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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



THE INFORMATION GUIDE FOR PLENARY SESSIONS OF PACE

1-5 October 2012

Monday 1

- Opening of the session and statement by Assembly President Jean-Claude Mignon
- Progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee
- Free debate

Tuesday 2

- Election of judges to the European Court of Human Rights in respect of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation
- The honouring of obligations and commitments by the Russian Federation
- Communication from the Committee of Ministers to the Parliamentary Assembly by Edmond Panariti, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Albania, Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers
- Joint debate:
 - For more democratic elections
 - Political parties and women's political representation

Wednesday 3

- The activities of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2011-2012, and statement by Angel Gurría, Secretary General of the OECD
- Address by Nicolae Timofti, President of the Republic of Moldova
- The definition of political prisoner
- Human rights and foreign policy

Thursday 4

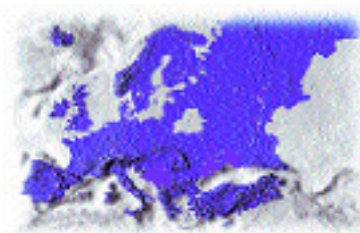
- Urgent debate: the European response to the humanitarian crisis in Syria
- Address by Bujar Nishani, President of Albania
- Code of conduct of members of the Parliamentary Assembly: good practice or a core duty?
- The right to freedom of choice in education in Europe
- Current affairs debate: the Safarov case

Friday 5

- Restoring social justice through a tax on financial transactions
- Joint debate:
 - The consolidation and international openness of the European Higher Education Area
 - Governance of higher education institutions in the European Higher Education Area

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



214

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



182

Socialist Group (SOC)



85

Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)



85

European Democrat Group (EDG)



35

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 1 October 2012

☞ Morning (11.30 a.m.-1 p.m.)

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

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

The Assembly examined credentials and dealt with changes in the membership of committees. It is also elected René Rouquet a Vice-President of the Assembly with respect to France.

Finally, the Assembly decided to hold an urgent debate on "The European response to the humanitarian crisis in Syria" and a current affairs debate on "The Safarov case", both on Thursday.

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

Doc. 13031 and Addendum, Doc. 13036

Rapporteur: Tina Acketoft (Sweden, ALDE)

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

Monday 1 October 2012

☞ Afternoon (3.30 p.m.-5 p.m.)

◆ Free debate

Among the changes 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 2 October 2012

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ **Election of judges to the European Court of Human Rights in respect of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation**

Doc. 13027

Voting takes place from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., and from 3.30 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 recommendations based on personal interviews with all the candidates and assessments of their CVs. The document containing these recommendations is made available 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 3 October from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 3.30 p.m. to 5 p.m., for which a relative majority of votes is sufficient.

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

◆ **The honouring of obligations and commitments by the Russian Federation**

Doc. 13018 and Addendum

Report of the Monitoring Committee

Co-rapporteurs: György Frunda (Romania, EPP/CD) and Andreas Gross (Switzerland, SOC)

The report, which covers the last seven years, welcomes some "very positive steps", such as amendments to the law on political parties, changes in the electoral law and the re-introduction of direct elections of governors. It also expresses satisfaction at a number of reforms in the field of the judiciary, such as the establishment of the Investigative Committee and its separation from the Prosecutor's Office, the adoption of the Compensation Act and penitentiary reform.

However, other measures raise serious concerns, namely amendments to the law on the constitutional court, and four laws adopted by the State Duma in June and July 2012 (on the criminalisation of defamation, on the amendments to the law on assemblies and on NGOs), as well as deficiencies in and restrictive implementation of other laws crucial for the functioning of democratic institutions and the political environment, which have led to a deterioration of the conditions for genuine political pluralism.

The Monitoring Committee considers that the engagement and the mobilisation of more than 100 000 citizens following the December 2011 elections, the awakening of a very engaged civil society and the willingness of the authorities to hear the call for reforms have created a momentum for change in the

Russian Federation and in order to realise this unique political potential, Russian society needs concrete reforms. The committee recommends that the Assembly pursue its monitoring of the honouring of the obligations and commitments by the Russian Federation until it receives evidence of substantial progress on the issues raised in the relevant resolutions concerning this country.

