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*Committee on Constitutional Affairs*

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**2013/2083(REG)**

10.10.2013

## **DRAFT REPORT**

on amendment of Rule 116 of, and Annex II to, Parliament's Rules of  
Procedure on Question Time  
(2013/2083(REG))

Committee on Constitutional Affairs

Rapporteur: Zita Gurmai

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## PROPOSAL FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DECISION

### on amendment of Rule 116 of, and Annex II to, Parliament's Rules of Procedure on Question Time (2013/2083(REG))

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the letter from its President of 13 February 2013,
  - having regard to Rules 211 and 212 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs (A7-0000/2013),
1. Decides to amend its Rules of Procedure as shown below;
  2. Points out that the amendments will enter into force on the first day of the next part-session;
  3. Decides that the ballot system established by the amendments for the determination of the Members allowed to put a question shall be assessed after a trial period of .... from their entry into force;
  4. Instructs its President to forward this decision to the Council and the Commission, for information.

#### Amendment 1

#### Parliament's Rules of Procedure Rule 116

##### *Present text*

1. Question Time with the Commission shall be held at each part-session ***at times decided by Parliament on a proposal from*** the Conference of Presidents.

2. ***No Member may put more than one question to the Commission at any given part-session.***

##### *Amendment*

1. Question time with the Commission shall be held at each part-session ***for a duration of ninety minutes on a specific horizontal theme decided upon by*** the Conference of Presidents ***in principle one month in advance of the part-session.***

2. ***The Commissioners invited to participate by the Conference of Presidents shall have a portfolio related to the specific horizontal theme. Their number shall be limited to two per part-session, with the possibility of adding a third being dependent on the specific***

***3. Questions shall be submitted in writing to the President, who shall rule on their admissibility and on the order in which they are to be taken. The questioner shall be notified immediately of this decision.***

***4. The detailed procedure shall be governed by guidelines laid down in an annex to these Rules of Procedure<sup>17</sup>.***

5. In accordance with guidelines established by the Conference of Presidents, specific question hours may be held with the Council, with the President of the Commission, with the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and with the President of the Eurogroup.

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<sup>17</sup>*See Annex II.*

***horizontal theme chosen for the Question Time.***

***3. Members who put a question to one of the Commissioners shall be chosen by means of a ballot system in the following way:***

***– two ballot boxes are placed at the presidency podium 30 minutes before the start of Question Time;***

***– Members wishing to put a question write their name on a form and place that form in one of the ballot boxes;***

***– the President opens Question Time and closes the ballot boxes;***

***– the President draws one form at a time and calls on the Member whose name appears on that form to put his/her question to the competent Commissioner. The Member is given one minute in which to formulate the question and the Commissioner two minutes in which to reply. The President may exceptionally accept a supplementary question of 30 seconds' duration from any Member present if he/she considers that the answer given by the Commissioner merits it. The Commissioner shall then be given two minutes for a supplementary reply.***

4. In accordance with guidelines established by the Conference of Presidents, specific question hours may be held with the Council, with the President of the Commission, with the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and with the President of the Eurogroup.

**Amendment 2**

**Parliament's Rules of Procedure  
Annex II**

*Present text*

*Amendment*

[...]

*deleted*

## **EXPLANATORY STATEMENT**

### **1) Background**

In June 2011 the Conference of Presidents revised the format for Question Time with the Commission, with a view to improving its quality and liveliness. The new format was foreseen to run for a trial period from September 2011 and be subject to an evaluation before any changes were made definitive.

At its meeting of 17 January 2013, the Conference of Presidents examined an evaluation report on the trial period drafted and presented by the Vice-President responsible, Mr Mcmillan-Scott, and decided to confirm the revised format of Question time, which should continue to take place on a monthly basis for a duration of ninety minutes.

The Conference of Presidents further specified that:

- the number of participating Commissioners should, as a general rule, be limited to two per session, with the possibility of including a third depending on the topic;
- the Conference of Presidents should in principle decide upon the specific topic for discussion a month in advance of the part-session concerned, with a view to ensuring the presence of the appropriate Commissioners; nonetheless, some flexibility must be retained on this point in order to facilitate plenary agenda planning.

The Conference of Presidents decided finally that the regular 'catch the eye' system be replaced by a ballot system and to evaluate this system at a later stage.

By letter of 13 February 2013, the President informed the Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of this decision and referred the matter for consideration under Rule 211 with a view to a possible modification of Rule 116 and Annex II.

### **2) Modification of the Rules**

The modification of Rule 116 and Annex II proposed by this draft report is consistent with the decision of the Conference of Presidents.

The main features of the modification are:

- the selection of Members called to put their question through the 'catch the eye' method is substituted by a ballot system guaranteeing absolute objectivity;
- questions are not submitted in writing in advance and no verification of their admissibility takes place in advance;
- Annex II which establishes in great length guidelines for the verification of the admissibility of questions, supplementary questions and time-limits becomes redundant.