

### **Strengthening transparency and integrity in the EU institutions by setting up an independent EU ethics body**

**Rapporteur: Daniel Freund (Greens/EFA)**



JURI and AFCO committee members will hold an exchange of views on two studies requested in the preparation of the AFCO report on a common EU Ethics body.

The proposal to set up such a body was one of the flagship proposals of the political guidelines of the new Commission president, Mrs Von der Leyen.

This report, prepared by the AFCO committee in association with JURI, aims to explore the avenues and scope for such body to regulate the ethical standards for public office holders in all EU institutions.

The first of the two studies being presented looks at best practices on conflict of interest policies across the EU and draws conclusions on which of such practices could be introduced at the EU level. The second study, building on sets of examples of countries with advanced regulation of ethical standards of public office holders, aims to mainly analyse the scope of activities, which such a body should carry, and provide an analysis of legal options to set up such structure at the EU level.

### INTRODUCTORY WORDS BY THE CHAIR

Dear Readers,

I am happy to present the 20th issue of AFCO Newsletter, a tool prepared by the Secretariat to keep you informed of AFCO activities and to increase awareness of the current institutional challenges facing the European Union.



Together, we continue to face the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. This includes having to regularly adapt our working methods. In this regard, our AFCO committee meeting on 19 November will be held exclusively via videoconference. This is in line with the precautionary measures taken by the European Parliament to contain the spread of the pandemic whilst safeguarding Parliament's core activities.

During our next meeting, we will concentrate on matters related to the very important financial package for the next years that the European institutions have been discussing: we will vote on the opinion on the regulation laying down the multiannual financial framework (MFF) for 2021 to 2027 and for which I am rapporteur; and we will start the discussion on the draft report by Esteban González Pons on the proposal for an Interinstitutional Agreement on budgetary discipline, cooperation in budgetary matters, and sound financial management that accompanies the regulation on the MFF.

We will also be having a first discussion on the draft opinion, on the discharge for the 2019 Council and European Council budget which I will present as rapporteur.

Before that, in the first part of our meeting, together with colleagues from the Committee on Legal Affairs, we will be discussing two studies commanded by the Policy Department on Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs on the theme of enhancing democracy and transparency in the EU, which will serve as an input for the report on the setting up of an EU ethics body that Daniel Freund is preparing.

**Antonio Tajani, Chair**

## **Parliament's Right of Initiative**

***Rapporteur: Paulo Rangel (EPP)***

AFCO will draft an initiative report on Parliament's right of initiative.

During Thursday's meeting, a presentation of a study commissioned by the Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, at the request of AFCO, on "The European Parliament's right of initiative" by Dr. Andreas MAURER, Professor for Political Science and European Integration Studies, University of Innsbruck (Austria) will take place, followed by an exchange of views with Members.

The study provides, inter alia, for a comprehensive analysis of non-legislative and legislative own-initiative reports. Building on the empirical evidence of Parliament's practice since 1993, it discusses means and ways for pragmatic reform and Treaty revision.

The Committee on Legal Affairs is associated to this report under Rule 57.

## **2019 discharge: General budget of the EU - Council and European Council**

***Rapporteur for the opinion: Antonio Tajani (EPP)***



There is a longstanding difference of views between the Council and Parliament about Parliament's practice of granting discharge to all EU institutions and bodies separately.

A lack of cooperation from the Council in the discharge procedure has resulted in Parliament's refusal to grant discharge to the Secretary-General of the Council for more than 10 years. Parliament's Committee on Budgetary Control has been mandated by Parliament's Conference of Presidents to reopen negotiations with the Council on cooperation during the annual discharge procedure but to date these negotiations have not yet resumed.

During the AFCO committee meeting, there will be a presentation of the draft opinion, which examines the state of play on this issue.

## **Interinstitutional Agreement on budgetary discipline, cooperation in budgetary matters, and sound financial management**

***Rapporteur: Esteban González Pons (EPP)***



On 2 May 2018 the Commission presented its proposals for a new multiannual financial framework (MFF) for the years 2021 to 2027.

The proposal for a new Council Regulation laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2021 to 2027 was accompanied by a proposal for a Council decision on the system of Own Resources of the EU, as well as a proposal for an Interinstitutional Agreement between the Parliament, the Council, and the Commission on budgetary discipline, cooperation in budgetary matters, and sound financial management. The package also included a proposal for a Regulation of the Parliament and of the Council on the protection of the Union's budget in the case of generalised deficiencies as regards the rule of law in the Member States

As part of the EU's response to the COVID-19 crisis, on 27 May 2020 the Commission proposed a European Recovery Plan (Next Generation EU), including a new Recovery and Resilience Facility, and amended its MFF and Own Resources proposals, the draft IIA and several other MFF related proposals.

On 10 November a political agreement between the Parliament and Council delegations was reached on the MFF package, including on the Interinstitutional Agreement, as well as on new own resources, including a roadmap for the introduction of new own resources.

Under Rule 148(1) of Parliament's Rules of Procedure, AFCO is the competent committee to give a

recommendation to Plenary as to the conclusion of the of the new Interinstitutional Agreement.

During the committee meeting, Members will exchange views on AFCO's draft report on the new Interinstitutional Agreement.

\*\*\*\*Votes\*\*\*\*

### **Council regulation laying down the multiannual financial framework for the years 2021 to 2027**

**Rapporteur for the opinion: Antonio Tajani (EPP)**

*(Responsible committee: BUDG, Rapporteur: Jan Olbrycht (EPP) and Margarida Marques (S&D))*



On 10 November 2020 the European Parliament, the Council, and the Commission reached a political agreement on the Multiannual Financial Framework for the years 2021-2027, the Own Resources and the Recovery Instrument. The agreement will be subject to a vote in the Committee on Budgets, as the committee responsible, followed by a vote in plenary.

AFCO contributes to the BUDG Report on the regulation on the MFF 2021-2027 by providing an opinion in a form of a letter from the Chair containing an assessment of the institutional aspects of the deal reached. The AFCO opinion also points to the further enhancements of the institutional architecture with regard to the MFF procedure deemed necessary, and which could be reflected upon during the Conference on the Future of Europe.

### **MEETING DOCUMENTS**

In light of the European Parliament's paperless project, please bear in mind that no paper dossiers will be available in the meeting room. Instead, meeting documents will be made available on the following **public** and **EP internal** websites.

### **MEETING DATE AND VENUE**

Thursday 19 November 2020, 13.45 – 15.45 and 16.45 – 18.45

Room: Altiero Spinelli (1G-3), Brussels (*and with remote participation of AFCO Members*)

### **MEETING LANGUAGES AVAILABLE**

FR DE IT NL EN ES PT FI RO

### **NEXT MEETING**

2 & 3 December, Brussels

### **FURTHER INFORMATION**



[AFCO website](#)



[@EPInstitutional](#)

### **CONTACT THE EDITOR**

European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies of the Union, Secretariat of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs



+ 32 2 28 43676



[AFCO mailbox](#)

### **LEGAL DISCLAIMER**

The items contained herein are drafted by the Secretariat of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs and are provided for general information purposes only. The opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of the European Parliament. The AFCO Newsletter may contain links to websites that are created and maintained by other organisations. The AFCO Secretariat does not necessarily endorse the views expressed on these websites.