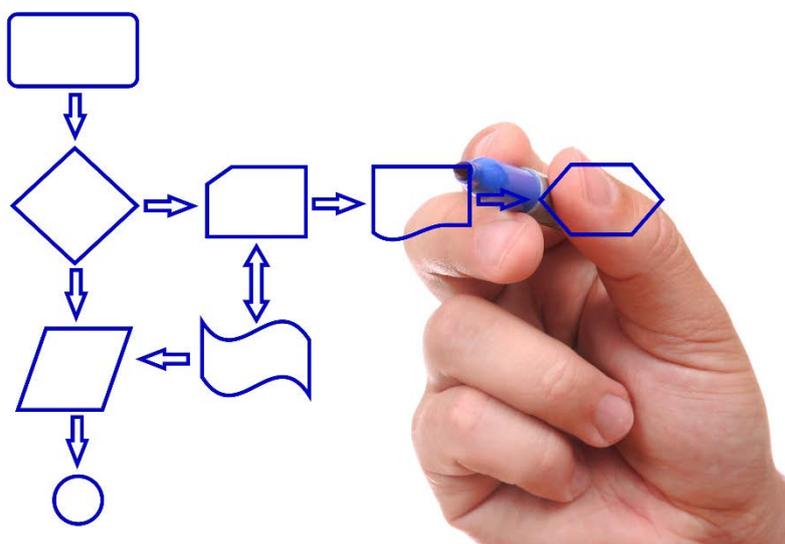

General revision of the European Parliament's Rules of Procedure

Achieving greater
transparency and
efficiency as of
January 2017



IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

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The European Parliament's Rules of Procedure underwent a general overhaul and revision in the first half of the current parliamentary term. The revised rules entered into force as of 16 January 2017, with the aim of bringing more transparency and efficiency to parliamentary work. A wide range of modifications were required to adapt to the 2016 Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-making as well as experience under the Lisbon Treaty, and were introduced to bring clarity, incorporate existing practices and correct redundancies or inconsistencies. This paper aims to provide an overview of the changes to the Rules of Procedure.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The European Parliament's Rules of Procedure are an important tool that allows Parliament to function in an orderly, democratic way, ensuring legal certainty and transparency. The most recent general overhaul, which entered into force as of 16 January 2017, has affected many areas of parliamentary life. This publication aims at providing an exhaustive description of the substantial changes that were introduced. For reasons of space, this executive summary mentions only some of them.

One of the most tangible changes is the streamlining of most of the thresholds for procedural requests and their reduction to three types: low (38 Members), medium (76 Members) and high (151 Members). Rules were also amended concerning the tabling and admissibility of amendments especially in case of codification, recast proposals and compromise amendments.

Further changes allow parliamentary work to be carried out more efficiently by limiting requests for roll-call votes and possibilities to give oral explanations of votes.

An important change concerns the increased attention paid to the conduct of Members, where penalties of a disciplinary nature have been strengthened, from a longer suspension of their daily allowance to a suspension of the Member's participation in Parliamentary activities. Increased focus on the conduct of Members is also coupled with greater attention to the issue of transparency, as more details are now demanded of Members when making a declaration of financial interest, and a ban applies to some paid lobbying activities.

Another relevant modification, which increases transparency in the Parliamentary legislative process, concerns the decision to begin negotiations during the various stages of the ordinary legislative procedure. A more detailed procedure now requires the intention to initiate the negotiation to be announced in plenary, with the possibility to block such a decision or to allow the committee to negotiate. In the same vein, in pursuit of a more efficient and transparent Parliamentary work, the voting procedure in plenary was overhauled, with a more detailed order of activities.

The different ways in which Members may interact with other institutions or express their views have been modified with the abolition of written declarations and a modification of the maximum number of questions for written answers allowed. Minor interpellations for written answers and major interpellations for written answer with debate were introduced. New rules also apply to motions for resolutions and the possibility to hold topical debates was introduced.

Committee work is also affected, as amendments or draft proposals for rejection of reports must be signed or co-signed by a Member of the relevant committee. It has been made clear that split votes on compromise amendments are not permitted and new rules apply for the employment of the confidentiality procedure and for breaches thereof. Moreover, some changes also affect the 'Sherpa delegations' and the establishment and dissolution of political groups.

Among the various amendments that will be explained in this publication, those required to adapt to the 2016 Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-making cannot be overlooked, in particular those allowing the President of Parliament to negotiate the newly introduced joint declaration on annual interinstitutional programming, the safeguards on Parliament's scrutiny of how implementing powers are exercised by the Commission and the consequences of a withdrawal of a Commission proposal.

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List of main acronyms used

AFCO:	Committee on Constitutional Affairs
CCC:	Conference of Committee Chairs
CFSP:	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CoP:	Conference of Presidents
HR:	High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
JURI:	Committee on Legal Affairs
PETI:	Committee on Petitions
RoP:	Rules of Procedure
TFEU:	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
VP:	Vice-President of the European Parliament
WG:	Working Group

1. Introduction

Parliament's Rules of Procedure (RoP) are a special legal instrument which derives its legitimacy from the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). Article 232 TFEU gives the European Parliament the power to adopt its own RoP, acting by a majority of its Members. The RoP therefore regulates Parliament's activities and represent an indication of Parliament's autonomy, which is however not absolute, but remains subject to the treaties, general principles of EU law and EU secondary law.

The Rules of Procedure have often been modified over the years to adapt to a new legal order (e.g. the Treaty of Lisbon), or because it was necessary to take account of the evolution of interinstitutional relations (e.g. the 2010 Framework Agreement on relations between the European Parliament and the European Commission).

With the intention to overhaul the applicable Rules, in December 2014, a Working Group (WG) was created by the Parliament's Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO), with the task of elaborating appropriate changes to the RoP. The WG was chaired by EP Vice President Rainer Wieland (EPP, Germany) and was composed of one Member for each political group. The WG met regularly for almost 18 months and presented the outcome of its findings to the AFCO committee. The report¹ (Rapporteur: Richard Corbett, S&D, United Kingdom) was adopted by the AFCO committee on 22 November 2016. Parliament adopted the decision amending the RoP during its plenary part-session of December 2016, establishing thereby the text of the Rules of Procedure² as applicable from 16 January 2017.

The changes introduced with this general revision affect many areas of parliamentary life with the intention of increasing clarity of interpretation, transparency, and where

¹ Report A8-0344/2016.

² [Rules of Procedure](#), European Parliament, 2016.

possible incorporating already existing practices and adding linguistic coherence. The new RoP also adapts to the 2016 Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-making.³

The following sections describe the main changes brought to the various areas of parliamentary activities.

