hide the fact that nearly seven in ten signatories do not take part in votes during the sittings for which they have registered.

15. Only eight delegations out of 46 had a participation rate of over 50% in votes (the figure was thirteen in 2015, ten in 2014 and 2013, seven in 2012, four in 2011 and 2010, seven in 2009 and six in 2008): placed on top were the same four delegations in 2015 and 2014, i.e. Andorra (two seats and 92.01%), Switzerland (six seats and 81.01%), Sweden (six seats and 77.47%) and Norway (five seats and 69.36%).

16. The fact that 22 delegations' participation rates in votes were less than 25% may be seen as a worrying trend (compared to 15 delegations in 2015, 17 in 2014, but only 6 in 2013, 22 in 2013, 25 in 2011, 27 in 2010, 24 in 2009 and 23 in 2008). The worst results – with rates below 15% – were those of Montenegro, Croatia, Ireland, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Monaco, the Slovak Republic and Albania (1.16%, 6.74%, 7.70%, 8.53%, 9.30%, 9.51%, 11.31%, 12.11%, 12.65%, 13.20%, 14.39% respectively)² (see appendix II).

17. Analysis of the statistics since 2008 shows that some delegations' participation in voting has substantially improved (for instance, Andorra's participation rose from 29.36% in 2011 to more than 90% in 2016 and 2014, San Marino from less 25% between 2008 and 2012 to 67.56% in 2015 and 63.95% in 2016). Some delegations whose participation rate was below 25% in 2014 and/or 2015 have made efforts (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Moldova).

18. Conversely other delegations have failed to sustain the efforts made over the past two or three years (Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Latvia, Malta, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Spain and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”) whereas the declining trend has become even worse in some others (Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Monaco, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia).

19. Between 2008 and 2016 19 delegations have an average participation rate of less than 25% (Albania, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Montenegro, Portugal, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”).

20. It is worth noting that there is no absolute correlation between the participation rate of national delegations as recorded in the register of signatures and the participation rate of the members of the same delegations in votes.³ It would be appropriate therefore to discuss matters more thoroughly with the delegations to establish why their members attend sessions but do not vote on the texts being debated.

21. As to individual voting, 44 members of the Assembly took part, on average, in more than 50% of the votes during the 2016 session (compared to 59 in 2015, 57 in 2014, 58 in 2013, 44 in 2012, 33 in 2011, 24 in 2010, 37 in 2009 and 31 in 2008).

22. During the 2016 session, the Assembly adopted 71 texts.⁴ 19 of the 59 texts adopted at plenary sessions were voted on by over 100 members on their final adoption (32%). This is encouraging compared to previous statistics (35% in 2015, 30% in 2014, 38% in 2013, 24% in 2012, 15% in 2011, 14% in 2010, 21% in 2009 and 13% in 2008), the record being the debate on the “Inhabitants of frontier regions of Azerbaijan are deliberately deprived of water” (209 votes cast).⁵ The next most successful were the texts on “Children's rights related to surrogacy” (167 votes cast) and on “The Mediterranean Sea: a front door to irregular migration” (143 votes cast).

23. The list of texts adopted by the Assembly in plenary (Appendix V) shows this year too how much Assembly members' interest clearly focused on topical political issues (the migratory crisis; the situation in some member states or states on Europe's borders; the honouring of obligations and

² Among the 22 delegations concerned are also Bulgaria, Hungary, Georgia, Greece, Iceland, Germany, Finland, Latvia, Spain, Denmark and Austria.

³ For example, the Portuguese delegation's participation rate in the 2016 session was 60.32%, and its participation rate in voting was 9.51% only. The same applies to Greece (60.72% and 17.52%), Ireland (44.44% and 7.70%), Latvia (74.07% and 22.38%), Montenegro (35.19% and 1.16%) and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” (51.85% and 8.53%).

⁴ 59 of these were adopted at Assembly part-sessions and 12 at Standing Committee meetings. In 2015, the Assembly adopted 83 texts (64 of which at plenary sessions); in 2014, 92 texts (73 of which at plenary sessions); in 2013, 84 texts (64 of which at plenary sessions); in 2012, 74 texts (58 of which at plenary sessions); in 2011, 115 texts (86 of which at plenary sessions); in 2010, 143 texts (98 of which at plenary sessions); in 2009, 109 texts (85 at part-sessions) and, in 2008, 83 texts (69 at part-sessions).

⁵ The “record” is still held by the 2014 debate on the honouring of obligations and commitments by Azerbaijan (225 votes cast – the best figure for a text adopted since 2006). Other “records” include the 2015 debate on the “Challenge, on substantive grounds, of the still unratified credentials of the delegation of the Russian Federation” (213 votes cast) and the 2012 debate on the honouring of obligations and commitments by the Russian Federation (209 votes cast).

commitments by member States; terrorism) or subjects related to the protection of specific human rights.

