

**European Parliament**  
Directorate-General for the Presidency  
Directorate for the Plenary

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**The Plenary: a User's Guide**  
(revision 2024)

This guide explains the role and works of the plenary of the European Parliament and is structured as follows: the **first chapter** deals with the governing bodies of the Parliament, giving an overview of who does what in plenary, the **second chapter** sets out how plenary sessions are organised and how the plenary agendas are drawn up, the **third chapter** elaborates on the access and conduct in plenary chambers, the **fourth chapter** deals with the organisation and conduct of plenary debates, the **fifth chapter** explains the procedures around votes and finally the **sixth chapter** deals with the types of documents related to activities in the plenary.

To learn more about the Parliament's different legislative committees, you can find information [here](#). If you are looking to visit to the European Parliament, either in Brussels or in Strasbourg, you are welcome to plan your visit [here](#).

# 1 - WHO DOES WHAT IN PLENARY?

## 1.1 THE PRESIDENT

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

The President directs all activities of Parliament and its bodies in accordance with the [Rules of Procedure](#), 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](#))

Parliament elects its President by secret ballot. Only a political group or Members reaching at least the low threshold can nominate a candidate, with the consent of the nominee. Nominations may be handed in before each ballot.

During the election of the President, a Member will be provisionally in the Chair by virtue of [Rule 14](#) and announce the nominees to Parliament. If, after three ballots, none of the candidates has 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, with the consent of the nominee.

If the number of nominations does not exceed the number of seats to be filled, the candidates are 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 THE BUREAU**

### **Composition and duties of the Bureau ([Rules 24](#) and [25](#))**

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

The Bureau takes decisions on, among others, 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.

## **1.5 THE CONFERENCE OF PRESIDENTS**

### **Composition and duties of the Conference of Presidents ([Rules 26](#), [27](#) and [163](#))**

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.

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.

## **1.6 THE CONFERENCE OF COMMITTEE CHAIRS ([Rules 29](#) and [163](#))**

The Conference of Committee Chairs consists of the chairs of all standing or special committees, and makes recommendations to the Conference of Presidents on drafting of the agenda for part-sessions.

## **1.7 MEMBERS**

### **Term of office ([Rule 4](#))**

Members are elected for a term of five years.

### **Allocation of seats in the Chamber ([Rule 38](#))**

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.

## **1.8 POLITICAL GROUPS AND NON-ATTACHED MEMBERS ([Rule 33](#) and [37](#))**

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 and 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 at a time.

Members who do not belong to a political group are 'non-attached', in accordance with [Rule 37](#).

## 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 159](#))

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

#### Sessions, part-sessions, sittings ([Rule 159](#))

A session covers 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, which in turn are divided into specific time slots for debates and votes.

#### Convening of Parliament ([Rule 160](#))

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.

Parliament may also be convened on a decision by the Conference of Presidents, on a proposal from a committee, Members or a political group or groups reaching at least the high threshold, to hold ad hoc part-sessions, without a voting session, on matters of significant political importance.

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

Parliament's [annual calendar](#) of part-sessions is adopted in plenary.

#### 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

Adopting the agenda of each part-session involves various stages:

- the **draft agenda**
- the **final draft agenda**
- the **agenda**

#### Draft agenda ([Rule 163](#))

The draft agenda for the forthcoming part-session is adopted by the Conference of Presidents, on the basis of a recommendation by the Conference of Committee Chairs, at its second last meeting before the part-session concerned.

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

### **Final draft agenda ([Rule 163](#))**

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

### **Adoption of the agenda ([Rule 164](#))**

At the beginning of each part-session, Parliament adopts its agenda on the basis of the final draft agenda. A committee, a political group or at least one tenth of Members may propose one amendment to the final draft agenda, in response to events or political developments that arose after its adoption by the CoP. Any proposal for such amendments must be received by the President **at least one hour** before the opening of the part-session. The President may give the floor to the person moving the amendment and to one speaker against, each for not more than one minute.

The **agenda** includes, among others, the following information:

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

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

### **Amendments to the agenda, after its adoption**

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 170](#));
- application of a procedural motion (see Rules, [204](#), [205](#), [206](#) and [207](#));
- 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.

