



TEXTS ADOPTED

P9_TA(2023)0292

Recommendations for reform of the European Parliament's rules on transparency, integrity, accountability and anti-corruption

European Parliament resolution of 13 July 2023 on recommendations for reform of European Parliament's rules on transparency, integrity, accountability and anti-corruption (2023/2034(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its resolution of 9 June 2016 for an open, efficient and independent European Union administration¹ and its resolution of 15 January 2013 with recommendations to the Commission on a Law of Administrative Procedure of the European Union²,
- having regard to its resolution of 14 September 2017 on transparency, accountability and integrity in the EU institutions³,
- having regard to its resolution of 9 March 2022 on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation⁴,
- having regard to its resolution of 15 December 2022 on suspicions of corruption from Qatar and the broader need for transparency and accountability in the European institutions⁵,
- having regard to the measures for strengthening integrity, independence and accountability adopted by its Conference of Presidents on 8 February 2023,
- having regard to its decision of 14 February 2023 amending the decision of 10 March 2022 on setting up a special committee on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation (INGE 2), and adjusting its title and responsibilities⁶,
- having regard to its resolution of 16 February 2023 on the establishment of an

¹ OJ C 86, 6.3.2018, p. 126.

² OJ C 440, 30.12.2015, p. 17.

³ OJ C 337, 20.9.2018, p. 120.

⁴ OJ C 347, 9.9.2022, p. 61.

⁵ OJ C 177, 17.5.2023, p. 109.

⁶ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2023)0030.

independent EU ethics body¹,

- having regard to its resolution of 16 February 2023 on following up on measures requested by Parliament to strengthen the integrity of the European institutions²,
 - having regard to Regulation No 31 (EEC), 11 (EAEC) laying down the Staff Regulations of Officials and the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community³,
 - having regard to the Decision of the European Parliament of 28 September 2005 adopting the Statute for Members of the European Parliament (2005/684/EC, Euratom)⁴,
 - having regard to Rules 54 and 207 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the Bureau Decision of 14 June 2023 on new rules governing the participation of interest representatives in events held on Parliament's premises,
 - having regard to the report of the Special Committee on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation, and the strengthening of integrity, transparency and accountability in the European Parliament (ING2) (A9-0215/2023),
- A. whereas ongoing investigations led by the Belgian authorities have uncovered suspicions of an extremely worrying system of corruption, money laundering and participation in a criminal organisation involving, to date, three sitting Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and one former MEP as well as one accredited parliamentary assistant (APA); whereas these suspicions relate to influence from Qatar and Morocco; whereas there are allegations that other states, such as Mauritania, may also be involved;
- B. whereas citizens' trust in the integrity and independence of European institutions is the foundation of the European political system, which is particularly vulnerable in the run-up to elections; whereas if foreign actors undermine citizens' trust in EU institutions, it can affect the democratic functioning of the EU; whereas corruption has significant financial consequences and constitutes a serious threat to democracy, the rule of law and public investment;
- C. whereas interference attempts are a widespread phenomenon that must be countered as vigorously as possible; whereas the EU institutions must strive for transparency, accountability and integrity in order to bolster the resilience of EU democracy;
- D. whereas the right to good administration covers the right of every person to have their affairs handled impartially, fairly and within a reasonable time by the EU institutions; whereas the institutions, bodies, offices and agencies of the Union must have the support of an open, efficient and independent European administration in carrying out

¹ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2023)0055.

² Texts adopted, P9_TA(2023)0054.

³ OJ P 45, 14.6.1962, p. 1385.

⁴ OJ L 262, 7.10.2005, p. 1.

their work;

- E. whereas MEPs must act solely in the public interest and conduct their work with integrity, openness, diligence, honesty, accountability and respect for Parliament's reputation, and without any undue influence from interest representatives; whereas MEPs must be independent and exercise their voting rights freely;
- F. whereas Parliament reacted swiftly to the suspicions of corruption involving several MEPs and staff members, including by cooperating fully with the Belgian authorities; whereas the magnitude of the scandal has highlighted numerous loopholes in Parliament's integrity and transparency rules and their enforcement; whereas much ambition is required to swiftly introduce significant reforms to Parliament's internal procedures and working methods and to push the EU institutions to implement a much more stringent regulatory framework;
- G. whereas the Code of Conduct for MEPs with respect to financial interests and conflicts of interest is monitored by an Advisory Committee on the Conduct of Members composed of five MEPs; whereas the working methods and mandate of the Advisory Committee have proved to be insufficient; whereas no financial penalty has ever been imposed for a breach of the Code of Conduct for MEPs, despite at least 26 breaches having been documented in the annual reports of the Advisory Committee on the Conduct of Members; whereas the Conference of Presidents has adopted guidelines for Members of the European Parliament on interactions with representatives of third countries;
- H. whereas the suspicions of corruption linked to Qatar and Morocco go beyond Parliament and also involve other EU institutions, as well as national politicians and influential voices in some Member States, such as researchers;
- I. whereas countries such as Qatar, Morocco, China, Russia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Serbia and Türkiye have invested heavily in lobbying efforts in Brussels; whereas certain extremist organisations from Qatar and Türkiye have requested European funds;
- J. whereas the UAE has been suspected of seeking to influence European decision-makers; whereas money originating in the UAE has been lent to a national political party on at least one occasion;
- K. whereas some foreign states have looked for unconventional ways to interfere in the EU's affairs by using the newest methods made possible by contemporary technological developments, as well as resorting to economic and energy coercion and illegal financing;
- L. whereas elite capture by foreign interests is facilitated by unrestricted 'revolving doors' from European institutions to autocratic countries, with a high risk of harmful interference against the interests and values of the EU; whereas measures to reduce elite capture are insufficient and do not prevent former MEPs or former senior civil servants from working for governments or entities from high-risk countries;
- M. whereas interference with EU and national institutions has happened for many years but the scale, intensity and potential danger of this interference increased vastly in the

months before and during Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine; whereas according to the European External Action Service (EEAS), Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine dominates observed foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI) activities;