24. However, many reports debated do not seem to achieve the expected level of interest among Assembly members. For instance, almost one in two texts were adopted with the votes of less than a quarter of Assembly members (27 of 59 texts – i.e. 46% – were adopted with less than 80 votes). This figure remains a cause for concern with regard to the Assembly political visibility and the effectiveness of its message.⁶

2.3. *Participation of members of national parliamentary delegations in meetings of general Assembly committees*

25. Resolution 1583 (2007) invites the Secretary General of the Assembly to observe the level of participation of members of national parliamentary delegations in the Assembly's general committees.

26. Moreover, Rule 44.10 of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure states that "*If (...) in the course of a parliamentary year*, the average level of participation of a national delegation in the meetings of a committee is below 33%, the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly shall inform the President of the Assembly, the Chairperson of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs and the chairperson of the national delegation concerned. The President of the Assembly shall bring this to the attention of the speaker of the national parliament concerned and the Bureau of the Assembly.*"

[* If during the reference year, parliamentary elections are held, the national delegation concerned may request that the reference time be prolonged by the Bureau up to a maximum of two years.]

27. The aim therefore was to observe, firstly, the average level of participation of each delegation in all the committees, taken as a whole, and, secondly, the average level of participation of each delegation in each separate committee. It goes without saying that while it is easy to analyse the statistics on delegations' participation in all the committees taken together, the task of narrowing down the analysis to reveal the details of each delegation's participation in the meetings of each committee is complex.

28. As with the figures on participation in Assembly sessions, these statistics on participation in committee meetings should be viewed in the light of the fact that they only reflect the number of members who signed the register at the beginning of meetings, not their actual presence during them.

2.3.1. *Participation levels in committee meetings by delegation*

29. In 2016, the nine Assembly committees held a total of 70 meetings,⁷ some committees having held one meeting more compared to 2015.

30. The overall level of participation of Assembly members in the Assembly's nine committees in 2016 was 52.78% (the rate was 52.74% in 2015; for the then eight committees it was 53.17% in 2014, 53.22% in 2013, 56.47% in 2012, 46.73% in 2011, 46.13% in 2010, 47.30% in 2009 and 47.98% in 2008).

31. With more specific regard to the participation of national delegations in the meetings of the six committees where they are represented, the overall participation is also on the increase (53.67%; 50.77% in 2015, 53.78% in 2014, 54.14% in 2013 and 56% in 2012, although it is well above the level before the reform of the Assembly in 2011, with 45.82% and 2010 with 44.71%) (see Appendix III).

32. Ten delegations have average rates of participation in all committee meetings below 33% (they were 9 in 2015, 8 in 2014, 9 in 2013 and 8 in 2012; it is encouraging compared to 14 in 2011, 18 in 2010, 9 in 2009 and 12 in 2008); in ascending order, they were:

⁶ In 2015, 31 of 64 texts (48%) were adopted with less than 80 votes – 36 of 73 texts (49%) in 2014, 30 of 64 texts (47%) in 2013, 32 of 58 texts (55%) in 2012, 40 of 74 texts (54%) in 2011. In 2016, 16 texts were adopted by less than 50 votes (17%) during plenary sessions (17% in 2015, 24% in 2014, 20% in 2013, 27% in 2012, 19% in 2011, and 32% in 2010).

⁷ In 2015, they held 67 meetings. The eight committees established before 2015 held 61 meetings in 2014, 66 in 2013 and 63 in 2012.

- the Slovak Republic, Liechtenstein, Ireland, Bulgaria, Croatia, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, with a rate of 25% or less;
- Montenegro, Slovenia, Albania and Monaco, with a rate of less than 33%.

33. 23 of the 46 delegations achieved average participation rates of 50% or more (27 in 2015, 29 in 2014, 27 in 2013, 29 in 2012, 15 in 2011, 18 in 2010, 25 in 2009 and 20 in 2008). However six delegations – Armenia, Poland, Finland, Azerbaijan, Andorra and Luxembourg – had averages of over 70% (four achieved the same good result in 2015, nine in 2014 and 2013, eleven delegations in 2012, but only two in 2011).

34. The national delegations’ levels of participation in committee meetings vary greatly;⁸ however, on the whole delegations made real efforts to ensure a better participation in the activities of committees.

35. In 2016, half of the committee meetings were held in Strasbourg (36 meetings out of 70). As in previous years, participation levels were better for meetings in Strasbourg (60.12%) than for meetings in Paris (34.75%) or elsewhere (37.49%).⁹ However, this result does need to be put in perspective, as there are certain special arrangements that apply to meetings in Strasbourg:

- each committee actually holds several meetings during session weeks, but they are counted as a single meeting and all the signatures are put together;
- the same member may go in turn to several committee meetings being held at the same time.

