

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities



22nd SESSION
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New Rules of Procedure of the Congress and its Chambers

Bureau of the Congress
Rapporteurs: Halvdan Skard, Norway (L, SOC¹)
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Draft resolution (for vote)..... 2

Summary

The Rules of Procedure of the Congress and its Chambers have been entirely revised and updated in the light of the Congress' reform and the adoption of its revised Charter and Statutory Resolution by the Committee of Ministers in January 2011.

Existing rules have been harmonised or completed to ensure greater transparency and clarity with regard to the Congress' decision-making and functioning, provide clear, unambiguous rules and avoid duplication or overlapping of information.

The boxed text quoting the Charter is for information purposes and shall not be voted on.

¹ L: Chamber of Local Authorities / R: Chamber of Regions
ILDG: Independent and Liberal Democrat Group of the Congress
EPP/CD: European People's Party – Christian Democrats of the Congress
SOC: Socialist Group of the Congress
NR: Members not belonging to a Political Group of the Congress



DRAFT RESOLUTION²

1. On 19 January 2011 the Committee of Ministers adopted Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2011)2 relating to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and the revised Charter appended thereto.
2. To complement its newly revised Charter, and as an integral part of its reform process, the Congress entrusted its two rapporteurs on the reform of the Congress with the task of redrafting its Rules of Procedure. The new draft is appended to this resolution.
3. The rapporteurs' mandate for redrafting the rules was to ensure greater transparency and clarity with regard to the Congress' decision-making and functioning, and clear, unambiguous, user-friendly rules.
4. To this end, the appended rules of procedure harmonise and clarify previously existing rules and update them in the light of the Congress' reform of its structures and working methods and the adoption of the revised Charter and Statutory Resolution in January 2011, exclude rules which do not strictly deal with procedural matters and provide new rules for procedures that have been updated or changed.
5. Lastly, the rapporteurs have proposed that the Rules of Procedure be complemented by a set of Administrative Rules with specific provisions of a more technical nature to be adopted by the Bureau.
6. The Congress therefore:
 - a. adopts the Rules of Procedure of the Congress and its Chambers, as appended, which replace the Rules of Procedure of the Congress and its Chambers that were adopted in October 2010 and which enter into effect immediately after the 22nd session with the exception of the following rules: 2.3, 2.4, 3.7, 6.3, 7, 11, 12.1, 12.4, 15, 16.3, 16.4, 16.5, 19.5, 47, 48 (application postponed until the renewal session of 2012);
 - b. entrusts its Bureau with the task of preparing and adopting Administrative Rules to complement the Rules of Procedure.

² Preliminary draft resolution approved by the Bureau of the Congress on 20 January 2012.

Bureau members:

K. Whitmore, President of the Congress, *H. Van Staa*, President of the Chamber of Regions, *J-C. Frécon*, President of the Chamber of Local Authorities, *W. Carey*, *H. Skard*, *N. Romanova*, *G. Doganoglu*, *L. Sfirloaga*, *B. Collin-Langen*, *J. Fischerova*, *A. Knape*, *H. Pihlajasaari*, *O. Van Veldhuizen*, *S. Orlova*, *D. Suica*, *F. Pellegrini*.

N.B : The names of members who took part in the vote are in italics

Bureau Secretariat: *D. Rios*, *L. Taesch*

Appendix**Rules of Procedure of the Congress and its Chambers****TABLE OF CONTENTS**

INTRODUCTION

DEFINITIONS

CHAPTER I – THE CONGRESS AND ITS CHAMBERS

The Congress

The Chambers

Aims and duties of the Congress

CHAPTER II – MEMBERSHIP

Rule 1 – appointment of national delegations

Rule 2 – requirements for national delegations

Rule 3 – term of office and general qualifications for membership

Rule 4 – membership of the Chambers

Rule 5 – representatives and substitutes

Rule 6 – verification of credentials

Rule 7 – non-conformity with Council of Europe principles

Rule 8 – honorary membership

CHAPTER III – POLITICAL GROUPS

Rule 9 – formation of groups

Rule 10 – meetings of groups

Rule 11 – duties of groups

Rule 12 – presidents of political groups

CHAPTER IV – SESSIONS OF THE CONGRESS AND CHAMBERS

Rule 13 – place and frequency

CHAPTER V – PRESIDENT

Rule 14 – entitlement to stand for Presidencies and vice-Presidencies

Rule 15 – election procedures

Rule 16 – term of office

Rule 17 – duties of presidents

CHAPTER VI – BUREAU

Rule 18 – constitution of the Bureaux

Rule 19 – Bureaux procedure

Rule 20 – functions of the Bureau of the Congress

CHAPTER VII – ORIGINATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF BUSINESS

Rule 21 – division of business between the Congress and Chambers

Rule 22 – distribution of matters to committees and working groups

CHAPTER VIII – SESSIONS OF THE CONGRESS AND CHAMBERS

Rule 23 – agreement of agenda

Rule 24 – tacit adoption procedure

Rule 25 – matters for debate

Rule 26 – declarations

Rule 27 – motions presented by delegates

Rule 28 – memoranda

Rule 29 – matters for vote

Rule 30 – speaking arrangements

Rule 31 – voting arrangements

Rule 32 – majorities required

Rule 33 – quorum

Rule 34 – amendments and sub-amendments

Rule 35 – procedural motions

Rule 36 – openness of debate, Minutes of Proceedings and Official Reports of Debates

Rule 37 – order in proceedings

Rule 38 – public order

Rule 39 – secret ballots

Rule 40 – provisional President

Rule 41 – application

CHAPTER IX – STATUTORY FORUM

Rule 42 – constitution

Rule 43 – functions, powers and procedures

CHAPTER X – COMMITTEES

Rule 44 – constitution and role of committees

Rule 45 – setting up of other committees

Rule 46 – powers and duties of committees

Rule 47 – membership of committees

Rule 48 – election of chairs and vice-chairs

Rule 49 – duties and powers of chairs

Rule 50 – time and frequency of meetings

Rule 51 – attendance at meetings

Rule 52 – agenda of committees

Rule 53 – voting and quorum

Rule 54 – procedure

Rule 55 – appointment and duties of rapporteurs

Rule 56 – reports from committees

Rule 57 – common positions

CHAPTER XI – WORKING GROUPS

Rule 58 – terms of reference and time-limit

Rule 59 – applicability of committee rules

CHAPTER XII – CONGRESS THEMATIC SPOKESPERSONS

Rule 60 – appointment and role

CHAPTER XIII – BUDGET AND SECRETARIAT

Rule 61 – secretariat of the Congress and its Chambers

Rule 62 – budget

CHAPTER XIV – MISCELLANEOUS

Rule 63 – official languages

Rule 64 – working languages

Rule 65 – other languages

Rule 66 – special guests

Rule 67 – observers

Rule 68 – consultation and co-operation with other groups

Rule 69 – revision of the Charter

Rule 70 – revision of Rules of Procedure

INTRODUCTION

The Congress is governed by statutory resolutions adopted by the Committee of Ministers under the authority of the Statute of the Council of Europe. The relevant parts of Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2011)2, and the Charter appended to it, govern aspects of the procedure of the Congress and are set out as boxed text in this document. They are reproduced for information purposes only.

The Congress itself has powers to adopt Rules of Procedure to amplify the Statutory Resolution and the Charter. Rules must be consistent with the Statutory Resolution and Charter. The current Rules are set out in ordinary type in this document.

Under these Rules, the Bureau of the Congress is also authorised to adopt rules on certain matters. These are set out in a separate document (Administrative Rules).

Finally, the Secretary General of the Congress is empowered to make decisions in matters within his or her competence, and in particular for the efficient management of the human and financial resources of the Congress.

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of these Rules, unless the context otherwise requires:

“advisory capacity”	means without voting rights;
“available”	in respect of any document or text means either published or provided in hard copy;
“Bureau”	means both the Bureau of the Congress and the Bureaux of the Chambers;
“Charter”	means the Charter of the Congress as adopted by the Committee of Ministers;
“competence of the Congress”	means anything covered by Article 2 of Statutory Resolution (2011) 2 of the Committee of Ministers;
“Congress”	means the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe;
“day”	means a calendar day;
“delegate”	means a member of a national delegation, whether he or she is a representative or a substitute;
“matter”	has the same meaning as “question” in Articles 9 and 11 of the Charter;
“non-affiliated”	means not belonging to a political group as defined in Chapter III;
“Opinion”	means a reply from the Congress following consultation by the Committee of Ministers or the Parliamentary Assembly;
“Plenary”	means proceedings of the Congress or of the Statutory Forum, but not of a Chamber;
“President”	(unless otherwise qualified) means the Representative at the time performing the functions of President of the Congress or of a Chamber;
“Proceedings”	means the business transacted at sittings of the Congress, either Chamber, the Statutory Forum, the Bureaux, any committee or any working group;

“publish”	includes publishing on the Congress website;
“Recommendation”	means a text adopted by the Congress containing proposals addressed to the Committee of Ministers and/or the Parliamentary Assembly and/or European and international institutions and organisations;
“Renewal session”	means the session at which national delegations as a whole are renewed when the 4-year mandate of the previous delegations under Article 3.3 of the Statutory Resolution expires;
“Report”	refers to a draft recommendation and/or draft resolution and its accompanying explanatory memorandum;
“Representative”	means a delegate nominated as a representative in its national delegation by the government of a member state (as opposed to “substitute”). A representative is a full member of the Plenary and of a Chamber;
“Resolution”	means a text adopted by the Congress and addressed to the Congress itself or to the local and/or regional authorities of the member states;
“Rule”	(with a capital letter) means a Rule in these Rules of Procedure;
“Session”	means a number of sittings of the Congress and its chambers held together;
“Sitting”	means a single official meeting of the Congress or a Chamber where business is transacted;
“Sitting with full capacity”	in respect of a delegate means a delegate sitting in the Chamber of the Regions other than one who sits only in an advisory capacity in accordance with Article 2.4 of the Charter; ¹
“Substitute”	means a delegate nominated as a substitute in its national delegation by the government of a member state (as opposed to “representative”). A substitute to the Congress is a full member of a Chamber;
“to table”	means to deposit in a printed or electronic form in the Table Office;
“Table Office”	refers to the division within the secretariat of the Congress which deals with all matters concerning preparation of the Session and the Rules of Procedure;
“Text”	means any declaration, resolution, recommendation or opinion adopted during a sitting, and “draft text” means any proposal for a text being considered in any proceedings;
“Writing”	includes by electronic means.