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

◆ **Communication from the Committee of Ministers to the Parliamentary Assembly, presented by Edmond Panariti, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Albania, Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers**

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

Tuesday 2 October 2012

☞ Afternoon (3.30 p.m.-8.30 p.m.)

◆ **Election of judges to the European Court of Human Rights (continued)**

Doc. 13027

Voting takes place from 3.30 p.m. to 5 p.m., in the area behind the presidential rostrum.

◆ **The honouring of obligations and commitments by the Russian Federation (continued)**

◆ **Joint debate:**

For more democratic elections

Doc. 13021

Report of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

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

Opinion of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Rapporteur: Michael McNamara (Ireland, SOC)

Doc. 13029

Opinion of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons

Rapporteur: Giacomo Santini (Italy, EPP/CD)

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

Rapporteur: Zaruhi Postanjyan (Armenia, EPP/CD)

Opinion of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination

Rapporteur: Marietta de Pourbaix-Lundin (Sweden, EPP/CD)

Whereas domestic electoral legislation in most Council of Europe member States generally offers a good basis to hold "free and fair" elections, recurrent violations occur, mainly due to a lack of political commitment at the highest level to ensure full and effective implementation of the law and a level playing field for all candidates, according to the Political Affairs Committee.

On the basis of election observation reports and other Council of Europe sources, the report notes that election-related violations still occur in a number of Council of Europe member States, in particular: in the pre-electoral period (opacity of election campaign funding or lack of equal access to the media), on voting day or during counting (ballot box stuffing or falsification of electoral protocols), in the post-electoral period (ineffective complaints and appeals procedures) or throughout the electoral process

(misuse of administrative resources; threats, pressure, violence and intimidation on candidates and voters).

The report thus proposes measures to improve the democratic character of elections by fostering participation, ensuring transparency and strengthening supervision.

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

Political parties and women's political representation

Doc. 13022

Report of the Committee on Equality and Non-discrimination

Rapporteur: Maria Stavrositu (Romania, EPP/CD)

Although it is widely acknowledged that the low proportion of women in parliament affects its representativeness, introducing and implementing effective measures to redress this imbalance has proved to be a major challenge, according to the Equality Committee.

As key protagonists in pluralist democracies, political parties have a decisive role to play in enhancing women's political representation: in addition to ensuring strict compliance with electoral legislation, including on legislated quotas, and introducing voluntary measures, they are well placed to promote a change of culture conducive to gender equality, in politics and in society at large.

On the basis of the positive experience of some of them, the Assembly should recommend good practices to political parties on how to increase women's representation in the parliaments of Council of Europe member and observer States, as well as Partners for democracy.

Contact in the secretariat: Sonia Sirtori, tel. 2370.

Wednesday 3 October 2012

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ **Election of judges to the European Court of Human Rights
(possible second round)**

Doc. 13027

Voting takes place from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., and from 3.30 p.m. to 5 p.m., 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 is sufficient.

◆ **Joint debate (continued)**

◆ **The activities of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2011-2012**

Doc. 13019

Report of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

Rapporteur: Jean-Marie Bockel (France, EPP/CD)

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

Rapporteur: Márton Braun (Hungary, EPP/CD)

The Assembly, enlarged to include the delegations of national parliaments of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member states which are not members of the Council of Europe, as well as the European Parliament, is once again considering the activities of the OECD.

The Assembly has sought to make the debate more political to enable the enlarged Assembly to focus more on a political assessment of the work of the OECD. Therefore the Political Affairs Committee presents this year a report which pays particular attention to responses to the eurozone crisis and to support activities for the political developments in the Arab world.

Specifically, the committee calls for consolidation measures in the eurozone that are "bolder than those taken to date", and structural pro-growth reforms. Otherwise, it warns, Europe runs the risk of plunging into a spiral of bank busts, defaults and negative growth – a calamity which could jeopardise the entire European project. Public acceptance of reform will also depend on governments ensuring that the impact of reforms is socially balanced and shared fairly throughout all sections of society.

Statement by Angel Gurría, Secretary General of the OECD

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

Wednesday 3 October 2012

☞ Afternoon (3.30 p.m.-8 p.m.)