36. The number of meetings held in Paris in 2016 (26 meetings, compared to 26 meetings in 2015, 22 in 2014 and 21 in 2013), as well as the number of meetings held outside France (8 meetings, compared to 8 meetings in 2015, 7 in 2014, 13 in 2013, 7 in 2012) remain more or less unchanged.

37. However, some delegations only took part in meetings held during the part-sessions in Strasbourg (Liechtenstein, San Marino, the Slovak Republic), while several other delegations clearly gave precedence to meetings in Strasbourg, attending certain committee meetings in Paris or elsewhere more occasionally (Albania, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Ireland, Latvia, Malta, the Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Norway, Slovenia, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”).

38. There are objective reasons for this situation. It is obvious that members belonging to small delegations cannot by themselves take on the heavy workload that participation in the work of all the committees would involve, and this is what accounts for some of the delegations’ low participation rates. Moreover, several delegations are faced with budgetary problems which rule out long or over-frequent journeys.

⁸ In 2016:

- the delegation of Liechtenstein did not participate in any of the meetings of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons and the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination,
- the Albanian delegation did not participate in any of the meetings of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons and the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination,
- the delegation of Monaco in any of the meetings of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights and the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development,
- the delegation of the Slovak Republic in any of the meetings of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights and the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination,
- the delegation of Montenegro in any of the meetings of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media,
- the delegation of Malta in any of the meetings of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination.

⁹ The “attractiveness” of meetings in Paris may be questioned, since members’ interest in participating thereto is clearly declining over the past five years, compared to an average of 35.05% in 2015, 38.82% in 2014, 42.22% in 2013 and 45.32% in 2012. For the third consecutive year, meetings in places other than Paris or Strasbourg have higher rates of participation than those for meetings in Paris.

2.3.2. Overall participation levels in meetings by committee¹⁰

39. The expected effects of the 2011 reform of the Assembly – in particular by reducing the number of committees – seem to be marking time. Although the measures which have been implemented in 2012 resulted then in a significant increase of members' participation in committee meetings, the incidence is least in 2016 as in 2015, 2014 and 2013 (see Appendix VI).

40. As to the level of participation by committee, seven committees out of nine recorded an overall figure of over 50% (compared to five committees in 2015, six in 2014 and 2013 and seven in 2012).

41. The Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy had the highest participation rate (60.36%). Next came the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights (56.17%), the Committee on the Election of Judges to the European Court of Human Rights (54.55%), the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development (53.55%), the Monitoring Committee (52.57%), the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination (51.70%), the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons (50.15%), the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media (49.23%), and the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional (44.15%).¹¹

3. Possible explanations

42. Every year for the last nine years, the committee has examined the statistics on participation by members in the work of the Assembly and its committees, and looked for factors that might explain certain aspects, since the 2007 report on "Improving the participation of members in Assembly plenary sessions and committee meetings" (see explanatory memorandum, Doc. 11295; paras. 31 to 41) and through the information memoranda presented since 2008.¹² As it has already pointed out, some caution is required when interpreting raw statistics, which take no account in themselves of the valid reasons explaining parliamentarians' absence.

43. The main explanation given by national delegations was that members held a dual mandate and were sometimes required to stay in their national parliaments, or were called back for important debates. This point was emphasised most by the delegations of member States in which the government held only a narrow majority and was trying to introduce major constitutional or legislative reforms.

44. Delegations also pointed to budget cuts in their national parliaments, which accounted in particular for the absence of certain delegations for meetings held away from Strasbourg outside the sessions. This had been particularly true given the big impact of the 2008 global financial and economic crisis on the budget of parliaments in many member States. Some delegations admitted that they had decided to stop sending substitutes to sit in the Assembly or on committees.

45. Moreover, as already mentioned, some small delegations regularly refer to the fact that their members cannot ensure regular participation in all the meetings of all the committees.

46. Mention was also made of the fact that, in election years, it was impossible for members to take part in Assembly activities when they were required to stay in their constituencies for the election campaign. Six of the 15 delegations whose average participation rate in the Assembly part-sessions was less than 50% in 2016 were in an election year (Croatia, Georgia, Ireland, Montenegro, Romania and the Slovak Republic). This is an entirely valid explanation, which may account for the depleted ranks of these delegations during the part-session preceding or following those national elections (pending the appointment of a new delegation), but it does need to be put in perspective and should not be used to justify the absence of members throughout a whole year. Several delegations whose

¹⁰ The statistics provided concern the participation of committee members in meetings of their committees in the strict sense and do not take account of conferences and seminars held by those committees, which sometimes nevertheless are attended by very large numbers of participants.