### **Adjournment of a debate or a vote ([Rule 206](#))**

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 a 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 205](#))**

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 181](#), 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.

## 2.3 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, particularly for new items added to the final draft agenda or the agenda.

The deadlines are included in the agenda for the part-session and published 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 195](#)). 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.

## 2.4 URGENT PROCEDURE ([Rule 170](#))

A request that a decision on a proposal submitted to Parliament be treated as urgent, as a result of unforeseen developments, may be submitted 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. For requests made by the Commission or the Council, the statement of reasons must contain a detailed justification of each proposal and, where appropriate, a precise indication of legally required deadlines for the adoption or entry into force of the proposed legally binding act.

The President announces any request for an urgent decision to Parliament as soon as possible after it is received. Parliament then votes on the request at the beginning of the next sitting. 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. Where the request is approved, the President determines the time of the vote and, where appropriate, a debate.

In principle, Parliament takes the urgent decision on the proposal on the basis of a report from the committee responsible. However, if requested by the President, a committee, a political group or Members reaching at least the low threshold, Parliament may exceptionally decide to take the urgent decision without a report or on the basis of an oral report by the committee responsible.

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

## 2.5 DECISIONS TO ENTER INTO INTERINSTITUTIONAL NEGOTIATIONS



Where a committee has adopted a legislative report pursuant to [Rule 51](#), it may decide, by a majority of its members, to enter into negotiations on the basis of that report, in accordance with [Rule 72](#).

Decisions to enter into negotiations shall be announced at the beginning of the part-session following their adoption in committee. By the end of the day following the announcement in Parliament, Members or a political group or groups reaching at least the medium threshold or a committee having delivered an opinion pursuant to [Rule 57](#) may request in writing that a committee decision to enter into negotiations be put to the vote. Parliament shall then proceed to that vote during the same part-session. If no such request is received by the expiry of the deadline laid down in [Rule 72](#) (2), the President shall inform Parliament that this is the case. If a request is made, the President may, immediately prior to the vote, give the floor to one speaker from each political group to speak on the committee's decision to enter into negotiations. Each speaker may make a statement lasting no more than one minute.

If Parliament rejects the committee's decision to enter into negotiations, the draft legislative act and the report of the committee responsible shall be placed on the agenda of the following part-session, and the President shall set a deadline for 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, religious leader or other prominent guests), 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 generally takes place before 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.

## 3 - PLENARY CHAMBER AND GALLERY

For plenary sittings, the 720 Members of the European Parliament debate and vote in the Chambers in Strasbourg and Brussels. Individual and group visitors are welcomed in the Visitors' Gallery in both Brussels and Strasbourg.

### 3.1 ACCESS TO THE CHAMBER, MEMBERS AND STAFF

In accordance with [Rule 173](#), access to the Chamber is reserved for 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.

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.

### 3.2 ACCESS TO AND CONDUCT IN THE GALLERY

#### Visitors

Visiting the European Parliament is a unique opportunity for citizens to learn how EU parliamentary democracy works and how the decisions taken by the European Parliament are relevant to our daily lives. Parliament offers visitors a wide range of possibilities to get acquainted with the work, including the possibility to follow debates and votes from the Visitors' Gallery overlooking the Chambers in Brussels and Strasbourg.

Parliament has a dedicated visitors' service that manages visits to the European Parliament. You can find all the information you need to plan your visit here: <https://visiting.europarl.europa.eu/en>

#### Official delegations and diplomats

Places are reserved for official delegations, members of the diplomatic corps, members of national parliaments and dignitaries in the Diplomatic Gallery. In principle, these are the only people admitted to the official galleries: Applications for access must be sent to Parliament's Protocol Service [Protocole@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:Protocole@europarl.europa.eu)

#### Media

Another part of the Gallery is dedicated to the press. Access is governed by the rules applicable to media representatives inside Parliament's buildings. For more information on media accreditation: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/accreditation>

#### Conduct in the Gallery

The Chamber is a working area and persons admitted to the Gallery are expected to follow certain rules on conduct during sittings. Visitors must remain seated, keep silent and refrain from any actions likely to disrupt the business of the Assembly.