2. Thresholds, amendments and votes

One of the most important modification of the RoP is the rationalisation in Rule 168a of the previous 15 types of **thresholds for procedural requests** into three main types:

- the **'low threshold'** i.e. 1/20th of Parliament's Members (38) or a political group whatever its size;
- the **'medium threshold'** i.e. 1/10th of Parliament's Members (76) composed by either one or more political groups or individual Members or a combination of the two;
- the **'high threshold'** i.e. 1/5th of Parliament's Members (151) made up of one or more political groups or individual Members or a combination of the two.

The three types of thresholds differ with respect to their composition. The 'low' threshold may be composed also by a political group whatever its size, while for the 'medium' and 'high' threshold heterogeneity in the components is acceptable, if the number of Members is that which is required. If the medium and high thresholds are invoked during a meeting or a sitting, the number required is reached by those physically present, in all other cases by all Members who belong to the supporting group.

The RoP still contain thresholds different to the three set out above, either because a different threshold is required by the TFEU, or to preserve some committee prerogatives. To give examples, Rule 119 on the motion of censure on the Commission requires two thirds of the votes cast representing the majority of the component Members for adoption, which is the same requirement established by Article 234 TFEU; Rule 168 provides that at least 40 Members are required to contest a lack of quorum and Rule 169(6) at least 40 Members are needed to object to the decision to put amendments to vote before all the different language versions are available.

In addition to the committee responsible for a text, or a political group, amendments for consideration in Parliament may be tabled by Members reaching at least the low threshold (Rule 169). Rule 170 introduces cases where **amendments** are **not admissible** i.e. for **proposals codifying** or **recasting** Union legislation, or where mere linguistic correctness and consistency in the language in which the amendment is tabled is sought. In the case of amendments to codification or recast proposals, the general rule precluding amendments is mitigated by respectively Rule 103(3), second subparagraph, Rule 104(2), second subparagraph and Rule 104(3), third subparagraph. Rule 103(3) second subparagraph refers to codification proposals and allows, on the rapporteur's request, the chair of the Committee on Legal Affairs (JURI) to submit some technical adaptations for the latter's approval, if they are necessary to ensure compliance with codification rules and do not involve any substantial change. Rule 104(2), second subparagraph, makes this procedure applicable also to recasting proposals with respect to provisions which remain unchanged in the recasting

³ [Interinstitutional agreement](#) between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on Better Law-making of 13 April 2016.

proposal. Rule 104(3), third subparagraph, refers to another exceptional situation, where amendments to the unchanged part of a recasting proposal may be admitted on a case-by-case basis by the chair of the committee responsible, if they are necessary for pressing reasons related to the internal logic of the text or they are inextricably linked to other amendments admitted. In both cases a written justification must be provided.

Concerning **compromise amendments** tabled after the deadline, interpretative provisions to Rule 170 now clarify the criteria to be adhered to by the President when deciding upon their admissibility. Accordingly, compromise amendments may be put to vote. However, before doing so, the President must obtain Parliament's agreement. If an objection is raised, Parliament decides by majority of votes cast.

Where more than 50 amendments or requests for a split or separate vote have been tabled in plenary, new Rule 175 allows the President to refer the matter to the committee for a vote on each of the amendments or requests (previously referral to committee was only to seek global consideration), with the result that if the amendments are not voted by 1/3rd of the committee (previously 1/10th) they shall not be tabled for vote in plenary. This procedure in Rule 175 now extends to all texts tabled by a committee i.e. also motions for resolution, and no longer only to reports as previously.

Separate, split or roll call votes may now be requested by a political group or a number of Members reaching the low threshold (previously 40 Members, new Rules 176 and 180). However, Rule 180(2) no longer allows groups to table more than 100 requests for roll call votes per part-session. Rule 183 allows Members to give a maximum of three oral explanations⁴ per part-session (before there was no ceiling), and written explanations are now published on the individual Member's page on Parliament's website.

3. Interinstitutional negotiations during the ordinary legislative procedure

The rules governing negotiations with the Commission and the Council have been substantially modified to make decisions on the start of negotiations more transparent. This part of the new RoP has some impact on Parliamentary work since around 70 % of the files are adopted at first reading. The old Rule 73 was split into several rules (69b to 69f). Rule 69b now establishes the general principle that negotiations can begin only following a committee decision, by majority of its members, in accordance with Rules 69c to 69e, or following a referral back by Parliament for interinstitutional negotiations. Such negotiations must be conducted according to the Code of Conduct⁵ laid down by the Conference of Presidents (CoP).

⁴ Their duration remains however unchanged i.e. one minute.

⁵ The Code of Conduct for negotiating in the context of the ordinary legislative procedure, as approved by the CoP on 28 September 2017 was previously contained in Annex XX, which was deleted. The Code of Conduct is now included in the [Compendium](#) of the main legal acts related to the rules of procedure.

Rule 69c deals with **negotiations before Parliament's first reading** which can start only after:

- i) the prior adoption of a legislative report within the committee, which also constitutes the mandate to negotiate; and
- ii) a decision by the majority of committee members to enter into negotiations.

A new timeframe is set for authorising negotiations prior to Parliament's first reading. Once the committee has decided to enter into negotiations, such decision shall be announced in plenary at the beginning of the following part-session. Members or political groups reaching the medium threshold have the possibility to block such a committee decision by requesting that the decision is put to vote. Parliament shall then vote during the same part-session (i.e. by Thursday). The request must be submitted in writing by the end of the day following the announcement in plenary. If Parliament blocks the committee decision to enter into negotiations, the draft legislative act and the report is placed on the agenda of the following part-session and the President establishes deadlines for amendments. If on the other hand, Parliament does not oppose the decision to open negotiations, negotiation may begin at any time. In this latter case, an active motion is needed (most likely from the rapporteur) to revert to the committee for trilogue negotiations.

As an example of a possible timeline for this amended procedure: the announcement to enter into negotiations is made on the Monday of the part-session. By midnight of the Tuesday of the same part-session, Members or political groups reaching the medium threshold may request that the plenary, if they want to block such a decision, vote on the decision to enter into negotiations. The vote takes place during the same part session, i.e. by Thursday at the latest.

Negotiations may be initiated also:

- i) **before Council's first reading** ('early second reading' Rule 69d); or
- ii) after Council's first reading but **before Parliament's second reading** (Rule 69e).

In the first case (i), according to Rule 69d the Parliament's position at first reading constitutes the mandate for any further negotiation that might be initiated after the first Parliamentary reading. In addition, in this case, for reasons of transparency, the decision to initiate negotiations shall be taken by a majority of the committee's members and shall be announced at the part-session following the vote in committee. There is no need in this case to wait for Parliament to react, since the announcement is only for information purposes and shall be recorded in the minutes of the sitting.