¹¹ There are no alternate members in the Monitoring Committee and the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs.

¹² See documents AS/Pro (2008) 13, AS/Pro (2009) 21, AS/Pro (2010) 21, AS/Pro (2012) 02, AS/Pro (2013) 02, AS/Pro (2014) 03, AS/Pro (2015) 02 and AS/Pro (2016) 03.

members were also involved in election campaigns in their countries continued to participate in Assembly activities in good numbers (Cyprus, Iceland, Lithuania, San Marino, Spain and Serbia).

47. It is necessary here to underline the importance of national parliaments renewing their national delegations to the Assembly as quickly as possible, as the late renewal of delegations has a significant impact on rates of participation in Assembly activities.¹³

4. Conclusions

48. Statistics on delegations' participation in Assembly sessions, in votes and in committee meetings have evened out at a reasonable level, but this does not offer sufficient grounds for satisfaction: the relatively low participation rate of members in votes shows a sometimes somewhat minimal interest in Assembly debates. When delegations give their reasons for poor participation, systematic reference is made to budgetary restrictions. Some small delegations also point to the fact that their members cannot ensure regular participation in all the meetings of all the committees.

49. The low participation of members of national delegations in voting at plenary sessions weakens the Assembly's political influence, in particular vis-à-vis the Committee of Ministers (or even the Secretary General of the Council of Europe). The latter sometimes plays down the position of the Assembly, pointing out that its statutory opinions and recommendations are adopted by small numbers of members. The Assembly therefore lays itself open to criticism from the Ministers' Deputies, who are less inclined to give a positive follow-up to its proposals.

50. The Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs held an exchange of views on the basis of this memorandum, and considered, in accordance with Resolution 1583 (2007), what conclusions might be drawn from the analysis of the statistics on delegations' participation.

51. The committee decided to transmit this memorandum to the Bureau of the Assembly, containing the following proposals, for appropriate follow-up:

– The committee invites the President of the Assembly to notify in writing the chairpersons of the delegations and the speakers of the parliaments concerned by low participation rates (Rule 44.10 of the Rules of Procedure and paragraph 7.2 of Resolution 1583 – the President of the Assembly is invited “to examine, with the speakers and political groups of the parliaments concerned, the possible consequences if... the average level of participation of national delegations in Assembly sittings... falls below 50% of their nominal strength”) or to arrange a meeting with the chairpersons of the relevant delegations, i.e.:

. the 15 delegations affected by the measure planned under paragraph 7.2 of Resolution 1583 (average participation rate in Assembly sittings below 50%): Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Romania, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and the United Kingdom; and

. the 10 delegations affected by the measure planned under Rule 44.10 (average participation rate in committee meetings below 33%): Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Montenegro, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”.

– Moreover, the committee suggests that the statistics related to the participation of national delegations be made publicly available on the Assembly's website. It is to be noted in this respect that the Bureau took the decision to publish the 2012, 2013 and 2014 reports but did not consider it advisable to publish the 2015 report.

¹³ Under the Rules of Procedure (Rule 11.3), parliaments are required to appoint members of the new delegations within six months of parliamentary elections. During 2010 and 2011, however, there has been a significant increase in the time taken to renew parliamentary delegations. This was the case in 2016 with regard to the Irish delegation, beyond the statutory deadline. In 2015 this was the case with regard to the British delegation.

