

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: ORGANISATION AND OPERATION

The organisation and the operation of the European Parliament are governed by its rules of procedure. The management bodies, committees, delegations and political groups guide Parliament's activities. Its composition usually changes after treaty revisions and enlargements.

LEGAL BASIS

- Articles 183-201 EC;
- European Parliament's Rules of Procedure.

MEMBERSHIP

There are at present 785 Members, allocated as follows: Germany – 99; France, Italy and the United Kingdom – 78; Spain and Poland – 54; Romania – 35; The Netherlands – 27; Belgium, Greece, Hungary, Portugal, and the Czech Republic – 24; Sweden – 19; Austria and Bulgaria – 18; Finland and Slovakia – 14; Denmark, Ireland and Lithuania – 13; Latvia – 9; Slovenia – 7; Cyprus, Estonia and Luxembourg – 6; Malta – 5.

ORGANISATION

A. Management bodies

They comprise the Bureau (the President and 14 Vice-Presidents); the Conference of Presidents (President and political group chairmen); the six (after July 2009 five) Quaestors responsible for Members' administrative and financial business; the Conference of Committee Chairmen; and the Conference of Delegation Chairmen. The term of office of the President, Vice-Presidents and Quaestors is two and a half years.

B. Committees and delegations

Members are assigned to 20 committees, 2 subcommittees, interparliamentary delegations and delegations to joint parliamentary committees. There is also the Joint Assembly set up under the agreement between the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States and the EU.

Each committee or delegation elects its own 'bureau' comprising a chairman and four (after July 2009 three) vice-chairmen.

C. The political groups

Members do not sit in national delegations but according to their political affinities, in transnational groups. Under the Rules of Procedure a political group shall comprise Members elected in at least one-fifth of the Member States. After accession of Bulgaria and Romania the minimum number of Members required to form a political group was twenty, coming from at least six Member States (Rule 29). After the 2009 elections this threshold will rise to 25 MEPs from at least 7 Member States. The political groups hold regular meetings during the week before the part-session and during the part-session week, as well as seminars to determine the

main principles of their Community activity. Several political groupings have founded political parties that operate at European level, e.g. the European People's Party, the Party of European Socialists, the European Green Party and the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party. They work in close cooperation with the corresponding political groups within Parliament.

D. European political parties

The European political parties' importance in forming a European awareness and in expressing the political will of the citizens of the Union is recognised in Article 191 EC, introduced by the Maastricht Treaty. Parliament recommends the creation of an environment favourable to their continued development, including the adoption of framework legislation. The Treaty of Nice supplemented Article 191 with a legal base which allowed the adoption via the codecision procedure of a statute of European level political parties and particularly of rules concerning their funding. Since the entry into force of this regulation (2004/2003 EC), in 2004, several new political parties have been founded, raising their total number to 10.

OPERATION

Under the Treaty, Parliament organises its work independently. It adopts its Rules of Procedure, acting by a majority of its members (Article 199 EC). If the Treaties do not provide otherwise, Parliament acts by an absolute majority of the votes cast (Article 198). It decides the agenda for its part-sessions, which primarily cover the adoption of reports by its committees, questions to the Commission and Council, topical and urgent debates and statements by the Presidency. Plenary sittings are held in public.

SEAT AND PLACES OF WORK

From 7 July 1981 onward, Parliament has adopted several resolutions on its seat, calling on the governments of the Member States to comply with the obligation incumbent upon them under the Treaties to establish a single seat for the Institutions. Since they failed to respond, it took a series of decisions concerning its organisation and places of work (Luxembourg, Strasbourg and Brussels).

At the **Edinburgh European Council** of 11 and 12 December 1992 the Member States' governments reached agreement on the seats of the Institutions, whereby:

- Parliament should have its seat in Strasbourg, where the 12 monthly part-sessions, including the budget session, should be held;
- additional plenary part-sessions should be held in Brussels;
- the parliamentary committees should meet in Brussels;
- the Parliament's secretariat and departments should remain in Luxembourg.

This decision was criticised by Parliament. However, the Court of Justice (judgment of 1 October 1997 – C 345/95) confirmed that it had determined the seat of Parliament in accordance with Article 289 EC. The substance of this decision was included in the Treaty of Amsterdam in a protocol annexed to the Treaties, which Parliament regretted.

Parliament draws up its annual calendar of part-sessions on the proposal of the Conference of Presidents. In general Parliament holds 12 four-day part-sessions in Strasbourg and six two-day part-sessions in Brussels. On 18 December 2006 Parliament held for the first time a supplementary plenary sitting in Brussels directly after the European Council of 15/16 December 2006. In future, this practice will be consolidated.

MEMBERSHIP OF PARLIAMENT BY GROUP AND MEMBER STATE

	PPE-DE	PSE	ALDE	UEN	Greens/ ALE	GUE/N GL	IND/D EM	NI	
Belgium	6	7	6		2			3	24
Bulgaria	5	5	5					3	18
Czech Republic	14	2				6	1	1	24
Denmark	1	5	4	1	1	1	1		14
Germany	49	23	7		13	7			99
Estonia	1	3	2						6
Greece	11	8				4	1		24
Spain	24	24	2		3	1			54
France	18	31	10		6	3	3	7	78
Ireland	5	1	1	4		1	1		13
Italy	24	17	12	13	2	7		3	78
Cyprus	3		1			2			6
Latvia	3		1	4	1				9
Lithuania	2	2	7	2					13
Luxembourg	3	1	1		1				6
Hungary	13	9	2						24
Malta	2	3							5
Netherlands	7	7	5		4	2	2		27
Austria	6	7	1		2			2	18
Poland	15	9	6	19			3	2	54
Portugal	9	12				3			24
Romania	18	10	6		1				35
Slovenia	4	1	2						7
Slovakia	8	3						3	14
Finland	4	3	5		1	1			14
Sweden	6	5	3		1	2	2		19
United Kingdom	27	19	11		5	1	8	7	78
Total	277	218	106	44	42	41	23	14	785

PPE-DE: Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) and European Democrats

PSE: Socialist Group in the European Parliament

ALDE: Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe

UEN: Union for Europe of the Nations Group

Greens/ALE: Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance

GUE/NGL: Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left

IND/DEM: Independence and Democracy Group

NI: Non-attached Members

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