

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

# **Rules of Procedure**

DECEMBER 1976



# **RULES OF PROCEDURE**

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**CHAPTER I**  
**SESSION OF PARLIAMENT**

**Rule 1**

1. Parliament shall hold an annual session.
2. It shall meet, without requiring to be convened, on the second Tuesday in March each year and shall itself determine the duration of adjournments of the session.
3. The enlarged Bureau may alter the duration of such adjournments by a reasoned decision of a majority of its members taken at least two weeks before the date previously fixed by Parliament for resuming the session; the date of resumption shall not, however, be postponed for more than two weeks.
4. Exceptionally, the President may, on behalf of the enlarged Bureau, convene Parliament at the request of a majority of its current members or at the request of the Commission or the Council.

**Rule 2**

1. Parliament shall hold its plenary sittings and its committees shall meet at the place fixed as its seat under the provisions of the Treaties.
2. Exceptionally, however, on a resolution adopted by a majority of its current members, Parliament may decide to hold one or more plenary sittings elsewhere than at its seat.
3. Any committee may decide to ask that one or more meetings be held away from the said seat. Its request, with the reasons therefor, shall be made to the President, who shall place it before the Bureau. If the matter is urgent, the President may take the decision himself. Should the decision taken by the Bureau or the President be unfavourable, the reasons therefor shall be stated.

**CHAPTER II**  
**VERIFICATION OF CREDENTIALS**

**Rule 3**

1. Parliament shall verify the credentials of its Members. This shall be done on the basis of a report by the Bureau, which shall check whether appointments comply with the provisions of the Treaties.
2. Any dispute shall be referred to the appropriate committee, which shall report to Parliament as soon as possible.
3. Any Representative whose credentials have not yet been verified may provisionally take his seat in Parliament or on its committees, and shall have the same rights as other Members of Parliament.

**Rule 4**

1. A Member's term of office shall end on expiry of the appointment conferred on him by his national parliament, on death, on resignation notified by him to the President of the European Parliament, on unseating by the European Parliament or on loss of his seat in his national parliament.
2. Should he lose his seat in his national parliament, a Member may continue to sit until the appointment of his successor has been notified to the European Parliament, but for not more than six months and provided that the appointment to the European Parliament conferred on him by his national parliament has not in the meantime expired.
3. Any dispute concerning the validity of the appointment of a Member whose credentials have been verified shall be referred to the appropriate committee, which shall report to Parliament not later than at the beginning of the next part-session.

**CHAPTER III**  
**BUREAU OF PARLIAMENT**

**Rule 5**

1. The Bureau shall consist of the President and the twelve Vice-Presidents of Parliament.

2. A member of a national government may not be a member of the Bureau.

3. The enlarged Bureau shall consist of the Bureau and the chairmen of the political groups.

The chairman of a political group may arrange to be represented by a member of his group.

4. Should voting on a decision of the Bureau or enlarged Bureau result in a tie, the President shall have a casting vote.

**Rule 6**

1. At the sitting held on the second Tuesday in March each year, the oldest Member present shall take the chair until the President has been declared elected.

2. No business shall be transacted while the oldest Member is in the chair unless it is concerned with the election of the President or the verification of credentials.

**Rule 7**

1. The President and Vice-Presidents shall be elected by secret ballot ; Parliament may, however, decide to depart from this rule for any election if the number of nominations does not exceed the number of seats to be filled.

Four tellers chosen by lot shall count the votes cast in a secret ballot; candidates shall not act as tellers.

2. The President shall be elected first. Nominations shall be handed before each ballot to the oldest Member, who shall announce them to Parliament. If after three ballots no candidate has obtained an absolute majority of the votes cast, the fourth ballot shall be confined to the two Members who have obtained the highest number of votes in the third ballot. In the event of a tie the elder candidate shall be declared elected.

3. As soon as the President has been elected, the oldest Member shall vacate the chair.

4. The Vice-Presidents shall then be elected on a single ballot paper. Those who on the first ballot obtain an absolute majority of the votes cast shall be declared elected. Should the number of candidates elected be less than the number of seats to be filled, a second ballot shall be held under the same conditions among candidates not yet elected. Should a third ballot be necessary, a relative majority shall suffice for election to the remaining seats, and in the event of a tie the oldest candidates shall be declared elected.

5. The Vice-Presidents shall take precedence in the order in which they were elected, and in the event of a tie, by age.

Where they are not elected by secret ballot, the order in which their names are read out to the House by the President of the sitting shall determine the order of precedence.

6. Should it be necessary for the President or a Vice-President to be replaced, his successor shall be elected in accordance with the above provisions.

A newly elected Vice-President shall take the place of his predecessor in the order of precedence.

7. Should the seat become vacant during an adjournment of the session, the political group to which the Member whose seat has become vacant belonged shall nominate a candidate for temporary membership of the Bureau pending the election referred to in paragraph 6.

The nomination shall be placed before the enlarged Bureau for ratification.

A temporary member of the Bureau shall enjoy the same rights as a Vice-President.

Should the President's seat become vacant, the first Vice-President shall act as President.

## CHAPTER IV

### PRESIDENCY

#### Rule 8

1. The President shall direct all the activities of Parliament and of its organs under the conditions laid down in these Rules. He shall enjoy all the powers necessary to preside over the proceedings of Parliament and to ensure that they are properly conducted.
2. The duties of the President shall be to open, adjourn and close sittings; to ensure observance of these Rules, maintain order, call upon speakers, close debates, put questions to the vote and announce the results of votes; and to refer to committees any communications that concern them.
3. The President may speak in a debate only to sum up or to call speakers to order. Should he wish to take part in a debate, he shall vacate the chair and shall not resume it until that debate is over.