In the second case (ii), Rule 69e regulates interinstitutional negotiations following Council's first reading and before Parliament's second reading, establishing that the Parliament's position on first reading constitutes the extent of the mandate. Negotiations may begin at any time following referral to the committee. The committee may provide the negotiating team with guidelines if the Council position contains elements not covered by the draft legislative act or by the Parliament's first reading position.

Rule 69f establishes that after each trilogue meeting, the chair and the rapporteur are responsible for reporting back to the committee. If negotiations lead to a provisional agreement, the committee shall be informed without delay and the documents concluding the trilogue published. The committee decides on the provisional agreement by single vote, by a majority of the votes cast.

4. Legislative procedure in general

With the purpose of incorporating the **Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-making** of 12 May 2016 in its Rules of Procedure, some aspects of legislative procedure programming have been amended. Rule 37 now provides that after the Commission has drawn up its work programme, the Parliament, the Council and the Commission exchange views in order to agree on a **joint declaration**⁶ on the annual interinstitutional programming as provided in Paragraph 7 of the 2016 Interinstitutional Agreement. The President of the EP, before entering into negotiations with the Council and the Commission on the joint declaration, consults the CoP and the Conference of Committee Chairs (CCC) on the EP's broader objectives. The President also seeks approval of the CoP before signing the joint declaration. The same rule also provides that, where the Commission intends to **withdraw a proposal**, the Commissioner responsible should explain that intention before the relevant EP committee; the Presidency of the Council may also be invited to intervene in that situation. A Commission statement, before the Parliament, may be requested if the committee disagrees with the proposed withdrawal.

New safeguards also now apply when Parliament's scrutiny is exercised on the **delegation of implementing powers**. A new paragraph (2) is in fact introduced in Rule 40, putting a particular emphasis on Parliament's supervisory role over the Commission's exercise of the implementing powers enshrined in Article 291 TFEU. The Parliament should specifically oversee that in its exercise of implementing powers, the Commission does not amend or supplement the legislative act conferring the implementing power, including its non-essential elements. The new Rule 40 entrusts the Legal Affairs Committee (JURI) with issuing opinions not only - as was previously the case - on conferral of delegated powers, but also on conferral of implementing powers.

The power to **object delegated acts** (Article 290(2) TFEU) also belongs (Rule 105) to a political group or 38 Members (previously 40) - who may table a motion for resolution under the same conditions as previously, i.e. if ten days before the Wednesday of the part session closest to the deadline for objection laid down in the legislative act, the committee responsible has not done so.

New Rule 46 brings some changes to the way Parliament exercises the **right of legislative initiative** provided in Article 225 TFEU. Once the proposal is submitted to the President who checks the fulfilment of the legal requirements, and the proposal has been referred to the committee responsible, the new wording of Rule 46 has abolished the signature procedure and maintained the power of the committee responsible to decide on the way forward for the proposal within three months from the referral.⁷ In addition, new Rule 46 places an obligation on the CCC to monitor correct compliance with paragraph 10 of the 2016 Interinstitutional Agreement, according to which the Commission should reply within three months to a request for a proposal of the Parliament, by adopting a specific communication explaining the

⁶ This is an act signed by the Presidents of the three institutions (Commission, Council and Parliament) setting broad objectives and initiatives to be treated with priority in the following years' legislative process. See also section 16.

⁷ The previous formulation of Rule 46 provided for the possibility to replace the authorisation of the CoP with the signature of the majority of the components' members. When failing to reach majority, the committee responsible was entrusted to take a decision on further action within three months of the referral.

appropriate follow-up. Rule 47a provides for the possibility to accelerate the legislative procedure of selected proposals, particularly those which appear in the joint declaration on annual interinstitutional programming. The above decision to fast-track a proposal may be agreed by the committee(s) responsible, in coordination with the Commission and the Council.

Rule 48, which in its previous wording set out the procedure applicable to legislative initiatives originating from Member States, is now broadened to also include initiatives from institutions other than the Commission.

5. Order of vote in plenary

Rule 59 (vote in parliament on first reading) overhauls the **voting procedure in plenary of acts under the ordinary legislative procedure**, in the following order.

First, a vote takes place on the immediate rejection of a legislative draft, if it has been tabled in writing by the lead committee, a political group or Members reaching the low threshold (38). If the vote for rejection is successful, the President asks the submitting institution to withdraw the legislative draft, which leads to the closure of the procedure. If, however, the institution does not withdraw the legislative proposal, the first reading of the Parliament is declared concluded, unless Parliament decides, on a proposal from the chair or the rapporteur of the relevant committee, a political group, or Members reaching at least the lower threshold (38), to refer the draft legislative act back to the responsible committee for consideration.

Second, if a draft legislative act is not rejected, a vote takes place on provisional agreements reached with Council and tabled by the committee responsible. Such a vote is a single vote unless a political group or at least 38 Members request that Parliament proceed with a vote on single amendments. If Parliament decides to vote on the amendments, it must also decide if the vote takes place immediately; if not, the Parliament must set a new deadline for amendments and the vote takes place at a future sitting. If the single vote on the provisional agreement is successful, the first reading is concluded, otherwise the President sets new deadlines for amendments to the draft legislative act to be voted at a subsequent parliamentary sitting.

Third, if there was no provisional agreement, if the provisional agreement was rejected, or if the single vote on the provisional agreement was refused, all amendments will be put to the vote. The vote on amendments includes individual parts of the provisional agreement, if any. Following the vote on amendments, Parliament votes on the whole draft legislative act. If the draft legislative act is adopted, the first reading is concluded. However, the chair or the rapporteur of the committee responsible, a political group or at least 38 Members may request that a decision is put to vote to refer back to the committee for interinstitutional negotiations. If the legislative draft is not adopted, the first reading is likewise concluded, unless a vote to refer back to the committee for reconsideration is requested by the chair, the rapporteur, a political group or 38 Members. Following the above procedure and votes taken on the amendments to the draft legislative resolution relating to procedural requests, the draft legislative resolution will be deemed to be adopted without a separate vote.

When a draft legislative act is **referred back to the responsible committee** new Rule 59a provides that this latter should report in writing within four months (previously two months under former Rule 60 now deleted), or within a longer period upon decision of the CoP.

To emphasise the importance of the interinstitutional dialogue around the **choice of the legal basis** when this determines a change in the applicable legislative procedure,⁸ Rule 63 contains now a new paragraph (2) providing that, where the ordinary legislative procedure would no longer apply as a result of a change in the legal basis, the Parliament, the Council and the Commission will exchange views on the matter.