APPENDIX I

Participation of national delegations in the Assembly part-sessions in 2015

Country	Number of members	Average presence (signatures) January 2016	Average presence (signatures) April 2016	Average presence (signatures) June 2016	Average presence (signatures) October 2016	Average presence (signatures) 2016	Rank
Albania	4	69,44%	38,89%	19,44%	36,11%	40,97%	41
Andorra	2	100,00%	100,00%	100,00%	94,44%	98,61%	1
Armenia	4	69,44%	69,44%	50,00%	80,56%	67,36%	16
Austria	6	40,74%	64,81%	72,22%	53,70%	57,87%	26
Azerbaijan	6	74,07%	66,67%	72,22%	83,33%	74,07%	11
Belgium	7	61,90%	69,84%	74,60%	58,73%	66,27%	18
Bosnia and Herzegovina	5	44,44%	55,56%	75,56%	46,67%	55,56%	27
Bulgaria	6	50,00%	22,22%	62,96%	24,07%	39,81%	42
Croatia	5	0,00%	48,89%	11,11%	8,89%	17,22%	46
Cyprus	2	72,22%	61,11%	94,44%	77,78%	76,39%	9
Czech Republic	7	80,95%	71,43%	65,08%	76,19%	73,41%	13
Denmark	5	51,11%	44,44%	33,33%	44,44%	43,33%	37
Estonia	3	51,85%	70,37%	74,07%	59,26%	63,89%	20
Finland	5	66,67%	62,22%	57,78%	82,22%	67,22%	17
France	18	71,60%	57,41%	58,02%	64,20%	62,81%	21
Georgia	5	53,33%	64,44%	28,89%	17,78%	41,11%	40
Germany	18	51,23%	40,74%	37,04%	43,21%	43,05%	38
Greece	7	60,32%	66,67%	68,25%	47,62%	60,72%	22
Hungary	7	57,14%	47,62%	33,33%	49,21%	46,82%	35
Iceland	3	62,96%	77,78%	70,37%	25,93%	59,26%	25
Ireland	4	50,00%	25,00%	16,67%	86,11%	44,44%	36
Italy	18	48,15%	56,79%	59,88%	42,59%	51,85%	28
Latvia	3	70,37%	81,48%	62,96%	81,48%	74,07%	12
Liechtenstein	2	94,44%	83,33%	83,33%	61,11%	80,55%	5
Lithuania	4	80,56%	86,11%	75,00%	77,78%	79,86%	7
Luxembourg	3	100,00%	70,37%	66,67%	55,56%	73,15%	14
Malta	3	29,63%	0,00%	37,04%	40,74%	26,85%	44
Republic of Moldova	5	68,89%	93,33%	97,78%	57,78%	79,44%	8
Monaco	2	61,11%	38,89%	33,33%	61,11%	48,61%	33
Montenegro	3	29,63%	40,74%	51,85%	18,52%	35,19%	43
Netherlands	7	61,90%	53,97%	66,67%	57,14%	59,92%	24
Norway	5	97,78%	86,67%	82,22%	60,00%	81,67%	3
Poland	12	53,70%	87,96%	58,33%	84,26%	71,06%	15
Portugal	7	41,27%	58,73%	71,43%	69,84%	60,32%	23
Romania	10	56,67%	36,67%	36,67%	37,78%	41,95%	39
Russian Federation	-	-	-	-	-	-	
San Marino	2	100,00%	88,89%	66,67%	0,00%	63,89%	19
Serbia	7	79,37%	0,00%	49,21%	73,02%	50,40%	30
Slovak Republic	5	73,33%	0,00%	0,00%	0,00%	18,33%	45
Slovenia	3	92,59%	55,56%	25,93%	14,81%	47,22%	34
Spain	12	51,85%	73,15%	15,74%	60,19%	50,23%	31
Sweden	6	88,89%	64,81%	77,78%	88,89%	80,09%	6
Switzerland	6	96,30%	92,59%	98,15%	94,44%	95,37%	2
"the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"	3	74,07%	3,70%	59,26%	70,37%	51,85%	29

AS/Pro (2017) 03 def

Turkey	18	87,65%	85,80%	75,31%	77,16%	81,48%	4
Ukraine	12	79,63%	70,37%	65,74%	81,48%	74,31%	10
United Kingdom	18	51,23%	50,00%	49,38%	48,15%	49,69%	32
	305	59,79%	55,49%	52,80%	54,28%	55,59%	

APPENDIX II

Participation of national delegations in voting at the Assembly part-sessions in 2016

Country	Votes cast in 2016	Seats		Rank
Albania	198	4	14,39%	36
Andorra	633	2	92,01%	1
Armenia	393	4	28,56%	24
Austria	514	6	24,90%	25
Azerbaijan	793	6	38,42%	14
Belgium	991	7	41,15%	12
Bosnia and Herzegovina	552	5	32,09%	20
Bulgaria	314	6	15,21%	35
Croatia	116	5	6,74%	45
Cyprus	310	2	45,06%	11
Czech Republic	1090	7	45,27%	10
Denmark	420	5	24,42%	26
Estonia	352	3	34,11%	18
Finland	373	5	21,69%	29
France	1788	18	28,88%	23
Georgia	287	5	16,69%	33
Germany	1286	18	20,77%	30
Greece	422	7	17,52%	32
Hungary	398	7	16,53%	34
Iceland	199	3	19,28%	31
Ireland	106	4	7,70%	44
Italy	2149	18	34,71%	16
Latvia	231	3	22,38%	28
Liechtenstein	421	2	61,19%	7
Lithuania	476	4	34,59%	17
Luxembourg	507	3	49,13%	9
Malta	96	3	9,30%	42
Republic of Moldova	941	5	54,71%	8
Monaco	87	2	12,65%	38
Montenegro	12	3	1,16%	46
Netherlands	785	7	32,60%	19
Norway	1193	5	69,36%	4
Poland	1545	12	37,43%	15
Portugal	229	7	9,51%	41
Romania	389	10	11,31%	40
Russian Federation		-	-	-
San Marino	440	2	63,95%	6
Serbia	726	7	30,15%	22
Slovak Republic	227	5	13,20%	37
Slovenia	125	3	12,11%	39
Spain	1002	12	24,27%	27
Sweden	1599	6	77,47%	3
Switzerland	1672	6	81,01%	2
"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"	88	3	8,53%	43
Turkey	4015	18	64,84%	5
Ukraine	1599	12	38,74%	13
United Kingdom	1941	18	31,35%	21
Total	34030	305	32,43%	

