Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 975 (1991)[1]

Organisation of Assembly debates: references to committees and presentation of amendments

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Assembly points out that the arrangements at present applying to the organisation of debates and meetings of the Standing Committee were introduced some twenty years ago, when the Council of Europe had seventeen member states.

2. It considers that, while they may have served their purpose in the past, these arrangements have now become inadequate. The time reserved for the discussion of committee reports in plenary session is insufficient. There is a danger that this situation may worsen as the Council of Europe expands.

3. Pending a substantial reform of the organisation of debates, the Assembly considers that action should be taken urgently regarding references to committees, the tabling of amendments and to encourage committees to submit more reports to the Standing Committee.

4. The Assembly accordingly decides to amend its Rules of Procedure as follows :

4.1. Replace the first sentence of Rule 28, paragraph 2, by the following text : ‘‘This report and the opinions of other committees to which a matter has been referred under the provisions of Rule 15 above shall be distributed2 at least two weeks before the opening or resumption of the session. The main committee's report shall be made available to the committee for opinion two weeks at least before the meeting during which the latter is to approve its opinion. This provision shall not apply to requests from the Committee of Ministers made under Rule 53 below."

4.2. Replace the first paragraph of Rule 30 as follows : ‘‘Two Representatives or Substitutes at least may propose amendments and sub-amendments. However, a Rapporteur may not, even in a personal capacity, be the co-author of an amendment previously rejected by the committee on whose behalf he is reporting."

4.3. Substitute ‘‘authors" for ‘‘author" in paragraph 4 of Rule 30.

4.4. Substitute ‘‘one of its authors is called" for ‘‘its author is called" in paragraph 6 of Rule 30.

4.5. Insert in paragraph 6 of Rule 30 a new third sentence as follows : ‘‘An amendment or sub-amendment which has been withdrawn by its authors may not be moved."

4.6. Add the following new sentence at the end of paragraph 4 of Rule 44 : ‘‘However, a committee requested to give an opinion shall table amendments at least twenty-four hours before the meeting of the committee requested to report, at which these amendments shall be discussed."

4.7. Delete the second sentence of paragraph 6 of Rule 47.

4.8. Substitute ‘‘ten members" for ‘‘five members" in the second sentence of paragraph 8 of Rule 47, and add two new sentences as follows at the end of that paragraph : ‘‘This provision shall not apply when the Assembly has decided that a report will be discussed by the Standing Committee. This decision may be altered only by a unanimous vote of the Standing Committee."

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1. See Doc. 6521, report of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Rapporteur : Mr Schieder. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 25 November 1991.

4.9. Substitute ‘‘ten members" for ‘‘five members" in the first sentence of paragraph 9 of Rule 47.

4.10. Add the following text at the end of paragraph 9 of Rule 47 : ‘‘nor when the Assembly has decided that a report will be submitted to the Standing Committee. In the latter case, the Assembly's decision may be altered only by a unanimous vote of the Standing Committee."

5. The Assembly decides that these new provisions shall come into force at the opening of the 44th Ordinary Session of the Assembly (May 1992) and instructs its Committee on Rules of Procedure to review the functioning of the new provisions in two years' time.

6. The Assembly also invites the Bureau and the Standing Committee to draw up guidelines before the opening of the 44th Ordinary Session, taking into account the following aspects :

6.1. When committees take decisions concerning the submission of their reports in accordance withRule 47, paragraph 6, of the Rules of Procedure, they must take account of :

a. any proposals made by the Assembly or the Standing Committee when a question is being referred (Rule 15, paragraph 2, of the Rules of Procedure) concerning the presentation of a possible report ;

b. the need to submit at least a third of their reports to the Standing Committee.

6.2. A committee failing to respect this obligation shall lose all priority for debates in plenary session of the Assembly. This provision shall not affect Rule 16, paragraph 3, of the Rules of Procedure.

6.3. Committee reports which are not based on references ratified by the Assembly or the Standing Committee (Rule 15, paragraph 2, of the Rules of Procedure) but on instructions contained in recommendations or resolutions shall, as a general rule, be submitted to the Standing Committee.