New Rule 67a (**vote in Parliament on second reading**) incorporates and/or modifies provisions of other Rules which have been deleted (e.g. Rule 68) and inserts new provisions in order to align the procedure with the vote in plenary on first reading (Rule 59). A vote on the proposal for immediate rejection of Council's position takes place first if it is tabled in writing by the committee responsible, a political group or at least 38 Members. A majority of Parliament's component Members is necessary for such rejection. If the position is not rejected, a vote on the provisional agreement (if any) shall be given priority - as it is the case with first reading in Rule 59 - and put to a single vote unless a number of actors (political group or 38 Members) requests the plenary to proceed with a vote on the amendments. If the provisional agreement is voted by the majority of component Members the second reading is concluded, otherwise it is proceeded to a vote on the amendments to the Council's position. As it was the case with previous Rule 68(2), Parliament may reconsider a proposal for rejection after a vote on the amendments has taken place, however the actors who may initiate such proposal are broader than before i.e. the chair, the rapporteur of the responsible committee, a political group or at least 38 Members (previously upon recommendation of the rapporteur).

Rule 78c extends to the consultation procedure the rules applicable to the vote in plenary at first reading in the framework of the ordinary legislative procedure (Rule 59) except those applicable if a provisional agreement has been reached.

With respect to the **budgetary procedure**, Rule 86a now gives explicitly the power to the responsible committee to draw up all appropriate reports concerning the budget having regard to the cooperation procedure established by the Interinstitutional Agreement of 2 December 2013 on budgetary discipline.⁹ It is now also the same committee who may set a deadline for other committees to submit an opinion. Rule 88 reformulates more clearly that during the budgetary procedure the voting procedures in plenary takes place with Parliament taking successive votes on the amendments to Council's position on the draft budget by sections.

New Rule 226, introduces a 24h deadline as of the announcement in plenary for **contesting the interpretation of existing rules** where this latter has been proposed by the Committee (on Constitutional Affairs) and further announced in plenary. The required number of Members for contesting the interpretation is not anymore 40 Members, but 38.

⁸ See point 25 of the 2016 Interinstitutional Agreement.

⁹ Interinstitutional Agreement of 2 December 2013 between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline, on cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management, OJ C 373, 20.12.2013, p. 1–11.

6. International agreements

When the Parliament is required to give its consent or its opinion on the conclusion, renewal or amendment of an international agreement, Rule 108¹⁰ allows the Parliament to seek an **opinion from the Court of Justice** on the compatibility of the international agreement with the Treaties. Those entitled now (Rule 108) to ask such an opinion are the committee responsible and one tenth of the Members. Political groups are not allowed anymore to do that. In addition, before that vote the President may ask the opinion of JURI.

Rule 134 on recommendations to the Council in the field of the Union's external action and CFSP (Title V TEU) was abolished and merged with Rule 113. Previously Rule 113 dealt with recommendations only in the framework of CFSP while now it deals more broadly with recommendations on the Union's external policies. As a consequence, new Rule 113 incorporates provisions of the former Rule 134 and takes stock of the novelties with respect to CFSP introduced with the Lisbon Treaty. In particular, it provides that the responsible committee on the Union's external policy may also draw up a draft recommendation not only to the Council, but also to the Commission or the Vice-President/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR); the same responsible committee may draw up a draft recommendation in cases where international agreements have not been referred to Parliament (under Rule 108) or where the Parliament has not been informed thereof (under Rule 109). The prior authorisation of CoP previously contained in Rule 113 has been abolished.

7. Parliamentary questions and debates

New Rule 128 extends the possibility to submit questions ('**oral questions**') to the VP/HR and provides that this possibility is available, besides a committee and a political group, as in the old formulation, also to a number of Members which is now at least the lower threshold (previously 40). The speaking time of the questioner is however no longer pre-determined.

The **question time** with the Commission has also been modified and the ballot system, previously provided for in accordance with former Annex II, has been abolished. Now new Rule 129 provides that question time shall not be allocated in advance. The President shall rule on the admissibility of questions and shall ensure that Members of different political views and Member States have the possibility to put questions to the Commissioners ('catch the eye procedure'). As to the concrete modalities in which questions and answers are carried out, the rules remain unchanged.¹¹

The rules on **questions for written answers** have been substantially overhauled. Old Rule 130 gave the possibility to submit a maximum of five questions per month and,

¹⁰ The legal base of Rule 108 is article 218(11) TFEU which empowers the European Parliament (in addition to a Member State, the Council and the Commission) to seek an opinion of the Court of Justice on the compatibility with the treaties of an international agreement.

¹¹ One minute for the Member to formulate the question and two minutes for the Commissioner to answer. A supplementary question of 30 seconds may be added with the allocation of a two-minute answer to the Commissioner(s). The relevant provisions of former Annex II (conduct of question time with the Commission) have been incorporated into Rule 129 and former Annex II therefore has been abolished.

by way of exception, four additional questions per month.¹² New Rule 130 allows now Members to submit up to 20 questions over a rolling period of 3 months, but maintains the possibility to table one priority question each month. Members other than the author may support a question, however this latter counts only towards the author and not the supporter. New Rule 130(5) provides that where questions remain unanswered for three weeks (priority questions) or six weeks (non-priority questions) from the time they are sent to the addressee, the question is no longer compulsorily placed on the agenda of the next committee meeting, but it may be so placed at the request of the author.

Rule 130a and 130b create two new instruments. Rule 130a introduced **minor interpellations for written answer**, which are requests to provide information on specific issues submitted to the Council, the Commission or the VP /HR by a committee, a political group or at least five per cent of Parliament's component Members. The President of the EP decides on their admissibility and their compliance with the RoP and Annex II (previously Annex III) and formally asks the addressee to reply within two weeks, subject to an extension if the questioner agrees.

Article 130b introduces **major interpellations for written answer with debate**. These are questions which may be submitted under the same conditions as the minor interpellations above. However, upon receipt of the written answer, or in the absence of it within three weeks, the question shall be placed on the draft agenda of Parliament and a debate is held upon request of a committee, a political group or at least five per cent (5%) of Parliament's component Members. Major interpellations have therefore an impact on the agenda of the plenary and in general on the parliamentary proceedings.

The deadline for the European Central Bank to answer questions for written answer is now fixed in six weeks (Rule 131).¹³ In the absence of an answer, the question may now be placed on the agenda of the responsible committee (ECON) if the author so requests, while in the past such unanswered questions were in any case placed on such agenda. Rule 131a introduces the possibility to submit questions for written answer concerning the Single Supervisory Mechanism and the Single Resolution Mechanism. In this case, the same admissibility rules and procedure for submission apply, the deadline for the reply is however fixed in five weeks and, like questions under Rule 131, if they remain unanswered they may be placed at the request of the author on the agenda of the next committee meeting. The number of such questions counts against the maximum number of six allowed under Rule 131.

