



European Parliament

# GENERAL REVISION OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE

A brief overview of  
the main changes

January 2017

**European Parliament  
Directorate-General  
for the Presidency**

**European Parliament  
Directorate-General for  
Internal Policies of the Union**

# **GENERAL REVISION OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE**

A brief overview of  
the main changes

This information booklet aims to highlight some changes to  
the Rules of Procedure which will affect your work as an MEP

# Foreword

Dear Member,

The last general revision of the Rules of Procedure dates back to 2009. There have been additions and amendments since then, of course, but nothing quite like the general revision Parliament adopted on 13 December 2016.

Such an extensive revision of the Rules of Procedure right in the middle of the eighth parliamentary term is a particular challenge, not only for stakeholders such as the Parliament's services and IT systems, but also, and above all, for Parliament's primary actors: its Members.

The newly amended Rules of Procedure will enter into force on 16 January 2017. To help you in your work, the Directorate General for the Presidency and the Directorate General for Internal Policies have taken the initiative to prepare this short information booklet. It is not exhaustive, instead it aims to highlight some important changes which affect your daily work and relate, in particular, to plenary and committee work, as well as to your individual rights and administrative life.

Markus Winkler  
Deputy Secretary General and Director General DG Presidency

Riccardo Ribera d'Alcalá  
Director General DG Internal Policies

# Index

- Timeline** ..... p.4
- Sessions of Parliament** ..... p.5
- Committee work** ..... p.11
- Members' activities** ..... p.14
- Members' administration** ..... p.20

# Timeline

In December 2014, the AFCO committee established a Working Group to proceed to a general review of Parliament's Rules of Procedure. The Working Group was composed of one MEP from each political group and chaired by Mr Wieland, Vice-president of the EP.

In July 2016, the Working Group presented the outcome of its deliberations to the AFCO committee. Mr Corbett was appointed as rapporteur. The report was adopted by the AFCO committee on 8 November and submitted to plenary during the part-session of December 2016. With a few exceptions, the revised Rules of Procedure will enter into force on 16 January 2017, on the first day of the January part-session.

# Sessions of Parliament

## Thresholds (new Rule 168 a)

---

Until now, the Rules have provided for about 15 types of thresholds for procedural requests (40 MEPs, a political group or 40 MEPs, etc.). Most of them are being replaced with the nearest of the following three new thresholds:

- a “low threshold” corresponding to Members who constitute 5% of Parliament’s component Members (i.e. 38 MEPs) or a political group;
- a “medium threshold” corresponding to one or more political groups or Members who together constitute 10% of Parliament’s component Members;
- a “high threshold” corresponding to one or more political groups or Members who together constitute 20% of Parliament’s component Members.

Some existing thresholds are not affected by this streamlining because of the specificity of the situations to which they apply, because they concern individual Members’ prerogatives, or because they are laid down in the Treaties.

# Voting in plenary

## Tabling of amendments

### Old Rules

Amendments for consideration in Parliament may be tabled by the committee responsible, a political group or **at least 40** Members.

### New Rules *(Rule 169(1))*

Amendments for consideration in Parliament may be tabled by the committee responsible, a political group or Members **reaching at least the low threshold (38 Members)**.

(Amendments relating to own-initiative reports under Rule 52(2) (now Rule 52(4)) may still only be tabled by the rapporteur to take account of new information or by 76 Members)



## Tabling of requests for split, separate and roll-call votes

### Old Rules

Split, separate and roll-call votes may be requested by a political group **or at least 40 Members**.

### New Rules

*(Rules 174, 176 and 180)*

Split, separate and roll-call votes may be requested by a political group **or Members reaching at least the low threshold (38 Members)**.

***Split and separate votes relating to own-initiative reports under Rule 52(2) (now Rule 52(4)) may only be tabled by the rapporteur to take account of new information or by 76 Members*** (i.e. now the same threshold as for amendments).

