

**European Parliament**

Directorate-General for the Presidency

Directorate for the Plenary

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## **The Plenary: a User's Guide**

**(revision 2019)**

# 1 - WHO DOES WHAT IN PLENARY?

## 1.1 THE PRESIDENT

### Duties of the President ([Rule 22](#))

The President directs all the activities of Parliament and its bodies and enjoys all the powers necessary to preside over its proceedings and to ensure that they are properly conducted.

The President of the sitting opens, suspends and closes the sitting, ensures the Rules of Procedure are adhered to, maintains order, gives the floor, closes debates, puts items to the vote and announces the results of votes.

### Election of the President (Rules [15](#) and [16](#))

The President is elected by secret ballot. Nominations may only be made by a political group or by Members reaching at least the low threshold and they shall be with the consent of the nominee. They are handed before each ballot to the Member provisionally in the Chair by virtue of [Rule 14](#), who announces them to Parliament. If, after three ballots, none of the candidates have obtained an absolute majority of the votes cast, the fourth ballot is confined to the two candidates who obtained the highest number of votes in the third ballot. In the event of a tie, the oldest candidate is declared elected. As soon as the President has been elected, the Member who is provisionally in the Chair vacates the Chair. Only the elected President may deliver an opening address.

## 1.2 THE VICE-PRESIDENTS

### Duties of the Vice-Presidents ([Rule 23](#))

The Vice-Presidents stand in for the President should she/he be absent, unable to discharge her/his duties or wish to take part in a debate.

### Election of the Vice-Presidents (Rules [15](#) and [17](#))

The Vice-Presidents are elected after the President has been elected. There are fourteen seats to be filled. The Vice-Presidents are elected by secret ballot. Nominations may only be made by a political group or by Members reaching at least the low threshold and they shall be with the consent of the nominee.

If the number of nominations does not exceed the number of seats to be filled, the candidates may be elected by acclamation, unless Members or political group(s) reaching at least the high threshold request a secret ballot. In this case their order of precedence is decided by a secret ballot. In the case of a single ballot for more than one office holder, the ballot paper shall only be valid if more than half of the available votes have been cast.

In the first ballot, candidates having obtained an absolute majority of the votes cast are declared elected in the order of the number of votes obtained. A second ballot is held if seats remain unfilled after the first ballot. If a third ballot should prove necessary, candidates are elected by relative majority for the seats still to be filled. In the event of a tie, the oldest candidates are declared elected.

## 1.3 TERMS OF OFFICE

### Terms of office – Length ([Rule 19](#))

The term of office of the President and the Vice-Presidents is **two and a half years**.

### Terms of office – Vacancies ([Rule 20](#))

Should it be necessary for the President or a Vice-President to be replaced, the successor is elected in accordance with the above rules. Should the President's seat become vacant, the first Vice-President takes over the President's duties until a new President is elected.

## **1.4 PROVISIONAL CHAIR ([Rule 14](#))**

The outgoing President or, if this is not possible, one of the outgoing Vice-Presidents in order of precedence or, in their absence, the Member who has held office for the longest period takes the Chair until the President has been elected. No business may be transacted while a Member is provisionally in the Chair, unless it is concerned with the election of the President or the verification of credentials.

## **1.5 THE BUREAU**

### **Composition of the Bureau ([Rule 24](#))**

The Bureau is composed of Parliament's President and the fourteen Vice-Presidents. The Quaestors are member of the Bureau in an advisory capacity.

### **Duties of the Bureau ([Rule 25](#))**

The Bureau takes decisions on financial, organisational and administrative matters concerning Members and the internal organisation of Parliament, its secretariat and its bodies. It also manages matters relating to the conduct of sittings.

## **1.6 THE CONFERENCE OF PRESIDENTS**

### **Composition of the Conference of Presidents ([Rule 26](#))**

The Conference of Presidents consists of the President of Parliament and the chairs of the political groups. The President of Parliament invites one of the non-attached Members to attend meetings of the Conference of Presidents, without having the right to vote.

### **Duties of the Conference of Presidents ([Rule 27](#))**

Among other tasks, the Conference of Presidents takes decisions on the organisation of Parliament's work and matters of legislative planning. It adopts the draft agenda and the final draft agenda for Parliament's part-sessions.

## **1.7 THE CONFERENCE OF COMMITTEE CHAIRS (Rules [29](#) and [157](#))**

The Conference of Committee Chairs consists of the chairs of all the standing or temporary committees. The Conference of Committee Chairs makes recommendations to the Conference of Presidents about the drafting of the agenda for part-sessions.

## **1.8 MEMBERS**

### **Allocation of seats in the Chamber ([Rule 37](#))**

The Conference of Presidents decides how seats in the Chamber are to be allocated among the political groups, the non-attached Members and the institutions of the European Union.

### **Seating plan**

An updated seating plan is distributed and published on the [Plenary webpage](#) for each part-session.

## **1.9 POLITICAL GROUPS ([Rule 33](#))**

Members may form themselves into groups according to their political affinities. Political groups must comprise Members elected in at least one quarter of the Member States. The minimum number of Members needed to form a political group is twenty-three.

A Member may not belong to more than one political group.

## 2 - HOW PLENARY SESSIONS ARE ORGANISED

Parliament sits monthly in Strasbourg in a four-day part-session (Monday to Thursday). Additional part-sessions are held in Brussels.

An agenda is drawn up for each part-session.

### 2.1 SESSIONS OF PARLIAMENT

#### Parliamentary term ([Rule 153](#))

The parliamentary term runs concurrently with the Members' term of office, namely five years.

#### Convening of Parliament ([Rule 154](#))

Parliament meets, without needing to be convened, on the second Tuesday in March each year and decides on the duration of adjournments of the session. Parliament also meets, without needing to be convened, on the first Tuesday after an interval of one month from the election of the European Parliament.

Exceptionally, Parliament may also be convened by the President on his or her own initiative, or by the President at the request of a majority of the members, or of the Commission or the Council.

#### Calendar of Parliament's part-sessions

Parliament's annual calendar of part-sessions is adopted in plenary.

#### Sessions, part-sessions, sittings ([Rule 153](#))

A session is a one-year period. The meetings held as a rule every month by Parliament are part-sessions. Part-sessions are divided into one-day sittings.

#### Meetings held simultaneously with plenary sittings

As a general rule, plenary sittings being the major forum for the business of the House, no other meeting may be held at the same time.

### 2.2 AGENDA

#### Agenda

The following are published for each part-session:

- a **draft agenda**;
- a **final draft agenda**;
- an **agenda**.

#### Draft agenda ([Rule 157](#))

The draft agenda for the forthcoming part-session is adopted by the **Conference of Presidents** at its second last meeting before the part-session concerned. It is then translated, printed and distributed in all the official languages and published on the [Plenary webpage](#).

#### Final draft agenda ([Rule 157](#))

Having examined any requests for amendments to the draft agenda proposed by the political groups, the **Conference of Presidents** adopts the final draft agenda at its last meeting before the part-session concerned.

The final draft agenda is translated, printed and distributed in all the official languages and published on the [Plenary webpage](#).

### **Adoption of the agenda ([Rule 158](#))**

At the beginning of each part-session, Parliament adopts its agenda. Amendments may be proposed by a committee, a political group or Members reaching at least the low threshold and must be received by the President **at least one hour** before the opening of the part-session. He/she may give the floor for one minute each to the person moving the amendment and one speaker against, in each case for not more than one minute.