The use of mobile phones, smoking, eating or drinking is not allowed in the Gallery.

Expressions of approval or disapproval are also prohibited, as is any photography or filming (except where prior authorisation has been granted; lighting equipment or flash may not be used).

There are special rules governing recordings on the premises of the European Parliament for media representatives: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/Accreditations/Recueil\\_4\\_4.4\\_586710\\_1\\_en.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/Accreditations/Recueil_4_4.4_586710_1_en.pdf)

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.

## 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 Tuesday and/or Wednesday morning in Strasbourg. During key debates no other meetings may be organised in parallel.

### Timing

Sittings are divided in pre-determined slots, before and after the votes. Except for debates starting at the beginning of such slots, there is no fixed time. The duration of the debates varies according to the number of speakers.

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.

### 4.1 TYPES OF DEBATE

#### Committee reports (full debate)

A report is first debated in plenary and then put to the vote. The usual structure of a full debate is detailed in Table 1.

Rapporteurs are given six minutes to speak, which is not deducted from the time allocated to political groups. They intervene at the beginning and at the end of the debate.

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

It should be noted that reports adopted in committee by a very large majority (with less than one tenth of the members voting against) may be put directly to the vote without debate ([Rule 165](#)).

#### Committee reports (short presentation) ([Rule 166](#))

Short presentations consist of a speech by the rapporteur 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'

#### Parliament's statements ([Rule 167](#))

Parliament may place debates on specific matters of interest to the European Union on the agenda, with the possibility to wind up the debate with a resolution.

#### Statements by the other Institutions ([Rule 136](#))

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 142](#))**

Oral questions may be tabled by a committee, political groups or Members reaching at least the low threshold, 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 163](#).

If an oral question is tabled by committee(s), the author(s) is/are given five minutes speaking time at the beginning of the debate. 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 150](#))**

Once a month, on Wednesday 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 may be wind up with motions for resolutions, tabled by a committee, a political group or Members reaching at least the low threshold.

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.

## **Major interpellations for written answer ([Rule 145](#))**

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 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 169](#))**

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 are no "catch-the-eye", or blue cards allowed.

**Extraordinary debate ([Rule 168](#))**

Rule 168 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 143](#))**

Question Time with one or more Commissioners may be held at each part-session for a duration of up to about 90 minutes on one or more themes to be decided upon by the Conference of Presidents in advance, and at the latest on the Thursday before the relevant part-session. The Commissioners invited shall have a portfolio related to the theme or themes on which questions are to be put to them.

Question Time may also be held with the President of the European Council, with the Presidency of the Council, with the President of the Commission, with the entire college of Commissioners or specific categories of Commissioners, with the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, with the President of the Eurogroup and with other relevant representatives of Union institutions and bodies.

Members' interventions during the 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 for replying. 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, the follow-up question is allowed for the first round of political group speakers.

**Special scrutiny session ([Rule 143](#) - paragraph 2)**

As a general rule, once per part-session, the Parliament holds a special scrutiny session with the President of the Commission or selected Commissioners without a pre-defined theme.

**Public hearings and debates on citizens' initiatives ([Rule 228](#))**

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 178\(7\)](#))**

With a view to increasing the spontaneity of debates and Members' participation, a period is set aside for short interventions by Members on a "catch-the-eye" basis. This occurs prior to the closing interventions 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 178, on the basis of the overall time available and in accordance with the provisions in Rule 178(7) based on a decision from the Conference of Presidents.

Members wishing for the floor under this procedure should attract the President's attention by raising their hand or by using the electronic system. 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 political group speakers, with no "catch-the-eye" nor blue cards foreseen.

#### **Blue card ([Rule 178\(10\)](#))**

The President may give the floor to Members who indicate, by raising a blue card or by using the electronic system, 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 or to a gross imbalance in the political group affinities of Members speaking in that 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 blue card question has to be related to what that Member has said. The Member raising the "blue-card" has 30 seconds to ask a question and the speaker 30 seconds to respond. The Members shall not be from the same political group. A follow-up question and answer may be further allowed by the President. A speaker can be interrupted by more than one Member raising the blue card, 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.

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 foreseen.

