

Strengthening integrity, independence and accountability ***First Steps***

The European Parliament prides itself on its openness, its accessibility and its defence of legislating in the public eye. The principle of ‘openness builds trust’ is one we hold dear and defend. Any abuse or misuse of the tools we created for this purpose must be addressed strongly, systematically and with any potential weaknesses addressed.

The events of the last month have led to a need to re-build trust with the European citizens we represent. Citizens, rightly, demand accountability and integrity. This document aims to propose the reinforcement of measures to immediately respond to that need and re-affirm the European Parliament’s place as the best example of modern, open, multi-national parliamentary democracy.

The purpose of these proposals is to set out actions that can be implemented in the short term to reinforce the European Parliament’s tools on transparency, ethics and conduct and to improve our working relationships with third countries.

These proposals constitute the starting point of a broader reform of the European Parliament.

The President requests that the Secretary General to form an administrative task force to set out a rapid roll-out and implementation plan. The President will consult with Members of the Advisory Committee and report back to the Conference of Presidents.

The following objectives are intended to be a first step in reinforcing trust in European decision-making:

Objective 1: A new revolving door policy

A ‘cooling-off’ period for former Members who wish to lobby Parliamentarians could be envisaged. This will be linked to the transitional allowance granted to former Members. For a period that former Members benefit from a transitional allowance they would not be allowed to be registered in the Transparency Register and therefore not able to lobby the institution they served immediately following the end of their mandate.

Objective 2: Shining a brighter light on Members' activities

More and clearer information should be made available to the public. One option is to introduce an "integrity" tab on the front page of the European Parliament website that would centralise and contain information relating to the integrity of parliamentary work in one place. It could include detailed information on the following:

- *sanctions;*
- *declarations of gifts;*
- *declarations of trips to third countries not paid for by the European Parliament;*
- *declarations of scheduled meetings;*
- *information on the code of conduct and advisory committee;*
- *information and links to the Transparency Register.*

Objective 3: Stronger checks on interest representatives

A listing in the Transparency Register should be an obligation for the participation in parliamentary hearings and other events for all lobbyists, NGOs and interest representatives.

Additional staff will be needed to optimise the scrutiny of the Transparency Register to ensure data quality and up-to date information on lobbying activities.

The European Parliament could conduct regular checks on those organisations on the Transparency Register, including asking for ad hoc verifications of links to third countries and funding streams.

Objective 4: Mandatory publication of meetings

A mandatory requirement for all Members to make public all scheduled meetings with third parties related to a report or resolution of the European Parliament should be introduced. This obligation currently exists only for Committee Chairs, Rapporteurs and Shadow Rapporteurs. This obligation could be extended to all Members, all Accredited Parliamentary Assistants, Political Group Staff and European Parliament staff.

The list of meetings will be made easily accessible to the public.

Organisations listed in the Transparency Register should also have an obligation to make public all their meetings with Members, APAs and Staff linked to EP reports or resolutions.

Objective 5: Enforcing a ban on friendship groups with third countries

Any activities or meetings of any unofficial groupings of Members that could result in confusion with official European Parliament Activities will be banned. This will apply to 'Friendship Groups' with third countries where other Parliament bodies already act as interlocutors. Third countries should interact with the Parliament through the Committee on Foreign Affairs, existing official Parliament delegations or other Committees as required.

The legal basis for this is Article 35 of the Rules of Procedure.

Objective 6: Clarity on accessing the Parliament premises

The creation of a new entry log. All persons entering the European Parliament premises, including representatives of third countries, must upon entry to European Parliament buildings, provide information for an entry log stating the date, time and purpose of visit.

Arrangements can be made to also have this log as a digital or online option.

Guests, with visitor badges, must, at all times, be accompanied by the person responsible for granting them access.

Objective 7: Revision of rules on former Members

We could replace permanent access badges currently granted to former Members with new daily access badges. Former Members should no longer have the right to grant entry to anyone else and current access rights for the entourage of former Members can be removed.

Parliament's services can be asked to establish a dedicated desk and fast-lane specifically for accreditation of former Members.

Former members entering Parliament as interest representatives, after the cooling-off period, will have to be entered into the transparency register as per existing rules. They will be required to sign the newly created entry log.

Objective 8: Avoiding conflict of interests

We should enforce an obligation for Members to make a declaration on potential conflicts of interest before taking up a report or resolution as Rapporteur or Shadow Rapporteur and present it to the relevant Committee (or plenary as needed). This will be managed by the relevant Committee secretariats.

Further checks and awareness raising should be implemented to ensure that Accredited Parliamentary Assistants and Staff are not allowed to form part of any organisation in a management role that has any connection with third-countries.

Objective 9: Increased transparency on financial declarations

The level of detail required in Members' Declaration of Financial Interests should be increased and made clearer. More information should be included on Members' side jobs and outside activities. Checks should be allowed to ensure proper enforcement of the rules.

Objective 10: Introduction of compliance and whistleblowing training

Training for Members should be made available throughout the legislature. The European Parliament should enforce mandatory training for all Members' Accredited Parliamentary Assistants on financial rules, compliance, conduct, and whistleblowing, ensuring they are aware of all rules and systems to protect the integrity of the Institution, themselves and the Member they work with. Among EP Staff, there should be mandatory training for line managers who might receive reports from whistle-blowers.

Objective 11: Strengthening the Code of Conduct Committee

While the European Parliament has already proposed a new Ethics Body for EU Institutions, we will take action unilaterally to ensure that Members are required to request advice, easily and speedily, on possible conflicts on a systematic basis from the Code of Conduct Advisory Committee. The role of the Committee should be reinforced.

Objective 12: Fighting foreign interference while strengthening work on Human Rights

The European Parliament's work on protecting Human Rights around the globe is one we are proud of and must strengthen. We must do this by pushing back against any foreign interference in our work. Checks and balances for Motions for Resolutions tabled with urgency, that have been the target of undue influence, can be strengthened and confidence in this critical aspect of the European Parliament's work restored.

Therefore the Conference of President's should apply an approach that only accepts requests for urgencies coming from a committee, after discussion within that Committee, with motions for resolutions limited in length and in scope to the Human Rights issue at hand.

Objective 13: Boosting the fight against corruption

The European Parliament should reinforce its cooperation with Member State judicial and law enforcement authorities to ensure that the Institution is best able to respond and aid with any investigations into alleged criminal activities of Members or staff. We will look into what protection such national judicial and law enforcement institutions can provide to the Institution, particularly vis-a-vis third country attempts to influence the democratic process.

Objective 14: Sanctions

The list of sanctionable activities for Members will need to be revised accordingly to help compliance with the obligations and responsibilities listed in this document.