APPENDIX III

Participation in committee meetings in 2016 (6 committees)

Country	no of members in committee	Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy	Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development	Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights	Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media	Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons	Committee on Equality and Non Discrimination	Average level of participation	Rank
N° of meetings in 2016		9	8	8	8	8	8		
Albania	1	7	1	1	7	0	0	32,65%	37
Andorra	1	6	8	6	4	7	6	75,51%	5
Armenia	1	9	7	7	4	8	4	79,59%	1
Austria	2	5	12	3	4	11	6	41,84%	31
Azerbaijan	2	15	12	16	9	11	12	76,53%	4
Belgium	2	15	11	13	1	12	16	69,39%	7
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	6	5	3	2	4	6	53,06%	21
Bulgaria	2	3	1	10	4	2	1	21,43%	43
Croatia	1	1	1	2	4	1	2	22,45%	41
Cyprus	1	5	4	5	5	5	5	59,18%	17
Czech Republic	2	15	12	4	9	5	5	51,02%	22
Denmark	1	7	1	2	4	5	1	40,82%	32
Estonia	1	6	3	3	4	3	1	40,82%	32
Finland	1	7	7	8	6	6	4	77,55%	3
France	4	28	23	22	18	10	20	61,73%	16
Georgia	1	6	6	8	3	4	6	67,35%	11
Germany	4	17	9	16	14	11	17	42,86%	29
Greece	2	15	13	11	8	13	7	68,37%	9
Hungary	2	11	10	6	9	12	9	58,16%	18
Iceland	1	5	7	1	1	4	3	42,86%	29
Ireland	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	18,37%	44
Italy	4	17	15	18	26	24	26	64,29%	14
Latvia	1	5	3	7	4	4	5	57,14%	20
Liechtenstein	1	4	0	4	0	0	0	16,33%	45
Lithuania	1	7	1	4	4	6	1	46,94%	27
Luxembourg	1	4	8	8	5	4	6	71,43%	6
Malta	1	5	3	6	1	2	0	34,69%	35
Republic of Moldova	1	4	7	1	4	2	6	48,98%	24
Monaco	1	3	0	0	4	2	7	32,65%	37
Montenegro	1	3	1	3	0	1	6	28,57%	40
Netherlands	2	7	8	12	4	10	9	51,02%	22
Norway	1	5	3	5	4	5	2	48,98%	24
Poland	3	24	15	22	21	19	16	79,59%	1
Portugal	2	8	12	6	15	9	7	58,16%	18
Romania	3	16	17	5	7	9	12	44,90%	28
Russian Federation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
San Marino	1	2	3	4	2	3	3	34,69%	35
Serbia	2	13	4	11	6	8	6	48,98%	24

Slovak Republic	1	1	2	0	2	1	0	12,24%	46
Slovenia	1	2	1	3	2	2	5	30,61%	39
Spain	3	12	4	12	10	6	8	35,37%	34
Sweden	2	13	8	10	8	12	14	66,33%	13
Switzerland	2	14	11	9	9	10	15	69,39%	7
"the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"	1	4	2	1	1	1	2	22,45%	41
Turkey	4	26	22	21	23	19	23	68,37%	9
Ukraine	3	19	17	19	14	15	10	63,95%	15
United Kingdom	4	31	26	24	21	16	14	67,35%	11
Participation:	81	440	347	364	319	325	335	53,67%	
Participation (%):		60,36	53,55	56,17	49,23	50,15	51,70		