Where the Treaty requires a consultation of Parliament or when other legal provisions prescribe Parliament's opinion, new Rule 132 extends the possibility that also annual reports of *bodies* are dealt with in a report to be submitted in Plenary (previously only annual reports of institutions). If the Treaty or other legal provisions do not provide Parliament's consultation or opinion, Rule 132(2) empowers the committee responsible to also submit **motions for resolutions** to the plenary (previously the

¹² In its [resolution of 29 April 2015](#) the EP called for a decision to limit the number of parliamentary question per member in electronic format to five and abolish the possibility to submit any additional questions in the form of paper document tabled and signed personally by the Member. With its [decision of 9 September 2015](#) the EP gave an official interpretation of the existing rules by limiting the possibility to submit additional questions by way of exception (i.e. for matters of urgency) to less than five questions.

¹³ Previously the deadline was determined on a case-by-case basis.

committee responsible could only propose the drawing of an own initiative report according to Rule 52).

The requirements of the motion for resolution (Rule 133) have been modified though as they may not contain decisions on matters for which specific procedures or competences are provided in other provisions of the RoP,¹⁴ and may not deal with ongoing proceedings in Parliament. Members may not table more than one motion per month. The President decides on their admissibility, announces them in plenary and refers them to the committee responsible who ultimately decides on any follow up.

The number of Members entitled to call for **debates** in cases of breach of human rights, democracy and the rule of law is now, under new Rule 135, made up by the low threshold i.e. 38 Members (previously 40). The possibility for other entitled bodies (committees, inter-parliamentary delegations or political groups) to request such debates remains unchanged.

Rule 136 providing for the possibility to submit **written declarations** is now **abolished**.

Rule 153a introduces the possibility to have a **topical debate** during one or two periods at each part-session of not less than 60 minutes. Topical debates concern matters of major interest for the EU. Political groups have the right to propose at least once a year the topic of the debate by making an express request to the President in writing before the CoP drafts the final agenda. The CoP decides on the time to hold the topical debate and is responsible for a fair distribution among political groups of the choice of topic. However, the CoP may also reject a topic by a majority representing four-fifths of Parliament's Members. The debate is not followed by the adoption of a resolution.

In the allocation of **speaking time**, new Rule 162 takes now into account the need to give more time to Members with disabilities. In addition, safeguards are made more explicit that establish the exercise of the right to question a speaker through the 'blue card' system for avoiding imbalances in the allocation of speaking time.

8. Committees

Rule 204 requires now the bureaus of the committees to reflect Parliament's diversity by forbidding an all-male or all-female composition. Likewise, vice-chairs may not all come from the same Member State. If the number of nominations corresponds to the number of seats to be filled, Rule 204 makes now mandatory the **election by acclamation**. However, if there is more than one candidate on a given ballot, or Members or political group(s) reaching at least the high threshold in the committee request a vote (previously one sixth of the committee's members), the election takes place by secret ballot.

As from the next legislature, new Rule 199 will modify the way in which committees are formed since Members will be appointed by political groups instead of being elected by Parliament. As a consequence when a Member changes political group, in principle the Member loses also the post in committee unless the new political group confirms

¹⁴ In particular as regards the right to request the Commission to submit a legislative initiative according to Article 225 TFEU.

his/her seat in the same committee. Conversely, the political group from which a Member moves away maintains the post in the committee.

Rule 205 now broadens the prohibition to delegate to coordinators certain decisions including also motions of resolutions. In addition, the same rule provides now that the committee chair shall announce in committee all decisions and recommendations of committee coordinators which shall be deemed to have been adopted if not contested.

According to new Rule 208, **amendments** or **draft proposals for rejection** which have been tabled in committee need now to be **signed** by a full or a substitute member of the committee or co-signed by such member. The quorum for a vote in committee, which is normally one quarter of committee's component members, may be derogated from if members or political groups reaching the high threshold in committee (i.e. 1/5th) decide that the vote shall be valid if the majority of committee members have taken part in the vote (previously, one sixth of members of a committee could change the quorum). The rule provides also that the obligation to vote by roll-call vote in committees on any single or final vote now applies not only to reports but also to opinions. The rule that the vote on amendments and other votes shall be taken by show of hands is derogated if the chair decides on electronic vote or if Members or political groups reaching at least the high threshold (i.e. 1/5th, previously one quarter of committee members) request a roll-call vote.

Rule 209 streamlines the description of the rules on plenary sittings that apply in committee. The application in committee of the provision which forbids split votes on compromise amendments is confirmed.

Under Rule 210a when Parliament is under the obligation to treat information confidentially, the confidential procedure applies automatically to the work of a committee; while in the absence of such legal obligations any committee may apply the confidential procedure on its own motion by a majority of two thirds of the members present.¹⁵ Cases of breaches of confidentiality may be submitted now by the committee acting by a majority of its members to the President (no longer to the committee chair) for further consideration.

Rule 211 now provides that when the Commission fails to put forward a proposal based on citizens' initiative, the committee responsible may organise a hearing with the organisers of the initiative and if necessary activate the procedure of Rule 46 which regulates the exercise of the Parliament's power to request a proposal from the Commission as provided by Article 225 of the TFEU.

9. Petitions

New Rule 215, refers now explicitly to Article 227 TFEU which deals with the right of petitions. If a submission to Parliament is not intended to be a petition it must not be registered as such.

Petitions may be submitted by post or through the EP's portal and may be dealt with jointly if they concern the same subject matter. If the responsible committee fails to reach a consensus on the admissibility of a petition, the petition is declared admissible

¹⁵ If the confidential procedure applies, the meeting is attended only by members of the committee and officials or experts strictly necessary. Material needed for committee work is collected at the end and numbered, without possibilities to take photocopies or notes.

upon request of one third of the members of the committee (previously one quarter). Now Petitions may be anonymised to protect the rights of third parties upon Parliament's motion or upon the request of the concerned party. Rule 216 allows the Committee on Petitions (PETI) to submit a short motion for a resolution to the Parliament, but the Conference of Committee Chairs (CCC) should now be informed in advance. The pre-existing condition that there should be no objection by the CoP remains.

A petition may be reopened if new relevant facts arise and the petitioner so requests. PETI is also entrusted to adopt new guidelines in the treatment of petitions. Rule 216a lays down new rules concerning **fact-finding visits**: they may take place only if the petition has already been debated in the committee and as a general rule may be carried out for issues present in several petitions. The Rules of the Bureau on committee delegations within the EU apply. Members elected in the Member State where the visit takes place may not be part of the fact-finding visit but may participate in an ex-officio capacity without the right to participate in the drafting of the report. The recommendations deriving from the visit may be amended by the committee, but the part of the report containing the facts established by the delegation may not. PETI votes first on the amendments to the recommendations then on the mission report as a whole. This latter is forwarded to the President for information.

