

The Congress



Le Congrès

**SESSION
HANDBOOK
2007/2008**

The Session handbook

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The Session handbook

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*Dear members,
Dear colleagues,*

To help you in your work, the Congress has prepared this new version of the session handbook, which we have tried to make more user-friendly and practical.

The sessions are among the focal points of the work of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. They provide an opportunity to discuss and publicise the activities carried out by the Congress through its various subordinate bodies and to pass on texts to the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and to the member states and their local and regional authorities.

The session takes place every year in May and brings together all the representatives in the Congress or their substitutes. The so-called spring and autumn sessions are attended by the members of the Standing Committee and one of the Congress's four statutory committees.

This is a particularly important year for us because it is fifty years since the first conference of local and regional elected representatives, in January 1957. This means that 2007 can be regarded as the 50th anniversary of local and regional democracy in Europe and of the Council of Europe's commitment to building genuine grassroots democracy.

In January 1994, the Committee of Ministers decided that the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe should become the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe and be made up of two Chambers, the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions.

On 2 May 2007, the Committee of Ministers adopted a revised Charter, which marks a turning point in our role within the organisation. As a result, this session will begin with a debate on the areas of activity of the Congress, the successive stages on the road we have already travelled and the challenges we still face.

We hope that this handbook will help you to gain a better grasp of the practical functioning of the session so that you can take part more effectively in the debates and hence contribute to the success of our work.

In this connection, we would like to thank the heads and secretaries of the delegations, as they play a key role in mobilising and helping all the members of the national delegations.

The Table Office and the entire Congress Secretariat are, of course, available to answer any questions you may have during the sessions.

I wish you every success.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ulrich Bohner', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ulrich Bohner
Secretary General of the Congress





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A wide-angle photograph of a Council of Europe meeting in session. The room is a large, semi-circular chamber with a high, vaulted wooden ceiling. In the foreground, several rows of delegates are seated at long wooden desks, each equipped with a microphone and a headset. The delegates are seen from behind, focused on the proceedings. In the background, a long, curved table separates the delegates from a panel of officials. Two large blue banners hang from the ceiling, each featuring the European Union flag (a circle of twelve gold stars) and the text 'COUNCIL OF EUROPE' and 'CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE' in white. To the left and right of the panel, smaller white banners display the text '800 millions' and a small graphic. The overall atmosphere is formal and professional.

COUNCIL
OF
EUROPE

CONSEIL
DE
L'EUROPE

800 millions

800 millions



The Congress

1

HOW DOES THE CONGRESS WORK ?

The Congress is a political assembly composed of local and regional representatives from the 47 member states of the Council of Europe.

Its 318 Representatives and 318 Substitutes, representing over 200 000 European municipalities and regions, are grouped by national delegation and political group. Thus the Congress offers an ideal forum for dialogue, where representatives of local and regional authorities discuss common problems, pool their experiences and present their views to the national governments.

The Chambers appoint the President of the Congress on an alternating basis. The President remains in office for two years.

The Congress meets in sessions in Strasbourg when it also welcomes delegations from accredited European organisations and some non-member states as special guests or observers.

The plenary session is held each year at the end of May - beginning of June. All the Representatives are invited.

The Standing Committee, drawn from all national delegations, meets during the Autumn (November) and Spring (March) Sessions, between the Congress plenary sessions.

The Standing Committee acts on behalf of the Congress in the periods between sessions.

The Bureau of the Congress comprises the President of the Congress, the Presidents of the two Chambers and the seven Vice-Presidents of each of the Bureaux of the Chambers. It is chaired by the Congress President.

The Bureau of the Congress gives the work of the Congress continuity between Standing Committee and full Congress sessions. It carries out work assigned by the Standing Committee.

The Bureau is also responsible for the preparation of the Congress sessions; 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 statutory Committees; the preparation of the budget and the balanced allocation of budgetary resources between the Congress and the two Chambers.

