

**The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe**

**EUROPEAN CONSERVATIVES & REFORMISTS GROUP**

**RULES**

**1. The Group**

- a) The European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR) is a centre-right coalition of like-minded colleagues from political parties within national delegations to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (“The Congress”) – all of whom support the aims and objectives of the Group.
- b) Membership and Associate Membership of the ECR is granted to political parties within national delegations to the Congress and to individuals. Once awarded to a political party, all members of that party are entitled to be Members or Associate Members of the ECR.
- c) Individuals who support the aims and objectives of the Group may also be granted membership in accordance with Rules 3a, 3b, 3c and 3d.

**2. Existing Members, Associate Members and Invited Participants**

- a) National political parties and individuals who are Members or Associate Members of the ECR on the adoption of these rules continue to be so (on the terms set out in Rules 3 and 4) and will remain so unless and until they notify the Group Secretary in writing that they wish to end their membership.
- b) National political parties and individuals who have been invited to participate in the activities of the ECR will on the adoption of these rules continue to be entitled to do so (on the terms set out in Rule 5).

**3. New Members**

- a) Parties within national delegations from Member States of the Council of Europe (COE) that are not members on the adoption of these rules who wish to join or to be allowed to participate must apply in writing to the Group Secretary. All applications must be accompanied by copies of the party’s aims, objectives, constitution and rules in one of the Congress’ official languages.
- b) The Group Secretary will report all applications to the next meeting of the Group’s Bureau. As soon as practical thereafter the Bureau will present a report and recommendation to an Ordinary Meeting of the Group.
- c) Upon receipt of such a report and recommendation the Group at an Ordinary Meeting will determine the application as soon as possible either by acclamation or secret ballot.
- d) Every member of a political party and individuals granted membership must give the Group Secretary written confirmation that they accept the aims, objectives, constitution and rules of the ECR before participating in any activity of the Group.

**4. New Associate Members**

- a) Members of national political parties from countries having Observer or Special Guest status with the COE and/or PACE and/or the Congress can apply for Associate Membership. Applications must be made in writing to the Group Secretary. Applications will be treated as set out in Rules 3a, 3b, 3c and 3d.
- b) Associate Members are entitled to attend and participate in all Group activities but are not entitled to vote.

**5. New Invited Participants**

- a) Political parties and individuals not able to apply for membership or associate membership can request or be invited to take part in all or specific Group activities.
- b) Applications must be made in writing to the Group Secretary. Applications will be processed as set out in Rules 3a, 3b, 3c and 3d. Invitations will be processed as though they were applications.
- c) Invited Participants are not entitled to vote.

## **6. The Chairman of the Group**

- a) At the first Congress Part-Session of each year the Group will elect a Chairman. The election will be conducted by the Group Secretary. If the election is contested voting will be by secret ballot. A simple majority will be sufficient. In the event of a tie the candidates will draw lots to decide the winner. A Chairman can be re-elected annually without restriction.
- b) Except for the first occasion after these rules are adopted, the Group Secretary will write to or email (if necessary via National Delegation Secretaries) every member of the Group no later than 1 month before the Session inviting nominations for the post of Group Chairman.
- c) Except for the first occasion after these rules are adopted, nominations signed by a proposer, seconder and the nominee must be received by the Group Secretary in writing, by fax or by email no later than fourteen days before the first meeting of the Group at the first Congress Part-Session of each year. As soon as practical after this deadline the Group Secretary will notify all members of the Group of all the valid nominations received.
- d) The Chairman of the Group will be responsible for the day to day management of the Group's affairs.

## **7. The First Deputy Chairman of the Group**

- a) At the first Congress Part Session of each year the Group will elect a First Deputy Chairman. If the election is contested voting will be by secret ballot. A simple majority will be sufficient.
- b) A First Deputy Chairmen can be re-elected annually without restriction, but the First Deputy-Chairmen may not belong to the same national delegation or that of the Group Chairman or the Second Deputy Chairman.
- c) In the event of a tie the Group Chairman will have a casting vote.
- e) Except for the first occasion after these rules are adopted, the Group Secretary will write to or email (if necessary via National Delegation Secretaries) every member of the Group no later than one month before the Session inviting nominations for the post of First Deputy Chairman.
- f) Except for the first occasion after these rules are adopted, nominations signed by a proposer, seconder and the nominee must be received by the Group Secretary in writing, by fax or by email no later than fourteen days before the first meeting of the Group at the first Congress Part-Session of each year. As soon as practical after this deadline the Group Secretary will notify all members of the Group of all the valid nominations received.
- g) The First Deputy Chairman's role is to support and assist the Group Chairman. In the absence of th Group Chairman he/she will chair meetings.
- h) Should the post of Group Chairman fall vacant during the year, the First Deputy Chairman will act as Group Chairman until the next Congress Part-Session of the year when the Group will elect its new Group Chairman in accordance with Rule 6b and 6c.