10. European political parties and foundations

Rule 223a adapts Parliament's RoP to some provisions of Regulation 1141/2014 on the funding of European political parties and foundations applicable as of 1 January 2017.¹⁶ A first novelty concerns the entity identified as responsible for deciding on the allocation of funds, eligibility of parties, supervision on compliance of obligations stemming from Regulation 1141/2014, exclusion and recovery of funds. From now on the entity in charge of these activities will be the Bureau.

The Bureau may consult the CoP and has the obligation to state the reasons when it takes individual decisions concerning the funding of European parties or foundations. According to Article 10(3) of Regulation 1141/2014, Parliament may request the Authority for European political parties and foundations to verify if a registered European party or foundation complies with the requirements set by the above regulation. In this case Rule 223a(2) provides that one quarter of Parliament's Members representing at least three political groups may decide to request such verification. The same specific majority is necessary for a reasoned decision to object the de-registration of a European political party or foundation within three months of the communication of the decision to de-register. Moreover, in the future, Parliament is represented in the committee of eminent persons not by the President, but by two persons appointed by the CoP.

11. Member's conduct, privileges and immunities

The President, according to Rule 165, as modified, may now decide to interrupt the live broadcasting of the sitting or may decide to delete certain parts from the audio-visual

¹⁶ Regulation (EU, Euratom) no 1141/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2014 on the statute and funding of European political parties and European political foundations.

record, where there is defamatory, racist or xenophobic language or behaviour of a Member. This latter decision takes immediate effect, but is subject to the confirmation of the Bureau no later than four weeks from the decision or, if the Bureau does not meet in that period, at next Bureau's meeting. The same powers are entrusted to chairs of committees, bodies and delegations.

New Rule 166 introduces a **procedure** where **penalties of a disciplinary nature** are at stake: the Member concerned may submit written observations before a final decision on penalties is adopted by the President. In exceptional cases the President may convene an oral hearing. The decision on penalties is notified to the Member and thereafter announced in plenary and published on the Parliament's website for the remainder of the parliamentary term. A distinction is inserted in Rule 166 from Annex XV where actions of a visual nature may be tolerated if they are not offensive, defamatory, racist or xenophobic and if they do not disrupt the parliamentary activity.

The range of possible **penalties** under the new Rule 166 is increased: the daily allowance may now be suspended from two to thirty days (previously two to ten days) while the participation of the offending Member in all or some of parliament's activities may now also be suspended from two to thirty days (previously between two and ten consecutive days). Rule 166 introduces a new set of penalties such as the prohibition to represent Parliament in inter-parliamentary delegations, inter-parliamentary conference or any other interinstitutional forum for up to one year. If a Member breaches obligations of confidentiality, the penalty may also consist in a limitation of the access to confidential information for up to one year. Penalties may be doubled if offences are reiterated. The President may now additionally propose to the Conference of Presidents (CoP) the suspension or complete removal of the offending Member from one or more offices held in Parliament.

Rule 167, dealing with the appeal against a penalty imposed by the President, extends the period within which the Bureau takes a decision on the penalty which may be either four weeks, or until the next Bureau's meeting if it meets after the four-week period. Also, the Bureau may now more broadly modify the penalty imposed (previously it could only reduce, annul or confirm it).

Rule 5 slightly changes the authority who issues the *laissez-passer*¹⁷ for Members and provides that it is the European Union, upon request of the Member and subject to the authorisation of the President of the EP (previously it was issued by the EP President). Moreover, a Member may be denied the right to inspect parliamentary documents if such inspection is based on private and personal interest and if it would cause unacceptable damage to Parliament's institutional interest. Such decision on refusal to grant access to information falls under the competence of the Bureau who must state the grounds thereof. The defence of privileges and immunities (Rule 7) is now possible also when in a Member State there is a risk that an infringement thereof is about to be committed. Rule 9 now forbids that in an **immunity procedure** the Member representing the Member whose immunity is under discussion, is involved in the

¹⁷ The *laissez-passer* is provided for in Article 6 of Protocol No 7 on the privileges and immunities of the European Union which states that the Council, acting by simple majority, prescribes the form of the *laissez-passer* which are to be recognised as valid travel documents by the authorities of the Member States. The *laissez-passer* is issued to officials and other servants of the EU. Council Regulation (EU) No 1417/2013 introduced a new form of *laissez-passer* designed to comply with the security standards and technical specifications applicable to passports and national travel documents. It is machine-readable and contains not only biographical data (printed), but also biometric data (facial image and two digital fingerprints), in order to comply with the specifications of the International Civil Aviation Organization. The *laissez-passer* however does not grant diplomatic status on its holder.

decision taken by the committee. According to the same rule, the reasoned decision of the responsible committee taken on the waiver is not subject to amendments and the rejection of the proposal implies that the contrary decision is deemed to be adopted. The committee considers requests relating to procedures on immunity *in camera*. New Rule 9 establishes also that the Parliament examines only requests for a waiver transmitted by judicial authorities or permanent representations of Member States (previously, requests for waiver could be sent by those national authorities contained in an indicative list drawn up by the responsible committee).

New Rule 11 also enhances the **transparency** and the **fair conduct** of Members by encouraging them to meet only interest representatives that are registered in the Transparency Register and by explicitly forbidding defamatory, racist or xenophobic language, including the prohibition to unfurl banners. Penalties for contravening this rule of conduct may be applied also to the behaviour of a Member's employee or invitee, in such case penalties may be imposed on the Member.

12. Appointments

New Rule 15 slightly changes the number of Members entitled to make nominations for the **office of President, Vice President or Quaestor** i.e. the low threshold (38), previously 40 Members. According to old Rule 15, the existence of only one candidate gave the opportunity to proceed to the election by acclamation, but the President could decide for a secret ballot upon his/her discretion. New Rule 15 establishes now the vote by acclamation if there is only one nomination per seat to be filled, unless Members or a political group reaching at least the high threshold (1/5th of Members i.e. 151 Members) request a secret ballot. In the event of a single ballot for more than one office holder, the ballot paper is only valid if more than half of available votes have been cast. In the election of President, Vice Presidents and Quaestors, Rule 15 makes now an explicit reference to gender balance in addition to geographic and political balance.

The EP President now has a broader competence including admissibility of texts in general (Rule 22). He/she is also responsible for the inviolability of EP's premises. The Bureau according to new Rule 25 is responsible for authorising missions of committees and for the application of the Statute for Members. It decides on amounts of allowances on the basis of the annual budget.

Rule 27 introduces a new rule dealing with **Sherpa delegations** i.e. the mandate and composition of EP's delegations which are in charge of consultations with Council and other EU institutions on matters related to the development of the EU. Such delegations should reflect the diverse political composition of the EP.