#### Rule 9

Should the President be absent or unable to discharge his duties, or should he speak in a debate in accordance with Rule 8 (3), he shall be replaced by one of the Vice-Presidents in accordance with Rule 7 (5).

#### Rule 10

1. The President shall call to order any Member who creates a disturbance during the proceedings.
2. Should the offence be repeated, the President shall again call the Member to order, and the fact shall be recorded in the minutes of proceedings.

3. In the event of a further offence, the President may exclude the offender from the Chamber for the remainder of the sitting.
4. In serious cases, the President may move that Parliament pass a vote of censure which shall automatically involve immediate exclusion from the Chamber and suspension for two to five days. Any Member against whom such disciplinary action is requested shall be entitled to be heard.
5. The vote of censure shall be taken without debate by sitting and standing.

### **Rule 11**

1. No person may enter the Chamber except Members of the Parliament, members of the Commission or Council, the Secretary-General of Parliament, members of the staff whose duties require their presence there, and experts or officials of the Communities.
2. Only holders of an admission card duly issued by the President or Secretary-General of Parliament shall be admitted to the galleries.
3. Members of the public admitted to the galleries shall remain seated and keep silent. Any person expressing approval or disapproval shall immediately be ejected by the ushers.

## CHAPTER V

### AGENDA OF SITTINGS

#### Rule 12

1. On receipt of a preliminary draft agenda prepared by the President after consulting the political groups, the enlarged Bureau shall draw up the draft agenda.

The Commission and the Council may attend the enlarged Bureau's deliberations on the draft agenda at the invitation of the President.

2. Parliament shall decide on the draft agenda submitted to it by the enlarged Bureau.

Once adopted, the agenda shall not be amended, except in application of Rules 14 and 32 or on a proposal from the President.

If a procedural motion to amend the agenda is rejected, it shall not be tabled again during the same part-session.

3. Before suspending the sitting the President shall announce the date, time and agenda of the next sitting.

#### Rule 13

Except in the cases of urgency referred to in Rule 14, a debate shall not be opened on a report unless it was tabled not later than twelve days before the beginning of the part-session and distributed at least twenty-four hours previously.

#### Rule 14

1. A request that a debate be treated as urgent may be made to Parliament by the President, by at least ten Members, or by the Commission or Council.

As soon as the President receives a request for urgent debate, he shall inform Parliament of the fact; the vote on that request shall be taken at the beginning of the next sitting.

2. Where a request for urgent debate relates to the placing of a report on the agenda, only the person making the request or one speaker in favour, one speaker against, and the chairman or rapporteur of the committee responsible may be heard, in each case for a maximum of five minutes.

In all other cases the spokesmen of the political groups may also be heard, at their request and for a maximum of three minutes each, unless they have already spoken on that request for urgent debate.

3. Questions to be dealt with by urgent procedure shall be given priority over other items on the agenda, and accorded a place for debate at the discretion of Parliament.

4. An urgent debate may be held without a report or on the basis of an oral report by the appropriate committee.

**CHAPTER VI**  
**OFFICIAL LANGUAGES**

**Rule 15**

1. All documents of Parliament shall be drawn up in the official languages.
2. Speeches delivered in one of the official languages shall be simultaneously interpreted into the other official languages and into any other language the Bureau may consider necessary.

## CHAPTER VII

### PUBLICITY OF PROCEEDINGS

#### Rule 16

Debates in Parliament shall be public unless Parliament decides otherwise.

#### Rule 17

1. The minutes of proceedings of each sitting, containing the decisions of Parliament and the names of speakers, shall be distributed at least half an hour before the opening of the following sitting.

2. At the beginning of each sitting the President shall place before Parliament, for its approval, the minutes of proceedings of the previous sitting.

The minutes of proceedings of the last sitting of a part-session shall be placed before Parliament for its approval before the sitting is closed, and if no objection is raised they shall be declared approved.

3. If any objections are raised to the minutes of proceedings Parliament shall, if necessary, decide whether the changes requested should be considered.

4. The minutes of proceedings shall be signed by the President and the Secretary-General and preserved in the records of Parliament. They shall be published within one month in the Official Journal of the European Communities.

#### Rule 18

A summary report of the proceedings of each sitting shall be drawn up and distributed in the official languages.

#### Rule 19

1. A verbatim report of the proceedings of each sitting shall be drawn up in the official languages.

2. Speakers shall be required to return typescripts of their speeches to the Secretariat not later than the day following that on which they were handed to them.

3. The verbatim report shall be published as an annex to the Official Journal of the European Communities.

**CHAPTER VIII**  
**CONDUCT OF SITTINGS**

**Rule 20**

1. The annual general report of the Commission on the activities of the Communities shall be distributed immediately after publication.
2. The various parts of the report shall be referred to the appropriate committees.
3. Committees consulted under paragraph 2 shall not be obliged to submit a report.

Any committee may, where it feels it necessary for Parliament to make known its views on certain essential problems raised by the general report, bring these problems up in plenary sitting by resorting to one of the existing procedures.

**Rule 21**

1. A motion of censure on the Commission may be handed to the President of Parliament by a political group or one tenth of Parliament's current Members.
2. The motion shall be presented in writing, labelled 'motion of censure' and supported by reasons. It shall be printed and distributed in the official languages as soon as it is received, and be brought to the notice of the Commission.
3. The President shall announce that a motion of censure has been tabled immediately he receives it, if Parliament is sitting, or else at the beginning of the next suitable sitting. The debate on the motion shall not be opened earlier than twenty-four hours after its receipt is announced. The vote shall not be taken on the motion until at least three clear days after such announcement. Voting shall be by open ballot by way of roll call.

