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

2007/2128(REG) - 08/07/2008 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 617 votes to 31, with 34 abstentions, a decision on amendment of its Rules of Procedure with respect to the approval of the Commission.

The report had been tabled for consideration in plenary by Andrew **DUFF** (ALDE, UK), on behalf of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs.

The amendments, which codify the existing practice, will enter into force on the first day of the next part-session.

The purpose of this essentially technical amendment is to provide a detailed proposal on the European Parliament's Rules of Procedure for hearings, evaluations and votes to approve or reject any new European Commission or in the event of a change in the composition of the college of the Commission.

It is also provided that each 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 (including their financial interests). Provisions relating to the organisation of the hearings shall be laid down in an annex to the Rules of Procedure. This annex comprises all the guidelines for the approval of the Commission, such as the principles, criteria and arrangements governing the procedure by which the Parliament approves the entire college of the Commission. The guidelines also set out the voting rules, without which no Commissioner can take office.

- **Hearings on the competence, commitment and independence of the Commissioner-designate**: the Parliament shall evaluate Commissioners-designate on the basis of their general competence, European commitment and personal independence. It shall assess knowledge of their prospective portfolio and their communication skills. The Parliament shall have particular regard to gender balance and may express itself on the allocation of portfolio responsibilities. The new Rules also enable candidates to enjoy an equal and fair opportunity to present their opinions. In this context, the Parliament sets out the rules to be observed by MEPs for public hearings of Commissioners, whether before one or several committees;
- **Evaluation**: the Parliament also establishes a set of specific rules on the evaluation phase of Commissioners and the debate that follows the appointment of a college of the Commission. A video recording of the hearings shall be made available for the public record within twenty-four hours. The committees shall meet without delay after the hearing to evaluate the individual Commissioners-designate. The President-elect of the Commission shall present the whole college of Commissioners-designate at a sitting of Parliament to enable an exchange of views and a debate on a motion for resolution that may be tabled by a political group or at least forty Members. Following the vote on the motion for resolution, Parliament shall vote on whether or not to give its consent to the appointment of the Commission;
- **Change in the composition of the college of Commissioners during its term of office**: in the event of a change in the composition of the college of Commissioners or a substantial portfolio change during its term of office, the new Commissioners-designate or those invited to take on another portfolio shall be subject to the same procedure. The only difference concerns the vote during the appointment of a single Commissioner (including in the event of a replacement): in this case, the vote shall be by secret ballot (instead of by roll call).