13. Political groups

Few amendments in Rule 32 have been inserted to make more unambiguous the procedure concerning the **establishment and dissolution of political groups**. It is clear now that if a political group falls below one of the required thresholds (i.e. election of Members in at least one-quarter of Member States and composition of minimum 25 Members) it may continue to exist until Parliament's next constitutive meeting subject to the authorisation of the President and CoP if two conditions are fulfilled (the

Members continue to represent at least one-fifth of the Member States and the group has been in existence for a period that is longer than a year).

In addition to that, Rule 32 provides now that the **statement establishing a political group** must be signed by all Members. The statement is no longer published on the Official Journal, but new Rule 32 provides that it is annexed to the minutes of the part-session in which the group's constitution was announced. The same rule provides that the announcement in plenary of the establishment of a group has retroactive legal effects to the moment when its set up was notified to the President. Likewise, according to new Rule 32 the dissolution is announced in plenary and takes legal effects on the day following that on which the conditions for a group's existence were no longer met. Concerning the coordination of political groups, new Rule 33 establishes new tasks for the CoP which, at the beginning of each parliamentary term will have to agree on procedures for reflecting the political diversity of the EP in committees and delegations and the decision-making bodies; the CoP has now also an explicit role to make proposals to the Bureau as regards the provision, implementation and monitoring of facilities and appropriations necessary for carrying out the tasks of the groups.¹⁸

14. Own-initiative reports

Own-initiative reports of a non-legislative nature or reports provided by Rule 45 and 46¹⁹ on which no referral has been made are subject now, as previously, to an authorisation of the CoP according to Rule 52. In the case of reports under Rule 45 and 46, the decision of the CoP must be taken within two months. Previously, Rule 52 provided that if the committee competence to draft a report was challenged, the decision of the CoP was based on a recommendation of the CCC and should have been taken within six weeks. This procedure previously contained in Rule 52 has now been moved to Rule 201a. According to amended Rule 52, with respect to motions for resolutions of own initiative reports submitted to Parliament, the specific admissibility requirements²⁰ applicable to amendments to the report are extended to requests for split votes or separate votes in plenary. Those special requirements do not apply where the report qualifies for a key debate in plenary or where it is drawn under rule 45 or 46 or where it has been authorised as a strategic report. Rule 53 offers now the option to the opinion-giving committee to present its position in the form of amendments to be tabled directly in the committee. Where this is the case they are tabled by the chair or the rapporteur on behalf of the committee and the deadlines for amendments set by the lead committee applies.

¹⁸ These resources do not relate to Members' allowances, but to the groups' work.

¹⁹ Rule 45 deals with proposals upon initiative of the Parliament i.e. where Treaties confer a right of initiative to the Parliament; Rule 46 deals with proposals originating from a request of the Parliament to the Commission according to Article 225 TFEU.

²⁰ The specific conditions are that amendments are tabled either by the rapporteur to take account of new information, or are requested at least by one tenth of the members.

15. Transparency

Concerning transparency and access to documents, as laid down by Regulation 1049/2001,²¹ Rule 116 provides that the Bureau must adopt the annual report which includes inter alia the number of cases where access was refused and the reason thereof, while the CoP designates the representatives of the Parliament in the Interinstitutional Committee tasked to elaborate best practices in the field. The rules on the access to Parliament are now regulated by new Rule 116a, which provides for the obligation for the entities listed in the transparency register and their representatives who have been issued with a long-term badge to respect the **ad hoc Code of Conduct** annexed to the Agreement on the transparency register²² and all the procedures related thereto. Save the application of general rules on de-activation of long-term badges, the Secretary-General, after authorisation of the Quaestors, is responsible for withdrawing or de-activating long-term access badges where the holder has been disbarred from the transparency register, has infringed rules on access to Parliament or has not appeared, without due justification, to a hearing or committee meeting or has not cooperated with an inquiry committee. The Bureau is responsible for laying down the rules for the implementation of the transparency register.

16. Relations with other bodies and Institutions

As regards procedures involving relations with other bodies or institutions, Rule 118 now sets an obligation (not an option as previously) for the President of the EP to invite the President-elect of the Commission to disclose the allocation of portfolio responsibilities of Commissioners-designate.²³ Moreover, it is provided that the hearing of **Commissioners-designate**, if they hold horizontal responsibilities, may differ from the usual one. The requirement however that hearings shall be public and conducted by committees remains. With new Rule 118 where a **substantial change of portfolio** occurs, the Commissioner is subject to a scrutiny (hearing) rather than, as previously, to the mere obligation to appear (exchange of views) before the responsible committee. Rule 118 provides now also that - in case of a conflict of interest during a Commissioner's term of office without the President of the Commission implementing Parliament's recommendations - Parliament may ask the President of the Commission to withdraw the confidence in the Commissioner in question and to take the necessary measures with a view to depriving the Commissioner of the right to pension or other benefits pursuant to Article 245 TFEU. New Rule 118a establishes how the negotiating procedure should be carried out on the **joint conclusions** on multiannual programming introduced with the 2016 Interinstitutional Agreement whereby the EP President should, prior to negotiating with Commission and Council, exchange views with the CoP on principal policy objectives and priorities and must seek its approval before the signing.

²¹ Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents, OJ L 145, 31.5.2001, p. 43–48.

²² Agreement between the European Parliament and the European Commission on the transparency register for organisations and self-employed individuals engaged in EU policy-making and policy implementation, OJ L 277, 19.9.2014, p. 11.

²³ This amendment of Rule 118 was already envisaged in the [resolution](#) of the European Parliament of 8 September 2015 on procedures and practices regarding Commissioner hearings, lessons to be taken from the 2014 process.

A new provision in Rule 119 requires a double number of Members (one fifth) for submitting a **motion of censure** on the Commission if a similar motion has been submitted in the preceding two months.²⁴ A similar rule was introduced with new Rule 221 where, if a request for dismissal of the Ombudsman has already been voted in the preceding two months, a new one may be tabled only if it is supported by one fifth of the component Members.

Rule 120 reflects the current practice whereby JURI selects by simple majority the nominee that the EP appoints as a member of the panel charged with assessing the suitability to the office of Judge or Advocate General of the Court of Justice and the General Court.

Rule 122a sets out explicitly the modalities with which Parliament **intervenes in the appointment of certain heads of economic governance bodies**,²⁵ such as e.g. the Supervisory Board of the Single Supervisory Mechanism, Single Resolution Board of the Single Resolution Mechanism or the European Supervisory Authority. Parliament votes by secret ballot within two months from the receipt of the proposed nominees, upon recommendation of the committee responsible. If Parliament does not approve the candidate, the EP President shall ask for a new proposal to Parliament.