4. The motion of censure shall be adopted only if it secures a two-thirds majority of the votes cast representing a majority of the Members of Parliament. The result of the vote shall be notified to the President of the Commission and the President of the Council.

## **Rule 22**

1. Requests from the Commission or Council for an opinion or for advice shall be printed, distributed and referred to the appropriate committees, and a list thereof shall be published in the Bulletin of Parliament.

2. Any decision or resolution adopted by Parliament following a request from an institution for an opinion or for advice shall be forwarded immediately to the President of that institution. Should the request have come from the President of the Council, the decision or resolution shall also be forwarded to the Commission.

## **Rule 22A**

1. Where, in the case of certain important Community decisions, the Council intends to depart from the opinion of Parliament, a procedure for conciliation with the Council, with the active participation of the Commission, may be initiated by Parliament when delivering its opinion.

2. This procedure shall be initiated by Parliament, either at its own or at the Council's initiative.

3. The delegation which consults with the Council shall consist of 9 members; it shall reflect the political composition of Parliament, care being taken to ensure balanced representation of political tendencies; in principle it shall include the chairmen and the rapporteurs of the committees concerned. The delegation shall be led by the President of Parliament or by one of the Vice-Presidents.

4. The appropriate committee shall report on the results of the conciliation.

### **Rule 23**

1. The following documents shall be printed and distributed:
  - the draft budget of the European Communities;
  - the documents drawn up by the Commission pursuant to Articles 49 and 50 of the ECSC Treaty, and in particular the report of the Commission to the Council on the basis of which the latter adapts the portion of expenditure covered by the ECSC levies to the budget of the Communities;
  - any request for advice made by the Council before the draft budget is finally adopted;
  - the report of the Audit Board of the Communities;
  - the report of the ECSC auditor.
2. These documents shall be referred to the appropriate committee, which shall report to Parliament.
3. Where other committees have been asked for their opinions, the President shall fix the time-limit within which these shall be communicated to the appropriate committee.

### **Rule 23 A**

1. Subject to the conditions set out below, any Member may table and speak in support of proposed modifications to the draft budget of the Communities.
2. Such proposals shall be admissible only if they are presented in writing, bear the signatures of at least five Members and specify the budget heading to which they refer.
3. The President shall fix a time-limit for the tabling of proposed modifications.

4. The appropriate committee shall deliver its opinion on the proposed modifications before they are discussed in plenary sitting.

5. Proposed modifications to the section of the draft budget relating to Parliament which are similar to those already rejected by Parliament at the time the estimates were drawn up shall be discussed only where the appropriate committee has delivered a favourable opinion.

6. Notwithstanding Rule 26 (1), Parliament shall take separate and successive votes on:

- each proposed modification ;
- each section of the draft budget ;
- the draft budget as a whole ;
- any motion for a resolution concerning the draft budget.

7. If Parliament adopts the draft budget as submitted to it by the Council, the President shall declare it to have been finally adopted.

8. The President shall forward to the Council and Commission the minutes of proceedings of the sitting at which Parliament reached a decision on the draft budget.

9. Where Parliament has adopted modifications, the draft budget, modified accordingly, shall be annexed to the minutes of proceedings and printed. The President shall forward it to the Council and notify the Commission.

10. The procedure laid down in Rules 23 and 23 A shall also apply to draft supplementary budgets.

#### **Rule 24**

1. Amendments proposed by the Commission and Council under Article 95 of the ECSC Treaty shall be printed at the same

time as the assenting opinion thereon delivered by the Court of Justice.

These documents shall be distributed and referred to the appropriate committee. In its report the committee shall recommend either adoption or rejection of the proposed amendment as a whole.

2. No amendment thereto shall be admissible, and voting item by item shall not be permitted. The proposed amendment as a whole shall require for adoption a three-quarters majority of the votes cast representing a two-thirds majority of the Members of Parliament.

3. Any Member may table a motion for a resolution proposing to the Commission and Council amendments to the ECSC Treaty under Article 95 of that treaty.

Such a motion shall be printed, distributed and referred to the appropriate committee. It shall be adopted only if it secures the votes of a majority of the current Members of Parliament.

### **Rule 25**

Any Member may table a motion for a resolution on a matter falling within the sphere of activities of the Communities.

Such a motion shall be printed, distributed and, without prejudice to Rule 14, referred to the appropriate committee, which shall include the text of the motion in its report.

### **Rule 26**

1. The debate shall be based on the report of the appropriate committee. Parliament shall vote only on the motion for a resolution.

2. Reference to committee may be requested at any time. Such a request shall always be granted if it is made by the chairman or

rapporteur of the committee responsible, or where, pursuant to Rule 33(3), two votes have been taken with a request that the number of those present be ascertained, without the required number being reached.

Parliament may fix a time-limit within which the committee shall report its conclusions.

3. Once the general debate and consideration of the texts have been concluded, only explanations of vote shall be permitted before the matter as a whole is put to the vote.

### **Rule 27**

1. Committees may, in agreement with the Commission, ask that motions for resolutions contained in their reports be put to the vote without further discussion.

2. The political groups shall be notified of any such request.

3. At the first sitting of each part-session, or at the latest on the day before the sitting on whose agenda they appear, the President shall announce any texts that can be voted on without debate.

4. If no request to speak has been entered when these texts come up for consideration, the President shall put them to the vote immediately.