The agenda thus adopted contains:

- a key to the various parliamentary procedures (listing the order in which items on the agenda will be voted on);
- a list of the debates and other items;
- details of each item (reference documents and procedure);
- speaking time;
- the deadlines for tabling texts relating to items on the agenda and for requesting separate, split and/or roll-call votes.

It is translated, printed and distributed in all the official languages and published on the [Plenary webpage](#).

### **Amendments to the agenda**

Once the agenda has been adopted the Rules provide for changes only in the following three cases:

- application of urgent procedure for a legislative proposal ([Rule 163](#));
- application of a procedural motion (see Rules [197](#), [198](#), [199](#), [200](#) and [201](#));
- a proposal by the President. (The President will normally make such a proposal only when there is a consensus with the political groups.)

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

## **2.3 DEBATES**

### **Timing**

Plenary debates can be followed live on the [Plenary webpage](#). For forthcoming debates, estimated timing and lists of speakers are published and updated in real time.

### **Adjournment of a debate or a vote ([Rule 200](#))**

At the start of a debate, a political group or Members reaching at least the low threshold may move that the debate be adjourned to a specific date and time. The intention to move adjournment of the debate must be notified at least 24 hours in advance to the President, who informs Parliament immediately. If the motion is rejected, it may not be tabled again during the same part-session.

Adjournment of the vote may be moved by a political group or Members reaching at least the low threshold without advance notice, before or during a vote. Such a motion is put to the vote immediately.

### **Closure of a debate ([Rule 199](#))**

A debate may be closed before the list of speakers has been exhausted on a proposal from the President or at the request of a political group or Members reaching at least the low threshold. The vote on such proposal or request is taken immediately.

If the proposal or request is carried, only one Member may speak from each political group which has not yet provided a speaker in the debate.

If the proposal or request is rejected, it may not be tabled during the same debate, except by the President.

In accordance with Rule 174, the President has the right to put end to excessive use of motions such as points of order, procedural motions or explanations of vote, or of requests for separate, split or roll-call votes, where he or she is convinced that those motions or requests are manifestly intended to cause, and would result in, a prolonged and serious obstruction of the procedures of Parliament or the rights of the Members.

## **2.4 DEADLINES**

### **Deadlines for tabling amendments**

The deadline for tabling amendments to texts voted in plenary is normally **13:00 on the Wednesday** of the week before the start of the part-sessions in Strasbourg and Brussels.

Different deadlines may be adopted during the part-session, particularly as regards new items added to the final draft agenda or agenda itself.

The deadlines are published in the agenda for the part-session and on the [Plenary webpage](#).

### **Deadlines for requesting separate, split or roll-call votes**

A political group or Members reaching at least the low threshold may request a separate, split or roll-call vote. The request must be in writing and be made at the latest the evening before the vote unless the President sets a different deadline. Each political group may table no more than one hundred requests for roll call votes per part-session.

When deciding on the basis of a report, Parliament shall take any single vote and/or a final vote by roll-call ([Rule 188](#)). This does not apply to reports concerning procedures on immunity ([Rule 8](#)(2) and [9](#)(4), (7) and (9)).

### **Deadlines relating to legislative procedures**

Deadlines concerning the handling of legislative procedures are announced by the President and have binding effect. The deadlines established in the Rules of Procedure for parliamentary procedures can be calculated on the basis of these announcements. Details of announcements appear in the minutes of the sitting concerned.

## **2.5 URGENT PROCEDURE ([Rule 163](#))**

A request that a debate on a proposal submitted to Parliament be treated as urgent may be made to Parliament by the President, a committee, a political group, Members reaching at least the low threshold, the Commission or the Council. It must be made in writing and supported by reasons.

The vote on the request shall be taken at the beginning of the sitting following that during which the announcement was made. Before the vote, only the mover, one speaker against, and the Chair and/or rapporteur of the committee responsible may be heard, and in each case for no more than three minutes. The President shall determine the time of the debate and vote.

*See also 'Procedure without amendment or debate' (in section 5.3. 'Voting Procedure') and 'Amendments - Simplified Procedure' (in section 5.1. 'Amendments').*

## **2.6 FORMAL SITTINGS**

A formal sitting is a sitting held to mark the official visit to the European Parliament (by a Head of State or religious leader), made at the President's invitation after consulting the Conference of Presidents.

The official guest is seated to the right of the President on the podium. After welcoming remarks by the President, the official guest addresses Parliament from the central rostrum in the Chamber.

The address to a formal sitting of Parliament, is usually scheduled to last 30 minutes and takes place generally before the votes.

### **Sakharov Prize**

The European Parliament "Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought" was established in 1988. The prize is awarded to individuals who have made an exceptional contribution to the fight for human rights across the globe, drawing attention to human rights violations as well as supporting the laureates and their cause. The prize is awarded annually at a formal sitting of Parliament, generally in December.

The programme for the award of the Sakharov Prize is organised and structured in a similar manner to an official visit.

### 3 - MEETING PLACE, CHAMBER, GALLERIES

Parliament sits monthly in Strasbourg in a four-day part-session (Monday to Thursday). Additional part-sessions are held in Brussels. An agenda is drawn up for each part-session.

#### Access to the Chamber

Under [Rule 166](#), only Members of Parliament, Members of the Commission, Members of the Council, Parliament's Secretary-General, staff members whose duties require their presence there and any person invited by the President may enter the Chamber.

Political group staff are allocated a number of seats in the Chamber. They may only enter the Chamber when strictly necessary to assist Members in the exercise of their duties there. They must show the appropriate entry pass and wear it visibly at all times.

Parliament officials may enter the Chamber only on an exceptional basis and when strictly necessary to assist Members in the exercise of their duties there. They must show the appropriate entry pass and wear it visibly at all times. Only parliamentary ushers are permitted, on the authority of the person presiding over the sitting, to distribute documents relating to parliamentary business.

#### Applications for group visits

Applications for group visits may be sent as follows:

Visits to Brussels and to Strasbourg during plenary sessions:

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT  
Visits and Seminars  
PHS 01C003  
rue Wiertz 60  
1047 Brussels  
BELGIUM  
Tel.: +32/2 283 20 51  
E-mail: [visit@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:visit@europarl.europa.eu)

Visits to Strasbourg outside plenary sessions:

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT  
Strasbourg Conference and Visitor Services Unit (CVU)  
1 avenue du Président Robert Schuman  
CS 9104  
67070 Strasbourg Cedex  
FRANCE  
Tel.: +33 3 88 1 72007 / 720 08 / 73 124  
E-mail: [VisitesStrasbourg@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:VisitesStrasbourg@europarl.europa.eu)

For further information: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/visiting/en/visitor-offer>

#### Access to the galleries

Parliament's debates are open to the public, unless the Assembly decides otherwise. Only persons so authorised by Parliament's President or the Secretariat's departments concerned may be admitted to the galleries.

The Protocol Service reserves places in the diplomatic gallery for official delegations, members of the diplomatic corps, members of national parliaments and dignitaries. Applications for access must be sent to DG Presidency's Protocol Service. In principle, these are the only people admitted to the official galleries.

Access to the press galleries is governed by the rules applicable to photographers and television crews inside Parliament's buildings. Places are reserved at all times for members of the accredited press corps.

