









Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2023/2034(INI)	Procedure completed
Recommendations for reform of European Parliament's rules on transparency, integrity, accountability and anti-corruption		
Subject 7.30.30.06 Action to combat economic fraud and corruption 8.40.01 European Parliament		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	ING2 Special Committee on foreign interference and disinformation, and on strengthening integrity in the EP		16/03/2023
		 BILČÍK Vladimír	16/03/2023
		 LOISEAU Nathalie	
		Shadow rapporteur	
		 SCHIEDER Andreas	
		 HAUTALA Heidi	
		 BEIGNEUX Aurélia	
		 SZYDŁO Beata	
		 DALY Clare	
European Commission	Commission DG Legal Service	Commissioner VON DER LEYEN Ursula	

Key events			
20/04/2023	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
01/06/2023	Vote in committee		
13/06/2023	Committee report tabled for plenary	A9-0215/2023	Summary
12/07/2023	Debate in Parliament		

13/07/2023	Results of vote in Parliament		
13/07/2023	Decision by Parliament	T9-0292/2023	Summary

Technical information

Procedure reference	2023/2034(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Special committee/Committee of inquiry
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 159
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	ING2/9/11386

Documentation gateway

Committee draft report		PE742.667	21/03/2023	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE746.838	20/04/2023	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE746.839	20/04/2023	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A9-0215/2023	13/06/2023	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T9-0292/2023	13/07/2023	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2023)504	19/12/2023	EC	

Recommendations for reform of European Parliament's rules on transparency, integrity, accountability and anti-corruption

The Special Committee on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation, and the strengthening of integrity, transparency and accountability in the European Parliament adopted the joint report by Vladimír BILÍK (EPP, SK) and Nathalie LOISEAU (Renew Europe, FR) on recommendations for reform of European Parliaments rules on transparency, integrity, accountability and anti-corruption.

Context

Ongoing investigations led by the Belgian authorities have uncovered suspicions of an extremely worrying system of corruption, money laundering and participation in a criminal organisation involving, to date, three sitting Members of the European Parliament and one former Member as well as one accredited parliamentary assistant. These suspicions relate to influence from Qatar and Morocco. Moreover, there are allegations that other states, such as Mauritania, may also be involved.

Citizens trust in the integrity and independence of European institutions is the foundation of the European political system, which is particularly vulnerable in the run-up to elections. If foreign actors undermine citizens trust in EU institutions, it can affect the democratic functioning of the EU. Corruption has significant financial consequences and constitutes a serious threat to democracy, the rule of law and public investment.

General observations

Members denounced the alleged attempts by Qatar and Morocco to influence Members, former Members and Parliament staff through acts of corruption, which constitute serious foreign interference in the EUs democratic processes. They are committed to working at all levels to strengthen the rules and culture on integrity, transparency and accountability in Parliament and called for stronger measures to address all potential conflicts of interest. The need for solidarity between the Member States and the EU institutions is needed to be able to fight effectively against this type of activity.

The committee insisted that potential loopholes in the institutions rules and procedures that allow unlawful behaviour need to be systematically identified and thoroughly closed by effective reforms and control capacities; highlights that some current mechanisms need to be reviewed with the aim of preventing conflicts of interest, enhancing transparency, and preventing, deterring and detecting foreign interference and corruption.

Code of Conduct

The report called for a rapid conclusion of the revision of the Code of Conduct for Members with a view to introducing rules on whistleblowers that are in step with the European standards set in the Whistleblower Directive. Members reiterated their opinion that a declaration of assets by Members before and after their term of office would provide additional safeguards in the fight against corruption.

Reinforcing the security culture within Parliament

Members called for mandatory, proper and regular training on security, interference, ethical standards, compliance and integrity for all Members and their offices and for all Parliament staff, making them aware that they are potential targets of foreign state and non-state actors.

As regards private contractors, particular attention should be paid to companies owned by non-EU companies or states, such as Russia and China.

Access to Parliament buildings by visitors, including representatives of non-EU countries, lobbyists and NGOs, should be controlled more strictly.

Relations with non-EU countries and entities: official missions, trips and friendship groups

Missions to non-EU countries can be used as an opportunity to exert undue influence on Members, therefore, the committee recalled that mandatory, dedicated security briefings focused on foreign interference risks, tailored to the destination country, should be given to Members before any missions.