### **Rule 27A**

1. The list of requests from the Commission or Council for an opinion or advice shall be sent each week to members of the appropriate committees. This list shall indicate the date on which the request was first received.

2. At each meeting of a committee the chairman shall submit to the committee those requests that in his opinion should be approved without report.

3. With respect to each of the requests made the object of a proposal under paragraph 2, the chairman of the committee responsible shall make available a summary of the document concerned to members of the appropriate committees.

4. The chairman shall put the proposal to the committee for decision and, unless any member objects to its adoption, shall send a statement to the President of Parliament to inform him that it has been adopted.

5. The titles of all requests from the Commission or Council for an opinion or for advice to which paragraph 4 applies shall be entered on the agenda of the first sitting of the part-session following the receipt of statements from all appropriate committees.

6. At the last sitting of the same part-session, the President shall declare the proposals to which the statements under paragraph 4 relate to be approved unless, before the opening of the sitting:

(a) any Member has asked leave to speak on the proposals;

(b) amendments have been tabled to them.

7. In these cases the proposals shall be referred back to the appropriate committees.

8. The title of each proposal approved by Parliament under paragraph 6 shall be recorded in the minutes.

### **Rule 28**

1. The President may, after consulting the chairmen of the political group, propose to Parliament that speaking time be allocated for a particular debate. Parliament shall decide on this proposal without debate.

2. The President shall allocate speaking time in accordance with the following criteria:

- (a) a first fraction of speaking time shall be divided equally among all the political groups;
- (b) a further fraction shall be divided among the political groups in proportion to the total number of their members;
- (c) Members not attached to a political group shall be allocated a total speaking time equal to the fraction allocated to each political group under subparagraph (a)

### **Rule 29**

1. Any Member may table amendments.

On a proposal from the President, Parliament may fix a time-limit for the tabling of amendments.

Parliament shall not deliberate on any amendment unless it is moved during the debate.

2. Amendments shall relate to the text it is sought to alter. They shall be tabled in writing and signed by one or more authors. The President shall decide whether they are in order.

No amendment shall be admissible if it is established that the wording in at least one of the official languages of the text it is sought to alter does not call for amendment; in that case the President shall seek out a suitable linguistic remedy jointly with those concerned.

Unless Parliament decides otherwise, amendments shall not be put to the vote until they have been printed and distributed in the official languages.

3. Amendments shall have priority over the text to which they relate and shall be put to the vote before that text.

4. If two or more mutually exclusive amendments are moved to the same part of a text, the amendment that departs furthest from

the text submitted by the committee shall have priority and shall be put to the vote first. If it is adopted the other amendments shall stand rejected. If it is rejected, the amendment next in priority shall be put to the vote and similarly for each of the remaining amendments. In case of doubt as to priority, the President shall decide.

5. Reference of an amendment to committee may be requested at any time. Such a request shall always be granted if it is made by the chairman or rapporteur of the committee responsible. Parliament may fix a time-limit within which the committee shall report its conclusions on the amendments referred to it. When an amendment is referred to committee, its discussion in plenary sitting, but not necessarily the general debate, shall be interrupted.

### **Rule 30**

1. No Member may speak unless called upon to do so by the President. Members shall speak from their places and shall address the chair; the President may invite them to come to the rostrum.

2. If a speaker departs from the subject, the President shall call him to order. If a speaker has already been called to order twice in the same debate, the President may, on the third occasion, forbid him to speak for the remainder of the debate on the same subject.

3. Without prejudice to his other disciplinary powers, the President may cause to be deleted from the reports of debates of sittings the speeches of Members who have not been called upon to speak by him or who continue to speak beyond the time allotted to them.

4. A speaker may not be interrupted. He may, however, by leave of the President, give way during his speech to allow another Member, the Commission or the Council to put to him a question on a particular point in his speech.

## **Rule 31**

1. The names of Members who ask leave to speak shall be entered in the list of speakers in the order in which their requests are received.

2. The President shall call upon Members to speak, ensuring as far as possible that speakers of different political views and using different languages are heard in turn.

On request, however, priority may be given to the rapporteur of the appropriate committee and to the chairmen of political groups who wish to speak on their behalf, or to speakers deputizing for them.

No Member may speak more than twice on the same subject, except by leave of the President.

The chairman and the rapporteur of the committees concerned shall, however, be allowed to speak at their request.

A Member who asks to make a personal statement shall be heard at the end of the discussion of the item of the agenda being dealt with.

3. The Commission and Council shall be heard at their request.

## **Rule 31A**

No Member may speak for more than five minutes on any of the following: the minutes of proceedings, explanations of vote, procedural motions and personal statements or, unless Parliament decides otherwise, for more than three minutes on amendments.

## **Rule 32**

1. A Member who asks leave to speak for a procedural motion, namely:

- (a) to raise a point of order;
  - (b) to move reference to committee;
  - (c) to move the closure of a debate;
  - (d) to move the adjournment of a debate;
  - (e) to move the previous question;
- shall have a prior right to do so.

2. The above matters shall take precedence over the main question, the discussion of which shall be suspended while they are being considered.

3. Without prejudice to Rule 31A, only the following shall be heard in debates on the above matters; the mover of the motion, one speaker for and one against the motion, and the chairmen or the rapporteurs of the committees concerned.