***No group may table more than 100 requests for roll-call votes per part-session.***

## Voting procedure for legislative reports

Rule 59 and the new Rule 67a set out the voting procedure for the adoption of Parliament's position at first and second reading of ordinary legislative procedures.

A proposal to immediately reject the Commission proposal or Council position may be tabled by the committee responsible, a political group or Members reaching at least the low threshold (38 Members). Such a proposal is voted first. A rejection of the Commission proposal will close the first reading unless Parliament decides to refer the matter back to committee following a specific request.

Any provisional agreement reached in negotiations between the Parliament and the Council in an ordinary legislative procedure will be put to a single vote before any other amendments, unless Parliament decides otherwise. If the provisional agreement is adopted Parliament's reading is concluded.

Parliament may decide instead to proceed with the vote on the basis of any amendments tabled (including those contained within the provisional agreement) and requests received for split, separate and roll-call votes.

From now on, the draft legislative resolution will be deemed adopted without being submitted to a separate vote; only amendments to the draft legislative resolution, if any, will be put to the vote. Instead the President will declare the reading closed and the legislative resolution will be adapted to reflect the outcome of the vote.

## Oral explanations of vote

### Old Rules

No limits

### New Rules (*Rule 183(1)*)

Any Member may give a maximum of three oral explanations of vote per part-session.

## Topical debates *(new Rule 153a)*

---

At each part-session one or two 1-hour Topical Debates on a matter of major interest to EU policy could now take place. Each group will have the right to ask for at least one debate per year. The Conference of Presidents will ensure a fair distribution. If a four-fifths majority of the Conference of Presidents disagrees with the subject of a topical debate, then it will not take place.

## Conduct of Members *(new Rule 11(3), 165 and 166)*

---

The Rules now make it clearer that Members may be sanctioned (by the President) if they use defamatory, racist or xenophobic language or undertake actions to disrupt parliamentary activity.

The range of immediate measures and penalties which may be imposed upon Members in the event of non-compliance with the standards of conduct has been broadened (e.g. Members may be prohibited from representing the EP externally (on delegations, inter-institutional meetings, etc.) or their right to access confidential information may be limited) and their level has been raised.

# Committee work

## Interinstitutional negotiations during the legislative procedure

---

In accordance with the new Rule 69c, committees may not start negotiations prior to the **adoption of a committee report** and a decision to enter into negotiations on that basis, a decision requiring a majority of the committee members. The former Rule 74 is abolished.

Decisions to enter into negotiations must be **announced in plenary**, and political groups and/or individual Members who together constitute the medium threshold (one tenth of Parliament's component Members) have the possibility to **request a vote, during the same part-session, on whether or not to allow the committee to start negotiations on the basis of its report**.

If Parliament rejects the committee decision to enter into negotiations, the committee report will be placed on the agenda of the following part-session with a deadline for amendments.

## Opinion-giving committees

---

In accordance with the modified Rule 53, an opinion-giving committee may decide to present its position in the form of **amendments to be tabled directly in the committee responsible, within the deadline for amendments**. Following their adoption in committee, these amendments will be tabled by the Chair or rapporteur on behalf of the committee.

## Amendments at committee stage

---

In accordance with the modified Rule 208(1), amendments or draft proposals for rejection of a Commission proposal must always be **signed or co-signed by a full or substitute member** of the committee.

## Roll call votes in committee

---

In accordance with the modified Rule 208(3), any single and/or final vote on a report **or an opinion** must be taken by roll call vote.

Members or political groups reaching at least the **high threshold** in the committee may request that other votes be taken by roll call.

## No split votes on compromise amendments

---

In accordance with Rules 174(5) and 209, a split vote in committee shall **not** be admissible in the case of a vote on a compromise amendment.

## Committee filter of plenary amendments

---

In accordance with the modified Rule 175, a committee responsible may be asked by the President to **vote on each** amendment or request for a split or separate vote, if more than 50 amendments or such requests have been submitted to plenary concerning a **text** tabled by that committee. Only amendments/requests supported by at least **one-third** of the committee members will then be put to the plenary vote.