◆ **Election of judges to the European Court of Human Rights
(possible second round, continued)**

Doc. 13027

Voting takes place from 3.30 p.m. to 5 p.m., 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 is sufficient.

◆ **Address by Nicolae Timofti, President of the Republic of Moldova**

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

◆ **The definition of political prisoner**

Doc. 13011

Report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Rapporteur: Christoph Strässer (Germany, SOC)

The notion of political prisoners was elaborated within the Council of Europe in 2001 by the independent experts of the Secretary General, mandated to assess cases of alleged political prisoners in Armenia and Azerbaijan in the context of the accession of the two States to the Organisation. The general criteria put forward by the independent experts were approved by all stakeholders at the time, including the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly.

The Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights reaffirms its support for these criteria, summed up in the draft resolution and explained in more detail in the explanatory memorandum, specifying that those deprived of their personal liberty for terrorist crimes shall not be considered political prisoners if they have been prosecuted and sentenced for such crimes according to national legislation and the European Convention on Human Rights.

The committee invites the competent authorities of all member States of the Council of Europe to reassess the cases of any alleged political prisoners by application of the above-mentioned criteria and to release or retry any such prisoners as appropriate.

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

◆ **Human rights and foreign policy**

Doc. 13020

Report of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

Rapporteur: Pietro Marcenaro (Italy, SOC)

In view of some recent trends in the foreign policy of Council of Europe member States, the Political Affairs Committee encourages them to fully integrate the systematic and structural promotion of democracy and human rights in any foreign policy strategy, be it at the national, European or international level. It also suggests ways to reduce inconsistency in the pursuit of a human rights-based foreign policy and to minimise the danger of resorting to military force to protect democracy and human rights.

The committee also welcomes the recent progress which has been made on the implementation of a Council of Europe policy towards neighbouring regions. It deems it essential that the promotion of democracy and human rights occupies an important place in the multilateral and bilateral relations of Council of Europe member States so as to ensure greater coherence with their action inside and outside the Council of Europe area.

Finally, the committee welcomes the recent adoption of a European Union Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, which represents an opportunity to improve significantly the effectiveness of international efforts to promote and protect human rights worldwide and to ensure greater co-ordination and consistency in the EU area. It encourages the EU, among other things, to make better use of the Council of Europe's expertise in the field of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, also in the EU's common foreign policy strategy.

Contact in the secretariat: Silvia Arzilli, tel. 4898.

Thursday 4 October 2012

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ **Urgent debate: the European response to the humanitarian crisis in Syria**

*Report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons
Rapporteur: Giacomo Santini (Italy, EPP/CD)*

Opinion of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

The Migration Committee is due to approve this report at its meeting on Tuesday 2 October at 8.30 a.m. Deadline for tabling amendments: 10.30 a.m. on Wednesday 3 October.

◆ **Address by Bujar Nishani, President of Albania**

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

Thursday 4 October 2012

☞ Afternoon (3.30 p.m.-8 p.m.)

◆ **Code of conduct of members of the Parliamentary Assembly: good practice or a core duty?**

Doc. 13000

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

Rapporteur: Oliver Heald (United Kingdom, EDG)

In order to provide members of the Parliamentary Assembly with a transparent and consistent reference framework, in particular with regard to situations of conflict of interest, offers of gifts or hospitality, or the use of office – or former members' prerogatives – to promote and safeguard personal interests, the Rules Committee proposes that the Assembly adopt a code of conduct which all members will undertake to respect in the performance of their duties.

These new ethical rules, which supplement the existing regulations, aim to promote the principles of transparency, accountability, integrity and primacy of the public interest, which are essential for maintaining public confidence in the Assembly and its members.

Contact in the secretariat: Kateryna Gayevska, tel. 2127.

◆ **The right to freedom of choice in education in Europe**

Doc. 13010

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

Rapporteur: Carmen Quintanilla (Spain, EPP/CD)

Council of Europe member States must provide for an education system which ensures equal opportunities and high-quality education for all pupils, to transmit both knowledge and the values nurturing the promotion of fundamental rights and democratic citizenship. They should also guarantee the fundamental right to freedom of choice in education, according to Article 2 of the additional Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights. This right, which is intimately linked to the rights to education and freedom of conscience, entails States' obligation to respect the right of parents to ensure education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.