Rule 123 introduces a novelty in the **order of vote of motions for resolution** as the EP President may put a motion for resolution to vote first if it is tabled by political groups representing a clear majority.

A request for consultation of the Economic and Social Committee and of the Committee of the Regions advanced by a committee is no longer approved without debate, but announced to Parliament in its next part-session and is deemed to be approved unless 24 hours after the announcement a political group or a number of Members reaching the low threshold (38) requests it to be put to vote. This procedure does not apply in those cases where consultation of the above institutions is required by the Treaties (Rule 137).

Concerning proceedings before the Court of Justice of the EU, the power to **defend Parliament's prerogatives** and oversee compliance with EU law, is now explicitly entrusted by means of Rule 141 with **JURI** which may, where appropriate, hear the views of the committee responsible for the subject matter. The involvement of JURI is now more clearly defined as it can formulate recommendations to the President on decisions concerning whether to bring an action on behalf of Parliament, or concerning matters occurring during the Court proceedings. Now the chair and rapporteur of JURI are also normally consulted in cases of urgency. The JURI committee is also expected to define the implementing measures of the rules concerning its role in proceedings before the Court of Justice of the EU.

17. Annexes to the Rules of Procedure

Annexes prior to the reform comprised documents of a rather varied nature. Some of them used to have the same legal status as the RoP which they implemented, while

²⁴ Rule 119 requires one tenth of the component members for a first submission of a motion of censure on the Commission but doubles the threshold (i.e. one fifth) for a further submission within the next two months.

²⁵ A similar procedure applies in Rule 122 for the appointment of Members of the Executive Board of the European Central Bank.

others contained information or texts which did not have the nature of (implementing) rules, but were still relevant for the regulation of parliamentary life (e.g. Annex XIII containing the Framework Agreement on relations between the European Parliament and the European Commission).

With the reform of the RoP it was decided to reduce the number of Annexes from twenty-one to seven.²⁶ Some of the deleted Annexes have been incorporated into the Rules themselves, while some others now form part of the Compendium which contains the main legal acts related to the Rules of Procedure.²⁷ As a consequence, Annexes have been renumbered. This chapter deals with the main changes introduced in the Annexes.

Annex I (unchanged numbering) sets out the **Code of Conduct for Members of the EP with respect to financial interests and conflicts of interest**. In its Article 2, a point c) has been added forbidding Members to engage in paid professional lobbying activity directly linked to the Union's decision-making process. Further modifications have been introduced when changes occur to the material situation that have an influence on the declaration of financial interests which now shall be notified to the President by the end of the month following the change in question (previously within 30 days).

The **declaration of financial interests** is now also more detailed since certain unremunerated activities or activities paid up to €499 also have to be reported.²⁸ New Rule 4(5) authorises now the President, if a declaration of financial interest is suspected to be substantially incorrect or out of date, to consult the Advisory Committee on the Conduct of Members and to request the correction of the declaration. The Bureau may take decisions impacting the participation of a non-complying Member to parliamentary bodies, in interinstitutional negotiations or the holding of a special appointment (e.g. rapporteur). Former Members who engage in lobbying or representational activities linked with EU law-making should now inform the Parliament.

Annex II on the Criteria for Questions and Interpellations for Written Answers under Rules 130, 130a, 130b, 131 and 131a (former Annex III) brought about some further specifications to the questions for written answers; also, it is now explicitly stated that questions to the Council may not deal with ongoing ordinary legislative procedures or with the Council's budgetary functions.

Annex VI on Approval of the Commission and monitoring of commitments made during the hearings (former Annex XVI), contains now in Article 2 a detailed description of the procedure that JURI must follow in **examining the declaration of financial interests of a Commissioner-designate**: a scrutiny is first made to assess the accuracy and completeness of the declaration to assess whether there is a conflict of interests. If none is found the hearing by the committee responsible may take place,

²⁶ The following former Annexes were deleted: II, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV, XVII, XVIII, XIX, XX, XXI.

²⁷ [Compendium of the main legal acts related to the Rules of Procedure](#), May 2018.

²⁸ These activities are the Member's occupation during the previous three years, membership to boards or committees of companies, non-governmental organisations, associations, remunerated activity as employee or self-employed, any relevant outside activity, occasional remunerated outside activity (e.g. expert advice, lecturing, writing).

whereas if a conflict of interests is identified, the procedure shall be suspended. If the scrutiny can exclude a conflict of interest JURI's chair sends a confirmation letter to the responsible committee for the hearing; however if the declaration is found incomplete or contradictory, the Commissioner-designate may be requested to provide further information. Following that, JURI draws recommendations for the solution of any conflict of interests which may consist in renouncing to the financial interest or in a change in the portfolio. As a last resort JURI may conclude that the Commissioner-designate is unable to exercise his/her functions in which case the EP President reverts to the President of the Commission to be informed on the way forward.

Article 3 provides more details on the **questioning of Commissioner-designate**: a maximum of 25 questions grouped by theme may be asked during the hearing, with follow up questions. Article 4 sets general guidelines for the evaluation after the hearing before the competent committee: in case of unanimous approval or rejection, the chair sends a letter of respectively approval or rejection; if the Commissioner-designate is approved by coordinators representing at least two-thirds of the members of the committee a letter stating the approval of the large majority is issued by the chair, otherwise additional information may be asked, or a further hearing of 1.5 hours may take place subject to the approval of the CoP. After that, coordinators representing two-thirds of the committee members may approve the Commissioner-designate, in which case the chair submits a letter ascertaining this. If no such majority can be reached at coordinators level, the questions whether the Commissioner-designate is qualified as a member of Commission's college and whether he can carry out his/her duties are put to separate vote in a dedicated committee meeting. The further stage remains unchanged i.e. the letter of the committee chair is transmitted within 24 hours to the CCC and subsequently to the CoP which may declare closed the procedure.

A new Article 6 now also provides that the commitments of the Commissioner-designate undertaken during the hearing are monitored by the committee responsible in the context of the annual structured dialogue with the Commission as provided in the 2010 Framework Agreement.

The last general and extensive overhaul of the European Parliament's Rules of Procedure, which entered into force as of 16 January 2017, was intended to bring more transparency and efficiency to parliamentary work. Among the numerous modifications, may be noted the increased attention to the conduct of Members, the streamlining of the types of thresholds for procedural requests, the increased transparency surrounding the decision to begin negotiations during the various stages of the legislative procedure, the abolition of written declarations and the modification of the maximum number of questions for written answer allowed. These and further modifications required to adapt to the 2016 Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-making were introduced to bring clarity, incorporate existing practices and correct redundancies or inconsistencies.

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