Places are reserved at all times for visitors' groups sponsored or non-sponsored. Applications for access must be sent to DG Communication's Visits and Seminars Unit. Authorisations are valid for a limited period not exceeding one hour.

Groups of fewer than nine visitors invited by Members, and other visitors, are admitted subject to the availability of places. They must have a pass issued by the Security Unit's Accreditation Centre. These passes are issued for that day's sitting only and are valid for one day at the most. They must be shown on request.

Individual visitors can follow the session for up to one hour. Entry is based on a first come, first served basis. In Strasbourg, individual visitors can attend the debates in the visitors' gallery for a maximum of one hour between 17.00 and 18.00 on Mondays, between 9.00 and 12.00 on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, and between 15.00 and 18.00 on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

Access for officials, political group staff, Members' assistants or long-term visitors is contingent on the availability of vacant seats in the galleries. If necessary, a separate room with a live feed from the Chamber may be placed at their disposal.

The Protocol Service and the Visits and Seminars Unit forward particulars of the official delegations or visitors' groups present in the galleries in good time to the Plenary Organisation and Follow-up Unit so as to ensure that the person presiding over the sitting is informed of their identity.

During formal sittings, special measures can be introduced concerning the access to the diplomatic and public galleries.

### **Conduct in the Chamber**

Persons admitted to the galleries must remain seated and keep silent. They must refrain from any actions contrary to the dignity of the Institution or likely to disrupt the business of the Assembly.

Expressions of approval or disapproval ([Rule 166](#)) are forbidden, as is any photography (except where prior authorisation has been granted on the understanding that additional lighting equipment or flash may not be used).

The use of mobile phones, smoking, eating or drinking is also prohibited in the galleries.

Persons present in the galleries must rise when the Assembly observes a minute's silence.

Persons present in the galleries will be informed of the rules concerning the conduct which the Institution expects of them. Parliament staff responsible for the galleries may call to order and, if necessary, eject any person whose dress or conduct does not comply with these rules.

### **Filming**

Television and cinema cameramen and photographers have permanent access during the part-session to the press' gallery overlooking the Chamber.

Passes bearing the letter **T** (for Tribune = galleries) are issued by the Press Service's Audio-visual Unit for each part-session.

The use of additional lighting equipment and flash is prohibited in the galleries.

## 4 - ORGANISATION AND CONDUCT OF DEBATES

Plenary sittings primarily consist of times for **debates** and **votes** (for further information on voting, see chapter 5 - 'Organisation and conduct of voting').

Key debates are debates selected by the Conference of Presidents as being of major political importance and are often held on Wednesday morning in Strasbourg. During key debates no other meetings may be organised in parallel.

### 4.1 TYPES OF DEBATE

#### **Committee reports (full debate)**

A report is first debated and then put to the vote. A full debate normally has the following structure:

- Rapporteur(s)
- Council (when present)
- Commission
- Rapporteurs for opinions
- Speakers on the speakers' list
- Catch-the-eye
- Commission
- Council (when present)
- Rapporteur(s)

Rapporteurs are given six minutes to speak. This time is not deducted from the time allocated to political groups.

Rapporteurs for opinions are given one minute of speaking time. This time is not deducted from the time allocated to political groups.

Please note that reports adopted in committee by a very large majority may be put directly to the vote without debate ([Rule 159](#)).

#### **Committee reports (short presentation) ([Rule 160](#))**

Short presentations consist of a speech by the rapporteur (4 minutes) and a reaction by the Commission followed by up to 10 minutes of debate in which the President may give the floor, for up to 1 minute each, to Members on the basis of the catch-the-eye procedure.

According to current practice, short presentations are structured as follows:

- Rapporteur 4'
- Catch-the-eye 5' (indicative)
- Commission 5'

#### **Statements by the other Institutions ([Rule 132](#))**

Debates may be held on statements by the European Council, the Council, the Commission or the Vice-President of the European Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The debate may be wound up by a resolution.

#### **Oral questions to the Council, the Commission or the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union ([Rule 136](#))**

Oral questions may be tabled by a committee, political groups or Members reaching at least the low threshold (5 % of Parliament's component Members), with a request that they be placed on the agenda of Parliament. The Conference of Presidents decides whether questions should be placed on the draft agenda, according to [Rule 157](#).

If an oral question is tabled by a committee, the author is given five minutes speaking time.

For oral questions tabled by political groups or Members reaching at least the low threshold, each author is given two minutes speaking time.

A Member designated in advance by the questioners shall move the question in Parliament. If that Member is not present, the question shall lapse.

A debate on one or more oral questions may be wound up by a resolution.

### **Debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law ([Rule 144](#))**

Once a month, on Thursday in Strasbourg, Parliament holds debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Three subjects are chosen each time. A subject cannot be included on the agenda for this type of debate if it is already on the agenda for the part-session. The total duration of the debates should not exceed 60 minutes.

The debates begin with interventions by the authors of the motions for resolutions, who are each given one minute speaking time. They are followed by speakers on behalf of the groups. Two minutes are set aside for catch-the-eye interventions for each debate. The debates are closed by the Commission.

The vote on motions for resolutions to wind up the debates takes place immediately after the debates.

### **Major interpellations for written answer ([Rule 139](#))**

Major interpellations are questions for written answer to the Council, the Commission or the Vice-President of the Commission/High-Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, tabled by a political group.

On receipt of the written answer, if Members or a political group or groups reaching at least the medium threshold (10 % of Parliament's component Members) so request, the major interpellation shall be placed on the final draft agenda of Parliament.

If the addressee fails to answer the major interpellation within six weeks of being forwarded to it, the interpellation shall, at the request of the author, be placed on the final draft agenda of Parliament.

The number of major interpellations debated during the same part-session shall not exceed three. If debates are requested for more than three major interpellations during the same part-session, the Conference of Presidents shall include them in the final draft agenda in the order it has received those requests for debate.

A Member designated in advance by the author, or by those requesting the debate, shall move the major interpellation in Parliament. If that Member is not present, the major interpellation shall lapse. The author is given two minutes speaking time.

The total number of major interpellations is limited to a maximum of 30 per year, fairly distributed among the political groups, and no political group shall submit more than one per month.

### **Topical debate ([Rule 162](#))**

At each part-session one or two 1-hour Topical Debates on a matter of major interest to EU policy take place. Each group has the right to ask for at least one debate per year. The Conference of Presidents ensures a fair distribution.

If a four-fifth majority of the Conference of Presidents disagrees with the subject of a topical debate, it does not take place.

The debate is introduced by a representative of the political group having proposed the topical matter, who is given four minutes speaking time. There is no "catch-the-eye" nor blue cards.

### **Extraordinary debate ([Rule 161](#))**

[Rule 161](#) provides for the holding of an extraordinary debate on a matter of major interest, upon request by a political group or Members reaching at least the low threshold. This debate may not last longer than sixty minutes and is wound up without the adoption of a resolution.

*In practice, this provision is very rarely used.*

### **Question time ([Rule 137](#))**

Question Time with the Commission may be held at each part-session for a duration of 90 minutes on one or more specific horizontal themes decided upon by the Conference of Presidents one month in advance of the part-session.

The Commissioners invited shall have a portfolio related to the specific horizontal theme or themes on which questions are to be put to them. The number of Commissioners is limited to two per part-session, with the possibility of adding a third being dependent on the specific horizontal theme or themes chosen for the Question Time.

