

Organisation of the Committee of the Regions

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URL: http://www.cvce.eu/obj/organisation_of_the_committee_of_the_regions-en-2cbdab8a-f7e8-437b-b730-c22e788a16e1.html

Last updated: 08/07/2016



Organisation of the Committee of the Regions

The constituent bodies of the Committee of the Regions are the Plenary Assembly, the President, the Bureau and the commissions. The Committee is assisted by a Secretariat-General.

Plenary Assembly

The Committee meets as a Plenary Assembly. It brings together all the members of the Committee. Its main tasks are as follows:

- to adopt opinions, reports and resolutions;
- to adopt the draft estimates of expenditure and revenue of the Committee;
- to adopt the political programme of the Committee at the beginning of every term;
- to elect the President, the first Vice-President and the remaining members of the Bureau;
- to set up commissions;
- to adopt and revise the Rules of Procedure of the Committee.

The Plenary Assembly is convened by the President of the Committee at least once every three months. The dates of the Plenary Sessions are fixed by the Bureau during the third quarter of the previous year. A Plenary Session can meet on one or more days.

At the written request of at least one quarter of the members, the President is obliged to convene an extraordinary Plenary Session, which must take place not sooner than one week and not later than one month after the date on which the request is submitted. The written request must state the subject matter which is to be discussed. No other matter may be dealt with.

Presidency

The Committee is represented by the President. He directs the work of the Committee. If the President is absent or unable to attend, he is represented by the first Vice-President; if the first Vice-President is absent or unable to attend, the President is represented by one of the other Vice-Presidents.

The Committee elects its President from among its members for a term of two years (Article 264 of the Treaty establishing the European Community (EC)). However, in the same way as the Constitutional Treaty, the Treaty amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, signed in Lisbon on 13 December 2007 and not yet in force, provides for the extension of the President's term of office to two and a half years.

The election of the President of the Committee and that of the first Vice-President are held separately. They are elected by a majority of the votes cast. If no candidate obtains the required majority in the first ballot, a second ballot is held in which the candidate receiving the highest number of votes is deemed to be elected. In the event of a tied vote, a decision is taken by drawing lots.

Bureau

The Bureau is elected by the Plenary Assembly for two years. It consists of the President, the first Vice-

President, one Vice-President per Member State, 27 other members and the chairmen of the political groups.

One member per country has the title of Vice-President.

Apart from the positions of President and first Vice-President and the seats of the chairmen of the political groups, the Bureau seats are allocated as follows among the national delegations:

— 3 seats: France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, United Kingdom;

— 2 seats: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden;

— 1 seat: Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Slovenia.

The Bureau has the following main tasks:

— establishment of its policy programme at the beginning of each term, monitoring of its implementation, and presentation to the Plenary Assembly of an impact assessment annually and at the end of each term;

—organisation and coordination of the work of the Plenary Assembly and the commissions;

— overall responsibility for financial, organisational and administrative matters concerning members and alternates; internal organisation of the Committee, its Secretariat-General, including the establishment plan, and its constituent bodies;

— engagement of the Secretary-General, the officials and other servants of the European Communities;

— submission of the draft estimates of expenditure and revenue to the Plenary Assembly;

— authorisation of meetings away from the usual place of work;

— drawing-up of provisions for the membership and working methods of working groups and of joint committees with applicant countries.

The Bureau is convened by the President. It meets at least once every three months, or within 14 days following receipt of a written request by at least one quarter of its members. A quorum exists if at least one half of its members are present. As a general rule, the Bureau decides by a majority of the votes cast.

In the same way as the Constitutional Treaty, the Treaty amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, signed in Lisbon on 13 December 2007 and not yet in force, provides for the lengthening of the Bureaus's term of office to two and a half years.

Commissions

At the beginning of each four-year term, the Plenary Assembly sets up commissions to prepare its work. It decides on their composition and powers.

The composition of the commissions must reflect the national composition of the Committee.

In principle, members of the Committee belong to at least one commission but may not belong to more than two.

The Committee of the Regions has six commissions:

- Commission for Territorial Cohesion Policy (COTER)
- Commission for Economic and Social Policy (ECOS)
- Commission for Sustainable Development (DEVE)
- Commission for Culture, Education and Research (EDUC)
- Commission for Constitutional Affairs, European Governance and the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice (CONST)
- Commission for External Relations and Decentralised Cooperation (RELEX)

Each commission appoints from among its members a chairman, a first vice-chairman and no more than two vice-chairmen.

The task of the commissions is to discuss community policies and, in particular, to draw up the draft versions of opinions, reports and resolutions. These drafts are submitted to the Plenary Assembly for adoption.

Secretariat-General

The Committee is assisted by a Secretariat-General headed by a Secretary-General.

The Secretariat-General ensures the efficient functioning of the Committee and its constituent bodies and helps the members of the Committee in the performance of their duties. It draws up the minutes of the meetings of the Committee's constituent bodies.

The Secretary-General is responsible for giving effect to the decisions taken by the Bureau or the President. He attends the meetings of the Bureau in an advisory capacity and keeps the minutes of those meetings. In preparation for the Bureau decisions, the Secretary-General draws up discussion documents and recommendations for a decision on each item to be discussed.

The Secretary-General discharges his duties under the direction of the President, representing the Bureau.

As for the structure of the Secretariat-General, the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee have a common organisational structure (COS) pursuant to Protocol No 16 annexed to the Treaty establishing the EC by the 1992 Treaty on EU. The 1997 Amsterdam Treaty repealed this Protocol [Article 2(59)] by granting each Committee its own administrative and budgetary autonomy. A cooperation agreement between the two bodies, approved by their respective Bureaux in April–May 1999, provides for new cooperation which falls within the general framework of interinstitutional cooperation and which is geared towards independence in several areas (Finances, Financial Control, Staff Support with the exception of the Medical/Welfare Department, and Secretariat for Staff Representation) and the common functioning of the other departments of the former COS.

National delegations

The members and alternates from each Member State form a national delegation. Each national delegation adopts its own internal rules and elects a chairman.

The Secretary-General makes arrangements, within the Committee's administration, for national delegations to receive assistance. Specifically, the Secretary-General provides them with suitable means for holding meetings immediately before or during Plenary Sessions.

Political groups

Members and alternates may form groups which reflect their political affinities. These groups provide a forum for Committee members to discuss key political issues and reach common positions. They may meet immediately before or during Plenary Sessions. They may hold two extraordinary meetings each year.

The political groups represented in the Committee of the Regions are as follows:

- European People's Party (EPP);
- Party of the European Socialists (PES);
- Union for Europe of the Nations – European Alliance (UEN – EA)
- Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE).

Each group is assisted by a secretariat staffed by Secretariat-General personnel. The Secretariat-General provides the political groups and their constituent bodies with adequate resources for meetings, activities and publications and for the work of their secretariats.

Non-attached members are provided with administrative support.

Interregional groups

Members and alternates may also form interregional groups.

(January 2009)