



Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire

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Provisional edition

Questions to the Committee of Ministers

Resolution 1658 (2009)¹

1. In adopting Resolution 1583 (2007) on Improving the participation of members in Assembly plenary sessions and committee meetings, the Parliamentary Assembly's aim was to improve its operation and the participation of members by taking steps to enable them to play a more active part in its work, in particular by offering them more opportunities to speak during debates and by making debates more lively and more attractive. It took this forward in Resolution 1584 (2007) on Application and amendment of various provisions of the Parliamentary Assembly's Rules of Procedure, by introducing a procedure for spontaneous questions to the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers.

2. The practice of spontaneous questions to the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers, which was inaugurated during the January 2008 part-session, has proved satisfactory both for the Committee of Ministers and for the Assembly and has renewed Assembly members' interest in the questions session. As the Bureau of the Assembly decided, from the June 2008 part-session, and with the agreement of the Chairperson-in-office of the Committee of Ministers, to alter the arrangements for the address by the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers and make the spontaneous questions a regular feature, the Rules of Procedure must be brought into line with the practice followed.

3. Therefore, the Assembly decides to modify Rule 58.2 of the Rules of Procedure as follows:

58.2. Following the presentation to the Assembly of a report of the Committee of Ministers on its activities, Representatives and Substitutes may submit oral questions for oral answer by the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers. This exercise requires the consent of the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers.

Representatives and Substitutes may also submit written questions. These must be tabled one week before the opening of the part-session. The Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers shall answer them orally or in writing.

Oral and written answers shall be published.

The President of the Assembly shall decide whether questions are in order.

No Representative or Substitute may put more than one oral or written question to the Chair of the Committee of Ministers at any one part-session.

The guidelines for questions to guest speakers shall apply to the implementation of this Rule.

4. The Assembly approves the "Guidelines for questions to guest speakers" appended to this Resolution as Complementary Texts to the Rules.

1. Text adopted by the Standing Committee acting on behalf of the Assembly on 13 March 2009 (see Doc. 11821, report of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs, rapporteur: Mr Gross).

5. Changes to the Assembly Rules of Procedure proposed in this resolution, as well as the guidelines for questions to guest speakers, shall enter into force at the opening of the April 2009 part-session (27 April 2009).

APPENDIX

Guidelines for questions to guest speakers

I. Questions to the Chairperson-in-office of the Committee of Ministers (Rule 58.2 of the Rules of Procedure)

a. oral questions

1. Representatives or Substitutes wishing to put an oral question to the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers must enter their names on the appropriate register within the prescribed time (see “Additional provisions relating to Assembly debates” – ii. List of speakers, paragraph 5). When they enter their names on the register, they will be asked to state the subject of their question.

2. If there is sufficient time, the President of the Assembly may authorise the author of a question to the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers to ask a supplementary question following the latter’s answer.

3. Each political group may appoint a spokesperson to put a question to the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers.

b. written questions

4. Representatives and Substitutes wishing to put a written question to the Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers must enter their names on the appropriate list and submit the text of the question at least one week before the opening of the part-session.

5. Written questions on the same subject or related subjects may receive a joint answer.

II. Questions to other guest speakers

6. Representatives and Substitutes may put spontaneous questions to guest speakers when this is provided for in the agenda of the part-session or authorised by the President of the Assembly during a sitting. Questions may be restricted to political groups’ spokespersons. No supplementary question may be asked.

III. Criteria applicable to questions

7. The time allowed for the presentation of all questions or supplementary questions by their author shall be limited to thirty seconds.

8. The President of the Assembly shall decide whether questions are in order and determine the order in which questions are called.

9. To assess whether a question is in order, the following considerations shall be taken into account:

- the question must be of general interest and not relate to strictly personal matters;
- the question shall be formulated clearly and concisely and be restricted to the elements which are absolutely essential for an understanding of the question;
- the question shall be interrogatory in form and contain only one request;
- the question shall not contain any personal accusation against third parties mentioned by name, or any insulting or defamatory remarks;

- a question to the Chairperson-in-office of the Committee of Ministers must fall within the competence of the Organisation and the sphere of responsibility of the Committee of Ministers.

10. Oral answers shall be published in the report of the sitting. Written answers shall be published as an official Assembly document distributed before the opening of the sitting at which the communication from the Committee of Ministers is to be presented.