While recalling the importance of election observation missions in providing relevant information and issuing specific recommendations to make the electoral system more resilient and help counter foreign interference in electoral processes, Members consider that Parliament should bar unauthorised, unofficial election observation by individual Members.

Stricter rules should be put in place for trips by officials which are paid for by foreign countries and entities. Members suggested limiting the threshold for gifts to Members to EUR 100.

Integrity of parliamentary work

While recalling the importance of urgency resolutions as part of Parliaments action to protect human rights around the globe, Members denounced any attempts at interfering with them. A suitable amount of time should be allowed for their drafting to ensure due protection against external influence. It is recommended that the resolutions voted on by Parliament be accompanied by an annex containing a list of persons or institutions met by rapporteurs and shadow rapporteurs.

The report considers that it should be made compulsory for all Members to publish all scheduled meetings with third parties (interest representatives). Members and their offices should be required to declare meetings with diplomatic representatives of non-EU countries as well as with representatives of interests covered by the scope of the EU Transparency Register, with exceptions being allowed in cases where the naming of individuals or organisations would put individuals lives or safety at risk.

The special committee insisted on the need for transparency, by means of registration in the EU Transparency Register, regarding the funding received by interest representatives, such as NGOs, think tanks and consultancy services, that wish to be involved with Parliament, in particular when they request support or sponsorship from Members for organising meetings on Parliaments premises, when they are invited to hearings, exchanges of views or any other scheduled appearances, or when they participate in a study or research on behalf of Parliament.

Members are of the opinion that the documents that are to be directly accessible through Parliaments public register should include preparatory legislative documents, such as political and technical trilogue documents, including all versions of the joint multi-column document referred to in the Code of Conduct for negotiating in the context of the ordinary legislative procedure.

Stronger action should be taken to enhance the protection of whistleblowers among staff members and accredited parliamentary assistants.

Cooperation with other EU and national institutions

Members reiterated the call for the swift establishment of an independent EU ethics body and committed to concluding interinstitutional negotiations by the end of 2023. The bodys mandate should include scrutiny, on a case-by-case basis, of Members and former Members intentions to work for any non-EU government or any entity controlled by a non-EU government during their term of office or after the end of their term. Members are called on to uphold Parliaments values and standards and not accept employment by authoritarian, non-democratic governments or related state-owned entities after the end of their term.

The rules applying to former Members engaging in lobbying activities falling under the Transparency Register should be clarified. It is recommended that the ethics body be given appropriate investigative powers, including the ability to act on its own initiative, and the power to request administrative documents, while respecting the immunity of Members.

The special committee called on Member States and all the EU institutions to increase cooperation with the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust) and the European Public Prosecutors Office (EPPO) and underlined the particular need to increase its own cooperation with these bodies. The EPPOs scope should be extended to the whole Union, which would facilitate its cooperation with other institutions and ensure better prosecution of cases in countries that do not currently participate in the EPPO.

The EU institutions are invited to work towards tighter internal regulations among the Member States regarding the use, servicing and procurement of spyware and surveillance tools and to assess the spyware and surveillance tools currently in use.

Lastly, Members insisted that the list of sanctionable activities for Members should be revised on the basis of this report.

Recommendations for reform of European Parliament's rules on transparency, integrity, accountability and anti-corruption

The European Parliament adopted by 441 votes to 70, with 71 abstentions, a resolution on recommendations for reform of European Parliaments rules on transparency, integrity, accountability and anti-corruption.

General observations

Members denounced the alleged attempts by Qatar and Morocco to influence Members, former Members and Parliament staff through acts of corruption, which constitute serious foreign interference in the EUs democratic processes. They condemned the alleged acts of corruption, money laundering and participation in a criminal organisation by three Members of the European Parliament, one former Member and one

accredited parliamentary assistant in exchange for influence over Parliament's decisions. They are committed to working at all levels to strengthen the rules and culture on integrity, transparency and accountability in Parliament and called for stronger measures to address all potential conflicts of interest. The need for solidarity between the Member States and the EU institutions is needed to be able to fight effectively against this type of activity.

The resolution insisted that potential loopholes in the institutions' rules and procedures that allow unlawful behaviour need to be systematically identified and thoroughly closed by effective reforms and control capacities; highlights that some current mechanisms need to be reviewed with the aim of preventing conflicts of interest, enhancing transparency, and preventing, deterring and detecting foreign interference and corruption.