- N. whereas Russia's and China's diplomatic channels regularly serve as enablers and multipliers of FIMI operations deployed across wide range of topics; whereas Russia systematically works on undermining and dividing international support for Ukraine and on sowing doubt about who is the aggressor by spreading lies about its war of aggression;
- O. whereas, in its resolution of 9 March 2022, Parliament identified Russia and China as the primary sources of foreign interference in Europe; whereas Russia seeks out contact with political parties, figures and movements in order to use them as players within the EU institutions and in national discourse with a view to legitimising its positions and proxy governments, lobbying for sanctions relief, mitigating the consequences of its international isolation and eroding the idea of truth and objective reality; whereas Kremlin-backed groups launched a cyberattack on Parliament's website following the adoption of a resolution recognising Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism¹;
- P. whereas several political parties represented in Parliament have sought financial support from entities outside Europe, including from Russia; whereas according to the US intelligence review, Russia has secretly funnelled hundreds of millions euros to foreign political parties and candidates in more than two dozen countries since 2014 in an attempt to shape political events beyond its borders; whereas Kremlin-linked forces have also used shell companies, think tanks and other means to influence political events; whereas Russian political financing was sometimes overseen by Russian government officials and legislators and was executed by government bodies; whereas Russia has used cryptocurrency, cash and gifts to influence political events in other countries;
- Q. whereas far-right parties from Austria, France and Italy have signed cooperation agreements with President Putin's United Russia party and face media allegations of being willing to accept political funding from Russia; whereas other European far-right parties in countries such as Germany, Hungary and the UK reportedly also have close contact with the Kremlin and have worked as bogus 'election observers' in Kremlin-controlled elections, for example in the Russian-occupied Donetsk and Luhansk regions in eastern Ukraine, in order to monitor and legitimise Russian-sponsored elections;
- R. whereas findings about the close and regular contact between Russian officials and representatives of a group of Catalan secessionists in Spain, as well as between Russian officials and the largest private donor for the Brexit 'Vote Leave' campaign, require in-depth investigation; whereas such activities are part of Russia's wider strategy to use each and every opportunity to manipulate discourse in order to promote destabilisation;
- S. whereas there are still staff members at Parliament with known links to the Russian authorities; whereas such a situation creates a blatant risk of malign foreign interference; whereas the daughter of a member of Putin's inner circle worked in

¹ European Parliament resolution of 23 November 2022 on recognising the Russian Federation as a state sponsor of terrorism (OJ C 167, 11.5.2023, p. 18).

Parliament as an MEP's intern;

- T. whereas Azerbaijan has conducted large-scale influence operations, involving strong suspicions of corruption, against members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe; whereas Azerbaijan has managed to avert probes into its elections and whitewash its human rights record;
- U. whereas Iran's Mujahideen, an organisation Human Rights Watch has accused of intimidating, torturing and sometimes murdering members of the Iranian diaspora, has been using aggressive and shady practices to meet MEPs, including by hiding their real affiliation; whereas MEPs have been included by this organisation as co-signatories of letters they had not co-signed or named as co-hosts of conferences they never endorsed; whereas they were registered using over 45 different pseudonyms, such as 'MEK', 'NCRI', 'ISJ', 'APA', in order to mislead MEPs and the Transparency Register;
- V. whereas the ability of interest representatives to share their views with decision-makers in Parliament by way of discussion is a vital part of European democracy; whereas, however, inappropriate means of influencing, bribery and other criminal offences are unacceptable; whereas some organisations focusing on general policy issues and lobbying within Parliament receive funding from outside the EU, including from Russia and from US-based far-right groups, and intend to influence the European way of life and democratic processes; whereas corruption of public representatives undermines democratic principles and should be met with zero tolerance;
- W. whereas all EU institutions maintaining relations with non-EU countries and conducting the EU's foreign policy need to allocate further resources and step up their efforts to fight foreign interference in democratic processes in EU partner countries, including by strengthening strategic communication;
- X. whereas it is necessary to enhance cooperation between the European institutions and the Member States in which they are located in the fight against interference, including corruption; whereas these Member States must adopt appropriate legislation to tackle these phenomena; whereas, in this context, cooperation between the intelligence services, the police and the judiciary is essential and must be strengthened;
- Y. whereas ethics standards already exist within the EU institutions, but are very fragmented and rely solely on a self-regulatory approach; whereas the creation of an independent ethics body could contribute to increasing trust in the EU institutions and their democratic legitimacy; whereas the EU institutions' internal monitoring and alert mechanisms did not detect the corruption and foreign interference;
- Z. whereas the EU Transparency Register was strengthened following the Interinstitutional Agreement of 20 May 2021¹, which set high standards of transparent and ethical interest representation in the EU; whereas the register, while still not formally mandatory, allows for many meetings to remain non-transparent and was found to still contain numerous inaccurate entries; whereas the register serves to increase the transparency of foreign influence but cannot deter foreign interference; whereas not all paid outside

¹ Interinstitutional Agreement of 20 May 2021 between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on a mandatory transparency register (OJ L 207, 11.6.2021, p. 1).

activities lead to conflicts of interest; whereas the measures recently introduced by the Interinstitutional Agreement on the Transparency Register require stronger ambition by Parliament in ensuring proper implementation, enforcement and oversight of all transparency standards; whereas the register's scope does not include former MEPs or representatives of non-EU states; whereas the register will not be subject to a review until July 2025 at the latest;