## **8. The Second Deputy Chairman of the Group**

- d) At the first Congress Part Session of each year the Group will elect a Second Deputy Chairman. If the election is contested voting will be by secret ballot. A simple majority will be sufficient.
  - e) A Second Deputy Chairman can be re-elected annually without restriction, but the Second Deputy-Chairman may not belong to the same national delegation or that of the Group Chairman or the First Deputy Chairman.
  - f) In the event of a tie the Group Chairman will have a casting vote.
- e) Except for the first occasion after these rules are adopted, the Group Secretary will write to or email (if necessary via National Delegation Secretaries) every member of the Group no later than 1 month before the Session inviting nominations for the post of Second Deputy Chairman.
- f) Except for the first occasion after these rules are adopted, nominations signed by a proposer, seconder and the nominee must be received by the Group Secretary in writing, by fax or by email no later than fourteen days before the first meeting of the Group at the first Congress Part-Session of each year. As soon as practical after this deadline the Group Secretary will notify all members of the Group of all the valid nominations received.
- g) The Second Deputy Chairman's role is to support and assist the Group Chairman. In the absence of the Group Chairman and the First Deputy Chairman he/she will chair meetings.
- h) Should the post of Group Chairman and First Deputy Chairman fall vacant at the same time during the year, the Second Deputy Chairman will act as Group Chairman until the next Congress Part-Session of the year when the Group will elect its new Group Chairman and First Deputy Chairman in accordance with Rule 6b and 6c.

## **9. Member Party Leaders**

- a) Every political party in membership or associate membership of the EDG will appoint a Member Party Leader. Each Leader will notify the Group Secretary of his/her appointment so that the Group Secretary can use Leaders as the principal contacts for parties.
- b) In the event of the Group Chairman, the First Deputy Chairman and the Second Deputy Chairman being absent from a meeting, the meeting will elect a Member Party Leader to take the chair.

## **10. The Secretary of the Group**

- a) The Bureau may appoint a paid member of staff as Secretary of the Group. He/she will be entitled to participate fully in all the formal business of the Group but will not be entitled to vote.
- b) If the Group has no paid Secretary, the Group will elect a Group Secretary at the first Congress Part-Session of every year. Voting will be by secret ballot. An elected Group Secretary can be re-elected annually without restriction
- c) The Group Secretary is responsible for the administration of the group's formal business, record and bookkeeping.

## **11. The Group Treasurers**

- a) At the first Congress Part-Session of every year the Group will elect a maximum of two Group Treasurers. Group Treasurers can be re-elected annually without restriction.
- b) Group Treasurers will agree and oversee appropriate arrangements with the Group Secretary for the control of all the Group's income and expenditure.
- c) At the last Congress Part-Session of every year the Treasurers will present for approval to the Group a budget for the following year.

- d) At each Congress Part-Session the Treasurers will present to the Group a financial statement.
- e) At the end of each calendar year the Treasurers will arrange for the audit of the group's accounts and present an auditor's report to the first Congress Part-Session of every year.

## **12. Group Auditors**

- a) At the first Part-Session of every year the Group will elect a maximum of two Group Auditors. Group Auditors can be re-elected annually without restriction.
- b) Group Auditors will agree and oversee appropriate arrangements with the Group Treasurers for the control of all the Group's income and expenditure.
- c) At the end of each calendar year the Auditors will arrange with the Group Treasurers for the audit of the Group's accounts and present with the Group Treasurers an auditor's report to the first Congress Part-Session of every year.
- d) The Group Auditors shall not be part of the Group Bureau. They may be invited or may request to be invited by the Bureau to discuss the financial matters of the Group.

## **13. The Group Bureau**

- a) The routine oversight of the Group's affairs will be undertaken by a Group Bureau.
- b) The membership of the Group Bureau will consist of:
  - The Chairman of the Group (who will be Chairman of the Group Bureau)
  - The First Deputy Chairman (who will be the Deputy Chairman of the Group Bureau)
  - The Second Deputy Chairman
  - The Group Treasurers
  - Not more than four members of the Group elected at the first Congress Part-Session of every year.
- c) Members elected to the Group Bureau can be re-elected annually without restriction. If an election is contested voting will be by secret ballot.
- d) When an elected member of the Group Bureau cannot attend a meeting of the Group Bureau he/she can appoint a substitute from his/her national political party by notifying the Secretary in advance.
- e) The Group Bureau can create and define specific roles and appoint elected members to such roles.
- f) Meetings of the Group Bureau will be conducted only in the official languages of the COE.
- g) The Group Bureau may appoint Members of the Group to act as Group coordinators for Committees and Sub-Committees of the Assembly until the next first Part-Session.
- h) The Group Bureau may co-opt two Members of the Group as Members of the Group Bureau until the next first Part-Session.
- i) If a vacancy occurs during a year, an election to fill it until the next first part session of the year will be held at the next ordinary meeting in accordance with the procedures set out in Rule 13.c