Code of conduct

Parliament has called for a rapid review of the Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament, including the effectiveness of sanctions. The Code should protect whistleblowers more effectively. It should introduce additional disclosure requirements in Members' declarations of financial interests and ensure a more effective and transparent system for Members and former Members of the European Parliament working for outside interests.

Members gave their support to the 14 points approved by Parliament's Conference of Presidents following a proposal by President Metsola to reform its Rules of Procedure and procedures and called for these points to be translated into concrete action as soon as possible.

Reinforcing the security culture within Parliament

Members called for mandatory, proper and regular training on security, interference, ethical standards, compliance and integrity for all Members and their offices and for all Parliament staff, making them aware that they are potential targets of foreign state and non-state actors.

As regards private contractors, particular attention should be paid to companies owned by non-EU companies or states, such as Russia and China.

Access to Parliament buildings by visitors, including representatives of non-EU countries, lobbyists and NGOs, should be controlled more strictly. Foreign interference and other illegitimate influence has at times taken the form of offering well-paid positions to former Members of the European Parliament. The EU institutions should treat potential cases of revolving doors more stringently in order to prevent conflicts of interest.

Relations with non-EU countries and entities: official missions, trips and friendship groups

Parliament called for special monitoring by the EU Transparency Register of registered interest representatives from countries considered to be at risk on the basis of objective criteria such as: (a) the existence of a programme of intellectual property theft directed at the Union and its Member States, (b) the existence of legislation compelling national non-state actors to engage in intelligence activities, (c) the systematic violation of human rights, (d) the existence of a revisionist policy on the current international legal order, (e) the extraterritorial application of an authoritarian ideology, and (f) the detection of interference activities or conflicts of interest in the European institutions.

Missions to non-EU countries can be used as an opportunity to exert undue influence on Members. Members proposed tightening up the rules on official missions on behalf of Parliament. In addition, Members should only take part in election observation missions that have been decided and approved by the Conference of Presidents.

Stricter rules should be put in place for trips by officials which are paid for by foreign countries and entities. Members suggested limiting the threshold for gifts to Members to EUR 100.

Integrity of parliamentary work

Parliament pointed out that countries such as Qatar, Morocco, but also China, Russia, the United Arab Emirates, Serbia and Turkey have invested heavily in lobbying efforts in Brussels. It stressed that foreign interference must not go unchallenged, and called for the suspension of all legislative and non-legislative proposals on cooperation with the authorities of states that attempt to interfere, as well as the suspension of all funding for EU programmes in favour of the national authorities of such countries.

Members recommended that the resolutions voted on by Parliament be accompanied by an annex containing a list of persons or institutions met by rapporteurs and shadow rapporteurs. It should be made compulsory for all Members to publish all scheduled meetings with third parties (interest representatives).

Members called for much stricter implementation, application and monitoring of compliance with the current provisions of the Interinstitutional Agreement on a transparency register within Parliament. They insisted on the need for transparency, by means of registration in the EU Transparency Register, regarding the funding received by interest representatives, such as NGOs, think tanks and consultancy services, that wish to be involved with Parliament, in particular when they request support or sponsorship from Members for organising meetings on Parliament's premises, when they are invited to hearings, exchanges of views or any other scheduled appearances, or when they participate in a study or research on behalf of Parliament.

Members called for a full financial review of all interest groups, NGOs and consultancies prior to their inclusion on the transparency register, and a review of all interest representatives currently on the register. In addition, Members should be more transparent about any paid work they may be doing, with revised rules on the disclosure of amounts of side income earned, the position in which it is earned and the clients on whose behalf Members work for payment.

Cooperation with other EU and national institutions

Members reiterated the call for the swift establishment of an independent EU ethics body and committed to concluding interinstitutional negotiations by the end of 2023. The body's mandate should include scrutiny, on a case-by-case basis, of Members and former Members' intentions to work for any non-EU government or any entity controlled by a non-EU government during their term of office or after the end of their term. Members are called on to uphold Parliament's values and standards and not accept employment by authoritarian, non-democratic governments or related state-owned entities after the end of their term.

The rules applying to former Members engaging in lobbying activities falling under the Transparency Register should be clarified. It is recommended that the ethics body be given appropriate investigative powers, including the ability to act on its own initiative, and the power to request administrative documents, while respecting the immunity of Members.

Lastly, Members insisted that the list of sanctionable activities for Members should be revised on the basis of this report.

Transparency

BIL?ÍK Vladimír	Rapporteur	ING2	07/06/2023	IRI
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