### **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 178\(13\)](#)).

#### **Speakers**

Members speak from the central rostrum, unless the President decides otherwise when appropriate. Speakers with disabilities may speak from their places if they prefer. For all other interventions, Members speak from their places.

As a general rule, Members shall be present for the debate in which they are scheduled to speak or in which they wish to speak.

#### **Allocation of speaking time and speaking order ([Rule 178](#))**

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, as shown in the following Table.

**Table 1:** General structure of plenary debates

<b>Debate on a report (ordinary legislative procedure, consent procedure, consultation procedure and own-initiative reports)</b>					
1. Rapporteur(s) 2. Council or VPC/HR (when present) 3. Commission <sup>1</sup> 4. Rapporteurs for opinion 5. Other speakers on the speakers' list 6. "Catch-the-eye" 7. Commission 8. Council or VPC/HR (when present) 9. Rapporteur(s)					
<b>Cases of special debates on reports</b>					
Annual reports from other institutions (Rule 148)		Short presentations		Amendment of the Rules of Procedure (REG) <sup>2</sup>	
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		1. Rapporteur 2. "Catch-the-eye" 3. Commission		1. Rapporteur 2. Speakers on the speakers' list 3. "Catch-the-eye" 4. Rapporteur	
<b>Other procedures</b>					
Parliament statements (Rule 167)	European Council / Council / VPC/HR / Commission statement(s) (Rule 136)	Oral Question(s) (Rule 142)	Debates on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law (Rule 150)	Topical debate (Rule 169)	Major interpellations for written answer (Rule 145):
	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	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	1. Authors of the motions for resolutions 2. Speakers on the speakers' list 3. "Catch-the-eye" 4. Commission	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	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

<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.

<sup>2</sup> In general, neither the Council nor the Commission intervene in this type of debate



				5. Commission (when present) 8. Council (when present)	
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## 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 are no "catch-the-eye" or blue card questions in debates for which the agenda foresees only one round of speakers.

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	Rule 201	<b>2'</b> <b>1'</b>
Procedural motion	Rule 203	<b>1'</b>
Point of order	Rule 202	<b>1'</b>
Personal statement	Rule 180	<b>3'</b>

## One-minute speeches ([Rule 179](#))

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 180](#))

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 203](#))

Requests to move a procedural motion, namely:

- to refer back to committee ([Rule 204](#));
- to close a debate ([Rule 205](#));
- to adjourn a debate or vote ([Rule 206](#));
- to suspend or close the sitting ([Rule 207](#)).

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 174](#))**

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 182](#))

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 10](#) 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 10.

### Penalties ([Rule 183](#))

In serious cases of breach of [Rule 10](#) 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.

As a general rule, Parliament votes by show of hands. In cases of doubt, the President will call for a vote to be taken using the electronic voting system.

At the end of the sitting, 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 proposal for a decision 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).

In general, only the committee(s) responsible, a political group, or Members reaching at least the low threshold may table amendments for consideration in plenary. ([Rule 187](#))

Amendments must be signed by their authors and tabled with Parliament's appropriate department (the Tabling Desk). The Tabling Desk is 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 2.3. '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 188\(4\)](#))**

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

In so doing he/she 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 187](#))**

The committee responsible, a political group, or Members reaching at least the low threshold (one-twentieth of Parliament's component Members) may table amendments for consideration in plenary. For certain procedures special provisions apply (e.g. [Rule 55\(4\)](#)).

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 made available 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 39 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 188\(3\)](#)). 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 55\(4\)](#). 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 191](#))**

When more than fifty amendments or requests for a split or separate vote have been tabled to a report for consideration in plenary, the President may, after consulting its Chair, 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 190](#))**

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.

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 all amendments are rejected, the original text is deemed adopted unless a separate vote has been requested within the specified deadline. However if it will facilitate the vote, 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 187\(6\)](#)) provide that amendments may be put to the vote only after they have been made available 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 39 Members object, the oral amendment may not be taken into consideration.

### **Procedure in plenary without amendment ([Rule 165](#))**

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 [188](#))**

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 69](#)).

No amendments are admissible at third reading ([Rule 79\(3\)](#)).