- AA. whereas mandatory disclosure of conflicts of interest could be a potential tool for strengthening Parliament's integrity;
- AB. whereas the use of targeted surveillance technology, in particular by repressive governments worldwide, to track political opponents or monitor regime critics, is on the rise; whereas typically vulnerable groups, such as human rights defenders, civil society activists, journalists and political opponents, are among the main targets, including within the EU; whereas the EU toolkit needs to be strengthened and better tailored to the challenges that global spyware and surveillance tools pose to EU institutions and individuals;
- AC. whereas work of the Special Committee on Foreign Interference in all Democratic Processes in the European Union, including Disinformation (INGE 1) and its successor, the Special Committee on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation, and the strengthening of integrity, transparency and accountability in the European Parliament (INGE 2), has brought to light actors who try to interfere in European affairs and revealed the strategies they use; whereas both Special Committees have made significant and comprehensive proposals on how to deal with malign interference; whereas more clarity is needed regarding foreign interference, be it by foreign officials or interest representatives at EU level;
- AD. whereas strengthening the transparency requirements for interest representatives and entities, such as lobbying and consultancy agencies, foundations, NGOs or think tanks, could serve the purpose of tracing foreign interference; whereas the requirements should not stigmatise legitimate foreign funding;
- AE. whereas interest representatives, such as lobbying and consultancy agencies, foundations, NGOs and think tanks, must be subject to scrutiny, due diligence and transparency rules, in particular with regard to financing, with proportional criteria and non-cumbersome procedures, in particular for small entities and small NGOs;
- AF. whereas resolutions related to non-EU countries, including urgency resolutions under Rule 132 and own-initiative country-specific or region-specific reports, must be adopted in line with Parliament's guidelines and scope, should never be misused by anyone and should never be used for any reason other than the urgent need to protect the fundamental rights and freedoms of those facing an imminent threat in non-EU countries; whereas urgency resolutions must remain an essential tool of Parliament's human rights policy;
- AG. whereas sensitive votes on trade and cooperation agreements must be placed under particular scrutiny, as they have the potential to attract special attention from the counterparts in the negotiations;

Introduction

1. Denounces, in the strongest terms, the alleged attempts by Qatar and Morocco to influence MEPs, former MEPs and Parliament staff through acts of corruption, which constitute serious foreign interference in the EU's democratic processes; reiterates its deep shock at and condemnation of the alleged acts of corruption, money laundering and participation in a criminal organisation by three MEPs, one former MEP and one APA in exchange for influence over Parliament's decisions; states that it has zero tolerance for corruption in any shape and form; underlines that the suspected criminal behaviour and intentions of the MEPs and APA under investigation are not representative of Parliament as a whole, since a very large majority of MEPs comply with current rules and the measures in place to enforce them and are fully committed to serving on behalf of EU citizens;
2. Insists that the wide scope of the ongoing investigations requires Parliament and the other EU institutions to react with robust and immediate measures to fight in defence of democracy, transparency, integrity and accountability and against corruption; recalls that current efforts to further strengthen the current rules in order to ensure prevention and preparedness with a view to enhancing the transparency and accountability of Parliament and all EU institutions and fighting corruption are of the utmost importance for fostering citizens' trust and ensuring the proper functioning of democratic institutions and are testament to the seriousness of MEPs' commitment to protecting and defending European democracy;
3. Is committed to working at all levels to strengthen the rules and culture on integrity, transparency and accountability in Parliament and calls for stronger measures to address all potential conflicts of interest, including a thorough assessment of the implementation of such measures; notes that it is essential for the institutions to operate transparently and avoid any conflicts of interest in order to maintain the trust of citizens in the work of the institutions themselves and in the Union in general; considers it of the utmost importance to ensure that the transparency and accountability rules are fully implemented and further enhanced, including the Code of Conduct for MEPs;
4. Affirms the need for solidarity between the Member States and the EU institutions in order to be able to fight effectively against this type of activity; calls for Article 222 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) to be amended to address the problem of malign foreign interference; calls on the Member States to revise their legislation, where necessary, in order to more effectively address foreign interference, including in the democratic processes within the EU institutions;
5. Believes that rules addressing MEPs, former MEPs, political group staff, APAs and officials of Parliament and other European institutions should be inspired by the highest standards of transparency, integrity and accountability; insists that potential loopholes in the institutions' rules and procedures that allow unlawful behaviour need to be systematically identified and thoroughly closed by effective reforms and control capacities; highlights that some current mechanisms need to be reviewed with the aim of preventing conflicts of interest, enhancing transparency, and preventing, deterring and detecting foreign interference and corruption;
6. Calls for a rapid conclusion of the revision of the Code of Conduct for MEPs with a view to introducing rules on whistleblowers that are in step with the European standards set in the Whistleblower Directive; considers it essential to amend Article 3 of the Code

of Conduct for MEPs in order to clarify the rules on conflicts of interests and MEPs' obligations to resolve them; requests that Article 4 of the Code of Conduct for MEPs be amended in order to introduce additional requirements for information in Members' declarations of financial interests; reiterates its opinion that a declaration of assets by MEPs before and after their term of office would provide additional safeguards in the fight against corruption, following the good practices of many Member States; believes that asset declarations should be accessible only to the relevant authorities, without prejudice to national regulations;

7. Welcomes and fully supports the 14 points endorsed by Parliament's Conference of Presidents following a proposal by President Metsola to reform Parliament's rules and procedures; calls for these points to be translated into concrete actions as soon as possible; notes that these proposals are an important first step in Parliament's internal reform process; is committed to ensuring that ambitious internal reforms addressing MEPs will take into account the freedom of mandate set out in Article 2 of the Decision of the European Parliament of 28 September 2005 adopting the Statute for Members of the European Parliament; considers that this freedom of mandate must be balanced with the Union's obligations to 'observe the principle of the equality of its citizens, who shall receive equal attention from its institutions' and with the principles that 'every citizen shall have the right to participate in the democratic life of the Union', that 'decisions shall be taken as openly and as closely as possible to the citizen' and that 'the Union's institutions, bodies, offices and agencies shall conduct their work as openly as possible' (Article 9 and Article 10(3) of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and Article 15(1) TFEU);
8. Recalls that the EU institutions overall, as well as the Member States' institutions, are targets of foreign political interference, spying attempts and attempts at corruption, as highlighted by the work of the INGE 1 and INGE 2 committees; recalls that the current geopolitical context adds to, rather than replaces, pre-existing threats to European democracy; urges Parliament's administration and MEPs to be particularly vigilant and to combat any attempts to interfere in the run-up to the 2024 European elections;
9. Calls on the EEAS and EU delegations in non-EU countries to further strengthen their respective capacities to fight and counter disinformation and propaganda linked to influencing the EU's common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and Parliament's role in the CFSP; recalls that proactive strategic communication is key for countering and eliminating undue foreign influence in the EU; underlines, in this regard, the importance of strengthening interinstitutional relations and cooperation; points out that the EEAS and its delegations have considerable potential to also gather information regarding the EU's geopolitical objectives; welcomes, in this light, the regular EEAS briefings for MEPs, believes that there is still a lot of scope for improvement and asks that these briefings be conducted more frequently and in greater depth;