Timings are in accordance with the 24 hour clock.²

¹ All delegates sit with full capacity in the Chamber of Local Authorities.

² English version only.

CHAPTER I – THE CONGRESS AND ITS CHAMBERS

The Congress

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe is a consultative organ composed of representatives of local and regional authorities of the member states of the Council of Europe. (Charter Art 1)

Its membership and functions are regulated by the present articles, by the Charter adopted by the Committee of Ministers and by the Rules of Procedure adopted by the Congress. (SR Art 1)

Its objectives are set out in Article 2 of Statutory Resolution CM/Res(2011)2. (Charter Art 1)

The Chambers

The Congress is composed of two Chambers: the Chamber of Local Authorities which represents local authorities and the Chamber of Regions which represents regional authorities. (SR Art 4.2)

Within the framework of the Congress, work is also organised in the two Chambers: the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions. Each Chamber has at its disposal a number of seats equal to that of the Congress itself. (Charter Art 7.1)

Aims and duties of the Congress

(SR Art 2)

1. The Congress, in addition to its consultative functions, furthermore undertakes activities the aims of which shall be:

- a. to ensure the participation of local and regional authorities in the implementation of the ideal of European unity, as defined in Article 1 of the Statute of the Council of Europe, as well as their representation and active involvement in the Council of Europe's work;*
- b. to submit proposals to the Committee of Ministers in order to promote local and regional democracy;*
- c. to promote co-operation between local and regional authorities;*
- d. to maintain, within the sphere of its responsibilities, contact with international organisations as part of the general external relations policy of the Council of Europe;*
- e. to work in close co-operation, on the one hand with the national, democratic associations of local and regional authorities, and, on the other hand, with the European organisations representing local and regional authorities of the member states of the Council of Europe, and notably with the Committee of the Regions of the European Union.*

2. The Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly shall consult the Congress on issues which are likely to affect the responsibilities and essential interests of the local and/or regional authorities which the Congress represents.

3. The Congress shall prepare on a regular basis country-by-country reports on the situation of local and regional democracy in all member states and in states which have applied to join the Council of Europe, and shall ensure, in particular, that the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government are implemented.

4. The Congress shall also prepare reports and recommendations following the observation of local and/or regional elections.

5. Recommendations and opinions of the Congress shall be sent as appropriate to the Parliamentary Assembly and/or the Committee of Ministers as well as to European and international organisations and institutions. Resolutions and other adopted texts which do not entail possible action by the Assembly and/or the Committee of Ministers shall be transmitted to them for their information.

CHAPTER II – MEMBERSHIP

Rule 1 – appointment of national delegations

Representatives and substitutes to the Congress shall be appointed by an official procedure specific to each member state. In particular, it shall provide for consultation in each member state of the relevant associations and/or institutional bodies and shall specify the principles to be adhered to in apportioning members in the two Chambers. Each government shall inform the Secretary General of the Council of Europe of this procedure. Such a procedure shall be approved by the Congress in conformity with the principles contained in its Rules of Procedure. (Charter Art 3.1)

1. The government of each member state must submit its official procedure (or any modification to that procedure), not later than two months before the session at which the procedure (or modification) is to apply for the first time, to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, who in turn transmits it to the Secretary General of the Congress.
2. The Bureau of the Congress must examine each official procedure (or modification) submitted to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and must report to the Congress as to whether it meets the requirements set out in Articles 2, 3 and 7 of the Charter as well as in these Rules.
3. If the Bureau of the Congress reports that an official procedure (or modification) does not meet those requirements, the Secretary General of the Congress must inform the member state concerned and seek rectification of the procedure to comply with the requirements of the Charter as well as these Rules. No person appointed under such a procedure may act as a member of the Congress.
4. The government of each member state must declare to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe that its delegation to the Congress has been appointed by an official procedure that ensures that its delegation has the full confidence of the member state's local and regional authorities and its political parties as people who would best represent them all.

Rule 2 – requirements for national delegations

1. The delegates from a member state form its national delegation which is made up of representatives and substitutes.
2. Each national delegation must elect a head of delegation and a deputy head according to its own procedures. The procedures must be notified to the Secretary General of the Congress.
3. Heads of delegation must be representatives.
4. The deputy head of a national delegation may not be of the same Chamber¹ and preferably not of the same gender or from the same political group as the head of the delegation, but either or both may be non-affiliated.
5. Each national delegation must have a secretary or secretaries who, in accordance with the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, must not be under the authority of any national government for the purposes of this work. The appointment of the secretary or secretaries of delegation must be notified to the Secretary General of the Congress by the head of delegation.

Rule 3 – term of office and general qualifications for membership

The Congress shall be composed of representatives of local or regional authorities, in conformity with Article 2.1 of the Congress Charter. Delegates shall be appointed according to the criteria and procedure established in the Charter, which will be adopted by the Committee of Ministers, each State ensuring in particular an equitable representation of its various types of local and regional authorities. (SR Art 3.1)

.../...

¹ Applicable only to countries with members sitting with full capacity in the Chamber of Regions.

Each member state shall have the right to the same number of seats in the Congress as it has in the Parliamentary Assembly. (SR Art 3.2)¹

Representatives and substitutes shall be appointed for a period of four years and shall maintain their functions until the opening of the session following the expiration of that period, referred to as renewal session, except in cases referred to in Article 2.6 of the Charter. (SR Art 3.3)

In the event of the death or resignation of a representative or substitute, or of loss of the mandate referred to in paragraph 1 above [Charter Art 2.1], a replacement shall be chosen, in accordance with the same rules and procedure, for the remainder of his or her predecessor's mandate. A representative or substitute who has lost his or her mandate, referred to in paragraph 1 [Charter Art 2.1] may not remain a member of the Congress for more than six months after the loss of his or her mandate. In the case of local and/or regional elections taking place up to four months prior to a renewal session, the four year mandate foreseen in Article 3.3 of the Statutory Resolution may be extended for a maximum of six months after the election. (Charter Art 2.6)

1. A delegate who resigns his or her local or regional or Congress mandate must notify the date the resignation takes effect in writing to the President of the Congress and the national delegation no later than one month following that resignation, and the relevant authorities must nominate a new delegate as soon as possible.

2. When a delegate loses his or her local or regional mandate, the national delegation concerned must notify the President of the Congress no later than one month after said loss takes effect,² and the relevant authorities must nominate a new delegate as soon as possible.

3. The membership of the delegate who lost his or her local or regional mandate expires on the date the credentials of the proposed successor are approved by the Bureau or, at the latest, six months after the day when the loss of the electoral mandate took effect.

The Congress shall be composed of representatives of local and regional bodies who either hold a general local or regional authority mandate resulting from direct elections or are politically accountable to a directly elected assembly, on the condition that they can be individually dismissed by, or following the decision of the aforementioned assembly and that dismissal is provided for by law. (Charter Art 2.1)

4. Where a member state wishes to send to the Congress delegates who do not hold a general local or regional authority mandate resulting from direct elections but who are politically responsible to a directly elected assembly, it must bring this to the specific attention of the Secretary General of the Congress and must specify the offices and conditions of dismissal of the delegates concerned.

The membership of each member state's delegation to the Congress shall be such as to ensure:

- a. a balanced geographical distribution of representatives from the member state's territory;***
- b. equitable representation of the various types of local and regional authorities in the member state;***
- c. equitable representation of the various political forces in the statutory bodies of local and regional authorities in the member state;***
- d. equitable representation of women and men on the statutory bodies of local and regional authorities in the member state, meaning that all delegations must include representatives of both sexes with a minimum participation of at least 30% of the under-represented sex among the representatives and among the substitutes. (Charter Art 2.2)***

[...] Rules of Procedure [...] shall provide for [...] the modalities for assessing compliance with the criteria of Article 2.2 of the Charter (Charter Art 13.1.a)

5. The government of each member state must provide information, via the Secretary General of the Congress, to the Bureau of the Congress to demonstrate the conformity of their delegation with Article 2.2 of the Charter, and must inform the Secretary General of the Congress of their delegates' political affiliation and of the apportionment of the various political trends represented within their local and regional authority bodies, as a result of the last local and regional elections held in their countries.

¹ Also Art 2.3 of Charter

² Taken to be the date of the elections unless other information is given by the national delegation.

6. A national delegation must comply with Article 2.2 of the Charter even if it is not composed of all the delegates to which it is entitled.

7. The number of vacant seats in a national delegation must not exceed one third of the total number of seats (representatives and substitutes) to which the member state concerned is entitled. Should the delegation continue to have one third of its seats vacant for more than a six-month period, it will be barred from participation in proceedings.

In case a national delegation does not comply with Article 2.2 of the Charter, its members will only be able to sit in the Congress without any right to vote or reimbursement of expenses. (Charter Art 4.2)

8. Members of any delegation which does not comply with Article 2.2 of the Charter may be present only at the session during which their credentials are examined. They may not table any amendment, nor vote. Thereafter, they may not take part in proceedings until the situation leading to non-compliance has been resolved.

Rule 4 – membership of the Chambers

Each member state, when notifying the Secretary General of the Council of Europe of the composition of its delegation, shall indicate those representatives and substitutes who will be members of the Chamber of Local Authorities and those who will be members of the Chamber of Regions. Each state shall appoint the same number of members to each Chamber. Countries having regions within the meaning of paragraph 4 of Article 2 of the Charter must appoint as far as possible the same number of representatives to the Chamber of Regions as to the Chamber of Local Authorities, or a number as close as possible in case of national delegations with an odd number of representatives. (Charter Art 3.2)

With regard to the Chamber of Regions, representatives must be from authorities placed between central government and local authorities and enjoying prerogatives either of self-organisation or of a type normally associated with the central authority and having a genuine competence to manage, on their own responsibility and in the interests of their populations, a substantial share of public affairs, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. If a country has authorities which cover a large area and exercise both local and regional responsibilities, representatives of such authorities shall also be entitled to sit in the Chamber of Regions. A list of these authorities shall be provided in the context of the national appointment procedure. Member states which do not have regional authorities within the meaning of this paragraph shall be able to send members to the Chamber of Regions and its organs in an advisory capacity. The list of these countries shall be determined by the Bureau of the Congress on the proposal of the Governance Committee of the Congress, following consultation of the national delegations. (Charter Art 2.4)

1. A member state which has a region or regions with legislative powers must include at least one delegate from one such region in the Chamber of Regions.