Question time shall not be specifically allocated in advance. The President shall ensure, as far as possible, that Members holding different political views and from different Member States are given the opportunity to put a question in turn. Questions and supplementary questions must be directly related to the specific horizontal theme decided by the Conference of Presidents one month in advance of the part-session. The President may rule on their admissibility.

The Member has one minute in which to formulate the question and the Commissioner two minutes in which to reply. That Member may put a supplementary question of 30 seconds duration, having a direct bearing on the main question. The Commissioner has two minutes in which to give a supplementary reply.

*In practice, this provision is very rarely used.*

### **Public hearings and debates on citizens' initiatives ([Rule 222](#))**

Parliament shall hold a debate in plenary on each citizens' initiative published in the Commission register, once the public hearing has taken place. That debate may be wound up with a resolution.

## **4.2 PROCEDURES IN DEBATES**

### **Catch-the-eye ([Rule 171\(6\)](#))**

With a view to increasing the spontaneity of debates and Members' participation, a period is set aside for short speeches (one minute maximum) by Members on a "catch-the-eye" basis. This occurs at the end of the normal list of speakers, immediately prior to the closing speeches by the Commission, Council and the rapporteur(s) (where appropriate).

The agenda sets aside a period of five minutes for "catch-the-eye", but this period can be shortened or extended by the President under [Rule 171](#), on the basis of the overall time available.

Members wishing for the floor under this procedure should attract the President's attention by raising their hand. Priority will normally be given to Members who have been present throughout the debate and who have not spoken during the debate or during the time-slot in which the debate takes place.

Overall, the President seeks to ensure that the "catch-the-eye" is balanced and that the different political groups and nationalities have their turn.

Exceptionally, when adopting the final draft agenda, the Conference of Presidents may decide that a debate is limited to one round of speakers, with no "catch-the-eye" nor blue cards.

### **Blue card ([Rule 171\(8\)](#))**

The President may give the floor to Members who indicate, by raising a blue card, their wish to put to another Member, during that Member's speech, a question of no longer than half a minute's duration, where the speaker agrees and where the President is satisfied that this will not lead to a disruption of the debate.

When a Member raises his/her blue card, the President, if he/she judges it appropriate, will ask the speaker, normally at the close of his/her speech, if he/she is willing to take the question before giving the floor to the blue card speaker.

The question has to be related to what that Member has said and the President seek to avoid a gross imbalance in the political groups' affinities of the Members speaking. The "blue-card" speaker has 30 seconds to ask a question and the original speaker 30 seconds to respond. A speaker can be interrupted by more than one blue-card holder, at the President's discretion. A Member can make more than one blue-card request during a debate; it will be up to the President to decide whether or not to grant the request.

A rapporteur or a speaker under the catch-the-eye procedure can also be interrupted by a blue card holder. Blue card questions may not be put to representatives of the other Institutions.

Exceptionally, when adopting the final draft agenda, the Conference of Presidents may decide that a debate is limited to one round of speakers, with no "catch-the-eye" or blue cards.

## **4.3 TAKING THE FLOOR IN PLENARY**

Members who wish to speak in a debate on the plenary agenda should ask their political group to allocate them speaking time. Alternatively they may ask to speak under the catch-the-eye procedure (see 4.2).

Members who have not spoken in a debate may, at most once per part-session, hand in a written statement of not more than 200 words, which will be appended to the verbatim report of the debate ([Rule 171\(11\)](#)).

### **Speakers**

Members stand and speak from their places, addressing the President or Vice-President.

### **Allocation of speaking time and speaking order ([Rule 171](#))**

Speaking time is laid down for the entire part-session and is indicated in the agenda of the part-session. This information is used by the political groups in allocating speaking time and drawing up their list of speakers.

The allocation of speaking time in the plenary shall take into consideration the fact that Members with disabilities might need more time.

Speaking order varies according to a type of debate.

### ***A. Debate on a report (ordinary legislative procedure, consent procedure, consultation procedure and own-initiative reports<sup>1</sup>)***

The Commission and Council are heard in the debate on a report as a rule immediately after its presentation by the rapporteur(s). The Commission, the Council and the rapporteur(s) may be heard again at the end of the debate, in particular to respond to the statements made by Members.

This means (with some exceptions) that the speaking order for all normal debates is as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> For own-initiative reports that are not short presentations.

1. Rapporteur(s)
2. Council (when present)<sup>2</sup>
3. Commission<sup>3</sup>
4. Rapporteurs for opinion
5. Other speakers on the speakers' list
6. "Catch-the-eye"
7. Commission
8. Council (when present)
9. Rapporteur(s)

### ***B. Cases of special debates on reports***

a) Annual reports from other institutions ([Rule 142](#))

1. Rapporteur
2. Institution invited
3. Possibly Commission
4. Rapporteurs for opinion
5. Other speakers on the speakers' list
6. "Catch-the-eye"
7. Commission
8. Rapporteur

b) Short presentations

1. Rapporteur
2. "Catch-the-eye"
3. Commission

c) Amendment of the Rules of Procedure (REG)

In general, neither the Council nor the Commission intervene in this type of debate, so the structure is:

1. Rapporteur
2. Speakers on the speakers' list
3. "Catch-the-eye"
4. Rapporteur

### ***C. Other procedures***

a) European Council / Council / VPC/HR / Commission statement(s) ([Rule 132](#)):

1. Institution(s) concerned
2. Speakers on the speakers' list
3. "Catch-the-eye"
4. Institution(s) concerned
5. Possibly one round of speakers in reverse order

b) Oral Question(s) ([Rule 136](#)):

1. Author(s) of the OQ(s)
2. Institution(s) concerned
3. Speakers on the speakers' list
4. "Catch-the-eye"
5. Institution(s) concerned

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<sup>2</sup> With regard to reports on subjects that fall within the competence of the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative (VPC/HR) of the Union for foreign and security policy, the latter intervenes after the rapporteur. In case of the VPC/HR being absent, he/she will decide whether he/she is to be replaced by the representative of the current Council Presidency or by a member of the Commission.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

c) Debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law ([Rule 144](#))

1. Authors of the motions for resolutions
2. Speakers on the speakers' list
3. "Catch-the-eye"
4. Commission

d) Topical debate requested by a political group ([Rule 162](#)):

1. Speaker on behalf of the political group requesting the topical debate
2. Council (when present)
3. Commission (when present)
4. Other speakers on the speakers' list
5. Commission (when present)
8. Council (when present)

e) Major interpellations for written answer ([Rule 139](#)):

1. Author(s) of the major interpellation
2. Institution(s) concerned
3. Speakers on the speakers' list
4. "Catch-the-eye"
5. Institution(s) concerned

#### ***D. General principles***

1. The European Council, the Council, the VPC/HR, the Commission and the institutions invited are asked not to exceed the speaking time allocated to them in the agenda.

2. There is no "catch-the-eye" and there are no blue card questions in debates for which the agenda foresees only one round of speakers.

3. The order in which the authors of oral questions ([Rule 136](#)) or of motions for resolution ([Rule 144](#)) speak follows the chronological order of the tabling of the questions or motions respectively.