Reinforcing the security culture within Parliament in order to combat foreign interference more effectively

10. Highlights the need to reinforce the security culture within Parliament; recalls that Parliament, like all other European institutions, is a regular target of interference attempts as a result of the impact that its positions have on the wider world and on the conduct of the EU's external relations; calls, therefore, for mandatory, proper and

regular training on security, interference, ethical standards, compliance and integrity for all MEPs and their offices and for all Parliament staff, making them aware that they are potential targets of foreign state and non-state actors; notes that this training should include a digital security component;

11. Recommends appropriate security clearance for Parliament officials and political group staff, and evaluation of when security clearance is needed for APAs when dealing with foreign affairs, security and defence or trade issues, such as is in place at the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU; calls, therefore, for appropriate cooperation with national security services to ensure that such security clearances are processed swiftly; calls on national authorities to follow procedures and a common timeframe whenever they are requested to give security clearance to MEPs and Parliament staff, as well as for any security screening related to the EU institutions;
12. Calls for Parliament's services, political groups and MEPs' offices to explore options for performing open-source screening of trainees, APAs, political group staff, Parliament staff and external contractors for possible vulnerability to non-European influence, using clearly defined criteria, before they take up their duties, as well as, if necessary, during their employment; recalls that such verification should be standardised to check the claims made by applicants in their CVs;
13. Recalls that, to ensure the proper and safe functioning of Parliament, private contractors are hired to perform maintenance on its buildings, IT systems and cameras; calls for Parliament's administration to exclude any non-EU private or publicly owned companies, as well as any providers that have been flagged by any EU institution or Member State as a potential security risk, from such contracts if there is a reason to believe that they may expose Parliament to security risks or fail to protect personal data properly; calls, in this regard, for particular attention to be paid to companies owned by non-EU companies or states, such as Russia and China;
14. Calls for Parliament's services to put in place effective monitoring and surveillance systems to detect foreign interference while respecting MEP's freedom of mandate and to offer to both MEPs and staff the opportunity to have their electronic devices scanned for malicious surveillance tools;
15. Considers that access to Parliament buildings by visitors, including representatives of non-EU countries, lobbyists and NGOs, should be controlled more strictly; calls for its Secretary-General to swiftly submit new proposals in this regard; calls for restrictions on access for any representatives and lobbyists from non-EU countries and NGOs that abuse their privileged access;
16. Recalls that any visitors must be accompanied while on Parliament's premises unless they are in dedicated visitors' areas; calls for the strict enforcement of appropriate restrictive measures in the event of non-compliance, such as preventing a staff member or MEP's office that has been committed previous such violations from granting access to visitors for a limited period of time; commits to implementing the Bureau Decision to create an entry log, which complies with the EU data protection framework, for all persons aged 18 years old and above who visit Parliament, indicating information such as the date, time and purpose of the visit, including identification of the MEPs, MEPs' staff, group staff or administrative units they meet, their contact details and the person responsible for them during the visit and including the possibility that different MEPs'

offices may share responsibility for visitors; considers that these entry conditions should not apply to the staff of other EU institutions, bodies and agencies, or to journalists, who have a specific scheme for accessing Parliament; calls for a thorough evaluation of the issuance of family access cards; calls for a review of the criteria for issuance on the basis of relevant documents; calls for family access card holders over the age of 18 to be subject to the entry log process;

17. Welcomes the reform of the access rules for former MEPs and former staff, in particular the proposal for a new daily access badge to replace the current badges, and invites Parliament to consider withdrawing the previous access badge granted to former staff; expects an immediate review of Rule 123 of its Rules of Procedure, followed by an amendment to Article 6 of its Code of Conduct; considers that former MEPs should not have the right to grant entry to anyone else; considers that the same provision should apply to former staff;
18. Notes that foreign interference and other illegitimate influence has at times taken the form of offering well-paid positions to former MEPs; notes that the EU institutions should treat potential cases of ‘revolving doors’ more stringently in order to prevent conflicts of interest and avoid reputational damage; calls for the bolstering of safeguards against serious malign interference through ‘revolving doors’ by high-risk non-EU countries; calls for the issue of elite capture to be addressed in the Commission’s annual rule of law reports;
19. Recommends that EU institutions and agencies and other EU bodies proactively monitor the professional activities of their staff members in order to strengthen their internal procedures and checks on potential revolving-door situations, in the spirit of the European Court of Auditors’ 2021 recommendations¹;
20. States that continued investment is required in order to ensure that a robust security structure is in place within Parliament; calls, in this regard, for a full and in-depth audit of Parliament’s security measures by an independent body; highlights the need to increase investment in Parliament’s IT infrastructure; considers such efforts to be necessary to ensure Parliament’s resilience to foreign interference;
21. Underlines the need for a comprehensive check of all technology used in the institutions in order to exclude providers from autocratic states, in particular Russia and China;
22. Urges more action to ensure that Parliament’s name is not misused by external actors to create a false image of legitimacy, as has already happened with the fake EU magazine ‘EP Today’; calls for a reform of the rules that require MEPs to use Parliament’s logo when they organise an event on Parliament’s premises, as Parliament has no control over the content of such events and this practice may unintentionally give some legitimacy to dubious statements or guests;

Relations with non-EU countries and entities: official missions (including election observation missions), trips and friendship groups

23. Calls for the establishment and application of objective criteria to identify countries at

¹ As set out in the report of 27 October 2022 entitled ‘Annual report on EU agencies for the financial year 2021’.

risk of conducting foreign interference operations and that the following be assessed as part of these criteria: (a) the existence of a programme of intellectual property theft directed at the Union and its Member States, (b) the existence of legislation compelling national non-state actors to engage in intelligence activities, (c) the systematic violation of human rights, (d) the existence of a revisionist policy on the current international legal order, (e) the extraterritorial application of an authoritarian ideology, and (f) the detection of interference activities or conflicts of interest in the European institutions; calls for special monitoring by the EU Transparency Register of registered interest representatives from countries considered to be at risk on the basis of these objective criteria;