LIST OF THE MEMBERS OF THE BUREAU

NAME / COUNTRY	FUNCTIONS	GROUP
Mr Halvdan SKARD Norway	President of the Congress	SOC
Mr Yavuz MILDON Turkey	President of the Chamber of Regions (CPR)	EPP/CD
Dr Ian MICALLEF Malta	President of the Chamber of Local Authorities (CPL)	EPP/CD
Mr Günther KRUG Germany	Vice-President (CPR)	SOC
Mrs Dubravka SUICA Croatia	Vice-President (CPL)	EPP/CD
Ms Suvi RIHTNIEMI Finland	Vice-President (CPR)	EPP/CD
Mr Anders KNAPE Sweden	Vice-President (CPL)	EPP/CD
Dr Herwig VAN STAA Austria	Vice-Président (CPR)	EPP/CD
Mr Jean-Claude FRECON France	Vice-President (CPL)	SOC
Mrs Ludmila SFIRLOAGA Romania	Vice-Président (CPR)	SOC
Mr Alan LLOYD United Kingdom	Vice-President (CPL)	SOC
Mr Anatoly SALTYSKOV Russian Federation	Vice-President (CPR)	SOC
Mr Volodymyr UDovyCHENKO Ukraine	Vice-President (CPL)	ILGD
Mr Hans Ulrich STÖCKLING Switzerland	Vice-Président (CPR)	ILGD
Mr Onno VAN VELDHIJZEN Netherlands	Vice-President (CPL)	ILGD
Mr Istvan BORBELY Hungary	Vice-President (CPR)	EPP/CD
Mr Emin YERITSYAN Armenia	Vice-President (CPL)	EPP/CD

2

MEMBER STATES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Council of Europe comprises at present 47 Member States listed below (with the size of each national delegation to the Congress and the year of accession)

Member states	Number of representatives	Entry to the Council of Europe
Albania	4	13.07.1950
Andorra	2	10.11.1994
Armenia	4	25.01.2001
Austria	6	16.04.1956
Azerbaijan	6	25.01.2001
Belgium	7	05.05.1949
Bosnia and Herzegovina	5	24.04.2002
Bulgaria	6	07.05.1992
Croatia	5	06.11.1996
Cyprus	3	24.05.1961
Czech Republic	7	30.06.1993
Denmark	5	05.05.1949
Estonia	3	14.05.1993
Finland	5	05.05.1989
France	18	05.05.1949
Georgia	5	27.04.1999
Germany	18	13.07.1995
Greece	7	09.08.1949
Hungary	7	06.11.1990
Iceland	3	07.03.1950
Ireland	4	05.05.1949

Member states	Number of representatives	Entry to the Council of Europe
Italy	18	05.05.1949
Latvia	3	10.02.1995
Liechtenstein	2	23.11.1978
Lithuania	4	14.05.1993
Luxembourg	3	05.05.1949
Malta	3	29.04.1965
Moldova	5	13.07.1995
Monaco	2	05.10.2004
Montenegro	3	11.05.2007
Netherlands	7	05.05.1949
Norway	5	05.05.1949
Poland	12	26.11.1991
Portugal	7	22.09.1976
Romania	10	07.10.1993
Russian Federation	18	28.02.1996
San Marino	2	16.11.1988
Serbia	7	03.04.2003
Slovakia	5	30.06.1993
Slovenia	3	14.05.1993
Spain	12	24.11.1977
Sweden	6	05.05.1949
Switzerland	6	06.05.1963
"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"	3	09.11.1995
Turkey	12	09.08.1949
Ukraine	12	09.11.1995
United Kingdom	18	09.11.1995

3

THE CONGRESS COMMITTEES

The work of the Congress is structured around four statutory committees:

- the Institutional Committee, which has the task of drawing up reports on the progress of local and regional democracy in Europe and is assisted by a committee of independent experts;
- the Committee on Culture and Education, responsible for media, youth, sport and communication;
- the Committee on Sustainable Development, responsible for environmental affairs and spatial and urban planning;
- the Committee on Social Cohesion, responsible for issues concerning employment, citizenship, migration, inter-community relations, equality between women and men, and solidarity.

Representatives are allocated to Committees according to rules set by the Congress, based on the size of the National Delegations and in order to allow each Representative to attend any Committee meetings as a titular member or as an alternate of the Committee.