The maximum speaking time is normally fixed as follows:

Rapporteur(s)		<b>6' (4'+2')</b>
Rapporteur(s) (Short presentations)		<b>4'</b>
Rapporteur(s) for opinion(s)		<b>1'</b>
Author of an oral question: - on behalf of a committee - on behalf of a political group, or members reaching at least the low threshold		<b>5'</b> <b>2'</b>
Author of a major interpellation		<b>2'</b>
Catch-the-eye		<b>1'</b>
Explanation of vote - on behalf of a group - on own behalf	<a href="#">Rule 194</a>	<b>2'</b> <b>1'</b>
Procedural motion	<a href="#">Rule 196</a>	<b>1'</b>
Point of order	<a href="#">Rule 195</a>	<b>1'</b>
Personal statement	<a href="#">Rule 173</a>	<b>3'</b>

### **One-minute speeches ([Rule 172](#))**

For a period of not more than 30 minutes during the first sitting of each part-session, and on the basis of a list prepared by the Plenary Organisation and Follow-up Unit, the President calls Members who wish to draw Parliament's attention on a matter of political importance to speak for a maximum of one minute each.

Blue card questions may not be put during one-minute speeches.

### **Personal statements ([Rule 173](#))**

A Member who asks to make a personal statement may be heard either at the end of the debate, or when the minutes of the sitting to which the request for leave to speak refers are considered for approval.

The Member concerned may not speak on substantive matters connected with the debate but shall confine their observations to rebutting any remarks that have been made about their person in the course of the debate or opinions that have been attributed to them, or to correcting observations that they themselves have made.

Speaking time may not exceed three minutes (unless Parliament decides otherwise).

### **Procedural motions ([Rule 196](#))**

Requests to move a procedural motion, namely:

- to declare a matter inadmissible ([Rule 197](#));
  - to refer back to committee ([Rule 198](#));
  - to close a debate ([Rule 199](#));
  - to adjourn a debate or vote ([Rule 200](#));
  - to suspend or close the sitting ([Rule 201](#)).
- shall take precedence over other requests to speak.

Only the following persons may be heard on these motions in addition to the mover: one speaker against and the chair or rapporteur of the committee responsible. Speaking time shall not exceed one minute.

### **Interpretation of debates in plenary ([Rule 167](#))**

Debates in plenary are interpreted simultaneously into all the official languages of the European Union.

If a speaker uses a language that is not an official one, the speech will not be interpreted and will not be included in the verbatim report of the debates.

Speakers may provide beforehand the text of the speech they will be giving in plenary.

Numbers of the interpreting booths and sound channels:

1 DE German	2 EN English	3 FR French	4 IT Italian	5 NL Dutch	6 DA Danish	7 EL Greek
8 ES Spanish	9 PT Portuguese	10 SU Finnish	11 SV Swedish	12 CS Czech	13 ET Estonian	14 LV Latvian
15 LT Lithuanian	16 HU Hungarian	17 MT Maltese	18 PL Polish	19 SK Slovak	20 SL Slovenian	21 BG Bulgarian
22 RO Romanian	23 GA Irish	24 HR Croatian				

## 4.4 CONDUCT IN THE CHAMBER

### Standards of conduct ([Rule 10](#))

Under [Rule 10](#), Members' conduct shall be characterised by mutual respect, based on the values and principles laid down in the Treaties, and particularly in the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Members shall respect the dignity of Parliament and shall not harm its reputation.

Furthermore, they shall not compromise the smooth conduct of parliamentary business, the maintenance of security and order on Parliament's premises or the functioning of Parliament's equipment.

They shall not disrupt the good order of the Chamber and refrain from improper behaviour. They shall not display banners. In parliamentary debates, Members shall not resort to offensive language.

The application of the Rules of Procedure shall not otherwise detract from the liveliness of parliamentary debates, nor shall it undermine Members' freedom of speech.

Members shall refrain from any type of psychological or sexual harassment and shall respect the Code of appropriate behaviour for Members of the European Parliament in exercising their duties which is attached to the Rules of Procedure.

### Calling to order ([Rule 175](#))

The President calls to order any Member who fails to comply with the relevant provisions of [Rule 10](#) as regards standards of conduct.

Should the breach be repeated, the President calls the Member to order again, and the fact is recorded in the minutes of the sitting.

Should the breach continue, or if a further breach is committed, the President may deny the offenders the right to speak and exclude them from the Chamber for the remainder of the sitting.

Should disturbances threaten to obstruct the business of the House, the President shall close or suspend the sitting for a specific period to restore order.

The President may decide to interrupt the live broadcasting of the sitting in the case of breach of Rule 11 by a Member and may order the deletion from the audiovisual record of the proceedings of the parts of a speech by a Member that breach Rule 11.

### Penalties ([Rule 176](#))

In serious cases of breach of Rule 11, the President, after having invited the Member concerned to submit his / her observation (or after an oral hearing), shall adopt a reasoned decision laying down the appropriate penalty. The penalty is notified to the Member concerned before being announced to plenary.

When assessing the conduct observed, account should be taken of its exceptional, recurrent or permanent nature and of its seriousness and if applicable, of possible damage inflicted on the dignity and reputation of Parliament.

The penalty may consist, inter alia, of a temporary suspension from participation in all or some of the activities of Parliament without prejudice to the right to vote in plenary.

## 5 - ORGANISATION AND CONDUCT OF VOTING

Votes in plenary take place after the debates, generally at about midday. A quorum exists when one third of the Members are present in the Chamber. In cases of doubt, the President will call for a vote to be taken using the electronic voting system.

At the end of voting, those Members who so wish may speak in order to give an explanation of vote.

### 5.1 AMENDMENTS

An amendment may seek to alter a part of a text (a motion for a resolution, a draft legislative resolution or a legislative proposal) and hence to delete, add, or substitute words or figures in this text. It has to satisfy certain admissibility criteria.

Amendments are presented in columns (with the proposed new text on the right).

Only the committee(s) responsible, a political group, or Members reaching at least the low threshold may table amendments for consideration in plenary.

Amendments must be signed by their authors and tabled in writing with Parliament's appropriate department. Parliament staff (the Tabling Desk) are responsible for coordinating and handling amendments from the time when they have been tabled until they are put to the vote.

See also 'Deadlines for tabling amendments' (in section 2.4. 'Deadlines').

After being checked by the Directorate for Legislative Acts (Lawyer-linguists), amendments by a committee responsible are published in anticipation of the plenary vote and disseminated via the [Plenary webpage](#).

#### **Compromise amendments ([Rule 181\(4\)](#))**

The President may accept an amendment tabled after the tabling deadline if he considers it a compromise amendment.

In so doing he may consider the following general criteria:

- compromise amendments relate to parts of the text to which amendments were tabled before the deadline expired;
- compromise amendments are tabled by political groups representing a majority in Parliament, the chairs or rapporteurs of the committees concerned, or the authors of other amendments;
- where there are compromise amendments, other amendments to the same passage are withdrawn.

Only the President may propose that a compromise amendment be considered. The President must obtain Parliament's agreement by asking whether there are any objections to the amendment's being put to the vote. If an objection is raised, the plenary will decide by a majority of the votes cast whether to vote on the compromise amendment.

#### **Tabling and moving amendments ([Rule 180](#))**

The committee responsible, a political group, or Members reaching at least the low threshold (one-twentieth of Parliament's component Members) - or for certain procedures one tenth of the House - may table amendments for consideration in plenary.

Amendments must be tabled in writing and signed by their authors. The deadline for tabling amendments is set by the President.

An amendment may be moved during the debate by its author or by any other Member appointed by the author to replace him or her.