24. Calls on the Commission and the Council to work with Parliament, as a co-legislator, to enhance the toolbox of the Authority for European Political Parties and European Political Foundations (APPF) and enable the effective tracing of donations to the ultimate payer, thus preventing the rules on donations from being circumvented through the use of intermediaries; calls, in particular, for the APPF to be mandated to obtain information directly from donors and their banking institutions, and for the establishment of a system of push notifications, to be sent from the Financial Intelligence Units in the Member States to the APPF when suspicious transactions are identified;
25. Notes that the staff and resources of APPF should be increased with the aim of enhancing its scrutiny capacity and promoting cooperation with the Member States on flagging potential cases of illicit funding; recommends that the APPF should make use of the data provided by Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs) in advertisement libraries and, soon, a European registry for political advertisements, in order to detect illicit funding and influence campaigns;
26. Highlights the importance of promoting full transparency on the revenues for and spending on European Parliament election campaigns by national parties; calls, in this context, for the adoption of rules on political campaigning and political party financing, including from non-EU countries; believes that adequate public funding for political parties, limits on private funding and a ban on donations from non-EU countries are needed to limit the risk of foreign interference through political parties;
27. Stresses that missions to non-EU countries can be used as an opportunity to exert undue influence on MEPs; recalls that mandatory, dedicated security briefings focused on foreign interference risks, tailored to the destination country, should be given to MEPs before any missions; believes that such any preparatory documents and meetings for missions should also include reminders about integrity requirements; underlines the need to better protect MEPs and Parliament staff against cyberattacks and hacking when they travel on missions to non-EU countries;
28. Welcomes the adoption by the Conference of Presidents, on 13 April 2023, of guidelines on relations with representatives of certain non-EU countries, which in some cases restrict official contacts; considers, in this regard, that it is of utmost importance to ensure the implementation of the transparency measures laid down in these guidelines, in particular by keeping records of any contact with the representatives of non-EU countries; calls, however, for more general declarations in cases where the naming of individuals or organisations could put individuals' lives or safety at risk;

29. Underlines that the primary responsibility for appointing MEPs to roles and sending them on missions lies with Parliament's political groups; proposes strengthening the rules on official missions carried out on behalf of Parliament, in particular:
- (a) it should primarily be the chair of the official mission who has the privilege of speaking publicly on behalf of the whole of Parliament to defend the positions adopted by it, while always guaranteeing MEPs' right to speak in a personal capacity;
 - (b) during the mission, and particularly during official meetings with foreign representatives and possible interviews, other MEPs must consistently and routinely ensure that it is clearly stated and is made clear publicly that they are not speaking on behalf of Parliament if they express positions different to those adopted by Parliament at its most recent votes; MEPs not adhering to this rule should be called to order by the chair of the mission and, in the event of a serious violation or repeated violations of this rule, may be barred from participating in missions;
30. Recalls the importance of election observation missions in providing relevant information and issuing specific recommendations to make the electoral system more resilient and help counter foreign interference in electoral processes; believes that Parliament should bar unauthorised, unofficial election observation by individual MEPs; stresses that MEPs should only participate in election observation missions decided on and authorised by the Conference of Presidents; recalls the Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group procedure for 'cases of individual unofficial election observation by Members of the European Parliament' (adopted on 13 December 2018), which allows for the exclusion of MEPs from Parliament's official election observation delegations for the duration of the parliamentary term; urges Parliament's administration to adopt stricter sanctions, including substantial fines and other restrictive measures, against MEPs who participate in unofficial electoral missions, as well as those who, while participating in Parliament's authorised observation missions, do not strictly respect the applicable rules; believes that election observation missions should put additional focus on actual or attempted interference before the election day, in particular where this interference takes place online or on social media;
31. Insists that individual trips undertaken by MEPs are an integral part of their freedom of mandate; reiterates its call for mandatory transparency rules for trips by MEPs paid for by foreign countries and entities, with requirements on the details to be provided including, but not being limited to, the name of the paying agent, a list of expenditure and the reasons for the trip; recalls that such trips must not be considered official Parliament delegations and calls for the MEPs involved in such trips to avoid any confusion in this respect and for strict sanctions for the failure to do so; considers that missions undertaken by MEPs in their capacity as rapporteur can always be considered official; calls for measures to ensure that the cost of travel to non-EU countries related to the mandate are covered by Parliament;
32. Reiterates its call for stricter rules for trips by officials which are paid for by foreign countries and entities; believes that similar rules should be drawn up for trips made by APAs or political group staff;

33. Suggests limiting the threshold for gifts to MEPs to EUR 100; encourages more stringent monitoring of all invitations, gifts and trips received by MEPs and staff where these relate to non-EU countries;
34. Considers that for non-EU countries, Parliament must give absolute priority to the work of its official delegations for relations with these countries; recalls that any activity or meeting of any unofficial groupings of MEPs that could result in confusion with official Parliament activities should be banned; calls for a ban on friendship groups with non-EU countries for which official Parliament delegations already exist, while recognising that friendship groups should continue to exist, on a case-by-case basis, for activities related to certain non-sovereign territories, persecuted minorities or partners for which an official delegation does not exist; emphasises that non-EU countries should interact with Parliament through the Committee on Foreign Affairs, existing official Parliament delegations, other Committees and the Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group as required; underlines that certain exceptions should be contingent on, among other things, official declarations being filed in the transparency register for intergroups and other informal groups maintained by the Quaestors, these declarations featuring the names of all the MEPs and stakeholders involved, as well as details of all the meetings held; considers that friendship groups must publicly declare any financial assistance or support in kind they receive, including exact amounts of funds and assistance provided by third parties; considers, in this regard, that Rule 35 of its Rules of Procedure must be amended; insists that Rule 176 of its Rules of Procedure must be amended to allow breaches to be effectively sanctioned; underlines, in parallel, that Parliament and its Members must ensure that parliamentary delegations function in a satisfactory way, in particular by respecting Parliament's positions as adopted during its plenary sessions; calls, in this regard, for the urgent streamlining of parliamentary delegations, their role and the scope of their action, and for them to always act completely consistently with the other Parliament bodies involved in determining the European Union's external action;
35. Urges MEPs to be vigilant about certain entities that, under the pretence of dealing with general policy issues, are vectors of influence and undeclared interference by foreign countries;

