EP Rules of Procedure, Rule 99 and Annex XVI b: approval of the Commission

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The Committee on Constitutional Affairs unanimously adopted the report by Andrew **DUFF** (ALDE, UK) on the amendment of Parliament's Rules of Procedure with respect to the approval of the Commission.

The purpose of the main technical amendment to the Parliament's Rule of Procedure is to provide a detailed proposal on the hearings, evaluations and votes with respect to the approval of the European Commission. The changes to the existing Rules of Procedure, which codify the current practice, will enter into force on the first day of the next part-session.

It is also provided that the committee shall invite the Commissioner-designate to make a statement and answer questions. The hearings shall be organised in such a way as to enable Commissioners-designate to disclose to Parliament all relevant information. Provisions relating to the organisation of the hearings shall be laid down in an annex to the Rules of Procedure.

This annex comprises the guidelines for the approval of the Commission, such as the principles, criteria and arrangements which shall apply for making the entire college of the Commission subject to Parliament's vote of consent. The guidelines also set out the voting rules used by the Parliament to appoint the President-elect and the Commissioners-designate.

Hearings: the Parliament shall evaluate Commissioners-designate on the basis of their general competence, European commitment and personal independence. Parliament shall have particular regard to gender balance. It may express itself on the allocation of portfolio responsibilities by the President-elect. It shall expect full disclosure of information relating to their financial interests. The conduct of the hearings shall aim to develop a pluralistic political dialogue between the Commissioners-designate and the Members.

Change in the composition of the Commission during its term: in the event of a substantial portfolio change during the Commission's term of office, the filling of a vacancy, or the appointment of a new Commissioner following the accession of a new Member State, the Commissioners concerned shall be invited to appear before the committees responsible for the areas of responsibility.

Statements of evaluation: MEPs propose a series of specific rules on the evaluation phase and the debate in plenary which follows the appointment of the college of Commissioners. The President-elect of the Commission shall present the whole college of Commissioners-designate and their programme at a sitting of Parliament which the whole Council shall be invited to attend. The presentation shall be followed by a debate in which any political group or at least 40 Members may table a motion for resolution. Following the vote on the motion for resolution, Parliament shall vote on whether or not to give its consent to the appointment, as a body, of the President-elect and Commissioners-designate.

It should be noted that an indexed video recording of the hearings shall be made available for the public record within 24 hours.