
MEPs propose reforms to protect democratic institutions and Parliament's integrity

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- Need for stronger culture of security, with highest level of transparency, integrity and accountability
 - Reforms should leave room for democratic dialogue with civil society
 - More stringent treatment of potential cases of 'revolving doors'
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The alleged attempts to influence MEPs unveiled loopholes in Parliament's internal rules, alongside other issues, says Special Committee on Foreign Interference.

Interference attempts are a “widespread phenomenon that must be countered as vigorously as possible”, warn MEPs, expressing their “deep shock and condemnation of the allegations of corruption, money laundering and participation in a criminal organisation” by three MEPs, one former MEP and one parliamentary assistant.

The committee has identified “numerous loopholes in Parliament's integrity and transparency rules” and calls for President Metsola's [14-point proposal](#) to reform Parliament's rules to be put into concrete actions as soon as possible.

Enhance whistleblower and clarify the rules on conflicts of interest

In a report adopted on Thursday by the Special Committee on Foreign Interference with 25 votes for, one against and five abstentions, MEPs call for a rapid revision of the Members' code of conduct, including on sanctions. It should protect whistleblowers more effectively and clarify rules on conflicts of interest. They also ask for asset declarations to be introduced.

Current rules for disclosing the amount of side income earned, the description of the position an MEP holds and the clients on whose behalf Members work for payment need to be improved. MEPs also propose to introduce a ban on Members holding paid side jobs for high-risk third

states or dependent entities.

Although the dialogue between interest group representatives and decision-makers remains a “vital part of European democracy”, inappropriate means of influencing, bribery and other criminal offences are unacceptable, they stress.

Making it harder for high-risk foreign actors to recruit former MEPs

MEPs demand that compliance with the six-month cooling-off period for former MEPs should be monitored by the new [EU ethics body](#). Parliament should introduce a monitoring system and rules for revoking access for former MEPs who lobby on behalf of high-risk countries beyond the cooling-off period.

Strengthened security culture as protection against foreign interference

MEPs note that countries such as “Qatar, Morocco, but also China, Russia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Serbia and Turkey have invested heavily in lobbying efforts in Brussels “ and say that foreign interference “must not remain without consequences for the country concerned”. Any legislative or non-legislative proposal on cooperation with these state authorities, including EU funding, should be suspended, while preserving funds for civil society organisations and independent media as well as humanitarian assistance.

Finally, the [Transparency Register](#)’s scope and monitoring should expand, while all MEPs should have to declare scheduled meetings with interest representatives, including those with diplomatic representatives from non-EU countries. Parliament’s reports should list relevant meetings, excluding those with persons whose security may be at risk.

Quotes

The co-rapporteur [Vladimír Bilčík](#) (EPP, Slovakia) said: “Parliament must remain an open institution, while defending itself against corruption and malign foreign interference. To achieve this, we propose that staff dealing with sensitive issues should get security clearance, all meetings with third parties should be publicly disclosed and political relations with third countries should be conducted only via established parliamentary channels.”

The co-rapporteur [Nathalie Loiseau](#) (Renew, France) said: “After the shock of Qatargate, and at a time when Russia, China and other countries are trying to penetrate the Parliament to influence us, the special committee on foreign interference has just adopted strong proposals to impose greater transparency on Parliament and ensure better protection of our work against enemies of European democracy.”

A press conference with the rapporteurs is scheduled for Thursday 1 June, at 12.30 CEST. Find out more [here](#).

Next steps

The final vote on the report is expected to take place during the July plenary session.

Background

The [Special Committee on foreign interference, transparency and accountability](#) in the European Parliament was tasked with writing this report, following the plenary [resolution of 15 December 2022](#). It complements the measures taken by and being prepared in other EP bodies.

Further information

[Special Committee on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation \(INGE 2\)](#)

[Procedure file](#)


[EP in-depth analysis - "Legal loopholes and the risk of foreign interference" \(05.02.2023\)](#)

[Free photos, video and audio material](#)


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