4

THE POLITICAL GROUPS OF THE CONGRESS

Representatives and Substitutes may form political groups and become members of these groups.

A political group shall consist of members of at least three different nationalities. It must have at least fifteen members in order to be recognized by the Bureau.

The political groups meet during Congress sessions (three times a year).

At present the Congress comprises three political groups:

- Socialist Group (SOC)
- European People's Party Group - Christians Democrats (EPP/CD)
- Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (ILDG)

OBSERVERS AND ASSOCIATIONS

Nearly 30 organisations have been granted Observer status with the Congress and are invited to attend the sessions. National Associations of Local and Regional Authorities can also send their representatives. A large number of International Organisations are also invited to participate.





The Congress Sessions

The Congress holds three sessions per year: the Plenary Session (end of May / beginning of June), the Autumn Session (November) and the Spring Session (March).

All three sessions are held in Strasbourg, headquarters of the Council of Europe, unless otherwise stated as the result of a common agreement between the Standing Committee and the Committee of Ministers.

Session dates:

Plenary Session	30 May - 1st June 2007
Autumn Session	19 - 21 November 2007
Spring Session:	12-14 March 2008

1

THE TABLE OFFICE

The Table office is in charge of the organisation and the general functioning of the Congress sessions.

It has specific responsibilities for convening the Congress, for keeping the Congress's Order of Business up to date and for the credentials of members.

In addition, the Table Office advises members of the Congress, secretaries of delegations and of political groups on how best to achieve their objectives within the Rules of Procedure of the Congress.

Motions for amendments, questions to personalities, written declarations and draft resolutions are submitted via the Table Office to the Congress.

2

SESSION DATES AND ORDER OF BUSINESS

a. Draft order of business of the Congress

The Bureau of the Congress sets the session dates and prepares a draft order of business of the Congress and the two Chambers. The draft order of business is made available to members of the Congress at least 20 days before the opening of the session.

The Congress adopts the draft order of business during the first sitting of the session.

The Chambers adopt their respective draft order of business during the first sitting of each Chamber.

b. Meetings of committees and political groups

The list of meetings held by the committees and the other organs of the Congress (Bureau, Political Groups, meetings of the Secretaries of National Delegations) appears in the draft order of business.

PLENARY SESSION WORKING DOCUMENTS

All working documents, the draft order of business of the Session and the agenda of the two Chambers are published on the Congress website: www.coe.int/congress. These are available 20 days before the session for texts to be adopted, and at least 8 days before for other documents.

During the plenary sessions, documents are available at the document counter located on the first floor in the Palais building building next to the hemicycle. The working documents of the Chamber meeting in Room 1 are available at the entrance of Room 1.

During the Autumn and Spring Sessions documents are available at the entrance of the meeting room.

a. Notice

A notice is published on a daily basis setting out the orders of the day for each sitting. It also contains other information relevant to the proceedings (amendments, tabling of questions, registration for debates, list of documents etc.).

b. Other useful documents

- Draft order of business of the Congress and of each Chamber
- Draft agenda of the session
- Plans of seat allocations in the hemicycle and in each Chamber
- List of Congress Representatives
- List of Congress Substitutes
- List of Members of the Chamber of Regions
- List of Members of the Chamber of Local Authorities
- List of National Delegations
- List of Observers
- List of other participants

c. Official documents

- *Reports*

The Statutory Committees draw up reports to be debated during the session. A Committee report comprises a draft Resolution and/or a draft Recommendation and/or a draft Opinion as well as an explanatory Memorandum prepared by one or several Rapporteurs. Following the debate draft Recommendations, Resolutions and Opinions are submitted to vote.

- *Amendments*

Motions for amendments should be submitted in writing to the Table Office (office 1081) by 16.00 hrs at the latest, the day before the opening of the debate on the relevant texts to which the amendments refer.

Amendments are distributed in the hemicycle at the beginning of the sitting in which they will be debated. They are also available at the document counter.

- *Minutes of proceedings*

The minutes of proceedings are produced after each sitting of the Congress and each Chamber. The minutes of proceedings are distributed and submitted for adoption at the opening of the next sitting of the Congress and of each Chamber.