# Members' activities

## Motions for resolutions under Rule 133

### Old Rules

No limits

### New Rules

Each Member may table one motion for resolution per month.

For more information, please contact [DocumentsReception@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:DocumentsReception@europarl.europa.eu)



## Requests to the Commission for submission of proposals under Rule 46 (“Proposal for a Union act”)

### Old Rules

Once the proposal was declared admissible by the President, the committee responsible had to draw up a report. Only after that the proposal - on the recommendation of the committee responsible - was signed by a majority of Parliament’s component Members.

### New Rules

The procedure has been simplified in the sense that once the President has declared the proposal admissible, he will refer it to the committee responsible which must take a decision on further action within three months of the referral. This means that there is no longer any need to gather the signature of the majority of Members before proceeding in committee.

For more information, please contact [unionact@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:unionact@europarl.europa.eu)

## Questions for oral answer with debate under Rule 128 (“Oral Question”)

### Old Rules

Questions to the Council and the Commission only

### New Rules

Main novelty: questions may also be put to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

For more information, please contact [QuestOral@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:QuestOral@europarl.europa.eu)

## Questions for written answer under Rule 130 and Annex III (now Annex II) ("Written Question")

### Old Rules

**Number of questions:**

Maximum of five questions per month, and, by way of exception, four additional questions per month if the urgency was sufficiently justified.

One of those 5 + 4 questions could be tabled as a priority question.

### New Rules

**Number of questions:**

Twenty questions over a rolling period of three months.

The Rule that each month one of those questions may be tabled as a priority question remains.

**Supporters of a question:**

Another novelty is that under the new Rule 130(4) a question may be supported by Members other than the author. Such questions shall only count towards the author's maximum number of questions. Supporting a question will only be possible at the moment of the tabling of the question.

For more information on these changes, please contact [QuestEcrit@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:QuestEcrit@europarl.europa.eu)

# Minor interpellations for written answer and major interpellations for written answer with debate (new Rules 130a and 130b)

## Old Rules

Completely new instruments!

## New Rules

These are completely new instruments that didn't exist before under Parliament's Rules of procedure.

The new Rules 130a and 130b specify who may table minor or major interpellations and to whom these may be addressed.

The admissibility criteria for minor and major interpellations are the same as for questions for written answer (see Annex III (now Annex II) to the Rules).

Unlike minor interpellations, and under the conditions laid down in Rule 130b, major interpellations will be placed on the draft agenda of Parliament and in some cases a debate must be held.

For more information, please contact [Interpellations@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:Interpellations@europarl.europa.eu)

## Written declarations under Rule 136

### Old Rules

### New Rules

This Rule is deleted. Written declarations will cease to exist.

However, written declarations already entered in the register for the collection of signatures, will remain open until the end of the 3 months period laid down in the old Rule 136.

For more information, please contact [DeclEcrit@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:DeclEcrit@europarl.europa.eu)

# Members' administration

## Changes to the declaration of financial interests

---

For reasons of transparency, Members of the European Parliament are to submit a declaration of financial interests to the President. Under the current Rules of Procedure, Members are also required to revise their declaration within 30 days of each change occurring. This deadline has been modified under the new Rules of Procedure: Members shall now notify the President of any changes in their declaration **by the end of the month following the occurrence of the change.**

Furthermore, the **income categories** for sections (a), (c), (d), (e) and (f) have been revised. Besides the existing categories (EUR 500 to EUR 1 000; EUR 1 001 to EUR 5 000; EUR 5 001 to EUR 10 000, and above EUR 10 000 gross a month), the new declaration of financial interests will have a new income category in which Members shall, where appropriate, indicate their monthly income **between EUR 1 and EUR 499**. For incomes above EUR 10 000 gross a month Members will be asked to give an **indication of the nearest EUR 10 000 amount.**

**The EP Bureau will adopt a new declaration form and inform Members about how the transition to the new declaration will work.**





**United in diversity**