2. When he or she is duly mandated to replace a representative from his or her delegation, a substitute from a delegation of a member state without regional authorities within the meaning of Recommendation 56 (1999) is entitled to vote in the Chamber of Local Authorities even if he or she is a member of the Chamber of Regions.¹

Rule 5 – representatives and substitutes

Each member state shall have the right to the same number of seats in the Congress as it has in the Parliamentary Assembly. Each member state sends a number of substitutes equal to the number of representatives it sends. Substitutes shall be members of the Chambers in the same capacity as representatives. (Charter Art 2.3)

The rules and procedures governing the choice of representatives to the Congress shall also apply to substitutes. (Charter Art 2.5)

¹ Rule 4.2 shall not apply to proceedings in committees.

1. A representative prevented from attending a sitting of the Congress may nominate a substitute from his or her national delegation as his or her replacement for that sitting. The representative must give notice of the replacement in writing to the Secretary General of the Congress and to his or her national delegation as soon as possible and preferably no later than one week prior to the sitting.
2. A substitute may only replace one representative at any one sitting.
3. A substitute replacing a representative is recorded in his or her own name when participating, whether by speaking or voting, in the Congress plenary.
4. A substitute replacing a representative at a sitting of the Congress plenary may exercise all the powers and enjoy all the voting, tabling and speaking privileges of a representative for the duration of the sitting concerned.
5. Except when replacing a representative under the present rule, a substitute may neither speak nor vote at a sitting of the Congress plenary.
6. A substitute acting as Rapporteur may speak in plenary in that capacity.

Rule 6 – verification of credentials

Whenever representatives and substitutes have been appointed, the Bureau shall check their credentials. Its conclusions shall be put to the vote in the Congress during sessions and in the Statutory Forum between sessions. (Charter Art 4.1)

A representative or substitute whose credentials are not ratified shall not be considered a member of the Congress and may not therefore receive allowances for attending the Congress meetings. (Charter Art 4.3)

Moreover, the rules of the Congress shall provide for the time-limit and method of notification of the names of representatives and substitutes and the procedure for the examination of their credentials, by taking into account in particular Articles 2, 3 and 7 of the present Charter. (Charter Art 13.2)

1. Each member state must submit the draft composition of its delegation, in accordance with its official procedure, to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe for presentation to the Bureau of the Congress at least six weeks before the opening of a renewal session. Where a modification to the existing delegation is proposed between renewal sessions, due to death, resignation or loss of mandate (as set out in Article 2.1 of the Charter) the altered draft composition should be sent two weeks before the next Bureau meeting at which the altered delegation will be examined.
2. The Bureau of the Congress must report on the draft composition of delegations (or on any proposed modification to a delegation) so that its report can be considered at the start of the session before the Congress proceeds to any other business. Its report must propose a decision for each delegation.
3. The Bureau of the Congress may only propose that an individual delegate's credentials be ratified if the Secretary General of the Congress has received a signed statement from that proposed delegate reading as follows:

“The aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage and facilitating their economic and social progress

(Chapter I, Article 1.a, Statute of the Council of Europe)

“Every member of the Council of Europe must accept the principles of the rule of law and of the enjoyment by all persons within its jurisdiction of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and collaborate sincerely and effectively in the realisation of the aim of the Council as specified in Chapter I.”

(Article 3, Statute of the Council of Europe)

I, the undersigned, ..., hereby affirm and state that I will subscribe to these aims and basic principles of the Council of Europe.”

4. Delegates whose credentials the Bureau of the Congress proposes should not be ratified may provisionally sit with the same rights as other delegates until the Congress has ruled on the matter. However, such delegates may not take part in any vote relating to the verification of credentials or of the official appointment procedures. If, following the vote by the plenary session those delegates' credentials have not been ratified, they are not considered members of the Congress and may not take part in proceedings.

Rule 7 – non-conformity with Council of Europe principles

1. If it is brought to the attention of the Bureau of the Congress that a delegate has said, written or done anything in the exercise of his or her functions as a delegate that may be incompatible with the aims and basic principles of the Council of Europe, it must consider the matter as soon as possible. If the Bureau finds, following due process, that the delegate's written or oral statement or action is contrary to the aims and basic principles he or she has committed himself or herself to in accordance with Rule 6.3, it may propose a disciplinary course of action to the Congress.

2. The Bureau may suggest one of the following courses of action: a reprimand, withdrawal of part or all of the delegate's prerogatives, or his/her suspension for a number of sessions to be proposed by the Bureau and which must not exceed one complete Congress mandate.

3. The Bureau's proposal, in the form of a draft resolution to be voted on in plenary, is not subject to amendment and must be voted upon by roll call. Those members of the Bureau present at the meeting when the draft resolution was approved must abstain from the vote in plenary.

Rule 8 – honorary membership

1. Upon request by a Bureau member, a head of a national delegation or a president of a political group, the Bureau of the Congress may confer the title of honorary member upon former delegates to the Congress or its predecessor bodies who have shown outstanding commitment to the Congress and have been:

- a. Presidents of the Congress or of a Chamber; or
- b. Vice-presidents of the Congress; or
- c. Presidents of political groups or chairs of committees; or
- d. Delegates for at least ten years (not necessarily consecutively).

2. The Bureau may make provisions governing the rights and privileges of honorary members in the Administrative Rules.

CHAPTER III – POLITICAL GROUPS

Rule 9 – formation and funding of groups

1. Delegates may form political groups and become members of these groups. A political group must consist of at least 20 delegates drawn from at least six national delegations to be recognised as a political group by the Congress.

2. Each group's budgetary allocation is calculated on the basis of the number of its members on 1 January each year. A complete list of their members must therefore be submitted to the Secretary General of the Congress in the first week of each year by the presidents of the political groups.

Rule 10 – meetings of groups

The political groups of the Congress shall meet principally on the occasion of ordinary sessions (Charter Art 6.3)

Meeting rooms and interpretation shall be provided by the Congress for meetings of political groups. Interpretation shall be provided in accordance with Rules 63 and 64.

Rule 11 – duties of groups

1. Each political group must adopt its constitution and rules of procedure, and must submit these, and any subsequent modification to them, to the Secretary General of the Congress who must submit them to the Bureau for information.
2. Each constitution must commit the group to the respect and promotion of the aims and basic principles of the Council of Europe, notably political pluralism, human rights and the rule of law.
3. Each political group must at each renewal session inform the Bureau of the Congress of the names of its members, President, 1st Vice-President, treasurer and secretary and the composition of its bureau and must keep the Bureau informed of any changes to these as soon as they occur. The Secretary General of the Congress must make this information publicly available.

Rule 12 – presidents of political groups

1. Presidents of political groups must be representatives.
2. Presidents of political groups may participate in the work of the Bureau on behalf of their group in accordance with Rule 18.3 and in the Statutory Forum in accordance with Rule 42.2.
3. A president of a political group may not at the same time:
 - a. be a member of the Bureau;
 - b. be a chair of a committee; or
 - c. act as rapporteur or head of delegation during election observation exercises.
4. A president of a political group who is elected to the Bureau or loses his or her mandate as a delegate of the Congress must be replaced at Bureau meetings, until a new president is elected, by the group's 1st Vice-President. This replacement should not exceed six months.

CHAPTER IV – SESSIONS OF THE CONGRESS AND CHAMBERS**Rule 13 – place and frequency**

The Congress shall meet in session at least once a year. Sessions shall be held at the seat of the Council of Europe unless the Congress or its Bureau and the Committee of Ministers decide by common consent that the session should be held elsewhere. (SR Art 4.1)¹

The sessions of each of the two Chambers shall be held either immediately before and/or after the session of the Congress. On the proposal of the Bureau of the Congress, either Chamber may hold other sessions. (Charter Art 6.2)

The Bureau of the Congress must set the dates of the Congress's sessions and the President must inform the Chair of the Committee of Ministers and the President of the Parliamentary Assembly accordingly.

CHAPTER V – PRESIDENT**Rule 14 – entitlement to stand for Presidencies and vice-Presidencies**

The Congress shall elect its president from the members, who are representatives, of each Chamber on an alternating basis [...]. (Charter Art 14.1)

¹ See also Charter Art 6.1

1. A representative may be a candidate for the office of President of the Congress only if:
 - a. he or she has been nominated in writing by at least 20 representatives from at least four national delegations;
 - b. his or her candidature has been notified to the Secretary General of the Congress at the latest twenty-four hours before the opening of the sitting at which the election is to take place; and
 - c. he or she does not belong to the same Chamber as the outgoing President.

Each Chamber of the Congress shall elect from among its representatives a president [...] (Charter Art 14.2)

2. A representative may be a candidate for the office of President of a Chamber only if:
 - a. he or she sits in that Chamber (and, in the case of the Chamber of the Regions, sits with full capacity);
 - b. he or she has been nominated in writing by at least ten delegates sitting with full capacity in that Chamber from at least four national delegations;
 - c. his or her candidature has been notified to the Executive Secretary of that Chamber at the latest two hours before the opening of the sitting at which the election is to take place; and
 - d. he or she has not held two consecutive mandates as President of that Chamber immediately before that election.
3. A representative may be a candidate for the office of vice-president of a Chamber only if:
 - a. he or she sits in that Chamber (or in the case of the Chamber of the Regions, sits with full capacity); and
 - b. his or her candidature has been notified to the Executive Secretary of that Chamber at the latest two hours before the opening of the sitting at which the election is to take place.