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

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

### **Amendments – Withdrawal ([Rule 187\(5\)](#))**

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 ([Rule 190](#))**

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/her 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/her 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 [165](#) and [189\(4\)](#))**

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 Chair 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 200](#))

The President may of his/her 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 199](#))

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 197](#))

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 195](#)). This does not apply to reports concerning procedures on immunity ([Rule 9](#)).

### **Corrections of votes**

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

\*Members can send their corrections by using "Roll-call vote correction" electronic form in the "Members only" space on the Plenary webpage or by sending an e-mail to the Plenary Records Unit at [corrvote@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:corrvote@europarl.europa.eu).

Any request for a correction of vote forwarded by a Member shall be recorded in the list of "Results of roll-call votes", annexed to the minutes of the sitting, also available on the [Plenary webpage](#), but the result of the vote shall not be changed.

### **Time limits**

A correction of votes can be submitted until Friday 12 noon of the second week following the part-sessions in Strasbourg and Brussels.

### **Explanations of vote ([Rule 201](#))**

Any Member may give an oral explanation on the single and/or final vote on an item submitted to Parliament. Each Member may give a maximum of three oral explanations of vote per part-session.

Requests for oral explanations of vote must be forwarded to the Plenary Organisation and Follow-up Unit, before the start of the oral explanation of vote. 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.

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. Written explanations of vote may be forwarded by Members to the Plenary Records Unit by using the electronic form in the "Members only" space on the Plenary webpage. They may also be sent by electronic mail at [ExplVote@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:ExplVote@europarl.europa.eu). The deadline is end of business on the Friday of the week after the part-sessions in Strasbourg and Brussels.

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 150](#)).

For items placed on the agenda without debate ([Rule 165](#)), explanations of votes may only be made in writing.

### **Quorum ([Rule 185](#))**

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 39 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 component Members of Parliament. This is often referred to as a "qualified" majority

Some decisions, for example under [Rule 21](#) or [Rule 89](#), require for adoption the votes of a majority of the component Members of the Parliament 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 as from 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 68](#), [69](#), and [70](#))

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 190.

### Voting procedure – third reading ([Rule 79](#))

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 165](#))

Any report adopted in committee with fewer than one tenth of the committee's members voting against shall, in accordance with Rule 165, 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 195](#)).

### 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 [165](#)).

### Motion for the rejection of a Commission proposal at first reading ([Rule 60\(2\)](#))

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, a political group or Members reaching at least the low threshold.



### **Referral back to committee ([Rule 204](#))**

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;
- before 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 150](#)). Under Rules [132](#) and [136](#) it only applies to texts tabled by a committee.

### **Adjournment of a vote ([Rule 206](#))**

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 192](#))**

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

A split vote (with exception of [Rule 55](#)) 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. In the case of [Rule 55](#) split votes can be tabled by at least one-tenth of the Members.

### **Separate vote ([Rule 190](#))**

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 190(6)).

A separate vote may also concern a paragraph of a resolution to be put to the vote ([Rule 189\(1\)\(d\)](#)).

A separate vote (with exception of [Rule 55](#)) 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. In the case of [Rule 55](#) separate votes can be tabled by at least one-tenth of the Members.

### **Single vote ([Rule 165](#))**

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 208](#))**

Minutes of each sitting, detailing the proceedings and the decisions of Parliament and the names of speakers, including the results of votes, are available in the “minutes” section of Parliament’s plenary website 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 are signed by the President and the Secretary-General. They are also published in the Official Journal of the European Union.

### **Record of Members’ attendance in Plenary ([Rule 162](#))**

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.

### **Texts adopted ([Rule 209](#))**

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 210](#))**

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 178\(13\)](#)).

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

### **Audio-visual record of proceedings ([Rule 211](#))**

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 [136](#) and [142](#))**

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 [136](#) and [142](#) 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

The Secretariat of the Directorate for the Plenary can be contacted by e-mail at [sessions@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:sessions@europarl.europa.eu) or via the [contact form](#) of the Plenary webpage.

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.

Glossary:

Low threshold =	5 % of Parliament's component Members, i.e. 36 Members
Medium threshold =	10 % of Parliament's component Members. i.e. 72 Members
High threshold =	20 % of Parliament's component Members. i.e. 144 Members