

Strengthening Integrity, Independence and Accountability

First Steps

The preservation of public trust in the functioning of Parliament, the protection of the free mandate of Members and respect for their freedom of association are guiding principles for the proposed measures and their legal and proportional implementation, in view of achieving concrete improvements in the short-term.

The proposals below do not exclude considering other medium to longer-term measures in the framework of a wider reform process that could be entrusted to the ING2 Special Committee operating under a revised mandate as agreed by the Conference of Presidents in January 2023.

Awareness raising campaign

Parliament will run regular awareness raising campaigns on ethics and transparency obligations for MEPs and staff and improve available guidance in this field.

Administrative action:

- Preparation and immediate launch of the campaign, including innovative communication tools and covering provisional application of agreed measures;
- Guidelines and FAQs for MEPs and staff to be prepared or improved;
- Periodic reminders and offer of info sessions for MEPs and staff;
- Administrative individual guidance on compliance (reinforced human resources needed);
- Warning system put in place as first response to minor breaches to ensure compliance

The campaign would be accompanied by the possibility of submitting any outstanding declarations within a short timeframe, following which monitoring and checks would increase and systematic or severe breaches would be sanctioned.

1. A new revolving door policy

A 'cooling-off' period for former Members who wish to lobby the Parliament will be introduced.

For a period 6 months immediately following the end of their mandate, former Members will not be allowed to lobby the institution they served.

Rules:

- Change to Art. 6 of the Code of Conduct for Members, in the framework of a revision of the CoC.

To be noted that the introduction of further reaching conditionalities would require an amendment to the Statute for Members, which implies a Commission's opinion and consent by the Council.

EP Bureau:

- Bureau decision on former Members, covering:
 - the introduction of a 'cooling-off' period and a declaration of commitment;
 - rights and privileges;
 - access to the EP;
 - conditionality of IT account and access to intranet to the absence of lobbying activities within the scope of the Transparency Register or representative activities for third countries;
 - modalities of participation in EP mediation and capacity building activities; consequences in the event of non compliance.

Administrative action:

- Preparation of guidelines for TR interest representatives when employing former MEPs or EP staff;
- Farewell letters to outgoing MEPs to include reminder of applicable rules to former MEPs; Regular reminders should be sent.
- Administrative follow-up regarding the introduction of a declaration of commitment to the rules on former MEPs to be signed at the beginning of the term and published on the MEP profile.

2. Shining a brighter light on Members' activities

Information relating to the integrity of parliamentary work will be available to the public in a centralised, complete and easily accessible way.

A single webpage ("integrity" tab) will contain detailed information on:

- *the Code of conduct and the Advisory committee on the Conduct of Members;*
- *the Transparency Register, including links to the relevant webpages;*
- *Declarations of gifts ;*
- *MEPs attendance at events not paid for by the European Parliament, with a link to the MEPs profile pages;*
- *Declarations of scheduled meetings;*
- *Sanctions.*

The information on transparency and ethics in the MEPs profile could also appear under a single 'integrity tab', including declarations and meetings.

Administrative action:

- Development and deployment of the necessary IT changes.

3. Stronger checks on interest representatives

Participation of interest and civil society representatives in any exchange of views or hearings in committee (or committee's working or sub-groups) on Parliament's premises is to be conditional on registration in the TR. Prior registration will also be needed for participation and co-hosting of parliamentary events on EP premises.

Specific provisions apply to interest representatives who do not fall within the scope of the Transparency Register and where participation in EP events would undermine the protection of the life or the integrity of the individual or when other compelling reasons of public interest require confidentiality.

At the request of the EP service organising the event or co-hosted event, additional checks could be carried out by the TR Secretariat, on the participating organisation registered on the Transparency Register. The Secretariat of the TR will also conduct regular and random checks on the accuracy, relevance and updated status of the information provided by the

EP Bureau:

- Bureau decision extending the conditionality principle to all events held in the EP premises;

Administrative action:

- Preparation of detailed TR guidelines on financial and funding disclosure for NGOs;
- Preparation of clear guidelines for committee staff to perform mandatory transparency checks;
- Improving monitoring, by increasing exchange of information between services and checks;
- Speeding up the introduction of the 'Pre-accreditation portal for lobbyists'.

organisations in the TR. The TR Secretariat should be mandated to conduct indepth checks of interest representatives to verify funding streams and connections to third countries.

4. Mandatory declaration of meetings

A mandatory requirement will be extended to Members, APAs and staff to declare scheduled meetings with diplomatic representatives of third countries and third parties covered by the scope of the Transparency Register on specific reports or resolutions or in situations in which MEPs or staff have an active role and clear and immediate influence in the evolution of specific files.