Integrity of parliamentary work

36. Recalls the importance of urgency resolutions as part of Parliament's action to protect human rights around the globe; denounces any attempts at interfering with them; acknowledges that they must retain their urgency, but proposes that a suitable amount of time be allowed for their drafting in order to ensure due protection against external influence; reiterates that their scope should be strictly complied with; underlines that the strength and impact of Parliament's human rights urgency resolutions should not be undermined;
37. Believes that foreign interference or attempted foreign interference must not remain without consequences for the country responsible; intends to suspend any legislative or non-legislative proposal on cooperation with the state authorities of such a country for a period commensurate to the severity of the interference; intends, within the framework of the annual budgetary procedure, to suspend all funding from Union programmes to the state authorities of such a country, while preserving funding for civil society

organisations and independent media as well as for humanitarian assistance; believes that its Committee on Foreign Affairs should invite the Ambassador to the EU of such a country to appear in the Committee on Foreign Affairs for an exchange of views;

38. Recommends that resolutions voted on by Parliament be accompanied by an annex containing a list of persons or institutions met by rapporteurs and shadow rapporteurs, with the exception of individuals whose security would be put at risk if they were mentioned, whose identity will be communicated to and duly guarded by the body designated for that purpose; recommends, therefore, making it mandatory for MEPs who draft reports or opinions to attach a list to demonstrate the range of outside expertise and opinions that the rapporteur has received;
39. Considers that it should be made compulsory for all MEPs to publish all scheduled meetings with third parties (interest representatives); emphasises the need to make the disclosure process as easy and quick as possible, while maintaining the integrity of the procedure; considers that Rule 11 of its Rules of Procedure should be amended to include definitions of ‘scheduled meeting’ and ‘active role’; believes that the obligations under this rule should be extended to all MEPs; points out, however, that the system for declaring such meetings should be updated, in particular as it still does not take into account subcommittees; calls for Parliament delegations to also be included in the system; believes that similar rules should be adopted for meetings attended by Parliament officials, APAs and political group staff; regrets that some of the MEPs required to do so do not declare their meetings with interest representatives;
40. Calls for far stricter implementation, enforcement and supervision of adherence to the current provisions of the Interinstitutional Agreement on the Transparency Register within Parliament; calls for MEPs and their offices to be required to declare meetings with diplomatic representatives of non-EU countries as well as with representatives of interests covered by the scope of the EU Transparency Register, with exceptions being allowed in cases where the naming of individuals or organisations would put individuals’ lives or safety at risk; stresses that the declarations should be as clear and accessible to the public as possible; believes that sanctions should be applied for any failure submit such declarations;
41. Insists on the obligation to declare participation in any conference or event organised or funded by foreign entities, including foreign states, private companies, NGOs and think tanks;
42. Is concerned by the fact that some MEPs are members of political parties that have received financial support from non-EU entities, including from Russia, and that their political positions have clearly been influenced by this support;
43. Reiterates that MEPs, their staff and political group staff should critically evaluate and refrain from systematically tabling amendment proposals prewritten by third parties;
44. Calls for the opening of interinstitutional talks to review the Interinstitutional Agreement on the Transparency Register long before the deadline of July 2025; calls for a review of the Interinstitutional Agreement of 13 April 2016 on Better Law-Making¹ in order to assess how the principle of transparency and integrity can be included among

¹ OJ L 123, 12.5.2016, p. 1.

the common commitments and objectives of the legislative process;

45. Strongly insists on the need for transparency, by means of registration in the EU Transparency Register, regarding the funding received by interest representatives, such as NGOs, think tanks and consultancy services, that wish to be involved with Parliament, in particular when they request support or sponsorship from MEPs for organising meetings on Parliament's premises, when they are invited to hearings, exchanges of views or any other scheduled appearances, or when they participate in a study or research on behalf of Parliament; welcomes, in this regard, the proposal for stronger checks on interest representatives, such as the prerequisite of being listed in the Transparency Register in order to be able to speak at committee meetings; encourages the adoption of specific provisions for interest representatives whose activities do not fall within the scope of the Transparency Register, such as non-EU country representatives with diplomatic status; calls for particular attention to be paid to proportionality criteria and the need to avoid cumbersome procedures;
46. Calls for an assessment of whether current registrants in the EU Transparency Register have been subject to foreign influence and have effectively complied with the Code of Conduct; calls for the annual report on the functioning of the register to include a chapter on incidents related to the risk of foreign interference;
47. Insists that the EU Transparency Register must be strengthened by increasing its budget and its staff so that it is able to verify the information provided by applicants and registrants more thoroughly; calls for an extension of its scope to be considered, for additional obligations to be laid down for registrants and for more restrictive measures to address violations of the Code of Conduct;
48. Considers it relevant for Parliament to discuss ways of improving transparency and anti-corruption measures for interest representatives who seek to influence legislative proposals or resolutions, including by arranging meetings with MEPs, their offices or political group staff; highlights that this could include stricter measures on the registration of interest representatives in the Transparency Register;
49. Recalls that the Transparency Register (Annex II) requires that NGOs provide their main sources of funding by category, while this is not the case for commercial interest representatives or their intermediaries, who are merely required to provide an estimate of the annual cost of lobbying; calls for the comprehensive financial screening of all interest groups, NGOs and consultancies before they are listed in the Transparency Register, and for a review of all interest representatives currently registered; requests that these organisations also be transparent about the composition of their governing bodies and declare compliance with the relevant legal obligations, particularly financing and accounting obligations; calls for any consulting agencies wishing to register to be transparent about their client structure; requests that a clear legal definition of 'interest representatives' and 'NGO status' be drawn up, which would apply to all organisations wishing to be listed in the Transparency Register and become eligible to receive EU funding; underlines that NGOs that receive money from third parties that are not required to be listed in the Transparency Register must disclose the sources of their funding by providing the same information as all regular registrants; stresses that the measures requiring NGOs to disclose all funding sources must take into account the situation of NGOs operating in countries under authoritarian and illiberal regimes, in particular when the disclosure of such information could put them and their work at risk

because of the application of repressive legislation such as ‘foreign agents’ laws and similar;