APPENDIX IV - Average participation in votes

Part-session	Votes cast	Number of votes	Average participation	
January 2007	20 596	203	101	32,01%
April 2007	15 901	182	87	27,56%
June 2007	11 272	149	76	23,86%
October 2007	4 219	68	62	19,57%
Total 2007	51 988	602	86	27,24%
January 2008	5 477	69	79	25,04%
April 2008	14 109	115	123	38,70%
June 2008	7 818	111	70	22,22%
October 2008	11 514	123	94	29,53%
Total 2008	38 918	418	93	29,37%
January 2009	13 144	131	100	31,65%
April 2009	11 801	133	89	27,99%
June 2009	7 967	103	77	24,40%
October 2009	11 483	121	95	29,94%
Total 2009	44 395	488	91	28,70%
January 2010	14 403	183	79	24,83%
April 2010	6 795	111	61	19,31%
June 2010	7 394	101	73	23,09%
October 2010	9 201	104	88	27,91%
Total 2010	37 793	499	76	23,89%
January 2011	9 638	94	103	32,34%
April 2011	4 729	67	71	22,27%
June 2011	8 131	97	84	26,44%
October 2011	5 689	76	75	23,61%
Total 2011	28 187	334	84	26,62%
January 2012	7 748	85	91	28,75%
April 2012	5 844	66	89	27,93%
June 2012	5 853	73	80	25,29%
October 2012	9 257	74	125	39,46%
Total 2012	28 702	298	96	30,38%
January 2013	16 698	131	127	40,21%
April 2013	7 813	64	122	38,51%
June 2013	16 196	143	113	35,73%
October 2013	9 192	90	102	32,22%
Total 2013	49 899	428	117	36,78%
January 2014	10 012	81	124	38,99%
April 2014	21 961	190	116	36,46%
June 2014	7 730	82	94	29,74%
October 2014	8 609	92	94	29,52%
Total 2014	48 312	445	109	34,25%
January 2015	14 017	106	132	41,71%
April 2015	6 003	64	94	29,59%
June 2015	9 719	75	130	40,88%
October 2015	8 973	91	99	31,11%
Total 2015	38 712	336	115	36,35%
January 2016	12 072	101	120	39,19%
April 2016	8 957	103	87	28,51%
June 2016	8 451	86	98	32,22%
October 2016	4 550	54	84	27,63%
Total 2016	34 030	344	99	32,43%

APPENDIX V – list of texts adopted by the Assembly in 2016, by descending order of the number of votes

- *Inhabitants of frontier regions of Azerbaijan are deliberately deprived of water* – Resolution 2085 (26 January 2016, 209 votes*)
- *The Mediterranean Sea: a front door to irregular migration* – Resolution 2088 (27 January 2016, 143 votes*)
- *Renewed commitment in the fight against antisemitism in Europe* – Resolution 2106 (20 April 2016, 140 votes)
- *Refugees in Greece: challenges and risks – A European responsibility* – Resolution 2118 (21 June 2016, 138 votes)
- *Organised crime and migrants* – Resolution 2089 (27 January 2016, 135 votes*)
- *The functioning of democratic institutions in Turkey* – Resolution 2121 (22 June 2016, 130 votes)
- *Sport for all: a bridge to equality, integration and social inclusion* – Resolution 2131 (12 October 2016, 124 votes)
- *Foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq* – Resolution 2091 and Recommendation 2084 (27 January 2016, 120 and 119 votes*)
- *Recent attacks against women: the need for honest reporting and a comprehensive response* – Resolution 2093 (28 January 2016, 117 votes)
- *Assessing the impact of measures to improve women's political representation* – Resolution 2111 (21 April 2016, 117 votes)
- *Combating international terrorism while protecting Council of Europe standards and values* – Resolution 2090 (27 January 2016, 116 votes*)
- *Request for partner for democracy status with the Parliamentary Assembly submitted by the Parliament of Jordan* – Resolution 2086 (26 January 2016, 115 votes)
- *Human rights of refugees and migrants – The situation in the Western Balkans* – Resolution 2108 (20 April 2016, 113 votes*)
- *The situation in Kosovo and the role of the Council of Europe* – Resolution 2094 (28 January 2016, 112 votes)
- *The situation of refugees and migrants under the EU–Turkey Agreement of 18 March 2016* – Resolution 2109 (20 April 2016, 112 votes*)
- *A stronger European response to the Syrian refugee crisis* – Resolution 2107 (20 April 2016, 107 votes*)
- *Legal remedies for human rights violations on the Ukrainian territories outside the control of the Ukrainian authorities* – Resolution 2133 (12 October 2016, 104 votes*)
- *Political consequences of the Russian aggression in Ukraine* – Resolution 2132 (12 October 2016, 102 votes*)
- *Preventing the radicalisation of children and young people by fighting the root causes* – Resolution 2103 (19 April 2016, 96 votes*)
- *Towards a framework of competences for democratic citizenship* – Resolution 2104 and Recommendation 2088 (19 April 2016, 92 and 94 votes*)

