

PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Addendum to the report¹

Doc. 11295 20 November 2007

Improving the participation of members in Assembly plenary sessions and committee meetings

(Rapporteur: Mr Andreas GROSS, Switzerland, Socialist Group)

The report on “improving the participation of members in Assembly plenary sessions and committee meetings” (Doc. 11295) was adopted by the Committee on Rules of Procedure and Immunities on 30 May 2007. Since that date, apart from the need to provide Assembly members with updated statistics and figures on the participation in part-sessions held thereafter, some further interesting developments occurred which need to be mentioned in order to update the report.

I. Current participation in Assembly plenary sessions – statistical information (see paragraphs 18 to 26 in the report)

1. During the Assembly part-sessions held in June and October 2007 the average number of voting members was 79 and 56 respectively (that is, 25% and 18% respectively of the total number of Assembly representatives). The average number of members who signed the register for a morning or afternoon sitting was 156 and 158 respectively (that is, 49% and 50% respectively). The participation rates spanned between 24 members (resolution for a European drug convention on promoting public health policy in drug control) and 169 members (resolution on secret detentions and illegal transfers of detainees involving Council of Europe member states: second report). Similar to previous part-sessions, participation rates reached their lowest points during the Friday sessions. It may also be noted that 190 members participated in the election of judges to the European Court of Human Rights on 2 October 2007, an election that took place during two sittings.

II. Reform efforts by other international parliamentary institutions

2. On 15 February 2007 the European Parliament's Conference of Presidents set up a working group on

reform of the European Parliament (see paragraphs 107 and 108 in the report). The aim is to make the European Parliament's work more efficient and more attractive to the public. The working group is to issue three reports, dealing with plenary business, committee work, external issues and the European Parliament's organisation after 2009. The first report, adopted on 25 October 2007, dealt with plenary business.

3. The adopted proposals, which will apply from the beginning of 2008, covered the following five areas:

- agenda-setting and the structure of plenary activities (for example, the division of Strasbourg part-sessions into several clearly defined slots, including four slots for priority debates on Tuesdays and Wednesdays based on a continuously updated, rolling three-month programme of subjects; a “cooling-off” period of at least one month between the vote on any legislative report in committee (on first reading) and the subsequent vote in plenary; the scheduling of debates on important issues immediately prior to the relevant voting session whenever possible);

- priority-setting and the format of specific annual debates (debates on the European Commission's two key documents: the Annual Policy Strategy, and the annual Commission Legislative and Work Programme);

- organisation of debates (for example, additional speaking time for rapporteurs; a round of political group speakers at an early stage of debate and immediately before important votes where appropriate; increased time for spontaneous interventions and questions by members);

- organisation of votes and treatment of amendments (for example, voting time at noon Tuesday to Thursday during Strasbourg part-sessions);

- chamber seating (for example, members are invited to speak from the front rows of the chamber).

4. During its 16th annual session, held in Kiev from 5 to 9 July 2007, the Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) issued a resolution on its role and status within the organisation (see paragraph 109 in the report). The views offered to the OSCE ministers concerned, *inter alia*, the status and role of the Assembly as an integral part of the organisation; the rights and treatment of persons acting on behalf of the Assembly; and election monitoring as a joint exercise between the Assembly and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

5. Furthermore, it is to be noted that during an official visit of the Secretary General of the OSCE to the Luxembourg chamber of deputies on 19 September 2007 the future of the OSCE was at the centre of the discussion.

1. Unanimously approved by the committee on 16 November 2007.