Rule 15 – election procedures

[...] Rules of Procedure [...] shall provide for [...] the procedure for the election of the President of the Congress and the president and vice-presidents of each Chamber (Charter Art 13.1.d)

1. The election of the President of the Congress must take place during the opening sitting of the renewal session, and at the opening sitting of the session two years after a renewal session. Only representatives or substitutes duly mandated to replace a representative may vote.
2. The election of a President of a Chamber must take place during the first sitting of the Chamber following the election of a President of the Congress (except after an extraordinary election of a President held under Rule 16.3).
3. Where there is one candidate to be President (whether of the Congress or a Chamber) he or she is declared President without proceeding to a ballot unless a ballot is requested by at least 25 representatives or substitutes duly nominated in accordance with Rule 5.1. Where a ballot is requested, it shall be held immediately, be secret and provide for votes in favour, votes against and abstentions.
4. A candidate is elected if more than half of the votes cast are in his or her favour. If this is not the case, a new election must take place. Within four hours of notification of the result to Congress members by the provisional President, new candidatures must be presented to the Secretary General of the Congress in accordance with Rule 14.1.a and 14.1.c. The new election shall be held as soon as possible thereafter.

5. Where there is more than one candidate, the Congress or Chamber votes by secret ballot. Two tellers per ballot box, chosen by lot, are to count the votes cast. If no candidate receives more than half of the votes cast, an additional round or rounds shall take place until one candidate has achieved more than half of the votes cast. At each round the candidate who has received the least number of votes shall be eliminated. If more than one candidate has received the least number of votes, or in the event of a tie between two candidates in the final round, lots shall be drawn.

6. Immediately after each Chamber has elected a President, it must elect by secret ballot, on a single ballot paper, seven vice-presidents. An election must take place even if there are fewer than seven candidates. A delegate (but in the case of the Chamber of Regions, only a delegate sitting with full capacity) may vote for up to seven candidates and must vote for at least four. The seven candidates receiving the greatest number of votes are declared elected in each Chamber in order of precedence according to the number of votes each receives. A candidate for the office of vice-president is eliminated from election if a representative belonging to the same national delegation has already been elected as President of that Chamber. If more than one representative from the same national delegation is a candidate to be vice-president of the same Chamber, only the one with the highest number of votes can be declared elected.

7. The presidents and vice-presidents of the Chambers are the vice-presidents of the Congress. The President of the Chamber to which the President of the Congress does not belong is 1st Vice-President of the Congress. The President of the other Chamber is 2nd Vice-President. The 1st Vice-President of the Chamber to which the President of the Congress does not belong is 3rd Vice-President of the Congress, and so on.

Rule 16 – term of office

The president [of the Congress] shall remain in office for two years. (Charter Art 14.1)

Each Chamber of the Congress shall elect from among its representatives a president who shall remain in office for two years. (Charter Art 14.2)

1. No representative may hold office as President of the Congress for two consecutive terms, whether complete or partial.

2. No representative may hold office as President of a Chamber for more than two consecutive terms, whether complete or partial.

3. When the President of the Congress or a President of a Chamber resigns or ceases to be a representative, or is incapable of acting as such in accordance with Rule 16.5. below, an extraordinary election to the office in question for the remainder of the term outstanding must be held under the procedures described in Rule 15.3.

4. When a vice-president other than a President of a Chamber ceases to be a representative or if his or her seat on the Bureau becomes vacant, that position is filled by the next Bureau member of his or her Chamber according to order of precedence taking the number of votes and Chamber alternation into account. The Bureau of the Congress must make provision for the election of a new vice-president at the next Chamber sitting.

5. A representative who has not exercised any of his or her functions of president or vice-president for a period of six months is deemed to be incapable of acting in that office. In this case, the Bureau of the Congress must make provision for their replacement in accordance with Rules 16.3 or 16.4.

Rule 17 – duties of presidents

1. It is the duty of the President to open, suspend and close sittings; to propose at the end of each sitting the date, time and agenda of the next sitting; to guide debate; to ensure observance of the Rules of Procedure; to maintain order; to call on speakers; to open and close debates; to put questions to the vote; to announce the results of votes; and to decide to check whether there is a quorum before proceeding with a vote by roll-call.

2. The representative holding office as President may speak in a debate but must do so from the floor and not as President. When speaking from the rostrum, the President is restricted to speaking on matters on which the President is authorised to speak under these Rules.
3. No-one may preside over any debate in which he or she takes part.
4. When the President speaks from the floor, a vice-president must occupy the chair for that debate, and when a vice-president speaks from the floor, either the President or another vice-president must occupy the chair for that debate.
5. The President of the Congress represents the Congress in its relations with other bodies. In particular, he or she is responsible for informing the Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers of Congress activities. He or she also keeps the Congress informed at regular intervals about the state of the recommendations put forward to the Committee of Ministers by the Congress.
6. Each President must carry out the policy decided by the body of which he or she is president and is to maintain contacts with international organisations as part of the general external relations policy of the Council of Europe.
7. The President may delegate part of his or her responsibilities to a vice-president. If the President is absent or temporarily unable to discharge his or her responsibilities, the most senior vice-president available is to exercise them.
8. When acting as President, a vice-president may exercise the powers of, and is subject to the obligations of the President.

CHAPTER VI – BUREAU

Rule 18 – constitution of the Bureaux

Within the limits of available resources allocated to it and considering the priorities of the Council of Europe, the Congress shall undertake its activities and may set up the following bodies: a Bureau [...] (SR Art 4.2)

Each Chamber shall elect its Bureau from among its representatives for a period of two years. It shall be composed of the president of the Chamber and seven vice-presidents, respecting as far as possible a fair geographical distribution among member states. No member state shall have more than one representative on the Bureau of either Chamber. The Bureaux of the Chambers may only meet on the occasion of a meeting of the Bureau of the Congress. (Charter Art 7.2)

The Bureau of the Congress is composed of the Bureaux of the Chambers plus the President of the Congress [...] (Charter Art 9.1)

1. No member of the Bureau may at the same time:
 - a. be the president of a political group;
 - b. be a chair of a committee; or
 - c. act as rapporteur or head of delegation during election observation exercises.
2. Members of the Bureau who are not available to participate in a Bureau meeting may not be replaced.
3. The outgoing President of the Congress, the presidents of the political groups and the chairs of the committees are entitled to participate in the meetings of the Bureau of the Congress, but do not have the right to vote. Chairs of committees may be replaced at such meetings, but only by a vice-chair of the committee concerned. Presidents of political groups may be replaced by their 1st Vice-President, subject to the limitation set forth in Rule 12.4.
4. The presidents of the political groups and the chairs of the committees may participate in the meetings of the Bureau of either Chamber, irrespective of their Chamber of origin, but do not have the right to vote. Replacements are as under Rule 18.3.

5. A Bureau may also invite to the whole or part of its meetings any person in an advisory capacity (including the chairs of working groups, thematic spokespersons, a rapporteur on observation of elections, a rapporteur of a committee or a rapporteur of a working group). Persons invited under this paragraph may speak only on those subjects for which they were invited.

Rule 19 – Bureaux procedure

The Bureau of the Congress shall be presided over by the President of the Congress. (Charter Art 9.3)

1. The Bureau of a Chamber is presided over by that Chamber's President.
2. Meetings of the Bureaux are to be held *in camera*. A Bureau may decide to exclude from a particular meeting, or part of a meeting, any persons it considers necessary to exclude, except the members elected to the Bureau (restricted *in camera*).
3. The draft agenda of a Bureau meeting and all documents related to items on the agenda must be made available to participants in the Bureau at least seven days before the date of the meeting. An item may be considered if this deadline has not been met, provided that more than half of the members of the Bureau present agree.
4. A Bureau may decide to invite observers to the whole or part of its meetings and to organise hearings of individuals and organisations.
5. Bureau participants may be accompanied to meetings of the Bureau by no more than one advisor who must not be under the authority of any national government for the purposes of this work. If a Bureau participant is unable to participate in a Bureau meeting, their advisor may attend the meeting without the right to speak.

Rule 20 – functions of the Bureau of the Congress

The Bureau of the Congress [...] shall be responsible, in the period between the sessions of the Statutory Forum and the Congress, for ensuring the continuity of the Congress's work. (Charter Art 9.1)

The Bureau shall also be responsible for the preparation of the sessions of the Congress, the co-ordination of the work of the two Chambers, in particular the distribution of questions between the two Chambers, the co-ordination of the work of the committees and of the ad hoc working groups, preparation of the budget and the balanced allocation of budgetary resources between the Congress and the two Chambers. [...] The mandate of the Bureau and its role shall be detailed in the Rules of Procedure. (Charter Art 9.2)

1. The Bureau of the Congress is the executive organ of the Congress.
2. The Bureau of the Congress examines and takes a decision on committee terms of reference and biennial work programmes as well as on the proposals for reports, events or other activities presented to it by the Chambers, committees or working groups for approval.
3. The Bureau of the Congress, on the proposal of the Secretary General of the Congress, may adopt administrative rules, in conformity with the Council of Europe's rules. Rules adopted by the Bureau under this provision must be made available to delegates in draft and will come into force at the time of the next meeting of the Bureau unless representations are made to the Bureau by at least five delegates from two national delegations that the rules should not be brought into force. If such representations are made, at the latest one week prior to the Bureau meeting, the Bureau must reconsider the matter but may then decide to make the rules with or without amendment.

CHAPTER VII – ORIGINATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF BUSINESS

Rule 21 – division of business between the Congress and Chambers

As regards the distribution of questions, no question may be considered in both Chambers. Any matter in which both Chambers would have an interest shall be considered in the Congress. (Charter Art 9.2)

However, when a question is considered by the Bureau of the Congress as falling exclusively within the competence of a Chamber:

- a. the recommendations and opinions relating to such questions which are addressed to the Committee of Ministers, and/or to the Parliamentary Assembly shall be adopted either by the Congress or by the Statutory Forum between sessions, but without any consideration of the substance of the matter. In exceptional cases, the Bureau of the Congress may authorise the other Chamber to formulate an opinion on these draft texts;***
- b. the resolutions relating to the question and which are addressed to the authorities that the Chamber represents shall be adopted either by the Congress or by the Statutory Forum between ordinary sessions, without consideration of the substance of the matter. (Charter Art 11.2)***

Where the Bureau of the Congress considers that, although a matter falls exclusively within the competence of a Chamber, the opinion of the other Chamber is required on that matter, it may request the Bureau of that Chamber to appoint a delegate to follow the work of the competent Chamber and to prepare a draft opinion which he or she must then submit to his or her Chamber for adoption. If any such opinion is adopted by a Chamber, it must be considered by the competent Chamber.