## CHAPTER IX

### VOTING

#### Rule 33

1. Parliament may deliberate, settle its agenda and approve the minutes of proceedings, whatever the number of Members present.
2. A quorum shall exist when one third of the current Members of Parliament are present.
3. All votes other than votes by roll call shall be valid whatever the number of voters unless, before the voting has begun, the President has been requested by at least ten Members to ascertain the number of those present.
4. A vote by roll call shall be valid only if one third of the current Members of Parliament have taken part in it. However, if so requested before the voting has begun by at least thirty Members present, it shall be valid only if a majority of the current Members of Parliament have taken part in it.
5. Should this not be the case, the vote shall be placed on the agenda of the next sitting.

#### Rule 34

The right to vote is a personal right. Voting by proxy is prohibited.

#### Rule 35

1. Normally Parliament shall vote by show of hands.
2. If the result of the show of hands is doubtful, a fresh vote shall be taken by sitting and standing.

3. If the result of this last vote is doubtful, or whenever ten or more Members so desire, the vote shall be taken by roll call. Rule 33(2) and (4) shall not apply if the vote by roll call is taken merely to clarify a doubtful result.

4. The roll shall be called in alphabetical order, beginning with the name of a Member drawn by lot. The President shall be the last to be called to vote.

Voting shall be by word of mouth and shall be expressed by 'Yes', 'No', or 'I abstain'. In calculating whether a motion has been adopted or rejected, account shall be taken only of votes cast for and against. The President shall establish the result of the count and announce it.

Votes shall be recorded in the minutes of proceedings of the sitting in the alphabetical order of Members' names.

5. Without prejudice to Rules 2 (2), 7 (2) and (4), 21 (4), 24 (2) and (3), 41 (5) and 54, motions put to the vote shall be declared adopted only if they have secured a majority of the votes cast.

In the event of a tie, the motion shall stand rejected.

6. In the case of appointments, voting shall be by secret ballot without prejudice to Rules 7 (1), 37 (2) and 41 (5), second subparagraph. Only ballot papers bearing the names of persons who have been nominated shall be taken into account in calculating the number of votes cast.

## CHAPTER X

### GROUPS AND COMMITTEES

#### Rule 36

1. Members may form themselves into groups according to their political affinities.
2. A political group shall be considered to have been set up after the President has been handed a statement to that effect containing the name of the group, the signatures of its members and the composition of its Bureau.
3. This statement shall be published in the Official Journal of the European Communities.
4. A Member may not belong to more than one group.
5. A group shall consist of not less than fourteen members. However, it may consist of not less than ten members where these come from at least three Member States.

#### Rule 37

1. Parliament shall set up standing or temporary, general or special committees, and shall define their powers. The Bureau of each committee shall consist of a chairman and one, two or three vice-chairmen. Member of a national government may not be a member of the Bureau of a committee.
2. Committee members shall be elected at the beginning of the session which opens each year on the second Tuesday in March. Candidatures shall be addressed to the Bureau of Parliament, which shall place before Parliament proposals designed to ensure fair representation of Member States and of political views.
3. Should any dispute arise, Parliament shall decide thereon by secret ballot.

4. The Bureau of Parliament may provisionally decide to fill any vacancy on a committee with the agreement of the persons concerned and having regard to paragraph 2.

5. Any such changes shall be placed before Parliament for ratification at its next sitting.

### **Rule 38**

1. Committees shall examine questions referred to them by Parliament or, during an adjournment of the session, by the President on behalf of the Bureau.

2. Should a committee declare itself incompetent to consider a question, or should a conflict arise over the competence of two or more committees, the question of competence shall be placed on Parliament's agenda on a proposal from the Bureau or at the request of one of the committees concerned.

3. Should two or more committees be competent to deal with a question, one committee shall be named as the committee responsible and the others as committees asked for their opinions.

A question shall not, however, be referred simultaneously to more than three committees, unless it is decided for sound reasons to depart from this rule under the conditions laid down in paragraph 1.

### **Rule 39**

1. A committee shall meet when convened by its chairman or at the request of the President.

2. A committee may, in the interest of its work, appoint one or more sub-committees, of which it shall at the same time determine the composition and competence. Sub-committees shall report to the committee that set them up.

3. Any two or more committees or sub-committees may jointly consider matters coming within their competence but shall not take a decision.

4. Any committee may, with the agreement of the Bureau of Parliament, instruct one or more of its members to proceed on a study or fact-finding mission.

#### **Rule 40**

1. Committee meetings shall not be held in public unless the committee decides otherwise.

2. The Commission and Council may take part in committee meetings if invited to do so on behalf of a committee by its chairman.

By special decision of a committee, any other person may be invited to attend and to speak at a meeting.

3. Any member of a committee may arrange for his place to be taken at meetings by another Member of Parliament of his choice. The name of the substitute shall be notified in advance to the chairman of the committee.

4. Substitutes shall be allowed to sit on sub-committees under the same conditions.

5. Without prejudice to Rule 44 (6) and unless a committee decides otherwise, Members may attend meetings of committees to which they do not belong but may not take part in their deliberations.

Such Members may, however, be allowed by the committee to take part in its proceedings in an advisory capacity.

#### **Rule 41**

1. Rules 7 (2), 29, 30, 31, 31A, 32 and 35 (4, 5, 6) shall apply, as appropriate, to committee meetings.

2. A committee may validly vote when one quarter of its current members are actually present. However, if so requested by one sixth of its members before voting begins, the vote shall be valid only if the number of voters represents an absolute majority of the committee members.

3. Voting in committee shall be by show of hands, unless any Member demands a vote by roll call.

4. The chairman may take part in discussions and may vote, but without having a casting vote.

5. Without prejudice to paragraph 2, the Bureau shall be elected by secret ballot without discussion. Its election shall require an absolute majority of the votes cast; where, however, a second ballot proves to be necessary, a relative majority shall suffice.