50. Notes that as part of the recent corruption scandal, the work of two NGOs was misused to finance illegal activities and influence Parliament’s decision-making on behalf of third parties;
51. Calls for enhanced checks on, and scrutiny of, interest representatives and other relevant stakeholders who work closely with Parliament or other EU institutions, in order to identify irregularities, fraud or breaches of obligations, including activities counter to the EU’s values, as defined in Article 2 TEU, or breaches of obligations related to their registration in the Transparency Register; calls for contracts to be suspended or terminated, or for their duration to be reduced, and for funds to be recovered in the event that any such infringements occur;
52. Recalls that current EU measures against Russian TV channels should be fully implemented to counter Russian propaganda more effectively;
53. Is worried by the interference of Islamist organisations inspired by foreign states;
54. Calls for the urgent implementation of the INGE 1 report, which already recommended that the EU institutions reform the Transparency Register, including by introducing more stringent transparency rules, such as for trips offered by foreign countries and entities to officials of the EU institutions, by enhancing the transparency and accountability of friendship groups, by mapping foreign funding for EU-related lobbying and by ensuring an entry which allows for the identification of funding from foreign governments; calls on the Member States to harmonise laws on foreign interference and to ban foreign donations to political parties and foundations;
55. Restates its commitment to implementing a six-month cooling-off period for former MEPs; stresses that this period should start immediately following the end of their term of office; considers that compliance with this cooling-off period should be monitored by the future EU ethics body;
56. Calls for Parliament’s services to create a monitoring system and rules for revoking former MEPs’ access should they lobby Parliament on behalf of high-risk countries following their cooling-off period, use the knowledge acquired during their time as public officials against the interests of the Union and the public interest, or even participate in global influence or interference operations;
57. Believes that MEPs need to be more transparent about any paid side work they may do, applying revised and more precise rules regarding the disclosure of the amounts of side income earned, the position in which it is earned and the clients on whose behalf MEPs work for payment; reiterates its call for stricter rules for MEPs performing paid side work, with a special focus on restricting activities on behalf of organisations or individuals covered by the scope of the Transparency Register; commits to introducing a prohibition on MEPs performing paid side work for high-risk non-EU states or dependent entities during their term of office; reiterates its call for a ban on MEPs performing paid side work on behalf of organisations or entities covered by the scope of the Transparency Register in order to avoid potential conflicts of interest in the performance of their mandate; considers that the Statute for Members of the European

Parliament should be subject to legislative revision, with particular focus on side work; believes that Parliament needs to be more transparent about this matter; calls for MEPs' declarations on side work to be subject to institutional checks and supported by relevant documents, as is already the case in some Member States;

58. Calls for the enforcement of rules prohibiting any activities that undermine official Parliament activities, particularly if these activities involve interaction with non-EU countries; notes that MEPs are free to take up positions in organisations based outside the EU and falling outside the scope of the Transparency Register or to work for or on behalf of non-EU countries, subject to the exceptions mentioned elsewhere in this resolution, while insisting that MEPs must disclose the amount of side income earned, the position in which it is earned and the clients on whose behalf they work for payment, in line with relevant amendments to the Code of Conduct;
59. Supports the overhaul of its website with the aim of making the information available on it more easily accessible to the public; calls for a user-friendly system to be set up on its website which allows the text voted on and the voting results to be filtered by group and MEP for each roll-call vote; calls for the legislative footprint of proposed texts and amendments to be disclosed; recalls its record of transparency and its efforts to ensure that documents, irrespective of their medium, are easily accessible to all citizens and stresses that they should be made available in an open, user-friendly and machine-readable format;
60. Insists that all EU institutions participating in trilogues should make legislative documents directly accessible in accordance with Article 12(2) of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001¹, unless their disclosure would seriously undermine the decision-making process; highlights that in the recent judgment in Case T-163/21², the General Court concluded that access to legislative documents had to be as wide as possible; calls on the Council to fully comply with this judgment; calls for all EU institutions to fully comply with the judgment of the General Court in Case T-540/15³ with regard to access to trilogue documents;
61. Is of the opinion that the documents that are to be directly accessible through Parliament's public register should include preparatory legislative documents, such as political and technical trilogue documents, including all versions of the joint multi-column document referred to in the Code of Conduct for negotiating in the context of the ordinary legislative procedure;
62. Welcomes the decision to introduce compulsory training on whistleblowers for Parliament staff managers and APAs; calls for stronger action to enhance the protection of whistleblowers among staff members and APAs, in particular by amending Article 22c of Regulation No 31 (EEC), 11 (EAEC) ('EU Staff Regulations') to align it with the standards laid down in Directive (EU) 2019/1937 ('Whistleblower Directive') and

¹ Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 May 2001 regarding public access to European Parliament, Council and Commission documents (OJ L 145, 31.05.2001, p. 43).

² Judgment of the General Court of 25 January 2023, *De Capitani v Council*, T-163/21, ECLI:EU:T:2023:15.

³ Judgment of the General Court of 22 March 2018, *Emilio De Capitani v European Parliament*, T-540/15, ECLI:EU:T:2018:167.

by revising Parliament's Internal Rules Implementing Article 22c of the Staff Regulations accordingly;

63. Stresses that codifying the rules of good administration by setting out key aspects of the administrative procedure, such as notifications, the right to be heard and the right of every person to have access to their own file, would positively contribute to and strengthen the transparency, integrity and accountability of the EU institutions and make them less susceptible to corruption;