- *Adopted texts*

Provisional versions of texts adopted during the sittings: Recommendations, Opinions and Resolutions are issued upon adoption of the texts. The provisional adopted texts are available at the document counter and on the Web site of the Congress.

A definitive version in the five working languages of the Congress is issued later.

After the sittings, the Table Office transmits a compendium of adopted texts to the Committee of Ministers and to the Parliamentary Assembly, as well as to the relevant countries, when a Recommendation or Resolution refers to a specific country.

The Committee of Ministers decides what action should be taken regarding the texts adopted by the Congress and transmits them to the relevant parties.

Recommendations include proposals addressed to the Committee of Ministers for implementation by governments. They are also sometimes addressed to other international organisations.

Opinions generally refer to questions submitted by the Committee of Ministers or by the Parliamentary Assembly to the Congress seeking the Congress's advice on matters which are likely to question the competencies and essential interests of local and regional communities represented by the Congress.

Resolutions embody decisions that the Congress is empowered to put into effect or recommendations addressed to local and regional communities and their associations.

A chronological and thematic list of texts adopted by the Congress is updated on a regular basis by the Table Office after each sitting.

- *Reports of debates*

Reports of debates are issued after each sitting and sent free of charge to the Members of the Congress and to the participants on request. The date of issue is available on the Congress's website: www.coe.int/congress

d. Other official documents:

- communications from the Secretary General, the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, special guests;
- written questions to the Secretary General and to the President of the Committee of Ministers;
- written declarations;
- motions for Resolutions.

WORKING LANGUAGES

4

The official languages of the Congress are French and English. German, Italian and Russian are working languages. Following a decision taken by the Ministers' Deputies, sitting debates made in any of these five languages are simultaneously interpreted into the other languages.

Documents are presented in French and in English, except for draft Recommendations (REC), Resolutions (RES) and Opinions, which are presented in five languages (French, English, German, Italian and Russian). Explanatory memoranda (REP) are presented in French and in English.



Ballotín de Voto
Ballot paper

IV

How the
Session work

1

RECEPTION

a. Badges

Members of the Congress and Secretaries starting a new mandate will receive a badge valid for the duration of the mandate. This badge will be delivered to them at the reception desk of the Palais building upon their arrival.

Following their nomination, Honorary Members receive a badge with no validity limit.



Wearing badges is compulsory, as certain areas in the Palais building can not be accessed without a badge.

b. Members' Congress passports

Congress passports are issued or extended for all Congress Members. They are delivered after completion of a request form available from the reception desk located on the right-hand side of the Palais building entrance hall.

c. Registration of other participants

Non-registered participants are invited to complete the registration form available at the reception desk. They will receive a pass and will be registered on the list of participants.

2

ATTENDANCE REGISTER

All Congress members must sign the attendance register before going into the hemicycle. Every Substitute duly designated will find their name on the attendance register next to the name of the Representative that they replace.

Attendance registers for the sittings of the Chambers are placed at the entrance of the hemicycle or Room 1. Members of the Chambers are requested to sign the register each time they attend a sitting.



Members are reminded that their expenses will only be refunded if they have signed the register.

NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES

3

Delegation Secretaries are bound to notify the Table Service (Room 1074) about all Substitutes duly designated to replace Representatives during the plenary sessions. If no substitution is notified, Substitutes attending the sitting do not have the right to speak, vote or be reimbursed for their expenses.

SEATING ALLOCATION IN THE HEMICYCLE

4

A seating plan for Members and Observers in the hemicycle will be available in front of the hemicycle before the Congress sittings.

Seats allocated to members in the hemicycle are arranged in the shape of a horseshoe and allocated in alphabetical order of surname. Consequently members do not sit in national delegations or in political groups.

Seating plans of different categories of participants in the two Chambers will also be available in front of the hemicycle and Room 1 before the sittings of the Chambers.



V

Organisation
of the debates

The Congress and the two Chambers' plenary debates are held in public whilst the Bureau and Committees *meet in camera*.