As a general rule an amendment may not be put to the vote if it has not been printed and distributed in all the official languages. Parliament may nevertheless decide by a majority of the votes cast to vote on such an amendment but only on condition that there is no opposition from 38 Members or, if there are less than 100 Members present, from one tenth of those present.

A political group or Members reaching at least the low threshold may table an alternative motion for a resolution to a non-legislative motion for a resolution contained in a committee report (Rule 181(3)). In this event the authors may not table amendments to the same text. The alternative motion for a resolution may not be longer than the committee's motion for a resolution. It is put to a single vote in Parliament.

Special provisions cover the tabling of amendments to own-initiative reports under Rule 54(4). Amendments are only admissible if tabled by individual Members making up one tenth of the House. The rapporteur may table amendments to take account of new information received after adoption of the text by the committee responsible.

### **Committee consideration of plenary amendments ([Rule 184](#))**

When more than fifty amendments and requests for a split or separate vote have been tabled to a report for consideration in plenary, the President may ask the committee responsible to meet to consider each of those amendments or requests. Any amendment or request for a split or separate vote not receiving favourable votes at this stage from at least one third of the committee members is not put to the vote.

### **Order of voting of amendments ([Rule 183](#))**

The Rules of Procedure lay down the order in which amendments tabled are to be put to the vote in plenary.

With the assistance of Parliament's appropriate department (the Tabling Desk), the President draws up a voting list for each text for which the vote has been placed on the agenda.

See also 'Voting procedure - second reading' (in section 5.3. 'Voting procedure').  
See also 'Voting procedure - third reading' (in section 5.3. 'Voting procedure').

If two or more mutually exclusive amendments have been tabled to the same part of a text, the amendment that departs furthest from the original text has priority and is put to the vote first. If it is adopted, the other amendments fall. If it is rejected, the amendment next in priority is put to the vote, each of the remaining amendments being treated similarly.

Where there is doubt as to priority, the President decides, if necessary after consulting the rapporteur. If all amendments are rejected, the original text is deemed adopted unless a separate vote has been requested within the specified deadline. However, the President may put the original text to the vote first or, before taking the vote on the amendment that departs furthest from the original text, put to the vote an amendment that is closer to the original text.

When an amendment is adopted, other incompatible amendments relating to the same part of the text will fall. As a general rule amendments will lapse if they are inconsistent with a previous vote.

### **Identical amendments**

Two or more identical amendments tabled by different authors are put to the vote as one.

### **Justifications for amendments**

Amendments to legislative documents may be accompanied by short justifications. Such justifications are intended solely to clarify an author's intentions. They fall under the responsibility of their author and are not put to the vote.

Justifications are not permitted when amendments relate to non-legislative texts.

## **Oral amendments**

Exceptionally, amendments may be tabled orally in plenary sitting before the text in question is put to the vote. However, since the Rules of Procedure (Rule 180) provide that amendments may be put to the vote only after they have been printed and distributed in all the official languages, unless Parliament decides otherwise, the President of the sitting is required to consult the House on whether an oral amendment should be considered. If at least 38 Members object, the oral amendment may not be taken into consideration.

## **Procedure in plenary without amendment ([Rule 159](#))**

Any legislative proposal (first reading) or any non-legislative motion for a resolution adopted in committee with less than one tenth of the committee members voting against is placed on Parliament's draft agenda for adoption without amendment.

An item to be taken without amendment is dealt with by a single vote unless, before the final draft agenda has been drawn up, political groups or individual Members who together constitute one tenth of Parliament's membership have requested permission in writing to table amendments. In that event the President shall set a deadline for tabling the amendments.

When finalising a part-session agenda, the Conference of Presidents may propose that other items be taken without amendment. When adopting its agenda, Parliament may not accept any such proposal if a political group or Members reaching at least the low threshold have raised objections in writing at least one hour before the opening of the part-session.

## **Amendments – Simplified procedure ([Rule 52](#))**

Following initial discussion of a legislative proposal, the Chair of the committee concerned may propose that the proposal be approved without amendment. Unless members or a political group or groups representing at least one tenth of the committee object, the Chair will submit a report to Parliament approving the proposal.

## **Amendments – Admissibility ([Rules 22](#) and [181](#))**

The admissibility criteria are laid down in the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament. In line with the development of the legislative procedure, additional inadmissibility criteria apply at second reading (Rule 68).

No amendments are admissible at third reading ([Rule 78\(3\)](#)).

The President decides whether amendments are admissible. His decision is not based exclusively on the provisions relating to inadmissibility, but on the provisions of the Rules in general. His decision is final.

An amendment that has been declared inadmissible is not put to the vote.

## **Amendments – Withdrawal ([Rule 180\(5\)](#))**

An amendment may be withdrawn before the vote. In this case it will fall unless immediately taken over by another party under the same conditions (by the committee(s) responsible, by a political group or by Members reaching at least the low threshold).

## **Amendments – Deletion**

Any amendment deleting a part of a text is put to the vote before other amendments relating to the same part of the text.

If a part of a text is the subject of a deleting amendment, separate vote requests on that text are not admissible and any request for a roll-call vote must concern the deleting amendment, not the original text.

## **Collective voting on amendments ([Rules 183](#))**

Voting on a legislative proposal takes place on the basis of a recommendation by the committee responsible. If the committee has agreed on a set of amendments to the text with which the report is concerned the amendments in question are put to the vote collectively in plenary and taken first in order of priority.

If a political group or Members reaching at least the low threshold have requested a separate vote or if other incompatible amendments have been tabled to the same part of the text, the relevant committee amendments are put to the vote separately.

The President may put other amendments to the vote collectively where they are complementary. In such cases he follows the procedure set out above. Authors of such amendments may propose such collective votes on their own amendments.

The President may decide, following the adoption or a rejection of a particular amendment that several other amendments of similar content or with similar objectives are to be put to the vote collectively. The President may seek the agreement of Parliament before doing so. Such a set of amendments may relate to different parts of the original text.

## **5.2 ORGANISATION OF VOTING**

### **The service responsible**

The Tabling Desk is responsible for the submission of texts put to the vote in Parliament and for checking whether they comply with the rules and are admissible. Disputes are referred to the President of Parliament. His decision is final.

The Tabling Desk prepares briefings for the President and also publishes on the [Plenary webpage](#) voting schedules and voting lists concerning the organisation and conduct of voting. Prior to voting, the official responsible briefs the Chair and notifies him of any procedural and/or presentational problems which may occur during voting.

### **Order of votes of items placed on the agenda**

Texts are put to the vote in the order laid down in the voting schedule published on the [Plenary webpage](#).

### **Voting lists**

A voting list is drawn up for each item that is put to the vote.

An initial list is published by the Tabling Desk on the [Plenary webpage](#) after amendments have been received. It shows the order in which the amendments will be put to the vote. Upon expiry of the deadline for the submission of requests for roll-call, separate and split votes, a final version of the voting list, including details of these requests, is published on the [Plenary webpage](#).

### **Taking the floor during voting time ([Rules 159](#) and [182\(4\)](#))**

No Member may be given the floor when Parliament is voting. During voting only the President and the rapporteur or Chair of the committee responsible may address the House.

When an item is taken without debate, the rapporteur or the chairman of the committee responsible may make a statement of not more than two minutes immediately prior to the vote.

Other Members may be authorised to take the floor to draw attention to points of order concerning the vote.