This mandatory requirement would not apply:

- (i) where disclosure would undermine the protection of the life or the integrity of the individual or when other compelling reasons of public interest require confidentiality;*
- (ii) for meetings with natural persons acting in a strictly personal capacity and not in association with others;*
- (iii) for spontaneous meetings or meetings of a purely private or social character.*

Tools for declaration of meetings will be further simplified and the list of meetings will be made easily accessible to the public.

Meetings of Members would also be published on the profile page of the relevant TR organisation, when applicable.

Rules:

- Change to Rule 11 of the EP RoP, including:
 - definition of 'scheduled meeting' and 'active role';
 - extension to all MEPs, APAs and staff
 - extension to meetings on situations in which MEPs have an active role and clear and immediate influence in the evolution of specific files;
 - extension to diplomatic representatives of third countries.

EP Bureau:

- Guidelines for the implementation of the changes to Rule 11;

Administrative action:

- Increase monitoring and proactive approach;
- Preparation of the framework for staff declarations, other than those of APAs, which require IT developments and rules;
- IT development or interinstitutional contacts to set up export of published meetings to the relevant TR registrant profile page, when applicable.

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 official Parliamentary interlocutors already exist. Third countries should interact with the Parliament through the Committee on Foreign Affairs, existing official Parliament delegations, other Committees and the DEG as required.

Rules:

- Change to Rule 35 of the EP RoP to ban friendship groups with third countries;
- Change to Rule 176 of the EP RoP to allow breaches to be sanctioned.

It is within Parliament's power of self-regulation to decide which organs are entrusted with relations with third countries. Measures limiting the scope of friendship groups and any facilitation of their activities in Parliament respect the freedom of association of individual Members.

CoP:

- Update of rules on Intergroups.

Administrative action:

- Increased monitoring of groupings activities, including better exchange of information between services;
- Assessment of possible loopholes in Parliament's global relations with third countries.

6. Clarity on accessing the Parliament premises

The creation of a new entry log for all persons above 18 years old visiting the European Parliament premises, stating the date, time and purpose of visit.

This should not apply to accredited journalists, other EU institutions, bodies and agencies who have a different regime to access Parliament.

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.

Rules:

- Change to Rule 123 of the EP RoP.

EP Bureau:

- Bureau decision on EP access policy;

Administrative action:

- Stricter implementation of existing rules;
- Acceleration of ongoing projects for:
 - Stricter zone management policy;
 - new visitors' accreditation system;
 - new accreditation procedure for lobbyists;
- Assessment of development of digital entry log;

7. Revision of rules on former Members

Permanent access badges currently granted to former Members and former staff will be replaced by new daily access badges. Former Members and former staff should no longer have the right to grant entry to anyone else.

A dedicated desk and fast-lane specifically for accreditation of former Members will be established.

Former members and former staff entering Parliament as interest representatives must be identified by a specific badge.

Rules:

- Change to Rule 123 of the EP RoP;
- Change to Art. 6 of the Code of Conduct, in the framework of the revision of the CoC.

EP Bureau:

- Bureau decision on Former Members (see objective 1);

Administrative action:

- Practical arrangements to set up a dedicate desk and fast-lane for former Members;
- Practical arrangements to introduce daily access badges;
- Monitoring the use of the appropriate and distinct badge for former MEPs and former EP staff who engage in lobbying activities.

8. Avoiding conflict of interests

Any Member who finds that he or she has a conflict of interest shall immediately take the necessary steps to address it as set in Article 3(2) of the Code of Conduct.

Any rapporteur or shadow rapporteur must submit a declaration of conflict of interests to the relevant committee secretariat when being appointed. This obligation also applies to EP co-rapporteurs in multilateral assemblies and their committees.

Further checks and awareness raising activities should be implemented to ensure that Accredited Parliamentary Assistants and other Staff are not allowed to have a coordinating role in any organisation connected with a third-country or active in lobbying activities within the scope of the Transparency Register.

Rules:

- Change to Art. 3 of the Code of Conduct, in the framework of the revision of the CoC, to clarify the rules on conflicts of interests and MEPs' obligations to solve them.

EP Bureau:

- Revision of the Implementing measures for the Code of Conduct, including form for the declaration of Absence of Conflict of Interests by rapporteurs, shadow rapporteurs (and ahead of the new legislature possibly chairs and vice-chairs of Committees and Delegations);
- Revision of the Code of Conduct for staff for clarification and consolidation purposes;

Administrative action:

- Guidelines for committee and delegations staff, setting-up an harmonised procedure to collect the declarations;
- Application of Art. 12b and 13 of the Staff regulations;

9. Increased transparency on financial declarations

A revised Declaration Form on financial interests should be developed with a clearer level of detail. More information should be included on Members' side jobs and outside activities where appropriate. Checks should be allowed to ensure proper enforcement of the rules.