1

SPEAKERS' REGISTER

Members who wish to speak during Congress sittings should complete the form for registration of speakers (distributed during each sitting) and submit it to the Secretariat staff seated at the President's rostrum, before the opening of the sitting or during the sitting, or request the right to speak during the general discussion. Speaking time is limited to 5 minutes.

2

WRITTEN QUESTIONS TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL AND TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Written questions for oral answer should be tabled in Room 1081 (see session draft order of business for tabling deadline). In principle, each member should limit herself/himself to one question to the Secretary General and one question to the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers. Replies to additional questions will be provided only if there is enough time left during the debate.

3

QUESTIONS TO INVITED DIGNITARIES

For most invited guest speakers, the draft order of business indicates whether the members may ask questions. If so, members are encouraged to register their names with the Table Office as soon as the draft order of business is published and the name of the guest speaker appears. Members are invited to submit the subject of their question. There is no formal deadline as such as the questions are "spontaneous".

However, members should register their names as early as possible as there is usually not enough time to answer all questions.

AMENDMENTS

Amendments to draft texts must be tabled in Room 1081 by 16.00 hrs at the latest the day before the opening of the sitting at which the texts in question are to be debated.

The author of a tabled amendment is automatically listed on the speakers' register during the voting procedure to support his amendment. If beforehand he wishes to speak during the general discussion, he/she should make this known as per the rules set out in point 1.

Speaking time is limited to 2 minutes for members who wish to support or oppose an amendment.

WRITTEN DECLARATIONS *(Rule 35 of the Rules of Procedure of the Congress)*

Written declarations not exceeding two hundred words on subjects within the competence of the Congress may be tabled provided they have been signed by at least three Representatives or Substitutes of different nationalities.

If such declarations are judged by the President of the Congress to be in order they shall then be printed and distributed. They shall neither be referred to a statutory Committee or a working group, nor debated in the Congress or in a Chamber.

Any Representative or Substitute may add his signature to a written declaration. In such a case, the declaration shall be distributed again at the beginning of the next session together with the names of all members who have signed it.

MOTIONS FOR RESOLUTION *(Rule 23 of the Rules of Procedure of the Congress)*

Any Representative or Substitute may table motions which must bear on the substance of the question raised and take the form of a resolution; they may contain an explanatory memorandum. Such motions must be in writing, be signed by ten Representatives

or Substitutes belonging to at least two national delegations and relate to a question within the competence of the Congress.

The Chair shall decide whether such motions are in order. Motions which are in order shall be printed and distributed immediately.

The decision of the Congress to admit such motions for future examination shall require a two-third majority of the votes cast. On the question of admission, the following only shall be heard: one speaker "for" the motion and one speaker "against".

Motions admitted by the Congress for future examination shall be referred by the Congress to the Bureau. The Bureau shall then examine the question and decide whether it falls within the competence of a Chamber or of the Congress and act in conformity with rule 23 (reference to Committees).

7**VOTES**

Only members duly designated by their National Delegation who have signed the sitting attendance register have a voting right.

Voting in the hemicycle and meeting rooms is by a show of hands or roll call.

Upon signature of the attendance register, in the two Chambers and in each of the four statutory committees, members will receive a voting card which is essential during voting (pink for the Chamber of Regions and yellow for the Chamber of Local Authorities).

This voting card is not needed for Congress sittings as Representatives will sit at the place allocated to them (by name) and Substitutes replacing Representatives will sit at the relevant Representative's place.

TACIT ADOPTION PROCEDURE *(Rule 26 of the Rules of Procedure of the Congress)*

1. When preparing the agenda for a session of the Congress, the Bureau may include in it reports presented by a statutory Committee or a joint working group under the tacit adoption procedure, consisting of approval of a draft resolution, recommendation or opinion by the Congress without oral presentation or debate.
2. Such reports shall be distributed at least one month before the opening of the session and shall bear an indication that they are to be dealt with according to the procedure described in paragraph 1 above.
3. At the first sitting of the session concerned, the Chair shall announce the report or reports to be dealt with as provided in the foregoing paragraphs. The orders of the day shall give a list of such reports.
4. If no objection to any draft resolution, recommendation or opinion contained in such reports has been lodged by midday on the following day, they shall be regarded as adopted. Texts giving rise to an objection shall be included in the orders of the day for a later sitting of the current session and shall be the subject of a debate.
5. At the last sitting of the session, the Chair shall give notice of any texts which have been adopted by the procedure referred to in paragraph 4 above. Abstentions notified within the period prescribed for the lodging of objections shall be recorded in the minutes of proceedings of that sitting.
6. Texts adopted by tacit procedure according to the provisions of this Rule shall be published in the same manner as those adopted after debate.