## **14. Meetings of the Group**

- a) Ordinary Meetings of the Group will only take place during Congress Part-Sessions. At least one must be held during every Part-Session. The quorum for Ordinary Meetings is 10% of the total membership of the Group and must include members from at least 10% of the national party delegations.
- b) Special Meetings of the Group can be called at any time by the Group Chairman or by at least 30% of the members sending a written request to the Group Secretary. The quorum for Special Meetings is 30% of the total membership of the Group and must include members from at least 30% of the national party

delegations.

c) For Ordinary Meetings, a letter of convocation will be sent by the Group Secretary at least 14 days before the Part-Session to every member of the Group. It will specify the date, time, and venue for every ordinary Meeting to be held during the Part-Session.

d) An agenda for the first Ordinary Meeting of each Part-Session will be included with the letter of convocation. Agendas for any subsequent meetings will be announced at the previous meeting.

e) For Special Meetings unless they are held during a Congress Part-Session, the Group Secretary will give not less than 30 days notice in writing to every member of the Group. The notice will include the business to be conducted and no additional business can be transacted.

f) For Special Meetings held during a Congress Part-Session the Group Secretary will give written notice at least 24 hours before the proposed date and time to every member who has attended an ordinary Meeting during the Part-Session. The notice will include the business to be conducted and no additional business can be transacted.

g) The Group Chairman can call Informal Meetings of the Group at any time but such meetings may not take formal decisions. The Group Secretary will give members as much notice as possible informing members of the purpose of the meeting.

h) Non-members can only attend Group meetings with the permission of a majority of those members attending the meeting.

## **15. Voting at Group Meetings**

a) When a vote or ballot is taken, each member of the Group (except the Group Secretary if he/she is a paid officer of the Group) will have one vote (except as set out in Rule 15e). In the event of a tie the Chairman of the Group will have an additional casting vote.

b) A vote, but not a ballot, must be completed within three minutes of it being called and voting by proxy or by post is not allowed (except under Rule 6a).

## **16. Languages for Group Documents and Meetings**

a) The two official languages of the Congress can be used for all Group Documents and Meetings. Wherever possible all documents will be produced in both languages but failure to do so will not invalidate the document or the business of a meeting.

b) Whenever possible translation of documents and interpretation at meetings will be provided in additional languages.

## **17. Employment of Staff**

a) Subject to the availability of sufficient funds, the Group may employ staff to conduct its administrative, representative, research and secretarial work. Whilst the Group has employed staff one of them may be appointed by the Group Bureau as Secretary of the Group.

b) If more than one person is employed the senior member of staff will report to the Chairman of the Group and all others will report to the senior member of staff.

c) The arrangements for recruiting, selecting, employing, remunerating, reviewing and dismissing employees will be drawn up by the Group Bureau and approved by the Group at an Ordinary Meeting.

## **18. Amendments to the Rules**

a) The Group Chairman or 10% of the members of the Group may propose additional rules, deletion of rules

and amendments to rules. All proposals must be in writing and sent to the Group Secretary who will place them on the agenda of the next Ordinary Meeting to be held at least 14 days after their receipt.

b) Proposals to alter a proposal made under Rule18a can be made during debate at the discretion of the Group Chairman and provided that such proposed alterations are submitted to the Group Chairman in writing before any discussion takes place.

c) Proposed changes made during the course of debate that do not relate to a proposal set out in the agenda can be discussed but not voted on.

d) Approval of all proposed changes to these rules must receive the votes of at least 50% of those present and the number voting in favour must be at least 25% of the total membership of the Group.

## **19. Interpretation of these Rules**

a) In the event of their being a dispute about the meaning of these rules, the English version will be used as the definitive version.

b) In the event of it not being possible to informally agree the meaning of a rule, the joint decision of the Group Chairman and the two Deputy Chairmen will be final.

*18<sup>th</sup> September 2012*

### **Footnotes:**

- 1. Whilst rules are essential and must be observed, they will never replace the need for common sense.*
- 2. When electing Officers and Members of the Group Bureau, Colleagues are encouraged to consider achieving as wide a geographical spread as possible.*