Therefore, the Culture Committee highlights the need to uphold the principle of State neutrality and pluralism in the national education system, and to guarantee the viability and quality of the network of public-run schools. It also calls on member States to clearly recognise by law the right to establish and run private schools, and the possibility for these schools to be part of the national education system, subject only to objective and non-discriminatory conditions. In this framework, pupils attending private schools and their families should be granted the same financial benefits available to public-run school pupils and their families, and the funding of private schools which are part of the national education system should be subject only to objective and non-discriminatory conditions.

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

◆ **Current affairs debate: the Safarov case**

No report is prepared for a current affairs debate, and there is no vote.

Friday 5 October 2012

☞ Morning (10 a.m.-1 p.m.)

◆ **Restoring social justice through a tax on financial transactions**

Doc. 13017

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

Rapporteur: Hermine Naghdalyan (Armenia, ALDE)

With the financial and economic crisis continuing across Europe, many countries are struggling to find the right balance between fiscal discipline, structural reforms, open markets and domestic social commitments. At the same time, the global financial market and its institutions appear to be largely disconnected from the needs of the real economy and society at large. Moreover, the crisis exposed numerous disturbing shortcomings in the functioning of financial markets, such as a propensity for excessive risk-taking and speculation, as well as distortions in the level playing field due to the under-taxation of many financial services and goods. Social justice is now becoming the next victim of the crisis, as more and more governments turn to austerity measures, undercutting social rights.

In its report, the Social Affairs Committee insists on the need for policy-makers to draw lessons from the current crisis and to prevent such crises from recurring in the future. The responsibility of the financial sector towards society and the economy needs strengthening via appropriate fiscal and regulatory measures. Introducing a tax on financial transactions would not only be feasible, but also useful: it would help tackle tax evasion in the financial sector, improve public finances and restore social justice through an innovative approach to financing and solidarity.

The report welcomes the proposals of the European Commission and the European Parliament concerning the implementation of a financial transactions tax on the widest possible scale. Noting strong public support for this measure, the report underscores the political significance, long-term development goals and social motivations for launching a European tax on financial transactions. It then addresses a series of recommendations to the Council and the Commission of the European Union, member and observer States of the Council of Europe, as well as the Assembly's Partner for democracy States.

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

◆ **Joint debate:**

The consolidation and international openness of the European Higher Education Area

Doc. 13009

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

Rapporteur: Rafael Huseynov (Azerbaijan, ALDE)

The Council of Europe laid the foundations of one of the most important reforms in education in the 20th century with the creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Students, teachers and university staff can get access to the best university programmes Europe-wide. Higher education is gradually becoming borderless and is playing a more important role in bringing European peoples closer on the basis of common values. Adherence to the fundamental principles of the EHEA, such as academic freedom, autonomy and the participation of students, determines the degree of international

openness of the EHEA. Countries wishing to enhance co-operation with EHEA members, or to become a member, must ensure respect for these fundamental values through their policies and practice.

The consolidation of the EHEA would trigger increased opportunities for access to good quality higher education and ensure equality of access. Sustainable funding schemes and improved visa regimes, breaking administrative barriers to academic mobility, are essential to the success of the EHEA. Member States should ensure that Europe remains attractive as a destination for higher education. They must build a coherent European higher education space in a framework which is developed in common while preserving the richness and the diversity of national systems.

Contact in the secretariat: Angela Garabagiu, tel. 4520.

Governance of higher education institutions in the European Higher Education Area

Doc. 12964 and addendum

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

Rapporteur: Gvozden Srećko Flego (Croatia, SOC)

The right to education, guaranteed by Article 2 of the first Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights, encompasses the right to have access to higher education, which is protected also under Article 10.1 of the revised European Social Charter. Public authorities have the obligation to ensure the quality of higher education without limiting academic freedom. Autonomy of higher education institutions, academic freedom and freedom of scientific research and the arts are fundamental principles for the functioning and quality of higher education systems as well as for democratic and pluralist societies.