VI

Autumn
and Spring
Sessions

Autumn and Spring Sessions usually take place in Strasbourg; plenary sessions are held in room 1 (2nd floor of the Palais building) and the sittings of the Chambers in room 1 and 5.

The next Autumn Session will take place in Strasbourg on 19th and 21st November 2007.

The Spring Session will be held from 12 to 14 March 2008.

1**BADGES, WORKING LANGUAGES**

Rules that apply for the plenary session also apply for autumn and spring sessions.

2**DOCUMENTS**

Just as for the plenary sessions the draft agenda for the plenary sitting and for the two Chambers, as well as the working documents, are available on the Congress website www.coe.int/congress (20 days before the session for draft texts and at least 8 days before the sessions for other documents).

Draft texts and working documents submitted for debate and to be adopted that may not be available on the website before the session are available at the entrance of each meeting room.

3**ATTENDANCE REGISTER**

All members must sign the attendance register before going into the meeting room. All Substitutes duly designated will find their names on the attendance register next to the name of the Representative they are substituting for.



Members are reminded that their expenses will only be refunded if they have signed the register.

PROCEDURE FOR REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES FOR CONGRESS MEMBERS

a. Rules

Rules that apply for the plenary session also apply for autumn and spring sessions.

b. Submission of files and reimbursement

A “Finance” office is located at the entrance of room 2 (2nd floor) in the Palais building.

Reimbursement request files must be submitted there.

After verification of the files, reimbursement cheques can be collected from the same place.

DEBATES

a. Amendments

Motions for amendments should be submitted in writing to the Table Office by 16.00 hrs at the latest the day before the opening of the sitting at which the texts to which they refer are to be debated.

The author of a tabled amendment is automatically listed on the speakers' register during the voting procedure to support his amendment. If he wishes to speak during the general discussion, he has must notify the Secretariat staff seated at the President's rostrum.

Speaking time is limited to 2 minutes for members who wish to support or oppose an amendment.

b. Votes

Only full members of the Standing Committee who have signed the attendance register for the sittings of the Chambers or the plenary sittings have a right to vote (Rule 15 of the Rules of Procedure of the Congress).

After signing the attendance register, members of the Standing Committee will receive a voting card which is essential during voting.



VII

Press and communication

1

PRESS CONTACTS

Journalists accredited by the Council of Europe may attend the sessions and contact Congress members and invited dignitaries for interviews. Participants to the session can meet journalists in the press room which is opened during the session (2nd floor -room 4).

For any question regarding contacts with the press or interviews, contact:

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COUNCIL OF EUROPE DIRECTORATE OF COMMUNICATION

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PRESS BRIEFING**2**

A press briefing will be held on Tuesday 29 May from 3.45 pm to 4.30 pm at the Blue Restaurant of the Council of Europe.

LIVE WEBCAST OF THE DEBATES**3**

The debates will be webcast live during the session on the portals of the Congress and the Council of Europe. Video recordings of selected debates will also be available on the internet.

THE SESSION ONLINE**4**

A special file covering the session is available online:

www.coe.int/congress-session

including order of business, draft texts, adopted texts, speeches, as well as press releases and photos.



VIII

Reimbursement of expenses

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RULES:

a. Daily allowances

The amount of the daily allowance is 169 Euros allocated per day of actual presence at the meeting.

This amount includes local travel costs (Rule 5 of the Rules), from your home to the airport (or to the railway station), from the meeting venue to the airport (or to the railway station), and from the hotel to the meeting venue.

b. Travelling Expenses

Please read the Rules on reimbursement of travelling expenses very carefully before organising your journey. If you are in any doubt, please do not hesitate to contact the Congress Secretariat.