Rules:

- Change to Art. 4 of the Code of Conduct, in the framework of the revision of the CoC, to introduce additional requirements for information on Members' declaration of financial interests, including level of precision;

EP Bureau:

- Revision of the Implementing measures for the Code of Conduct, including form for the declaration of interests and rules' content on gifts and attendance at events paid for by third parties;

Administrative action:

- Increased monitoring and stricter application of the rules on declarations of financial interests;
- IT developments to the publication system;

10. Introduction of compliance and whistleblowing training

Training for Members should be made regularly 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. Training on whistleblowing should also be mandatory for all EP Staff managers.

EP Bureau:

- Decision on Whistleblowing:
 - to bring EP rules in line with the Directive;

Administrative action:

- Clear guidelines on practical implementation;
- Organisation of training.

11. Strengthening the Advisory Committee on the Code of Conduct

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

Rules:

- Change to Art. 7 and 8 of the Code of Conduct, in the framework of the revision of the CoC.

There could be a practice of referring systematic or severe failures to comply with disclosure obligations, within the deadline, to the Advisory Committee.

The Advisory Committee could also have a proactive role in signalling to the President other problematic situations.

Administrative action:

- Increased monitoring and stricter application of the rules.

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.

Rule 144 and annex IV should be strictly applied.

13. Boosting the fight against corruption

The European Parliament should reinforce its cooperation with Member State intelligence, 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 intelligence, judicial and law enforcement institutions can provide to the Institution, particularly vis-a-vis third country attempts to influence the democratic process.

Administrative action:

- Maintain and develop contacts.

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. A system of warnings and reminders will be put in place to remind Members of rules before sanctions in case of severe and systematic breaches are to be applied.

Rules:

- Change to Rule 176 of the EP RoP, to have a strong and visible framework in place, which is enforceable and dissuasive, covering the possibility of imposing a penalty on the grounds of systematic and severe non-compliance with:
 - Rule 10 (standards of conduct);
 - Rule 11 (publication of meetings);
 - Rule 35 (Intergroups and other groupings);
 - conflicting external activities, including election observation;
 - infringements of financial nature.

Summary

Some objectives could be, partly or fully, easily achieved by means of administrative action, either by developing the necessary tools (objective 0, 2, 4, 6, 7, 13), or by better implementing existing rules (objectives 6 and 10) and by going deeper in monitoring practices, including cross-checks (objectives 3, 4, 5, 8, 9 and 11).

Other objectives require a legal framework, which might imply changes to the rules of procedure (objectives 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11 and 14).

Implementation timeline

- ***Administrative action for immediate change***

- Improved monitoring, by better exchange of information between services, regarding: interest representatives, meetings declarations, friendship groups, declarations of financial interests, declarations of attendance (trips);

- Enacting guidelines for a harmonised and clear approach regarding interest representatives by committees, and for interest representatives employing former MEPs or staff; and to clarify application of the rules on the publication of meetings and on whistleblowing;

- Better implementation of existing rules on access to Parliament, staff outside activities, and sanctions;

- Awareness raising campaign and adaptation of all current procedures to the adopted measures, with the necessary technical delay in case IT developments are needed.

- ***Change requiring political action***

Further objectives could be reached in a couple of months' time:

- Bureau decisions on: former Members, namely covering the issue of revolving doors; extending the conditionality principle (registration in the Transparency Register) to all events held in EP premises; access to Parliament; the creation of a declaration of conflict of interest and the revision of the form on the declaration of financial interests and; whistleblowing, in view of bringing EP rules in line with the Directive;
- Update of the CoP Rules on Intergroup.

- ***Changes to the EP Rules of Procedure***

The implementation of some measures requires changes to the rules of procedure. In this context, the applicable parliamentary procedure could be launched, with the aim of adoption in plenary by Spring 2023, and moving to provisional application of the agreed package beforehand.

Particularly pressing is the revision of the Code of Conduct for Members (Annex I to the Rules of Procedure), in view of having comprehensive rules on ethics and transparency in a single text, providing a clear legal basis and facilitating visibility and compliance. In particular: change in title to clarify its scope beyond financial interests, definition of stricter and clear rules on conflict of interests, changes to improve the declarations of financial interests and a strengthened role for the Advisory Committee;

Changes to the following rules would also be necessary: Rule 11, to introduce a general mandatory requirement for publication of meetings, Rule 35 to ban friendship groups with third countries, Rule 123 on access to Parliament and Rule 176 on sanctions.