If the number of nominations corresponds to the number of seats to be filled, the candidate or candidates may be declared elected without holding the ballot referred to in the first subparagraph.

6. The procedure for sub-committees shall be the same as for committees.

7. The minutes of each meeting of a committee shall be distributed to all its members and submitted to the committee for its approval at its next meeting.

8. In addition, a summary report of the proceedings shall be drawn up. Unless the committee decides otherwise, however, such report shall not be distributed but shall be available to all Members of Parliament.

9. Unless the committee decides otherwise, only adopted reports and statements prepared on the responsibility of the chairman shall be made public.

## **Rule 42**

1. Committees may appoint for each subject a rapporteur who shall be responsible for preparing the committee's report and for introducing it in Parliament.

The final report of the committee shall include a motion for a resolution and an explanatory statement.

2. The report shall state the result of the vote taken on the report as a whole. If the committee is not unanimous, the report shall also state the views of the minority.

## **Rule 43**

1. On a proposal from its Bureau, a committee may fix a time-limit within which the rapporteur shall submit his draft report. This time-limit may be extended.

2. Once the time-limit has elapsed, the committee may instruct its chairman to ask for the matter referred to it to be placed on the agenda of one of the next sittings of Parliament. The debates may then be conducted on the basis of an oral report by the committee concerned.

## **Rule 44**

1. Should the committee to which a question was first referred wish to hear the views of another committee, or should another committee wish to make known its views on the report of the committee to which a question was first referred, such committees may request the President that, in accordance with Rule 38 (3), one committee be named as the committee responsible and the other as the committee asked for its opinion.

2. The committee asked for its opinion may communicate the opinion to the committee responsible either orally, through its chairman or rapporteur, or in writing. Its opinion shall relate to the text referred to it.

3. In its report the committee responsible shall set out the views of the committee asked for its opinion, in so far as these differ from its own.

4. If the committee asked for its opinion is unable to deliver the opinion before the report of the committee responsible is finally adopted, it may instruct its chairman or rapporteur to place the opinion before Parliament during the debate on the report, provided that it notifies the President of this intention before the debate is opened.

5. The opinion may include amendments to the text referred to the committee and suggestions for parts of the motion for a resolution submitted by the committee responsible, but shall not include any motion for a resolution as such.

6. The chairman and rapporteur of the committee asked for its opinion may take part in an advisory capacity in meetings of the committee responsible, in so far as these relate to the matter of common concern. In special cases, the committee asked for its opinion may nominate up to five other members who, with the agreement of the chairman of the committee responsible, may take part in an advisory capacity in the meetings of that committee, in so far as these deal with the matter of common concern.

## CHAPTER XI

### QUESTIONS

#### Rule 45

1. Questions for written answer may be put by any Member to the Commission, to the Council or to the Conference of Foreign Ministers.

These questions shall be brief and relate to specific points, and shall be submitted in writing to the President, who shall communicate them to the institution concerned.

2. Questions to which answers have been given shall be published, together with the answers, in the Official Journal of the European Communities.

3. Questions to which no answer has been given within one month by the Commission, or within two months by the Council or the Conference of Foreign Ministers, shall also be published in the Official Journal of the European Communities.

#### Rule 46

1. Any Member may put questions to the Commission, to the Council or to the Conference of Foreign Ministers and ask that they be placed on the agenda of Parliament and dealt with by oral procedure without debate.

Such questions shall be submitted in writing to the President, who shall place them before the enlarged Bureau at the next sitting held for the purpose of drafting the agenda.

The enlarged Bureau shall decide whether the question is to be converted into a question for written answer or for oral answer at Question Time, or whether it is to be dealt with by the procedure provided under this Rule.

The decision of the enlarged Bureau shall be notified immediately to the questioner and to the institutions concerned. If the question is addressed to the Commission such notification shall be made at least one week, and if to the Council, at least five weeks before the opening of the sitting on whose agenda it is to appear.

2. Questions may be put to the Conference of Foreign Ministers under the same conditions as laid down in this Rule for questions to the Council.

3. Questions shall be clearly worded and relate to specific points, not to problems of a general nature. Parliament shall set aside not more than half a day during each part-session for oral answers to these questions. Questions that remain unanswered during that period shall be carried forward to the next part-session or converted into questions for written answer, as the questioner may choose.

4. The questioner shall read out his question. He may speak to it for not more than ten minutes. A member of the institution concerned shall give a brief answer. Where the question is addressed to the Commission, the questioner may ask one or two supplementary questions, to which the member of the institution concerned shall give a brief answer.

5. The enlarged Bureau may ask questioners to reword their questions.

6. If the author of an oral question without debate so requests, the question shall be withdrawn.

#### **Rule 47**

1. Questions may be put to the Commission, to the Council or to the Conference of Foreign Ministers by a committee, a political group or five or more Members for placing on the agenda of Parliament in order that they may be dealt with by oral procedure with debate.

Such questions, which may also relate to problems of a general nature, shall be submitted in writing to the President, who shall place them before the enlarged Bureau at the next meeting held for the purpose of drafting the agenda.

Subject to the provisions below, during each part-session each political group shall have the right to have not more than one question dealt with by the procedure with debate.

Oral questions with debate shall not be included in the agenda of a part-session if that agenda already provides for the subject to be discussed with the participation of the institutions concerned; they will, however, be included in the debate. If a question relates to a report submitted by a committee but not yet considered by Parliament, Parliament shall vote on whether it shall be placed on the agenda.

The enlarged Bureau shall, taking account of the above requirements, exercise its discretion in deciding the order on the agenda of all oral questions with debate.