A Member may not be given the floor in order to justify amendments under consideration or to relaunch the debate on substantive matters.

### **Disputes on voting ([Rule 193](#))**

The President may of his own initiative or at the request of the House cross-check the result of a vote by show of hands using the electronic voting system.

The result of the vote is initially displayed only on the President's screen. The result of the vote is validated when it is announced by the President. The President's decision is final.

### **Electronic vote ([Rule 192](#))**

Electronic votes are cast using the blue non-transferable chip card.

Members may vote from any seat in the Chamber using their personal cards.

The voting card is inserted into the slot in the terminal at the Member's seat with the side showing the Member's name facing towards him or her. The terminal then comes on.

If the card has been inserted incorrectly, a yellow warning light will flash and an animated display will appear.

If the card has been correctly inserted, the display will show:

- the card number
- the Member's name
- the current date.

When the President puts a motion to the vote, Members should press the button on the terminal that corresponds to their voting intention. The appropriate light will then come on the terminal:

- |                     |            |             |
|---------------------|------------|-------------|
| – left-hand button  | FOR        | GREEN light |
| – centre button     | ABSTENTION | WHITE light |
| – right-hand button | AGAINST    | RED light   |

When a vote is taken by secret ballot, only a BLUE light will appear, indicating that the Member has taken part in the vote.

The display will show information about the vote in the form of pictograms:

- subject of the vote
- nature of vote: for (+), against (-), abstention (0) for votes by public ballot  
X for votes by secret ballot
- type of vote: simple, roll-call or secret ballot
- status of vote: open, closed

Until such time as the President has announced that voting is closed, Members may change their vote by pressing a different button. Members must not remove their cards from the slot until the President has declared the vote closed. Otherwise their vote will not be registered.

The President assesses the data provided by the voting system, notes the result and announces it.

Following the announcement by the President, the display on the terminal and one of the big screens in the Chamber will show the result of the vote.

During debates, and outside voting times, the display will show the following information:

- subject of the debate
- name of the speaker
- names of the upcoming speakers
- the next items on the agenda.

### **Voting by roll-call ([Rule 190](#))**

The vote is taken by roll-call if a political group or Members reaching at least the low threshold have so requested in writing before the deadline laid down in the voting schedule published on the [Plenary webpage](#). Roll-call voting takes place using the electronic system. The result of the vote is recorded by name and published as an annex to the minutes of the sitting.

The final (or single) vote on a report is always held by roll-call (Rule 188). This does not apply to reports concerning procedures on immunity ([Rule 9](#)).

### **Corrections of votes**

Requests for a correction of vote made verbally in the sitting or forwarded in writing or electronically by Members may concern only roll-call votes.

Any request for a correction of vote forwarded by a Member is recorded in the list of "results of roll-call votes" as printed and available electronically on the [Plenary webpage](#), but the result of the vote is not changed.

Any Member wishing to point out a correction to a roll-call vote may do so by using the "Roll-call vote correction" electronic form in the "Members only" space on the [Plenary webpage](#).

Corrections received before 6:30 p.m. on the day of the vote are published on the [Plenary webpage](#) on that day and in the minutes of the sitting, after the results of votes.

A correction of votes can be submitted until Friday 12 noon of the second week following the part-session.

### **Explanations of vote ([Rule 194](#))**

After voting time, Members may give oral explanations of vote. Each Member may give a maximum of three oral explanations of vote per part-session. Members may also hand in written explanations of vote of no more than 200 words which are included on the Members' pages on Parliament's website.

Requests for oral explanations of vote must be forwarded to the Plenary Organisation and Follow-up Unit before the end of voting time. No further requests for explanations of vote are admissible after the first explanation of vote for that particular sitting has begun.

Speaking time for oral explanations of votes is one minute if the Member is speaking in a personal capacity and two minutes if the Member is speaking on behalf of a political group.

Explanations of vote are not admissible in the case of:

- secret ballots;
- procedural matters;
- resolutions tabled in the context of debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law ([Rule 144](#)).

For items placed on the agenda without debate ([Rule 159](#)), explanations of votes may only be made in writing.

### **Quorum ([Rule 178](#))**

A quorum exists when one third of the component Members of Parliament are present in the Chamber.

Unless the President – on a request made before voting has begun – establishes that the quorum is not present, the vote is valid whatever the number of voters.

A request for the quorum to be established may be made by at least 38 Members. If the number of Members required to make up the quorum is not present, the President shall declare that the quorum is not present. In this case the vote is placed on the agenda of the next sitting.

### **Majorities**

Unless the Treaties and/or Rules of Procedure provide otherwise, decisions are adopted by a majority of the votes cast (for and against). This is often referred to as a "simple" majority.

Some decisions, for example amendments to the Budget, votes at second reading in legislative procedures and amendments to the Rules of Procedure, require for adoption the votes of a majority of the Members of the House. This is often referred to as a "qualified" majority

Some decisions, for example on the use of funds under the Flexibility Instrument or the Globalisation Adjustment Fund, require for adoption the votes of a majority of the Members of the House and also three fifths of the votes cast (for and against).

Some decisions, for example under Rule 21 or Rule 89, require for adoption the votes of a majority of the Members of the House and also two thirds of the votes cast (for and against).

### **Results of votes**

The results of votes are published as an annex to the minutes of the sitting. They are also available on the day of the vote on the [Plenary webpage](#).

## **5.3 VOTING PROCEDURE**

The following voting procedure applies to reports:

- (a) first, where applicable, voting on any amendments to the proposal for a legally binding act;
- (b) second, voting on that proposal as a whole, amended or otherwise;
- (c) third, voting on any amendments to the motion for a resolution/draft legislative resolution;
- (d) finally, voting on the motion for a resolution as a whole.

### **Voting procedure – second reading (Rule [67](#), [68](#), and [69](#))**

Where no proposal to reject or amend the Council's common position has been tabled, the common position is deemed to have been approved. Amendments in second reading require a majority of Parliament's component Members to be adopted.

A proposal to reject the common position is voted on before voting on any amendments. Where several amendments to the common position are tabled, they are put to the vote in the order set out in Rule 183.

### **Voting procedure – third reading (Rule [78](#))**

The joint text as a whole is the subject of a single vote. The joint text is approved if it secures a majority of the votes cast (simple majority).

No amendments may be tabled to the joint text.

### **Procedure in plenary without amendment (Rule [159](#))**

Any report adopted in committee with fewer than one tenth of the committee's members voting against shall, in accordance with Rule 159, be subject to a single vote. No amendments nor requests for separate or split votes may therefore be submitted. This single vote is held by roll-call (Rule 188).

### **Procedure without amendment and debate**

Items placed on the agenda of the sitting are the subject of a debate, except for those adopted in accordance with the simplified procedure or the procedure without debate and amendment (Rules 52 and 159).

### **Motion for the rejection of a Commission proposal at first reading (Rule [59\(2\)](#))**

A motion to reject a Commission proposal outright is put to the vote before any amendments. The motion may be tabled only by the committee(s) responsible or Members reaching at least the low threshold.

### **Referral back to committee ([Rule 198](#))**

Motions by a political group or Members reaching at least the low threshold seeking to refer a matter back to committee may be brought at three stages of the procedure:

- when Parliament fixes its order of business at the opening of a part-session;
- when the debate on the item in question is opened;
- during the vote, at any point before the final vote.

Such a request may be made only once at each of these three stages.