Cooperation with other EU and national institutions

64. Welcomes the Commission's announced package on the defence of democracy, including a directive, aimed at introducing common transparency and accountability standards for interest representation services directed or paid for from outside the EU, contributing to the proper functioning of the internal market and protecting the EU democratic sphere from covert outside interference; calls on the Commission, in this regard, to carry out a proper impact assessment, in line with the obligations laid down in the Interinstitutional Agreement of 13 April 2016 on Better Law-Making, before presenting new recommendations and legislative proposals;
65. Welcomes the Commission's announcement that it will propose, as part of the package on the defence of democracy, a directive on the transparency of interest representatives acting on behalf of non-EU countries, which would establish harmonised transparency requirements for the provision of services from outside the EU; welcomes, furthermore, the complementary recommendation on secure and resilient elections and the recommendation on increasing support for and engagement with civil society organisations; expects the proposal to ensure a level playing field for interest representation in the EU and to comply with international and human rights law, in particular regarding the exercise of civic freedoms;
66. Welcomes the Commission's planned anti-corruption package, including the proposal to update the EU rules on fighting corruption through criminal law;
67. Welcomes the Commission's proposal to establish a new sanctions regime to target serious acts of corruption worldwide;
68. Reiterates its call for the swift establishment of an independent EU ethics body and commits to concluding interinstitutional negotiations by the end of 2023; recalls that any such body must respect the separation of powers between the institutions; considers that the body's mandate should include scrutiny, on a case-by-case basis, of MEPs' and former MEPs' intentions to work for any non-EU government or any entity controlled by a non-EU government during their term of office or after the end of their term, and believes that this mandate should be advisory in nature; calls on MEPs to uphold Parliament's values and standards and not accept employment by authoritarian, non-democratic governments or related state-owned entities after the end of their term;
69. Regrets the Commission's delay in presenting its proposal and its lack of ambition for the establishment of an independent interinstitutional EU ethics body; calls for the institutions to promptly agree on the terms of this body's establishment in order to ensure more consistency on ethical obligations between the institutions' different rules of procedure and codes of conduct; recalls the need to clarify and clearly communicate

the rules applying to former MEPs engaging in lobbying activities falling under the Transparency Register; recalls the need to ensure the proper implementation of the standards of public office laid down in the Code of Conduct for MEPs and of other rules adopted by Parliament and its bodies by investigating breaches and proposing sanctions; insists that the ethics body must be established on a clear legal basis and should begin its work as soon as possible; stresses that the ethics body should be given appropriate investigative powers, including the ability to act on its own initiative, and the power to request administrative documents, while respecting the immunity of MEPs and their freedom of mandate and safeguarding the applicable procedural guarantees; is of the opinion that while it is open to broad participation, it will work with the Commission to ensure that the negotiations are not delayed by other institutions;

70. Underlines Parliament's intention to unilaterally ensure that MEPs have swift, easy and systematic access to advice on possible conflicts of interest from the Advisory Committee on the Conduct of Members; commits to reforming the Advisory Committee; calls, therefore, for the Code of Conduct for MEPs to be strengthened to ensure a more effective and transparent system for MEPs and for former MEPs working for outside interests, should MEPs be found not to be complying with rules and obligations; suggests that the Advisory Committee could also play a proactive role, including the ability to act on its own initiative; believes that the Advisory Committee should be able to deal with complaints directly;
71. Points to the relevant work of the Ombudsman in this regard and believes that additional cooperation between Parliament and the Ombudsman could be useful in the future;
72. Calls for the Member States and all the EU institutions to increase cooperation with the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust) and the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) and underlines the particular need to increase its own cooperation with these bodies; stresses that the EPPO's scope should be extended to the whole Union, which would facilitate its cooperation with other institutions and ensure better prosecution of cases in countries that do not currently participate in the EPPO;
73. Commits to introducing a mandatory declaration of absence of conflicts of interest for rapporteurs and shadow rapporteurs;
74. Reaffirms that the political decision on the conflicts of interest of Commissioners designate prior to their hearings remains a democratic and institutional competence of Parliament's Committee on Legal Affairs;
75. Calls on the Secretariat of the Transparency Register to ban any entities with direct or indirect relations with the Government of the Russian Federation, pursuant to the Council Decision of 3 June 2022 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine and the conduct of Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine; calls for further deliberations on an approach to be applied to entities linked with the People's Republic of China and other countries that conduct or seemingly aim to conduct malign foreign interference in European affairs; notes that the Conference of Presidents has decided that diplomats and government representatives from China will not be invited to Parliament; calls for the EU Transparency Register to be amended to provide for sanctions whenever the registrant represents, whether

directly or as an intermediary, the interests of governments, dependent entities or companies in strategic sectors of countries with a reported record of interference in democratic processes in the EU;

76. Notes that the current guidelines for NGOs and other stakeholders not covered by the Transparency Register have proved to be insufficient; stresses the need for a thorough check to be conducted prior to registration in the Transparency Register in order to reveal all funding sources; notes that funding from EU funds must be traceable from the direct recipient to the final beneficiary when it is passed on in a chain; calls for the guidelines for registration in the Transparency Register to be revised to include a requirement to disclose all incoming and outgoing funds, including the transfer of funds from one NGO or stakeholder to another;
77. Calls for the conditions governing MEPs' exercise of parliamentary immunity to be harmonised between the different Member States; calls, in this respect, for a review of Protocol No 7 to the TEU and the TFEU on the privileges and immunities of the European Union;
78. Resolves to strengthen its dialogue and cooperation with the intelligence, judicial and law enforcement authorities of the three Member States in which it is located in order to ensure Parliament's security and integrity and protect it against attempted interference from non-EU countries; calls, to that end, on the security services of the Member States to systematically notify the competent European authorities and the security services of the Member States in which Parliament is located of any information they may obtain relating to foreign interference in democratic processes in the Union;
79. Calls for the EU institutions to work towards tighter internal regulations among the Member States regarding the use, servicing and procurement of spyware and surveillance tools and to assess the spyware and surveillance tools currently in use; notes that the EU should use existing regulatory measures to hold malign international operators in the commercial spyware and surveillance technologies industries legally accountable;
80. Insists that it must revise the list of sanctionable activities for MEPs on the basis of this report; calls for appropriate warnings and reminders to be put in place for MEPs who do not comply and for appropriate penalties to be imposed after a reasonable timeframe; notes, in particular, the need to revise Rule 176 of its Rules of Procedure to allow penalties to be imposed for offences other than disruption of the plenary session; takes the view that additional sanctions should be applied where an MEP is found guilty of intentionally committing a criminal offence in the performance of their duties;
81. Calls for the revision of Article 42c of the Staff Regulations on leave in the interests of the service, which allows for the non-transparent early retirement of some staff of the EU institutions;
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82. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign

Affairs and Security Policy and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.