Academic freedom and autonomy of higher education institutions require that the latter can, within the framework of national higher education policies and domestic law and with due respect for human rights, determine for themselves their academic curricula and degrees, student admissions, research, administrative organisation, financing and staff employment. The basic strategic decisions about further development of higher education institutions should be made on a four-part basis – among the representatives of the academic community (including students), of the labour market (employers and trade unions), of civil society organisations and of government (executive as well as legislative).

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

◆ Closure of the fourth 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, certain 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, resolutions or opinions) 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:

- questions addressed to the Committee of Ministers;
- communications from the Secretary General of the Council of Europe;
- written declarations;
- motions tabled by members;
- any other document, at the discretion of the President of the Assembly (requests for opinion, report or communication by the Committee of Ministers, activity report by an institution of the Council of Europe, communication by the Secretary General, etc).

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 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, one being the Rules proper and the other the complementary texts, available in a bilingual version (English/French).

4. Tabling amendments

Members who wish to table amendments or sub-amendments to the draft texts before the Assembly should submit them to the Table Office (Room 1083). Amendments and sub-amendments must be **signed by at least five Representatives or Substitutes**, unless they have been submitted on behalf of the committee submitting the report or an opinion.

Under the provisions on the organisation of debates (see p. 93 and following of the Rules of Procedure), the **time limits for tabling amendments** are the following (where appropriate the Bureau may decide to change these limits, in particular for urgent debates or debates on general policy):

- for debates on the afternoon of Monday 1 October: Monday 1 October at 12 noon;
- for debates on Tuesday 2 October: Monday 1 October 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 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 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 43.7).

9. Requests for debates under urgent procedure or current affairs debates

At the request of the Committee of Ministers, of the committee concerned, of a political group, 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, a committee 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. There may only be one current affairs debate per part-session. 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. Free debate

With a view to making part-sessions more interesting and lively, the Assembly introduced one "free debate" during each part-session as from January 2012. Assembly members are able to speak on a topic of their choice, not appearing on the agenda of the part-session. This debate usually takes place in the afternoon of the first day of the part-session and last for one hour. Members will have the opportunity, if they so wish, also to raise questions relating to one of the institutional entities of the Council of Europe and will obtain a written reply from them.

11. 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.

12. 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.

13. 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.

14. 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, including for the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, members are invited to submit the subject of their oral question.

For the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, the member wishing to ask a written question must provide the text in writing within the deadline is specified in the draft agenda. The written questions to the Chairperson as well as their answers are published as an Assembly Document.

In accordance with established practice, 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 put more than one oral or written question to the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers 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" or "oral question").

For the other guest speakers, there is no formal deadline as such, as the questions are "spontaneous". However, members must register their names on the list of speakers. The intervention by the personalities being limited to one hour, the number of questions which will receive an answer is necessarily limited.

15. 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.

16. 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.

17. Quorum

The Assembly may deliberate, decide upon procedural motions and agree to adjourn, whatever the number of Representatives present.

All votes other than votes by roll-call shall be valid whatever the number of members voting, unless, before the voting has begun, the President has been requested to ascertain whether there is a quorum. At least one sixth of the Representatives authorised to vote, belonging to at least five national delegations, must vote in favour of the request. To ascertain whether there is a quorum, the President invites Representatives to mark their presence in the Chamber using the electronic voting system.

The quorum is one third of the number of Representatives of the Assembly authorised to vote (Rule 41.3).

A vote by roll-call shall not be valid unless one third of the Representatives authorised to vote took part. The President may decide to ascertain whether there is a quorum before proceeding to a vote by roll-call.

In the absence of a quorum, the vote shall be postponed until the next sitting or, on a motion from the Chair, until a subsequent sitting.

18. Majorities required

A majority of two-thirds of the votes cast is required for the adoption of a draft recommendation or a draft opinion to the Committee of Ministers, for the adoption of urgent procedure, for an alteration to the order of business, for the setting up of a committee and for the fixing of the date for the opening or resumption of Ordinary Sessions. For the adoption of a draft resolution and for any other decision, a majority of the votes cast is required, in the case of a tie the question being rejected.

19. Mobile phones 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.

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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.