Parliamentary reform: third package adopted

The European Parliament's political group leaders have adopted a third package of reforms designed to update the institution's internal procedures. The changes, agreed in the Conference of Presidents, concern the operation of committees and inter-parliamentary delegations.

The reforms complete a process begun two years ago, when a working group on EP Reform was proposed by Parliament President Hans-Gert Pöttering and established under the chairmanship of Dagmar Roth-Behrendt (PES, DE). The first two packages, adopted in autumn 2007 and autumn 2008, related to the organisation of plenary sessions, the handling of EP reports, the operation of the legislative process and improvements in inter-institutional relations.

The changes agreed in the Conference of Presidents on 12 and 19 March include the following reforms:

- allow the use of joint committee meetings for complex legislative dossiers that cross committee boundaries;
- make it mandatory for the Conference of Committee Chairs to give a recommendation to the Conference of Presidents on how to resolve any conflict of competences between committees;
- generally increase cooperation between committees, notably by enhancing the role of opinion-giving committees;
- rename 'temporary committees' as 'special committees';
- 'de-neutralise' the Petitions and Fisheries Committees, whilst leaving the Budgetary Control and Women's Committees neutralised (see note below);
- increase the involvement of inter-parliamentary delegations in the work of committees and vice versa;
- make the memberships of joint parliamentary assemblies and the bilateral inter-parliamentary delegations for the countries concerned more coterminous;
- update arrangements with the Commission to improve the operation of election observation missions.

Commenting on the third package on EP Reform, the Parliament's President, Hans-Gert Pöttering, said: "This latest round of reforms continues the key process of modernising the Parliament's procedures and practices. As co-legislator with the Council of Ministers in very many policy areas, we are determined to exercise our powers with maximum efficiency and effect."

N.B.:
Note: At present MEPs can generally be full members of only one committee and a substitute member of up to two others, but a few committees have a "neutralised" status, which means they do not count towards these limits.
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