2. The enlarged Bureau shall decide whether the Commission or Council is to be consulted. It shall decide whether the question is to be converted into a question for written answer, for oral answer at Question Time, or is to be dealt with either by oral procedure without debate under Rule 46 or by the procedure provided under this Rule.

The decision of the enlarged Bureau shall be notified immediately to the questioner and to the institutions concerned.

The procedure for oral questions with debate may be proposed only where notice of the question can be given within the following time-limits: if the question is addressed to the Commission, at least one week and if to the Council at least five weeks before the opening of the sitting on whose agenda it is to appear.

In urgent cases, the President may propose direct to Parliament that a question which could not be placed before the enlarged Bureau under the foregoing conditions be placed on the agenda. Such questions, together with any that could not be notified within the time-limits specified above, may be placed on the agenda only with the agreement of the institutions to which they are addressed.

3. Questions may be put to the Conference of Foreign Ministers under the same conditions as laid down in this Rule for questions to the Council.

4. One of the questioners may speak to the question for not more than ten minutes. One member of the institution concerned shall answer. Other Members of Parliament may speak for not more than five minutes, and may do so only once.

One of the questioners may, at his request, briefly comment on the answer given.

5. In order to wind up the debate on a question put to the Commission, any committee or political group, or five or more Members, may place before the President a motion for a resolution with a request that a vote be taken on it immediately.

As soon as the motion for a resolution has been distributed, Parliament shall first decide, if necessary after hearing one of the movers, whether a vote is to be taken immediately. Thereafter only explanations of vote shall be permitted.

Should an immediate vote be decided upon, the motion for a resolution shall be put to the vote without reference to committee. Only explanations of vote shall be permitted.

6. The enlarged Bureau may ask the authors of questions to reword them.

7. At the request of the author of an oral question with debate acting in agreement with any co-authors, the question may be withdrawn by them, but may be immediately taken over by any other Member, under the conditions set out in paragraph 1 above, with the agreement of Parliament deciding by vote without debate.

## Rule 47A

1. Question Time shall be held normally on the second and third sitting day of each part-session of Parliament, and shall in each case not exceed one and a half hours.

2. Questions shall be submitted in writing to the President, who shall decide whether they are admissible; he shall determine the order in which they will be taken, and how they will be grouped.

The questioner shall be notified immediately of the President's decision.

3. During Question Time any Member may put oral questions to the Commission or Council, in accordance with the provisions of this Rule.

4. Questions may be put to the Conference of Foreign Ministers under the same conditions as laid down in this Rule for questions to the Council.

5. Questions put to the Council and the Conference of Foreign Ministers shall be taken first on the second day of Question Time.

6. At each part-session, any Member may put only one question respectively to the Commission, the Council, and the Conference of Foreign Ministers.

7. The procedure for the conduct of Question Time shall be governed by guidelines(\*).

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(\* ) See Annex, p 47

## **Rule 47B**

1. Before the close of Question Time, any political group or at least five Members may request that a debate be held immediately thereafter on the answer given by the Commission, the Council or the Conference of Foreign Ministers on a specific matter of general and topical interest.
2. A debate as referred to in paragraph 1 may be requested only after the Commission, the Council or the Conference of Foreign Ministers has replied to all supplementary questions on the specific matter concerned.
3. The decision as to whether to hold a debate on request shall be taken by the President only at the close of Question Time and shall not be subject to debate. If he receives more than one request for such a debate, he shall decide thereon, without debate.
4. The debate shall be limited to one hour, excluding speaking time set aside for the Commission, the Council and the Conference of Foreign Ministers. No Member shall speak for more than five minutes.
5. The order of speaking shall be governed by Rule 31 of the Rules of Procedure, the first speaker being a spokesman for the political group or the Members who requested the debate.

## CHAPTER XII

### PETITIONS

#### Rule 48

1. Petitions to Parliament shall show the name, occupation, nationality and permanent address of each signatory.
2. Petitions shall be entered in a register in the order in which they are received if they comply with the conditions laid down in paragraph 1; those that do not shall be filed without further action, and the petitioner shall be informed of the reason therefor.
3. Petitions entered in the register shall be referred by the President to one of the committees set up under Rule 37 (1), which shall first ascertain whether they fall within the sphere of activities of the Communities; those that do not shall be filed without further action.
4. At the request of the appropriate committee, petitions declared admissible shall be filed without further action or forwarded by the President, together with the committee's opinion, to the Commission or Council.

The committee consulted may report to Parliament.

5. Notice shall be given in open sitting of the petitions entered in the register referred to in paragraph 2, and of the decision to file, forward or report on them.

Such announcements shall be entered in the minutes of proceedings. The petitioner shall be notified of the decision taken and the reasons therefor.

6. The texts of petitions entered in the register, together with the texts of committee opinions forwarded with them, shall be preserved in the records of Parliament, where they shall be available for inspection by any Member.

CHAPTER XIII  
SECRETARIAT OF PARLIAMENT  
ACCOUNTING

**Rule 49**

1. Parliament shall be assisted by a Secretary-General appointed by the Bureau.

The Secretary-General shall give a solemn undertaking before the Bureau to perform his duties conscientiously and with absolute impartiality.

2. The Secretary-General shall head a Secretariat the composition and organization of which shall be determined by the Bureau.

3. The Bureau, after consulting the appropriate committee of Parliament, shall decide the number of staff and lay down regulations relating to their administrative and financial situation.

The Bureau shall also decide to what categories of officials and servants Articles 12 to 14 of the Protocol on the privileges and immunities of the European Communities shall apply in whole or in part.

