Fresh start with new Members' Statute

Incoming MEPs will benefit from and be subject to the new Member's Statute that enters into force with the new term. This regulation for the first time ensures that MEPs from all countries will have the same status, also in terms of their salaries, pensions, sickness insurance. Previously there were huge disparities by nationality. Parliamentary assistants also see their status and working conditions clarified. New clearer rules on expenses and allowances complete the overall reform.

Parliamentary Status

As in any parliament, MEPs benefit from a range of provisions designed to ensure their ability to do their job properly and independently, free of undue influence and pressure. They therefore have guaranteed rights of access to information, rights to question commissioners and officials the right to receive prompt accurate answers. MEPs, also like national parliamentarians the world over, are for the same reason accorded a range of privileges and formal immunities in the exercise of their parliamentary mandates.

Most such guarantees, powers and parliamentary privileges for MEPs have been in place for many years, though some, relating in particular to the right to obtain information, have been newly strengthened in the new MEPs' statute.

Until now, however, a glaring exception remained to the principle that MEPs were subject to a unified status - namely their salaries, pensions and social benefits. These were hitherto covered by highly disparate national rules, with the result being vastly different pay and conditions for MEPs doing the same work.

Under the new Statute, MEPs pay and benefits will be paid out of the European Parliament's budget, rather than by national authorities. At the same time social provisions, pensions and health insurance will be subject to a unified scheme, again financed by the EU budget, similar to that applying to EU civil servants.

The salary - a judgmental question

Article 10 of the new Statute sets the amount of the MEPs salary as 38.5 % of the basic salary of a judge at the Court of Justice of the European Communities, thus currently €7,665 before tax. This would apply to all elected members and replace the former system that was often accused of inequality and be subject to the same conditions (though national taxation rules may still vary).

MEPs' salaries will be subject to EU tax, payable to the EU budget, and, under special arrangements, some Member States will apply further national taxes to salaries thereafter.

The road is clear

Alongside the introduction of the uniform salary, Parliament has overhauled its expenses system, to make it more transparent and accountable. It will drop the previous system, in large part based on a flat-rate reimbursement of travel costs, in favour of reimbursement of actual documented expenditure incurred in Members travelling to and from the places of work and in connection with other duty travel. Other, more measurable and comparable expenses, like office costs will remain covered with a flat-rate sum.
Who assists the assistants?

New, transparent rules will also regulate the employment of MEPS assistants. Now, assistants based in Brussels will be a special category of EP staff, with temporary contracts to expire at the end of parliamentary term.

They will have similar social benefits to those of EU civil servants, and their salaries will be dependent on their grade. The contracts and salaries of the assistants will be handled by the Parliament’s financial services. This change guarantees fair and equal treatment.

Assistants based in the Member States – those who work in MEP’s constituency offices, for example – will be paid via qualified payroll agents.

MEPs will be still entirely free in their choice of assistants, although close family members can no longer be employed – there is a transition period for those who were already in post during the previous term.