In the case of the first two of these three stages, the intention to move referral back to committee must be notified at least twenty-four hours in advance to the President, who must inform Parliament immediately.

Referral back to committee entails suspension of the discussion of the item.

Referral back does not apply to the debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law (Rule 144). Under Rules 132 and 136 it only applies to texts tabled by a committee.

### **Adjournment of a vote ([Rule 200](#))**

A political group or Members reaching at least the low threshold may also move that a vote be adjourned either before or during the vote, in which case this motion is put immediately to the vote.

## **5.4 TYPES OF VOTE**

### **Split vote ([Rule 185](#))**

Split voting means voting an amendment, article or paragraph of the text under consideration in two or more parts.

A split vote may be requested by a political group or Members reaching at least the low threshold. The deadline for submitting requests for split votes is indicated in the voting schedule document published in the “votes” section of Parliament’s plenary website.

### **Separate vote ([Rule 183](#))**

Where the committee responsible has tabled a set of amendments to the text with which the report is concerned, the President puts them to the vote collectively, unless a separate vote is requested or unless other amendments have been tabled (Rule 183(6)).

A separate vote may also concern a paragraph of a resolution to be put to the vote (Rule 182(1)(d)).

A separate vote may be requested by a political group or Members reaching at least the low threshold. The deadline for making such a request is indicated in the voting schedule document published in the “votes” section of Parliament’s plenary website.

### **Single vote ([Rule 159](#))**

Items placed on the agenda for adoption without amendment are the subject of a single vote in plenary. Split and separate vote requests are not admissible.

## 6 – DOCUMENTS RELATED TO ACTIVITIES IN PLENARY

See also:

- *Amendments (section 5.1.)*
- *Voting lists (in section 5.2. 'Organisation of voting')*
- *Lists of speakers (in section 4.3. 'Taking the floor in Plenary')*

### Minutes ([Rule 202](#))

Minutes of each sitting, detailing the proceedings and the decisions of Parliament and the names of speakers, are distributed at least half an hour before the beginning of the afternoon period of the next sitting.

At the beginning of the afternoon period of each sitting, the President places before Parliament, for its approval, the minutes of the previous sitting. If any objections are raised to the minutes, Parliament decides, if necessary, whether the changes requested should be considered.

The minutes shall be signed by the President and the Secretary-General. They shall be published in the Official Journal of the European Union.

### Record of Members' attendance in Plenary ([Rule 156](#))

An attendance register is placed outside the entrance of the Chamber while sittings are in progress.

The names of the Members recorded as being present in the attendance register are indicated in the minutes of each sitting as "present". The names of the Members excused by the President are indicated in the minutes of each sitting as "excused".

Members wishing to be excused from attending must submit a request by ordinary or electronic mail, sent to the Quaestors' secretariat.

A Member may notify the Plenary Records Unit that he or she was present even though his or her name does not appear in the attendance register. The relevant information will be published in the minutes, but the attendance register will not be changed.

### Texts adopted ([Rule 203](#))

The texts adopted in plenary constitute the acts of the European Parliament. They may be resolutions, legislative resolutions, legislative acts, opinions, declarations, decisions, recommendations etc.

Texts adopted by Parliament shall be published immediately after the vote. They shall be placed before Parliament in conjunction with the minutes of the relevant sitting and preserved in the records of Parliament.

Texts adopted by Parliament shall be subject to legal-linguistic finalisation under the responsibility of the President. Where such texts are adopted on the basis of an agreement reached between Parliament and the Council, such finalisation shall be carried out by the two institutions acting in close cooperation and by mutual agreement.

Positions adopted by Parliament under the ordinary legislative procedure shall take the form of a consolidated text. Where Parliament's vote was not based on an agreement with the Council, the consolidated text shall identify any amendments adopted.

After finalisation, the texts adopted shall be signed by the President and the Secretary-General and published in the Official Journal of the European Union.

### Verbatim report ([Rule 204](#))

A verbatim report of the proceedings of each sitting is drawn up as a multilingual document in which all oral contributions appear in the original official language. The verbatim report also includes written statements (Rule 171(11)).

The verbatim report is published as an annex to the Official Journal of the European Union.

### **Audio-visual record of proceedings ([Rule 205](#))**

Parliament broadcasts in real time on its website the debates in plenary, in the languages in which they are conducted, as well as the multilingual soundtrack from all active interpretation booths.

Immediately after each sitting, Parliament publishes on its website an indexed audio-visual recording of the debates in plenary, linked to the multilingual verbatim reports of the proceedings, and available for streaming, downloading and uploading on social media.

### **Distribution of documents ([Rules 165 and 169](#))**

Documents forming the basis for Parliament's debates and decisions are printed and distributed to Members. They are also accessible via the [Plenary webpage](#). A list of these documents is published in the minutes of Parliament's sittings.

Except in the cases of urgency provided for in the Rules of Procedure, a debate and vote are not opened on a text in plenary unless the text was distributed at least twenty-four hours previously.

### **Legislative reports ([Rule 51](#))**

The term "legislative report" refers to texts considered by Parliament in the context of the various legislative procedures (such as ordinary legislative procedure, consent and consultation).

### **Non-legislative reports ([Rule 53](#))**

The term "non-legislative report" refers to reports adopted by Parliament on its own initiative.

### **Texts relating to statements by other institutions and oral questions with debate ([Rules 132 and 136](#))**

When a statement with debate or an oral question is placed on its agenda, Parliament decides whether or not to wind up the debate with a resolution. If Parliament decides on a resolution, a committee, a political group or Members reaching at least the low threshold may table a motion for a resolution, in accordance with [Rules 132](#) and [136](#) respectively.

Each motion for a resolution is given a serial document number. A joint motion for a resolution replacing a set of motions for resolutions (on the same subject) receives a JMR number + the serial number of the first motion tabled of the set to be replaced.

## References and acronyms for session documents

The following references and acronyms denoting the various kinds of procedure and document are often used in session documents:

A: reports, recommendations, and recommendations for second reading  
B: motions for resolutions and other session documents  
O: oral questions  
G: major interpellations  
C: documents from other institutions  
T: texts adopted  
RC: joint motions for resolutions  
COD or \*\*\* ordinary legislative procedure (I: 1<sup>st</sup> reading; II: 2<sup>nd</sup> reading; III: 3<sup>rd</sup> reading)  
CNS or \* consultation procedure  
APP or \*\*\* consent  
NLE: non-legislative enactment  
REG: report on an amendment to a Rule of Procedure  
INI: own-initiative report  
INL: legislative own-initiative report  
IMM: report on a request for defence or waiver of immunity of a Member  
BUD: budget documents  
DEC: budgetary discharge  
ACI: interinstitutional agreement  
RSP: resolutions on subjects of political importance  
DEA: delegated acts  
RPS: regulatory procedure with scrutiny  
RSO: decisions on internal organisation

OJ: agenda

The number that may follow the letter denoting the document type refers to the parliamentary term: e.g. A8 = a report adopted during the eight parliamentary term; A9 = a report adopted during the ninth parliamentary term, etc.

## Directorate for the Plenary

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In the Chambers in Brussels and Strasbourg the officials assisting the President are responsible for the following tasks:

- minutes
- verbatim reports of proceedings
- lists of speakers
- requests for the floor and requests to modify speaking time
- explanations of vote
- assisting the President and the Vice-President in the conduct of the sitting.