



Resolution 1583 (2007)¹

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

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Presidential Committee and the Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly have initiated a process for improving the functioning of the Assembly and its bodies. A series of measures has already been agreed, some are still under discussion.
2. One objective of these initiatives is to improve the participation of members in Assembly plenary sessions and committee meetings. A regular and significant presence of members is important for the credibility of a parliamentary institution.
3. However, the dual mandate of Assembly members and their commitments at both national and European level does not make it any easier for them to attend all Assembly and committee activities. Some members also serve simultaneously as delegates to other international or regional interparliamentary institutions. Furthermore, it is not easy for very small national delegations in the Assembly, some including only four members, to participate in all these activities.
4. The Assembly considers that it should be possible to improve the participation of its members by introducing new provisions in the Rules of Procedure and by taking other measures which would make it easier for members to take an active role in the work of the Assembly and that of its bodies.
5. Current efforts to have Assembly debates on topical political or controversial subjects and on issues of general interest should be enhanced. In this connection the Assembly recalls that in Resolution 1547 (2007) on the state of human rights and democracy in Europe it resolved to mandate itself, with respect to future work, to give higher priority to human rights, the rule of law and democracy. Questions related to Council of Europe bodies and to the Organisation's place in the European institutional architecture should also be the subject of in-depth debates.
6. Consequently, the Assembly decides, with respect to its Rules of Procedure:
 - 6.1. at the end of Rule 11.2, to add: "The register of attendance shall be made public.";
 - 6.2. after Rule 35.5, to insert a new paragraph worded as follows: "For a period not exceeding fifteen minutes the President may, on the first day of a part-session, give the floor to members for one minute to draw the Assembly's attention to a matter of political importance which is not the subject of a report by an Assembly committee. They shall indicate beforehand the subject of their statement to the Table Office. If time permits, the President may allow similar shorter speaking periods later during the same part-session. A member shall not be given the right by virtue of this provision to speak more than once during the same part-session.";
 - 6.3. in Rule 43.1, to replace points 9 and 10 with the following text:

"9. Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee) (84 seats),

10. Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs (27 seats).";

1. *Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 23 November 2007 (see [Doc. 11295](#), report of the Committee on Rules of Procedure and Immunities, rapporteur: Mr Gross).*



- 6.4. to replace Rule 43.3, first sentence, with the following text: “On the basis of the candidatures presented by the political groups and taking into account gender balance and regional balance, the Bureau shall nominate the 84 members of the Monitoring Committee and 25 of the 27 members of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs by applying the apportionment ratio based on the so-called ‘D’Hondt principle’. The remaining two members of the latter committee are nominated by the Bureau from among the Assembly Representatives or Substitutes not belonging to a political group.”;
 - 6.5. to adapt rules 43.2, 43.4, 43.5 and 43.7 accordingly;
 - 6.6. after Rule 43.6, to insert a new paragraph worded as follows: “If, without prejudice to Rule 43.3, no candidatures for membership of a committee are submitted by a national delegation by the end of the June part-session of a parliamentary year, the President of the Assembly shall bring this to the attention of the chairperson of the national delegation concerned.”;
 - 6.7. after Rule 43.7, to insert a new paragraph worded as follows: “If, without prejudice to Rule 43.3, in the course of a parliamentary year,² 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.”;
 - 6.8. in Rule 48.3, to replace “51 seats” with “27 seats”;
 - 6.9. in the other relevant provisions of the rules and of the complementary texts to the rules, to replace the terms “Committee on Rules of Procedure and Immunities” with “Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs”.
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.
 8. The Assembly invites its Bureau, with respect to the complementary texts to the rules:
 - 8.1. to insert in the additional provisions relating to Assembly debates, section iii, on the order of speakers, a new paragraph 9, worded as follows: “The 10 members who, during the previous Assembly part-session, have participated in the highest number of votes taken in plenary shall be moved up three positions on the list of speakers on which they have been placed.”;
 - 8.2. to replace in the additional provisions relating to Assembly debates, section iv, on speaking time, at the end of paragraph 5, the words “one minute” with “thirty seconds”.
 9. Furthermore, the Assembly invites:
 - 9.1. its members, committees and political groups to combine their efforts so that during its part-sessions the Assembly debates topical political or controversial subjects as well as issues implying concrete Assembly responsibilities;

2. 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.

- 9.2. the committees:
 - 9.2.1. to prepare, where appropriate, information reports for final discussion at committee level and to submit them only exceptionally for debate in the Assembly and the Standing Committee;
 - 9.2.2. to strive for increased variety in rapporteurs;
 - 9.2.3. to avoid the appointment of members as rapporteurs when they are already responsible for two reports simultaneously within the same committee;
 - 9.3. the Bureau and committees to consider grouping committee meetings outside Strasbourg, in the member states, so as to increase participation and to promote links with the national parliaments and their committees;
 - 9.4. the political groups, when making proposals for the positions of committee chairperson and vice-chairperson, to bear in mind the merits of the candidates and the level of their involvement in the relevant committees;
 - 9.5. national delegations and political groups to take action, together with the appropriate national bodies, to:
 - 9.5.1. promote the conclusion of pairing agreements³ among the main parliamentary groups with a view to facilitating the participation of members at Assembly part-sessions and meetings of its committees;
 - 9.5.2. draw attention to the dates of Assembly plenary sittings when the national calendars of parliamentary sessions are drawn up;
 - 9.6. rapporteurs, where appropriate, to avail themselves of the possibility foreseen in Rule 35.5 to reply after the first round of speakers of political groups, for a time to be decided by the President;
 - 9.7. its members, where appropriate, to make use of Rule 35.3 to put a question, with the permission of the President, to a speaker in a debate on a particular point of the speech.
10. The Assembly decides that the changes proposed shall enter into force on the first day of the January 2008 part-session.

3. Pairing is an agreement whereby the name of a member of parliament from the majority is linked with an opposition member in the event of a vote arising in a national parliament. The practice is that under such an agreement neither member votes in parliament while the agreement is valid. This would enable these members to participate in Assembly debates in Strasbourg while important votes take place in their national parliaments.