Rule 22 – distribution of matters to committees and working groups

1. The Bureau of the Congress must consider all:
 - a. requests for an opinion presented by the Committee of Ministers or the Parliamentary Assembly;
 - b. motions presented by delegates under Rules 27, 69.3 or 70.2;
 - c. proposals (including proposals for reports, events or other activities) presented by a committee or working group; and
 - d. memoranda submitted by special guest delegations or organisations enjoying observer status with the Congress.
2. In each case, it must make one of the following decisions:
 - a. to refer the matter to a committee or working group for preparation of a report;
 - b. to refer the matter to a committee or working group for consultation;
 - c. to refer the matter to a committee or working group for information;
 - d. (in exceptional circumstances) to refer the matter to a working group set up for the purpose;
 - e. to take further action within the scope of its own activities, or
 - f. to take no further action.
3. Any reference under Rule 22.2.a to 2.d must be accompanied by clear terms of reference.
4. Any reference to a committee lapses either:
 - a. two years after it was made; or
 - b. at the request of the committee by decision of the Bureau of the Congress.

CHAPTER VIII – SESSIONS OF THE CONGRESS AND CHAMBERS

Rule 23 – agreement of agenda

[...] Rules of Procedure [...] shall provide for [...] the procedure for the establishment of the agenda and its transmission to members (Charter Art 13.1.e)

1. The Bureau of the Congress must draw up a draft sessional agenda for each session, coordinating the Chambers' sittings in accordance with Article 9 of the Charter.
2. Any matter within the competence of the Congress may be placed on the draft sessional agenda.
3. The Bureau of the Congress must indicate in respect of each matter on the draft sessional agenda:
 - a. whether it is to be discussed by a Chamber or by the Congress;
 - b. at which sitting it is to be discussed;
 - c. what reports from committees or working groups are to be considered in relation to it; and
 - d. whether any text is to be voted upon, or if the matter is for debate only.
4. The draft sessional agenda must be communicated to delegates at least one month before the opening of the session.
5. No report (except a report under Rule 6 (verification of credentials)), may be included in the agenda unless it has been made available to delegates at least twenty days before the first sitting of the session at which it is to be considered, or unless the Bureau of the Congress consider in the circumstances that a report deals with a matter of urgency and ought to be included without this deadline being met.
6. The draft sessional agenda may propose that one or more representatives of any organisation, regardless of whether it has observer status to the Congress, or any individual, should attend the whole or part of a sitting either to take part in debate or to reply to questions from delegates.
7. The Bureau of either Chamber or any ten delegates belonging to at least four national delegations may propose to the Bureau of the Congress, not later than three hours before the final meeting of the Bureau of the Congress before a session, that a matter not contained on the draft sessional agenda needs to be debated urgently.
8. The Bureau of the Congress may propose changes to the draft sessional agenda, in particular if it considers (whether following proposals made to it, or of its own motion) that a matter needs to be debated urgently, or if it considers that a draft declaration under Rule 26 needs to be considered.
9. The draft sessional agenda, containing any changes proposed by the Bureau of the Congress, must be submitted to the Congress at its first sitting.
10. The Congress may adopt or modify the draft sessional agenda. A two-thirds majority is required to modify a draft sessional agenda.
11. At the end of each sitting, the President must propose the date and time of the next sitting as well as any changes to the published agenda that the Bureau of the Congress considers necessary for the smooth transaction of business (a "sitting agenda" or notice).

Rule 24 – tacit adoption procedure

1. The Congress may decide to adopt a draft text without oral presentation or debate under the tacit adoption procedure.
2. It is for the Bureau of the Congress to decide when preparing the agenda for a session whether to propose that any report presented by a committee or a working group should be considered under the tacit adoption procedure.
3. Notice must be given to all delegates at least one month before the opening of the session of any report proposed to be considered under the tacit adoption procedure.
4. At the first sitting of the session concerned, the President announces the report or reports proposed to be considered under the tacit adoption procedure.

5. If twenty delegate(s) from at least four delegations object in writing to the President by midday on the day following the announcement to any draft text contained in such a report being considered under the tacit adoption procedure, the Bureau of the Congress must propose that the report be debated and voted on at the next possible sitting.

6. Any draft text to which no objection is made is regarded as adopted, and must be published as if it had been adopted after debate.

7. At the last sitting of the session, the President gives notice of any texts which have been adopted under the tacit adoption procedure during that session.

Rule 25 – matters for debate

All the recommendations and opinions to be addressed to the Committee of Ministers and/or the Parliamentary Assembly as well as the resolutions addressed to the local and regional authorities as a whole shall be adopted by the Congress at its plenary session or by the Statutory Forum. (Charter Art 11.1)

Matters for debate include any draft text or any other matter placed on the agenda by the Bureau under Rule 23.

Rule 26 – declarations

1. The Bureau of the Congress may table a draft declaration on any subject within the competence of the Congress.

2. A draft declaration may be included by the Bureau of the Congress in a draft sessional agenda whether or not the notice period under Rule 23.4 has been complied with, provided that at least 24 hours must elapse between the time at which the draft declaration was available and the time at which it is due to be debated.

3. It is for the Bureau of the Congress to decide whether the draft declaration is to be included in the draft agenda of the Congress or of a Chamber.

4. If a draft declaration is included in a sessional agenda, then:

- a. amendments may be tabled to the draft declaration in accordance with Rule 34;
- b. a debate on the draft declaration must be opened by a member of the Bureau of the Congress on its behalf;
- c. the draft declaration (and any amendments tabled to it) must be put to the vote; and
- d. if the draft declaration is adopted, it must be published as a Congress or Chamber declaration, as the case may be.

5. Notwithstanding this rule, the Bureau of the Congress may itself agree upon a Bureau Declaration and publish such a declaration.

Rule 27 – motions presented by delegates

Prior to, or during, a session at least twenty delegates from at least four national delegations, or a political group, may table a motion for a resolution or for a recommendation on any matter within the competence of the Congress. Such a motion may be accompanied by an explanatory memorandum. If the President determines that the motion is in order, it must be published during the session and is considered to be referred to the Bureau of the Congress for consideration and decision in accordance with Rule 22.1.

Rule 28 – memoranda

1. Memoranda not exceeding 200 words on subjects within the competence of the Congress may be tabled provided they have been signed by at least 20 delegates belonging to at least four national delegations.
2. Memoranda judged by the President to be in order must be published.
3. Any delegate may add his or her signature to a memorandum. When a signature is added, the memorandum must be published again at the beginning of the next session together with the names of all the delegates who have signed it.
4. No proceedings arise as the result of a memorandum.

Rule 29 – matters for vote

Voting takes place only on a draft text or where otherwise provided under these Rules.

Rule 30 – speaking arrangements

1. Representatives, substitutes duly mandated according to Rule 5.1 or, for the Chambers, delegates wishing to speak in debate must enter their names on the speakers' list either before the opening of the sitting or in the course of the sitting. The President may, in the interest of the debate, depart from the order in which names have been entered.
2. Those wishing to speak may only do so if called upon by the President to take the floor. They must speak from their places and address the President; but guest speakers normally speak from the rostrum.
3. A speaker may not be interrupted, except on a point of order. However, he or she may, with the permission of the President, give way during his or her speech to allow another person with the right to speak in that debate to put a question to him or her.
4. Speaking time is limited as follows:
 - a. Single rapporteurs presenting reports: 10 minutes;
 - b. Co-rapporteurs presenting reports: six minutes each;
 - c. Single rapporteurs replying to debates: five minutes;
 - d. Co-rapporteurs replying to debates: three minutes each;
 - e. Chairs replying to debates; three minutes;
 - f. Other speakers (except on personal statements; on setting the agenda; on any procedural question or on amendments): three minutes;
 - g. Speakers on personal statements; on setting the agenda; on any procedural question or on amendments: one minute.
5. When sufficient time is not available for all speakers to be heard for the times provided under Rule 30.4, the President may decide that speaking time will be reduced or that not all those who have entered their name in the register may speak.
6. If a person who has entered his or her name is prevented from speaking under Rule 30.1 and is present, he or she may, at the close of the debate, hand in the text of his or her speech in an official or working language for publication in the summary record, provided that it does not exceed the duration of the speaking time which he or she would otherwise have been granted.

The conditions under which the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly may be collectively represented in the debates of the Congress or of the Chambers and those under which their representatives may, in an individual capacity, speak therein shall be drawn up by the Committee of Ministers after consultation with the Congress and inserted in the Rules of Procedure of the latter. (Charter Art 12)

7. When the Committee of Ministers or the Parliamentary Assembly has requested an opinion from the Congress, persons speaking on behalf of those bodies have the right to speak in any debate on that request.

Rule 31 – voting arrangements

[...] Rules of Procedure [...] shall provide for [...] questions concerning the right to vote [...]
(Charter Art 13.1)

1. The right to vote is an individual one, linked to membership of a Chamber¹. Voting by proxy is not permitted.

2. Representatives, substitutes duly mandated according to Rule 5.1 or, for the Chambers, delegates sitting with full capacity in the Chamber of Regions or delegates sitting in the Chamber of Local Authorities may vote in the affirmative, or in the negative, or abstain. Only affirmative and negative votes count in calculating the number of votes cast. Votes are decided:

- a. by show of hands;
- b. when possible, by electronic voting;
- c. by standing, if, in the opinion of the President, the result of the show of hands is doubtful; or
- d. by roll-call, if one-sixth of the delegates entitled to vote request this, or the President so decides (if necessary having ascertained whether a quorum is present).

3. The President is responsible for the counting of votes except where electronic voting is used. The President must not announce the numbers counted except when a vote is taken by standing or by roll-call.

4. Voting by roll-call begins five minutes after warning bells have been rung. The roll is called in alphabetical order beginning with the name of a representative, a substitute duly mandated according to Rule 5.1 or, for the Chambers, a delegate sitting with full capacity, drawn by lot by the President. The names of those voting in a valid roll-call vote must be recorded in the minutes of the sitting.

5. Voting in elections takes place by secret ballot and may be conducted electronically.

Rule 32 – majorities required

[...] Rules of Procedure [...] shall provide for [...] the majorities required, it being understood that the recommendations and opinions addressed to the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly, and also recommendations addressed to a country following observation of local or regional elections, shall be adopted by a majority of two-thirds of the votes cast (Charter Art 13.1.c)

1. In addition to the requirements under Article 13.1 of the Charter, decisions to:

- a. modify the draft agenda under Rule 23;
- b. withdraw or suspend a delegation's special guest status under Rule 66; or
- c. set up a committee under Rule 45,

must be adopted by a majority of two-thirds of the votes cast.

