

Composition of the Committee of the Regions

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Composition of the Committee of the Regions

The number of members of the Committee of the Regions is laid down by Article 263 of the Treaty establishing the European Community (EC). The Committee originally consisted of 189 members and an equal number of alternate members, this number being increased to 222 following the accession of Austria, Finland and Sweden to the European Union (EU) on 1 January 1995. The 2001 Treaty of Nice stipulates that the number of its members may not exceed 350. Declaration No 20 on the Enlargement of the European Union, attached to the Treaty of Nice, opts for linear adaptation of the number of seats, i.e. the States that are already Members of the EU shall keep the same number of seats following future enlargements to 25 and later to 27 Member States. The number of members was increased to 317 following the enlargement of 1 May 2004 to include 10 new Member States. The accession of Bulgaria and Romania on 1 January 2007 brought this number to 344, with the following distribution (Article 13 of the Act of Accession):

Austria	12
Belgium	12
Bulgaria	12
Cyprus	6
Czech Republic	12
Denmark	9
Estonia	7
Finland	9
France	24
Germany	24
Greece	12
Hungary	12
Ireland	9
Italy	24
Latvia	7
Lithuania	9
Luxembourg	6
Malta	5
Netherlands	12
Poland	21
Portugal	12
Romania	15
Slovakia	9
Slovenia	7
Spain	21
Sweden	12
United Kingdom	24

The members and alternate members are appointed for four years by the Council, acting by a qualified majority, on proposals from the respective Member States. Their term of office is renewable. Until the entry into force of the Treaty of Nice in 2003, the Council decision concerning the appointment of members and alternate members was adopted unanimously.

No member or alternate member of the Committee may at the same time be a Member of the European Parliament. This incompatibility was introduced by the 1997 Treaty of Amsterdam.

The members of the Committee may not be bound by any mandatory instructions. They are completely independent in the performance of their duties, in the general interest of the Community.

The members of the Committee and their alternates are representatives of regional and local bodies pursuant to Article 263 of the EC Treaty. Prior to the reform introduced by the Treaty of Nice, the EC Treaty did not specify whether they should be elected. However, the European Commission and, in particular, the

European Parliament had called for the democratic legitimacy of these representatives. The Committee of the Regions itself had repeatedly requested that its members either hold a regional or local authority electoral mandate or be politically accountable to an assembly elected by direct universal suffrage. Membership of the Committee of the Regions now requires the member to hold a regional or local authority electoral mandate or to be politically accountable to an elected assembly. When this regional or local mandate expires, the term of office of the Committee member is automatically terminated, and the member is replaced for the remainder of the term in accordance with the customary appointment procedure.

As for the distribution of seats between the different levels of regional and local authorities, the composition of the Committee reflects the great diversity of regional, local and intermediary structures, the procedure for selecting members being different for each Member State.

The members and their duly mandated alternates enjoy, in the performance of their duties and during their travel to and from the place of meeting, the customary privileges, immunities and facilities in accordance with Article 11 of the Protocol on the privileges and immunities of the European Communities.

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, does not amend the maximum number of members set by the Treaty of Nice. However, the number of members for each Member State is no longer laid down by the Treaty; instead, it is stipulated that the Council, acting unanimously on a proposal from the Commission, shall adopt a decision determining the Committee's composition, which shall be reviewed at regular intervals by the Council to take account of economic, social and demographic developments within the Union (Article 2, Point 246 of the Treaty of Lisbon). In addition, the Treaty of Lisbon also specifies that the members of the Committee of the Regions shall no longer be appointed for four years but for five years, thus following the same rhythm as the European Parliament and the Commission.

(January 2009)