Delegates are asked to arrange their journeys by the most economical route and to make use of reduced fares (excursion, euro budget, pex, apex). If the use of reduced fares and/or if times of public transport make it necessary for members to spend extra nights away from home, in relation to the number of meeting days, a percentage of the daily allowance may be paid in compensation for additional costs incurred.

In conformity with Article 3.1 of the Rules, the sum refunded may not exceed the cost calculated on the basis of the normal routes determined by the Secretariat, according to the transport used. (See list of the normal routes to and from Strasbourg appended to the Rules).

Participants travelling by car should indicate on their reimbursement form whether they are using their own car and give the names of other participants who are travelling with them. If participants are not using their own car, they should indicate the name of the person with whom they are travelling.

Representatives of the Congress will have their travelling expenses reimbursed and will receive a per diem allowance to cover the period of the meeting (i.e. 169 Euros), in accordance with the instructions featured in the Financial Rules.

Delegations are asked to communicate to the Secretariat (Room 1074) a list in duplicate of any Representatives who are absent, specifying in each case the name of the Substitutes replacing them. Only Substitutes replacing a Representative, and appearing on such a list, will be entitled to reimbursement of travelling and subsistence expenses.

Concerning the statutory committees, the political groups and the working groups meeting before or during the Plenary Session, it should be pointed out that expenses will be refunded only to those members of these working structures who are entitled to reimbursement of their travel and subsistence costs on the basis of their attendance at the Plenary Session, either as Representatives or as Substitutes replacing absent Representatives.

REIMBURSEMENT CLAIM FILE DURING THE PLENARY SESSION

Reimbursement claim forms must be collected on the first day of the plenary session from Secretaries of each National Delegation or in Room 1038 (C. Belenesi, extension 53.23 or D. Oehler, extension 38.48) and filled in clearly and accurately in block capital letters.

a. Contents of the file

The Representatives or Substitutes who are replacing Representatives and whose names are on the above-mentioned list - are requested to submit to the Finance Directorate staff, a file containing:

- a duly completed and signed reimbursement claim form,
- the relevant documents required under Rule 3 of the Rules, i.e.:
 - ▶ Legible copies of airline tickets, showing the dates and times of departure and return, stop-over and arrival;
 - ▶ Original receipt of the airline ticket or original receipt of the amount paid (credit card slip, etc...);
 - ▶ For electronic tickets ordered by Internet or telephone: a document (e-mail, receipt of payment, invoice or bank statement) which shows:
 - *the words "amount paid",* – *the itinerary,*
 - *the name of the traveller,* – *the dates and time of the flight;*
 - *the method of payment,*

The "reçu passager/passenger receipt" or the "menu voyage/itinerary receipt" alone will not be accepted

- ▶ copy of train tickets;
- ▶ copy of seat reservations, train supplements and sleeper reservation vouchers.

b. Submission of file:

Reimbursement claim files must be submitted to the Finance Directorate (Room 1040 - on the 1st floor of the Palais de l'Europe):

Important deadlines:

1. The first day, i.e. Tuesday 30 May, from 9:00 to 12:00 and from 14:00 to 17:00 for members participating from the beginning of the session.
For reimbursement claims submitted after 30 May, the Finance Division cannot guarantee a reimbursement onsite. Thereafter, reimbursements will be made by bank transfer.
2. On arrival day and during the opening hours of the finance office, for members participating from the second or third day.

Opening dates and hours of the Finance Directorate office for members of the Congress (Room 1040 - 1st floor)

Wednesday 30th May 2007	09.00 to 12.00 - 14.00 to 17.00
Thursday 31st May 2007	09.00 to 12.00 only
Friday 1st June 2007	11.00 to 14.00

c. Payment**1. Advances:**

If claimants wish to receive an advance, they should enter a cross in the "ADVANCE" box in section III of the claim form. Advances will be paid on the first day only by cheque in euros which must be cashed at the Société Générale Bank at the Council of Europe, (ground floor of the Palais de l'Europe);

2. Balance:

But for those exceptions mentioned in point B, the reimbursement of travelling and/or daily allowance will also be paid by cheque in euros which can either:

- be cashed in euros at the Société Générale Bank at the Council of Europe, (ground floor of the Palais de l'Europe);

- or be deposited into the cheque holder's account, (according to the bank legislation of the country concerned).