The President of Parliament shall inform the appropriate institutions of the European Communities accordingly.

**Rule 50**

1. The Bureau shall draw up a first preliminary draft of the estimates of Parliament on the basis of a report prepared by the Secretary-General, and shall consult the appropriate committee on the subject.

2. After receiving the opinion of that committee, the enlarged Bureau shall adopt the preliminary draft estimates.

3. The President shall forward the preliminary draft estimates to the appropriate committee, which shall draw up the draft estimates and report to Parliament.

4. The President shall fix a time-limit for the tabling of amendments to the draft estimates.

The appropriate committee shall give its opinion on these amendments.

5. Parliament shall adopt the estimates.

6. The President shall forward the estimates to the Commission and Council.

7. The foregoing provisions shall also apply to supplementary estimates.

#### **Rule 50 A**

1. The President shall incur and settle, or cause to be incurred and settled, the expenditure covered by the internal financial regulations issued by the Bureau after consulting the appropriate committee.

2. The President shall forward the draft annual accounts to the appropriate committee.

3. On the basis of a report by its appropriate committee, Parliament shall pass its accounts and decide on the giving of a discharge.

## CHAPTER XIV

### MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

#### Rule 51

1. Passes to allow Members to circulate freely in the Member States shall be issued by the President as soon as their appointment has been notified to him.

2. Any request addressed to the President by the appropriate authority of a Member State that the immunity of a Member be waived shall be communicated to Parliament and referred to the appropriate committee.

3. Should a Member be arrested or prosecuted after having been found in the act of committing an offence, any Member of Parliament may request that the proceedings be suspended or that he be released.

4. The appropriate committee shall consider such a request without delay but shall not go into the merits of the case. It shall hear the Member concerned, should he so wish. If he is in custody, he may have himself represented by another Member of Parliament.

5. The report of the committee shall be placed at the head of the agenda of the first sitting following the day on which it was laid upon the Table.

Discussion shall be confined to the reasons for or against the waiver of immunity.

6. The President shall immediately communicate Parliament's decision to the appropriate authority of the Member State concerned.

#### Rule 52

1. At the beginning of the session which opens on the second Tuesday in March each year, the Presidential Committee shall appoint a rapporteur to prepare a report to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the activities of Parliament.

2. After this report has been approved by the Presidential Committee and by Parliament, it shall be forwarded direct by the President of Parliament to the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

### **Rule 53**

Parliament shall be represented in international relations, on ceremonial occasions, and in administrative, legal or financial matters by the President, who may delegate his powers.

### **Rule 54**

1. Motions for resolutions amending these Rules shall be printed and referred to the appropriate committee.

2. Such motions shall be adopted only if they secure the votes of a majority of the Members of Parliament.

3. The Bureau shall lay down, through internal rules drawn up after consulting the appropriate committee, procedures for applying, interpreting and implementing these Rules of Procedure; these internal rules shall be incorporated in a single document published as an annex to the Rules of Procedure and entitled 'General Instructions of the Bureau'.

**GUIDELINES FOR THE CONDUCT OF QUESTION TIME  
UNDER RULE 47A**

1. Questions shall be admissible only where they
  - are concise and are drafted so as to permit a brief answer to be given;
  - fall within the competence and sphere of responsibility of the Commission, the Council, or the Conference of Foreign Ministers, and are of general interest;
  - do not require extensive prior study or research by the institution concerned;
  - are clearly worded and relate to specific matters;
  - do not contain assertions or opinions;
  - do not relate to strictly personal matters;
  - are not aimed at procuring documents or statistical information;
  - are interrogatory in form.
2. Questions shall not be accepted for Question Time at any part-session if the agenda already provides for the subject to be discussed with the participation of the institution concerned.
3. Should the President decide that the question is inadmissible, the questioner may challenge the decision, in which case it shall be for the enlarged Bureau to rule on the matter. This ruling shall be notified immediately to the questioner.

**Supplementary Questions**

4. Each Member may put only one supplementary question to each question at Question Time.

5. Supplementary questions shall be subject to the rules of admissibility laid down in these Guidelines.

6. (1) The President shall rule on the admissibility of supplementary questions and shall limit their number so that each Member who has put down a question may receive an answer to it and so as to afford an opportunity for a debate to be requested on the answer given to any question or supplementary question.

(2) The President shall not be obliged to declare a supplementary question admissible, even where it satisfied the foregoing conditions of admissibility –

(a) if it is likely to upset the normal conduct of Question Time, or

(b) if the main question to which it relates has already been adequately covered by other supplementary questions, or

(c) if it has no direct bearing on the main question.

7. The institution concerned shall ensure that answers are concise and are relevant to the subject of the question.

8. If the content of the questions concerned permits it, the President may decide, after consulting the questioners, that the Institution concerned should answer them together.

### **Answers to questions**

9. A question may be answered only if the questioner is present or has notified the President in writing, before Question Time begins, of the name of his substitute.

10. If neither the questioner nor his substitute is present, the question shall be answered in writing by the Institution concerned, and published in the Report of Proceedings.

11. The same procedure shall be applied to questions that remain unanswered for lack of time, unless the questioner withdraws his question before Question Time is over or asks that the question be deferred until the next Question Time.

12. The procedure for answers in writing shall be governed by Rule 45(2) and (3).

**Time limits**

13. (1) Questions shall be tabled at least one week before Question Time begins.

Questions not tabled within this time limit may be taken during Question Time with the consent of the Institution concerned.

(2) Questions declared admissible shall be distributed to Members and forwarded to the Institutions concerned.

(Bureau Decision of 28 April 1976)