- *Strengthening the protection and role of human rights defenders in Council of Europe member States* – Resolution 2095 and Recommendation 2085 (28 January 2016, 88 and 85 votes*)
- *Culture and democracy* – Resolution 2123 and Recommendation 2093 (23 June 2016, 88 and 77 votes*)
- *How can inappropriate restrictions on NGO activities in Europe be prevented?* – Resolution 2096 and Recommendation 2086 (28 January 2016, 87 and 83 votes*)
- *Educational and cultural networks of migrant and diaspora communities* – Resolution 2124 (23 June 2016, 87 votes*)
- *Introduction of sanctions against parliamentarians* – Resolution 2087 and Recommendation 2083 (26 January 2016, 83 and 80 votes)
- *Fighting the over-sexualisation of children* – Resolution 2119 and Recommendation 2092 (21 June 2016, 82 and 81 votes)
- *Challenge on procedural grounds of the still unratified credentials of the parliamentary delegation of the Republic of Moldova* – Resolution 2092 (27 January 2016, 81 votes)
- *The humanitarian concerns with regard to people captured during the war in Ukraine* – Resolution 2112 and Recommendation 2090 (21 April 2016, 68 and 67 votes)
- *Female genital mutilation in Europe* – Resolution 2135 (13 October 2016, 68 votes)
- *After the Brussels attacks, an urgent need to address security failures and step up counter-terrorism co-operation* – Resolution 2113 (21 April 2016, 67 votes)
- *Evaluation of the partnership for democracy in respect of the Palestinian National Council* – Resolution 2105 (19 April 2016, 61 votes)
- *Administrative detention* – Resolution 2122 (22 June 2016, 60 votes)
- *Access to school and education for all children* – Resolution 2097 (29 January 2016, 58 votes)
- *Transparency and openness in European institutions* – Resolution 2125 and Recommendation 2094 (23 June 2016, 54 and 58 votes)
- *Lessons from the “Panama Papers” to ensure fiscal and social justice* – Resolution 2130 (11 October 2016, 53 votes)
- *Parliamentary immunity: challenges to the scope of the privileges and immunities enjoyed by members of the Parliamentary Assembly* – Resolution 2127 and Recommendation 2095 (23 June 2016, 48 and 49 votes*)
- *The impact of European population dynamics on migration policies* – Resolution 2137 (14 October 2016, 48 votes)
- *The nature of the mandate of members of the Parliamentary Assembly* – Resolution 2126 (23 June 2016, 46 votes*)
- *Co-operation with the International Criminal Court: towards a concrete and expanded commitment* – Resolution 2134 (12 October 2016, 44 votes)
- *Harmonising the protection of unaccompanied minors in Europe* – Resolution 2136 (13 October 2016, 44 votes)
- *Women in the armed forces: promoting equality, putting an end to gender-based violence* – Resolution 2120 (21 June 2016, 42 votes)
- *Violence against migrants* – Resolution 2128 (24 June 2016, 42 votes)

- *Judicial corruption: urgent need to implement the Assembly's proposals* – Resolution 2098 and Recommendation 2087 (29 January 2016, 39 and 36 votes)
- *The handling of international public-health emergencies* – Resolution 2114 (22 April 2016, 37 votes)
- *Forced migration: a new challenge* – Resolution 2115 (22 April 2016, 33 votes)
- *Intellectual property rights in the digital era* – Resolution 2110 and Recommendation 2089 (20 April 2016, 29 and 29 votes)
- *The case against a Council of Europe legal instrument on involuntary measures in psychiatry* – Recommendation 2091 (22 April 2016, 25 votes)
- *Road safety in Europe as a public health priority* – Resolution 2129 (24 June 2016, 21 votes)

(* votes taken together in the framework of joint debates)

APPENDIX VI – participation in committee meetings

Committee	2016		2015		2014		2013	
	number of meetings	average level of participation (in %)	number of meetings	average level of participation (in %)	number of meetings	average level of participation (in %)	number of meetings	average level of participation (in %)
Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy	9	60,36%	9	63,76%	8	63,84%	9	62,96%
Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights	8	56,17%	8	50,60%	8	54,47%	9	55,82%
Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development	8	53,55%	8	46,43%	7	49,66%	8	52,23%
Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons	8	50,15%	8	51,04%	8	50,89%	8	52,53%
Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media	8	49,23%	7	49,15%	7	51,02%	8	51,04%
Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination	8	51,70%	8	41,82%	8	52,68%	8	48,96%
Monitoring Committee	9	52,57%	9	62,52%	9	55,44%	9	60,69%
Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs	6	44,15%	6	40,54%	6	44,14%	7	37,06%
Committee on the Election of Judges to the ECHR	6	54,55%	4	72,73%				
	70	52,78%	67	52,74%	61	53,17%	63	53,22%

Committee	2012	
	number of meetings	average level of participation (in %)
Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy	9	62,43%
Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights	9	66,14%
Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development	8	55,21%
Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons	8	51,79%
Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media	7	54,08%
Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination	8	44,05%
Monitoring Committee	9	59,69%
Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs	5	55,25%
Committee on the Election of Judges to the ECHR		
	63	56,47%