2. Other decisions (except in respect of elections to which Rule 15 applies) are adopted by a majority of the votes cast and therefore a tied vote is decided in the negative.

¹ Except where Rule 4.2 applies.

Rule 33 – quorum*[...] Rules of Procedure [...] shall provide for [...] a quorum (Charter Art 13.1.b)*

1. Business may be transacted whatever the number of delegates present who are entitled to vote, but a vote by standing or by roll call is not valid unless one sixth of those entitled to vote take part.
2. A vote which is not valid owing to the lack of quorum must be held again at a time to be determined by the President.
3. Rule 33.2 does not apply to a vote on a procedural motion under Rule 35. A vote on such a motion which is not valid is to be regarded as decided in the negative.

Rule 34 – amendments and sub-amendments

1. An amendment to a draft text under consideration may be tabled by:
 - a. any five delegates from at least two national delegations; or
 - b. a rapporteur in respect of his or her text, provided that in the case of reports presented by two co-rapporteurs, both co-rapporteurs must be in agreement and sign the amendment.
2. Amendments may be tabled only to draft texts and not to explanatory memoranda. The Secretariat must make them available as soon as possible if they are in order in accordance with Rule 34.8 and Rule 34.9.
3. An amendment must relate directly to the draft text which it seeks to amend.
4. Amendments must be tabled in accordance with the following deadlines:
 - a. to a draft text due to be debated on the first day of a session, by 16.00 on the day before;
 - b. to any other text, by 10.00 on the day before the day on which debate is scheduled.
5. Rule 34.4 does not apply to amendments tabled under Rule 34.1.b (rapporteurs' amendments) nor to amendments tabled to declarations under Rule 26.
6. Sub-amendments to previously tabled amendments must be tabled in accordance with the following deadlines:
 - a. to a draft text due to be debated on the first day of a session, by 19.00 on the previous day;
 - b. to any other text, by 12.00 on the day before the day on which debate is scheduled.
7. A sub-amendment must relate directly to the amendment but must not contradict its sense. A sub-amendment may not be further amended.
8. The President is to decide whether an amendment or a sub-amendment is in order.
9. During the course of a debate members may propose oral amendments to previously tabled amendments or sub-amendments but not to any other part of a text presented for adoption. The Rapporteur must, at the President's request, give an opinion as to whether the oral amendment clarifies, takes account of new facts or leads to conciliation and is therefore in order. If the oral amendment is deemed to be in order, the procedure outlined in Rule 34.15 must be followed.
10. Sub-amendments must be debated and put to the vote before the amendment to which they refer.

11. Amendments must be considered in the order in which they relate to the draft text, but the President may decide that amendments may be grouped for consideration together if it appears to him or her that this will aid debate. Where amendments are grouped, it is for the President to decide whether any amendment other than the first in the group may be voted upon.

12. If two or more contradictory amendments relate to the same paragraph, the amendment which differs most from the draft text has priority over the others and is put first to the vote. If it is agreed to, the other amendments are regarded as having been thereby rejected; if it is rejected, the amendment which, according to the same principle, is next in priority is put to the vote, and similarly for each of the remaining amendments. It is for the President to decide, having consulted the chair of the committee or the working group concerned, the order in which such amendments are to be taken.

13. The same procedure is to be followed if two or more contradictory sub-amendments relate to the same amendment.

14. During examination of an amendment or sub-amendment, unless the Congress decides otherwise, only the following may speak: one of the authors of the amendment or sub-amendment, one speaker against and the rapporteur and the chair of the committee or working group concerned.

15. When an amendment or sub-amendment is called, one of its signatories is called to move it. If none of the signatories moves the amendment or sub-amendment, any representative (or duly mandated substitute) may do so. An amendment or sub-amendment that is not moved, falls.

16. An amendment or sub-amendment which has been withdrawn by its signatories may be moved by any other representative (or duly mandated substitute).

Rule 35 – procedural motions

1. A representative, a substitute duly mandated according to Rule 5.1 or, in the Chambers, a delegate, has a prior right to speak if he or she moves:

- a. the deferment of the debate until one or more conditions have been fulfilled (but unless the President decides otherwise, this motion is only admissible if notified in writing at least one hour before the opening of the debate);
- b. the adjournment of a debate;
- c. the closure of a debate;
- d. the closure of the list of speakers; or
- e. reference back to a committee or working group.

2. None of these procedural motions may be moved more than once during a debate.

3. A procedural motion takes precedence over the main question, the discussion of which must be suspended.

4. In debate on a procedural motion only the following may speak: the proposer of the motion, one speaker against the motion and the rapporteur and the chair of the committee or working group concerned.

5. Voting on a procedural motion is by standing up.

Rule 36 – order in proceedings

1. A representative, a substitute duly mandated according to Rule 5.1 or, for the Chambers, a delegate has a prior right to speak if he or she raises a point of order. A point of order must be confined to a question of procedure seeking a ruling from the President.

2. Where points of order are misused, the President may decide that the person concerned may not speak during the remainder of that debate.

3. The President must call to order any speaker who deviates from the subject of debate. If the President calls a speaker to order under this rule three times during any debate, then the President may decide that the person concerned may not speak during the remainder of that debate.

Rule 37 – openness of debate, minutes of proceedings and official report of debates

Sessions of the Congress and its Chambers shall be public. (Charter Art 6.1)

1. The minutes of proceedings of each sitting must be made available and submitted to the next sitting of the Congress or a Chamber, as appropriate, for approval. Any delegate who participated in the meeting may challenge the accuracy of the minutes of proceedings, and may require a vote on the changes requested.

2. Official reports of debates must be published in the official languages after sessions.

Rule 38 – public order

Upon request of the President, any person disrupting debate is to be removed by the ushers.

Rule 39 – secret ballots

1. Any representative who is a candidate for any post elected by secret ballot has the right to address the body electing to that post for no longer than three minutes in order to explain the reasons for his or her candidacy. No questions may be asked.

2. When a secret ballot takes place, no delegate or other person may canvass or solicit votes, or otherwise seek to influence the outcome of the ballot within ten metres of the room where the ballot is held.

Rule 40 – provisional President

1. At the beginning of each session when a President of the Congress is to be elected, the oldest representative present acts as provisional President and discharges the presidential duties until the new President is elected.

2. Until the election of the President of a Chamber, the oldest delegate¹ present acts as provisional President and discharges the presidential duties.

3. No discussion may take place while a provisional President is in the chair unless it is concerned with the examination of credentials or the election of the President.

4. A provisional President must leave the chair as soon as a President is elected.

Rule 41 – application

Rules 25, 29, 31-34 and 38-39 apply to the Congress and to each Chamber *mutatis mutandis*.

CHAPTER IX – STATUTORY FORUM

Rule 42 – constitution

Within the limits of available resources allocated to it and considering the priorities of the Council of Europe, the Congress shall undertake its activities and may set up the following bodies: [...] a Statutory Forum [...] (SR Art 4.2)

The Statutory Forum shall be composed of the heads of all national delegations together with the members of the Congress Bureau. (Charter Art 8.2)

¹ For the Chamber of Regions, read “oldest delegate sitting with full capacity”.

1. Heads of national delegations may be replaced in case of absence from the Statutory Forum by their deputy heads who will have the right to vote. Bureau members may not be replaced.
2. The outgoing President of the Congress, the presidents of the political groups and the chairs of the committees may participate in the meetings of the Statutory Forum, but do not have the right to vote.
3. The chairs of working groups may be invited to participate in the Statutory Forum's meetings in a consultative capacity. The rapporteur of a committee or of a working group may also be invited to attend all or part of a Statutory Forum meeting.

Rule 43 – functions, powers and procedures

The Statutory Forum shall act on behalf of the Congress between sessions. In particular, it shall adopt reports, and organise debates and hearings in accordance with the objectives of the Congress[...] (Charter Art 8.1)

The Statutory Forum shall be convened, as necessary, by the president upon decision of the Bureau. (Charter Art 8.2)

1. The powers, functions and procedures of the Statutory Forum, except as otherwise provided, are those of the Congress.
2. The President of the Congress is to chair the Statutory Forum.
3. The Statutory Forum may hold meetings in a member state after consent by the Bureau of the Congress.
4. When a report is submitted to the Statutory Forum for adoption, all delegates must be informed not less than twenty days before the meeting of the Statutory Forum where the report is to be examined and a copy of the report must be made available to them at the same time. If twenty delegates belonging to at least four national delegations notify objection to the Secretary General of the Congress at least a week before the meeting of the Statutory Forum, then the report must be examined at a session of the Congress.
5. The Statutory Forum deals with matters within the responsibility of the Congress and the Chambers, and therefore all members of the Statutory Forum are entitled to vote on all draft texts presented to it.

CHAPTER X – COMMITTEES

Within the limits of available resources allocated to it and considering the priorities of the Council of Europe, the Congress shall undertake its activities and may set up the following bodies: [...] committees and ad hoc working groups, which are necessary to perform its tasks. The Congress will inform the Committee of Ministers on the setting up of its committees. (SR Art 4.2)

[...] Rules of Procedure [...] shall provide for [...] the organisation of the work of the committees (Charter Art 13.1.f)

Rule 44 – constitution and role of committees

1. The Congress must establish the following committees:
 - a. a Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by member states of the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ECLSG) (to be known as the "Monitoring Committee");
 - b. a Governance Committee;
 - c. a Current Affairs Committee.
2. The terms of reference, detailing the responsibilities and role of these committees as well as their biennial work programmes must be adopted by the Bureau of the Congress.

Rule 45 – setting up of other committees

1. The Congress may set up any committee it considers necessary, within the priorities of the Council of Europe and within the limits of its budget. The President of the Congress must inform the Committee of Ministers if any such committee is set up.
2. The terms of reference, detailing the responsibilities and role of such committees as well as their biennial work programmes must be adopted by the Bureau of the Congress.

