

Opening: President Metsola on more integrity, independence and accountability



MEPs held a minute of silence to remember President Sassoli at the opening of 16-19 January session in Strasbourg © European Union
2022

President Metsola updated MEPs on measures being taken to increase Parliament's integrity, independence and accountability, at the opening of the session.

Here is President Metsola's full statement on the new measures:

"I also wanted to speak about the decisions needed on measures in this House to increase integrity, independence and accountability."

The European Parliament prides itself on its openness, its accessibility and its defence of legislating in the public eye. We are not in some imaginary ivory tower. The principle of 'openness builds trust' is one we hold dear and defend. And any abuse or misuse of the tools that we created for this purpose must be addressed strongly, systematically and with any potential weaknesses addressed.

The events of the past month have led to a need to re-build trust with the European citizens we represent. We must acknowledge this. And citizens, rightly, demand accountability and integrity. We will respond.

I promised you last month, that we will come back with a series of reforms.

With group leaders, we have agreed on a first step approach on a number of points that can go a long way. This is the beginning, not the end. We will start with measures that we can implement quickly while starting the process for longer-term reform. And consultations will continue across the board.

As a starting point, we will look at how we can implement a revolving door policy, at how we can ensure more transparency. Of how we can improve accountability and checks of interest representatives, of how we can better control who has access to our premises. We will ask for more transparency also when it comes to those representing the interests of third countries and from former members.

We will shine a brighter light on what we do as Members with more and clearer information being made available to the public. We will enforce rules that disallow any activities that could create confusion with official European Parliament Activities - particularly when it comes to interaction with third countries.

We will do more to ensure that the public has clear information on our financial declarations and we will ensure more training on whistleblowing and compliance. We will boost measures to boost the fight against corruption and on how we can push back against foreign interference.

We will strengthen our systems, address any shortcomings and be honest and open throughout this process.

And we will do all of this while protecting the freedom of our mandate as elected representatives. We will not hinder that - we will do the opposite and do so while highlighting the important, crucial, role played by MEPs in European decision-making and our role in making the lives of Europeans a little bit safer, a little bit fairer, a little bit more equal.

Our House is the embodiment of European parliamentary democracy and I need your help to ensure that the pillars holding it up are strengthened. We owe this to our citizens, to all those who came before and to all those who will come after."

The President also announced that the Belgian authorities have requested that the immunities of MEPs [Andrea Cozzolino](#) (S&D, IT) and [Marc Tarabella](#) (S&D, BE) be waived. This request will be referred to the Committee on Legal Affairs.

She also announced that on Wednesday 18 January, Parliament will hold an election for a new Vice-President to replace Eva Kailli.

Minute of silence for former President Sassoli

MEPs held a minute of silence in memory of President David Sassoli, who passed away one year ago, and for MEP Miroslav Číž (S&D, SL), who died on 29 December 2022.

Iran

On Iran, President Metsola repeated Parliament's call for the international community to respond forcefully to the regime. Those responsible for killings and executions must be held accountable, she added.

Ukraine

Following a series of indiscriminate strikes by Russia against Ukraine in the last few days, the President said that Europe will continue to show political, humanitarian, financial and military support for Ukraine. The €18 billion financial package that the Parliament voted for will begin to be disbursed this week and the Generators of Hope campaign is in full swing with towns, villages, cities all doing their best to help power Ukraine, she concluded.

Changes to the agenda

Tuesday

A Commission statement on New development in allegations of corruption and foreign interference, including those related to Morocco, and the need to increase transparency, integrity and accountability in the European institutions is added as the second point in the afternoon after the Question time to the Commission. As a consequence, the sitting will be extended until 23:00.

A Commission statement on The EU's response to the appalling attack against civilians in Dnipro: strengthening sanctions against the Putin regime and military support to Ukraine is added as the fifth point in the afternoon.

Wednesday

Council and Commission statements on Criminalisation of humanitarian assistance, including search and rescue are added as the sixth item. As a consequence, the sitting is extended until 23:00.

Information concerning the distribution of votes is available under the section "[Priority information](#)".

Request by the Employment and Social Affairs Committee to start negotiations with Council and Commission on the Platform Workers Directive

Decisions by committees to enter into inter-institutional negotiations ([Rule 71](#)) are published [on the plenary website](#).

If no request for a vote in Parliament on the decision to enter into negotiations is made by Tuesday 12.00 midnight, the committees may start negotiations.

Further information

[Video recording of the opening \(click on 16.01.2023\)](#)

[EbS+ \(16.01.2023\)](#)

[Final draft agenda](#)

[Briefing Newsletter](#)

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[Video recording of debate on suspicions of corruption from Qatar and the broader need for transparency and accountability in the European institutions, 13 December 2022](#)

[Press release on corruption scandal: MEPs insist on reforms for transparency and accountability, 15 December 2022](#)

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