General review of the Rules of Procedure

2007/2124(REG) - 06/05/2009 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 522 votes to 101, with 51 abstentions, a decision on the general revision of Parliament's Rules of Procedure.

This decision completes the package of reforms begun two years ago when a working group on European Parliament reform was proposed by Parliament President Hans-Gert Pöttering. This group was established under the chairmanship of Dagmar Roth-Behrendt (PES, DE).

The first two packages, adopted in autumn 2007 and autumn 2008, related to the organisation of plenary sessions, the handling of EP reports, the operation of the legislative process and improvements in inter-institutional relations.

The changes approved include reforms to:

- allow the use of joint committee meetings for complex legislative dossiers that cross committee boundaries;
- make it mandatory for the Conference of Committee Chairs to give a recommendation to the Conference of Presidents on how to resolve any conflict of competences between committees;
- generally increase co-operation between committees, notably by enhancing the role of opinion-giving committees;
- formalise Parliament’s consultation with European civil society;
- clarify the role of “intergroups”, i.e. unofficial groupings formed on specific issues with Members from different political groups;
- modify existing rules on debates in plenary;
- introduce a motion to reject the Commission's proposal in first reading;
- formalise the negotiating procedure with other EU institutions (e.g. for “first reading” agreements);
- give the floor to Members who indicate, by raising a blue card, their wish to put a question to another Member, during that Member's speech in plenary.

MEPs also adopted by a large majority an amendment tabled by the EPP-ED and PES groups, according to which the oldest Member will no longer preside over the first session of the newly elected Parliament until a President is elected. According to the new provisions, it is the outgoing President to chair the first sitting. In the event that he or she is not re-elected, it would be up to an outgoing Vice-President in order of precedence or, failing him or her, the Member having held office for the longest period to hold the office until the new President is elected.