Rule 46 – powers and duties of committees

1. A committee must examine all matters referred to it under Rule 22.2 and may examine any other matters within its terms of reference. It reports to the Congress or to either Chamber.
2. A committee may organise any meetings, conferences or hearings necessary to further its work programme, subject to the approval of the Bureau of the Congress.
3. If a committee wishes to report on a matter, it must first inform the Bureau of the Congress of the content, scope, expected results and objectives of the proposed report and how it will be relevant to Congress priorities established for the time period in question. It must not report on the matter unless the Bureau of the Congress agrees.
4. Every committee must keep under review:
 - a. texts adopted following its reports;
 - b. the intergovernmental activities of the Council of Europe and the activities of the Parliamentary Assembly committees within its terms of reference; and
 - c. the work of the committees of the Committee of the Regions of the European Union within its terms of reference.
5. The issue must be decided by the Bureau of the Congress, if:
 - a. a committee considers that a matter is outside its competence; or
 - b. more than one committee considers that a particular matter should be considered by it alone.

Rule 47 – membership of committees

The number of seats in the committees will be set by the Congress in its Rules of Procedure. (SR Art 5)

1. The number of seats in committees and their apportionment by country is agreed and updated by the Bureau of the Congress.
2. Any delegate may be appointed as a full member to one committee and/or as a replacement delegate to one committee. This rule applies except where it is necessary, because the number of representatives in a national delegation is less than the number of committees, for a delegate from such a national delegation to be appointed to two committees.
3. Each national delegation must assign delegates to act as replacement delegates for each committee. The number of replacement delegates so assigned must be the same as the number of delegates which that delegation appoints to the committee. A delegate may only be assigned as a replacement delegate for one committee except in the case of national delegations where the number of representatives is less than the number of committees.
4. If a full member of a committee is not able to attend a meeting of a committee, he or she must notify the secretariat of his or her national delegation in writing who must:
 - a. appoint one of the committee's replacement delegates for the whole of the meeting; and
 - b. immediately inform the committee secretariat.

5. The replacement delegate:
 - a. must come from the same national delegation; and
 - b. exercises the same powers as the full member he or she replaces for the period of the replacement (except that if he or she replaces the chair or vice-chair of a committee, he or she may not perform any of the functions exercised by the chair or vice-chair by virtue of those offices).
6. All full members of a committee may participate in all committee proceedings, but only members of a Chamber may vote on any matter within the competence of that Chamber only. Rule 4.2 shall not apply to proceedings in committees.

Rule 48 – election of chairs and vice-chairs

1. Every committee must elect from among its full members a chair who is a representative, as well as a 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th Vice-Chair. These elections must take place during the opening sitting of the renewal session, and at the opening sitting of the session two years after a renewal session. Every full member of the committee, or duly mandated replacement delegate, is entitled to vote in the election.
2. Nominations for election as chair or vice-chair must be sent to the Secretary to the committee not later than 18.00 on the day before the sitting at which the election is to take place.
3. The chair and vice-chairs of a committee remain in office for two years and may be re-elected for a second (but no further) consecutive mandate.
4. Where there is one candidate to be chair, he or she is declared chair without proceeding to a ballot unless a ballot is requested by at least 10 full members or their duly designated replacements in accordance with Rule 47.4. Where a ballot is requested, it shall be held immediately, be secret and provide for votes in favour, votes against and abstentions.
5. Where there is more than one candidate, the decision is made by secret ballot. Two tellers per ballot box, chosen by lot, are to count the votes cast. If no candidate receives more than half of the votes cast, an additional round or rounds shall take place until one candidate has achieved more than half of the votes cast. At each round the candidate who has received the least number of votes shall be eliminated. If more than one candidate has received the least number of votes, or in the event of a tie between two candidates in the final round, lots shall be drawn.
6. A candidate is elected if more than half of the votes cast are in his or her favour. If this is not the case, a new election must be held as soon as possible.
7. Immediately after a committee has elected a chair, it must elect by secret ballot, on a single ballot paper, its five vice-chairs. An election must take place even if there are fewer than five candidates. A committee member may vote for up to five candidates but must vote for at least three. The vice-chairs are to be declared elected in order of precedence according to the number of votes each receives, except that no candidate may be declared elected if:
 - a. a person belonging to the same national delegation as the candidate has already been elected as chair or vice-chair of that committee;
 - b. three persons belonging to the same Chamber as the candidate have already been elected as chair or vice-chairs of that committee; or
 - c. four persons of the same gender as the candidate have already been elected as chair or vice-chairs of that committee.
8. Rule 39 [secret ballots] applies to ballots for committee posts.

9. Rules 48.1 to 48.5 apply with such modifications as the Bureau of the Congress thinks appropriate when it is necessary to elect a chair or vice-chair between renewal sessions.
10. No chair of a committee may at the same time:
 - a. be a member of the Bureau;
 - b. be the president of a political group; or
 - c. act as rapporteur or head of delegation in election observation or monitoring exercises.

Rule 49 – duties and powers of chairs

1. The chair and vice-chairs of a committee co-ordinate its work.
2. The chair may take part in a committee's discussions and may vote, but does not have a casting vote.

Rule 50 – time and frequency of meetings

1. Committees meet at the convocation of their chairs, within the limits of the budgetary resources allocated by the Bureau of the Congress.
2. Committees must meet in Strasbourg or Paris. However, where it considers it appropriate to do so, the Bureau of the Congress may authorise a committee to meet elsewhere.

Rule 51 – attendance at meetings

1. A delegate who tabled a motion under Rule 27 and referred to a committee under Rule 22 and who is not a member of that committee may be invited to take part in a consultative capacity in the committee's work in respect of that motion, but may not vote.
2. A delegate who is not a member of a committee may attend a meeting of a committee at his or her own expense. He or she may take the floor only with the authorisation of the chair, but may not vote.
3. A committee may invite members of special guest delegations to attend all or part of certain of their meetings, without the right to vote.

Rule 52 – agenda of committees

All documents related to items on the agenda of a committee meeting must be made available to members of the committee at least two weeks before the date of the meeting. An item may be considered if this deadline has not been met, provided that more than half of the members present agree.

Rule 53 – voting and quorum

1. Voting in committee is by means of the voting card distributed at the beginning of each meeting or by electronic voting.
2. The quorum of a committee is one sixth of its membership (number of full members).

Rule 54 – procedure

1. Procedure in committee must, except where otherwise provided, follow procedure in plenary.
2. Unless a committee decides otherwise:
 - a. it must meet in private, and
 - b. only reports approved by it and communications and lists of decisions drawn up on the responsibility of its chair may be made public.

3. Until the chair of a committee is elected, the duties of the chair are discharged by the oldest full member present, and no discussion may take place unless it is concerned with the election of the chair.

Rule 55 – appointment and duties of rapporteurs

1. A committee must appoint a rapporteur (or two co-rapporteurs in the case of monitoring reports) for each report it wishes to bring before the Congress for examination. If a rapporteur is no longer able to act, the committee must appoint a replacement or, if it is unable to do so, the chair may appoint a replacement himself or herself.

2. Any member of a committee, or replacement delegate duly assigned to that committee, may present his or her candidature for the position of rapporteur to the committee, but a committee must ensure that there is a fair distribution of rapporteurships between the two Chambers, the political groups and non-affiliated members, genders and national delegations.

3. Reports presented for adoption to a Chamber may only be presented by rapporteurs who sit in that Chamber.

4. A rapporteur who, in exceptional circumstances, is not available to participate in a committee meeting or a Chamber or plenary sitting when his or her report is due to be examined may choose a member of his or her committee to replace him or her.

5. A rapporteur is responsible for the preparation and presentation of his or her report for approval by the committee and for adoption by the Congress or a Chamber.

6. It is the duty of each rapporteur to represent the views of his or her committee as a whole.

7. This Rule applies to rapporteurs appointed by a Bureau.

8. Specific rules apply to the appointment of rapporteurs for monitoring reports and election observation reports, and are set out as an appendix to these Rules.

Rule 56 – reports from committees

1. The final report of a committee must comprise one or more draft texts and an explanatory memorandum.

2. The committee debates the entire report and members may suggest changes to the preliminary draft texts and the draft explanatory memorandum. It is the duty of the chair and rapporteur to ensure that each part of the report best represents the consensus view of the committee. Each part of the report is voted on individually.

3. A committee member may require a statement of dissent to be appended to a report.

4. Committees may present information or interim reports which do not contain a draft text.

5. After a report has been approved by a committee, the committee must propose to the Bureau of the Congress that it be submitted to:

- a. the Congress for examination, debate and adoption;
- b. the Congress for tacit adoption in accordance with Rule 24 above; or
- c. the Statutory Forum for examination, debate and adoption.

6. If important new developments occur after a report has been approved in committee, the explanatory memorandum and draft texts may be revised (at the latest 15 days before the start of the session at which they are to be adopted) to reflect these developments, with the agreement of the rapporteurs and the committee chair. However, in no other cases may reports be modified after their approval in committee, other than through the use of the amendment procedure in session.

7. A rapporteur, or in his or her absence the chair of the committee, must inform the committee of which he or she was rapporteur, one year after the adoption of the report, as to whether and how the recommendations of the report have been implemented. If necessary, the committee may propose further follow-up measures.

Rule 57 – common positions

1. A committee may agree a common position on any matter within its terms of reference.
2. A common position must be agreed by a majority of committee members present at the meeting.
3. If the committee wishes the matter to be taken forward, it may submit the common position for consideration by the Bureau. The Bureau may decide that the common position should be included in a draft sessional agenda, whether or not the notice period under Rule 23.4 has been complied with, provided that there are at least 24 hours between the time at which the common position was available and the time at which it is due to be debated.
4. It is for the Bureau of the Congress to decide whether the common position is to be included in the draft agenda of the Congress or of a Chamber.
5. If a common position is included in a sessional agenda, then:
 - a. amendments may be tabled to the common position in accordance with Rule 34;
 - b. a debate on the common position must be opened by a representative speaking on behalf of the committee;
 - c. the common position (and any amendments tabled to it) must be put to the vote; and
 - d. if the common position is adopted, it must be published as a Congress or Chamber declaration (as the case may be) under Rule 26.