Travelling expenses claimed in a foreign currency will be converted and cashed in Euros on the basis of the official Council of Europe rate during the week of the meeting.

3. *Collection of cheques:*

i. Full Session participants:

cheques will be available from the Finance office on Friday 1st June as from 11.00.

Members who are obliged to leave before 11.00 on Friday 1st June must leave their bank details at the Finance office (Room 1040) and will be reimbursed by bank transfer after the Session.

ii. Participants in part of the Session and who must leave Strasbourg before 1st June:

Such participants must inform the Finance Directorate (room 1040) of their departure date and time when depositing their reimbursement request file, so that cheques are prepared and made available for collection before participants are due to leave.



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IX

Practical
information

Internet access

Free Wi-Fi access is available in most areas of the Palais building. Terminals with free broadband access are also available in the lobby of the debating chamber and outside the second floor meeting rooms. The Assembly's website and the Council of Europe portal, including other language portals, can be accessed here.

Mail addressed to National Delegations

Mail addressed to National Delegations will be placed in the pigeonholes reserved for this purpose at the document centre (first floor, next to the hemicycle, top right-hand side of the main staircase).

Receptions – Exhibitions

Receptions and exhibitions featured in the program are open to all participants.

Finance Office

Rooms 1038 - 1040, 1st floor of the Palais building

open from 9.00 hrs to 12.00 hrs - 14.00 hrs to 17.00 hrs Wednesday 30th May,
from 9.00 hrs to 12.00 hrs Thursday 31st May and
from 11.00 hrs to 14.00 hrs Friday 1st June.

"Non-smoking" area

The Council of Europe has decided to declare all its buildings "non-smoking areas". The decision became effective on 1st February 2007. This measure is destined to protect the health of occupants inside the Organisation buildings.

Outdoor smoking areas are available:

- Level 0 - Inner courtyards, access opposite lifts II, V and VI
- Level 1 - Inner terrace, access via the Parliamentarians' Bar
- Level 4 - Inner terrace, access opposite lifts I and VI.

Plans showing where the smoking areas are located are posted up at the reception desk in the buildings concerned.

Mobile phones

Members are reminded that mobile phones must be switched off at all times in the hemicycle and the meeting rooms.

Bars and restaurants

Parliamentarians' Bar: 1st floor, opposite the Chamber, open from 8,30 a.m. to the end of the sitting.

Restaurant Bleu : ground floor, for official meals (tel.3704 for reservations).

Palais building cafeteria: ground floor, open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Palais building self-service: ground floor, lunch from 12 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Bank

Société Générale, in the entrance hall, open from 8.15 a.m. to 5.30 p.m., tel.7060. A cash dispenser is located opposite the cafeteria (ground floor).

Bus

Free shuttle service to the railway station via the town center (and vice versa). Badges must be shown. Time schedules are available at the reception desk.

Bookshop

Librairie Kléber: In the entrance hall, open from 9.30 a.m. to 12.45 p.m. and from 1.30 p.m. to 5.45 p.m., tel. 3712.

Post office

La Poste : in the entrance hall, open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., tel. 3463.

Medical centre

Entrance hall, open from 8.30 a.m. to the end of the sitting, tel. 2442.

Newsagent

Just off the entrance hall, open from 7.30 a.m. to 7.00 p.m., tel. 3549.

Travel agent

Carlson Wagonlit: Palais building, ground floor, near the Restaurant. Open from 9.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and from 1.30 p.m. to 5.00 p.m., tel. 3714



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Reference
texts

 **Rules of Procedure of the Congress**

 **Statutory Resolution and Charter of the Congress**

These texts are available online on the Congress website:

www.coe.int/congress

and at the Document centre.

The Congress



Le Congrès

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe
Le Congrès des pouvoirs locaux et régionaux du Conseil de l'Europe

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