CHAPTER XI – WORKING GROUPS

When a question falls within the competence of the two Chambers, the Bureau of the Congress may, in exceptional cases, set up an ad hoc working group common to both Chambers. (Charter Art 10.1)

After the distribution of questions between the two Chambers and the committees in accordance with Article 9, the Bureau of the Chamber competent to deal with a question may, in exceptional cases, set up an ad hoc working group with a limited number of members empowered with specific terms of reference (preparation of reports, organisation of conferences, follow-up to co-operation projects or to specific intergovernmental activities of the Council of Europe). (Charter Art 10.2)

Organisation of the work of ad hoc working groups shall be governed by the Rules of Procedure. (Charter Art 10.3)¹

Rule 58 – terms of reference and time-limit

A working group:

- a. is appointed with particular terms of reference set by the Bureau which has set it up;
- b. is to have as few members as are necessary to discharge its responsibilities;

¹ See also Charter Art 13.1f

- c. is appointed for a limited time;
- d. must keep the appropriate Bureau informed at regular intervals of its progress in discharging its terms of reference; and
- e. ceases to exist either when the terms of reference have been fulfilled or upon decision by the appropriate Bureau.

Rule 59 – applicability of committee rules

Rules 46 to 56 which apply to committees also apply to working groups, subject to the following exceptions:

- a. a working group member may designate any delegate (whether or not from his or her national delegation) as a replacement ; and
- b. a working group does not elect vice-chairs, but, in the absence of its chair, may appoint another member of the working group to chair it for that meeting.

CHAPTER XII – CONGRESS THEMATIC SPOKESPERSONS

Rule 60 – appointment and role

1. A committee or a Bureau may appoint a delegate as a thematic spokesperson with responsibility for a particular issue relating to the Congress's priorities. Such an appointment, if not made by it, is subject to the approval of the Bureau of the Congress.
2. Any appointment must be for a specific period not extending beyond the next renewal session, and must include a duty to report back to the body which has appointed the spokesperson.
3. A spokesperson presents the Congress thematic position at external events.

CHAPTER XIII – BUDGET AND SECRETARIAT

Rule 61 – secretariat of the Congress and its Chambers

The Secretariat of the Congress shall be provided by the Secretary General of the Congress, elected by the Congress. The Secretary General of the Congress shall be answerable to the Congress and its organs and act under the authority of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. (Charter Art 15.1)

1. The Secretary General of the Congress is elected in accordance with the procedure set out as an appendix to these Rules.
2. The Secretary General is responsible for the efficient management of the human and financial resources of the Congress, and must ensure the smooth functioning of the Congress and its bodies and the follow-up of their decisions.
3. The Secretary General is responsible for transmitting texts adopted by the Congress to the Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers.

Candidates [to be Secretary General of the Congress] shall be free to submit their applications directly to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, who will transmit them to the President of the Congress, together with his or her opinion. Following examination of these candidatures, the Bureau shall submit a list of candidates to the vote of the Congress. The Statutory Forum, on behalf of the Congress, shall establish the procedure for the election of the Secretary General of the Congress, in order to clarify points which are not dealt with in the current Charter. (Charter Art 15.1)

The Congress shall elect its Secretary General for a renewable term of five years, although he or she may not exceed the age limit applicable to all Council of Europe staff. (Charter Art 15.2)

.../...

The Secretary General of the Council of Europe shall appoint a Director, following consultation of the Bureau of the Congress. (Charter Art 15.3)

The Secretariat of each Chamber shall be provided by the Executive Secretary of the Chamber who is appointed by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe after an informal exchange of views with the President of the Chamber concerned, during which he or she shall communicate his or her intentions and the reasons for his or her choice. (Charter Art 15.4)

Rule 62 – budget

The Committee of Ministers shall adopt the budget of the Congress, as part of the Ordinary Budget of the Council of Europe.

This budget shall be designed, in particular, to cover the expenditure occasioned by the Congress sessions, by the meetings of the two Chambers and Congress organs, and by all other clearly identifiable expenditure linked to the activities of the Congress. For plenary sessions, only the participation costs of representatives shall be defrayed by this budget.

The budget of the Congress shall constitute a specific vote of the Council of Europe budget.

The Congress shall inform the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the Committee of Ministers of its budgetary needs. Its requests shall be examined in the general context of the draft budget presented by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

The rates and methods of calculating Congress members' per diem allowances shall be subject to a specific decision by the Committee of Ministers.

The budget of the Congress (apart from the remuneration of permanent staff and the amounts allocated to political groups) shall constitute a package which the Bureau of the Congress will be responsible for managing. However, the Bureau shall abide by the financial regulations of the Council of Europe and see to it that the necessary funds are earmarked for the functioning of the statutory bodies of the Congress and of the two Chambers. It may not exceed the limit of the overall budgetary provision allocated to the Congress. (Charter Art 16)

1. The Bureau of the Congress is to draw up an estimate of the budgetary needs of the Congress in the form of a preliminary draft recommendation. The draft recommendation must be submitted to the Congress for adoption.
2. The Secretary General of the Congress must transmit the adopted recommendation to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and to the Committee of Ministers in accordance with Rule 61.2.
3. Once the budget of the Congress has been adopted, it is for the Secretary General of the Congress to manage it and to report to the Bureau of the Congress at regular intervals on its implementation.

CHAPTER XIV – MISCELLANEOUS

Rule 63 – official languages

1. The official languages of the Congress are those of the Council of Europe: English and French. All documents of the Congress and of its Chambers must be drawn up in these languages.
2. Chairing of Congress sessions must be done in an official language.

Rule 64 – working languages

The working languages of the Congress are: German, Russian and Italian. Simultaneous interpretation must be provided between these languages during proceedings.

Rule 65 - other languages

During proceedings delegates have the opportunity to use other languages than the official and working languages. In this case, funding for the interpretation of these other languages to the official languages and the working languages must be outside the Congress budget and at the initiative and cost of the delegations who made the request.

Rule 66 – special guests

The Congress may, on request, grant Special Guest status to delegations from local and regional authorities in European non-member states which have such status with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The Bureau of the Congress shall assign to each special guest state the same number of seats as it has in the Parliamentary Assembly. The appointment of Special Guest delegations shall be based on the same criteria set out in Articles 2 and 3. (Charter Art 5.2)

[Special guest] delegations [...] shall take part in the proceedings of the Congress and of its Chambers, with the right to speak, subject to the president's consent, but not to vote. The other conditions of their participation in the Statutory Forum, committees and in working groups shall be laid down in the Rules of Procedure of the Congress. (Charter Art 5.3)

1. Rules 1 to 7 apply to special guest delegations as they apply to delegations from member states.
2. A request for special guest status must be addressed at least three months before a session of the Congress in writing to the President, who must submit it to the Congress for decision after consulting with the Bureau of the Congress.
3. Special guest status may be suspended or withdrawn at any time by the Congress, acting on a request by twenty delegates belonging to at least four national delegations, subject to a majority of two thirds of the votes cast.
4. Members of special guest delegations may:
 - a. submit memoranda on matters on the agenda of the Congress and of the Chambers; and
 - b. at the invitation of a committee or working group, take part in a meeting.

Rule 67 – observers

International associations of local and regional authorities which have participatory status with the Council of Europe shall have observer status with the Congress. Other organisations may, on request, obtain observer status with the Congress and/or with one of its Chambers, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure. (Charter Art 5.1)

Observers [...] shall take part in the proceedings of the Congress and of its Chambers, with the right to speak, subject to the president's consent, but not to vote. The other conditions of their participation in the Statutory Forum, committees and in working groups shall be laid down in the Rules of Procedure of the Congress. (Charter Art 5.3)

1. The Congress Bureau may grant observer status, for a five-year renewable period, to organisations that request it and so inform the Congress.
2. Such organisations must be in full compliance with the values, principles and aims of the Council of Europe.
3. An organisation with observer status may, at its own expense, submit documents relating to subjects on the agenda of the Congress or of its Chambers.
4. The Statutory Forum, the Bureaux, the committees and the working groups may invite one or more high-level representatives of organisations with observer status to attend the whole or part of a meeting.

5. Other organisations may apply for observer status with a Chamber, also for a five-year renewable period. Where such an application is received, the relevant Chamber Bureau makes a decision on the application and informs its Chamber. If the Chamber Bureau is in favour, the organisation has the status of observer to that Chamber only.

Rule 68 – consultation and co-operation with other groups

The Congress and its two Chambers may, in accordance with the provisions to be set out in their Rules of Procedure, consult and work with representatives of international associations of local and regional authorities mentioned in Article 5 as well as national associations of local and regional authorities involved in the process of appointing national delegations. As a general rule, the cost of participation shall be borne by such organisations or associations. (Charter Art 10.4)

1. The Congress and its Chambers may, on the proposal of the relevant Bureau:
 - a. consult and co-operate with representatives of the international associations of local and regional authorities mentioned in Article 5 of the Charter and the national associations of local and/or regional authorities involved in appointing the national delegations; or
 - b. decide on specific co-operation agreements with organisations or institutions representing local and regional authorities of the member states of the Council of Europe.
2. Statutory bodies of Council of Europe partial agreements may be invited to appoint their representatives to participate in proceedings in an advisory capacity.

Rule 69 – revision of the Charter

1. Without prejudice to the respective rights of the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress may submit proposals to amend the Charter to the Committee of Ministers for decision.
2. The Bureau of the Congress or of either Chamber may submit to the Congress draft proposals to amend the Charter. These proposals must be included in a sessional agenda and made available to delegates one month before the session.
3. Any motion containing draft proposals to amend the Charter must be tabled by twenty delegates belonging to at least four national delegations in accordance with Rule 27. If the Bureau approves the draft proposals for amendment contained in the motion, the Bureau must submit them, in the form of a draft recommendation, to the Congress under Rule 69.2.

Rule 70 – revision of Rules of Procedure

The Congress adopts its own Rules of Procedure which also concerns the Chambers. (Charter Art 13.1)

1. The Bureau of the Congress may submit to the Congress a report containing draft proposals to amend the Rules. These proposals must be included in a sessional agenda and made available to delegates one month before the session.
2. Any motion containing draft proposals to amend these Rules must be tabled by twenty delegates belonging to at least four national delegations in accordance with Rule 27. If the Bureau approves the draft proposals for amendment contained in the motion, the Bureau must submit them, in the form of a draft resolution, to the Congress under Rule 70.1.