EP Rules of Procedure: general revision

2016/2114(REG) - 22/11/2016 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Constitutional Affairs adopted the report by Richard CORBETT (S&D, UK) on the general revision of Parliament's Rules of Procedure.

The proposed amendments have taken due account of the provisions of the Interinstitutional Agreement of 13 April 2016 on Better Law-Making.

The committee proposed that the European Parliament shall decide to amend its Rules of Procedure as shown below.

First reading agreements (new Section 3 - Rule 73 a (new)): these agreements shall be maintained but with **safeguards and greater transparency**. A committee can decide to start negotiations with the other institutions (though only once it has adopted its report) by an absolute majority, but such a decision must be **announced in plenary** and:

- if there is an objection by Groups or Members representing 1/10th of Parliament, then plenary must vote to confirm this;
- if there is no majority to confirm, the report will be put on the next plenary session with a deadline for amendments.

Second reading agreements (new rule 73a): in order to prepare the negotiations, it will be possible for a committee to adopt **guidelines**, which deal with any issues in the Council position not covered in Parliament's first reading position.

Applying the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law Making: it is proposed that the necessary changes to apply this agreement will be incorporated into the Rules of Procedure:

- possibility for the President to negotiate the annual interinstitutional programming agreement on **legislative programming** with Commission and Council;
- possibility for a Committee to agree to **accelerate a legislative procedure** if it has been identified as a priority in the annual interinstitutional programming agreement;
- obligation for the Commission to **respond to initiative requests by Parliament** within three months and if it fails to do so must appear before the relevant committee;
- obligation for **withdrawals of proposals** by the Commission to be discussed with the relevant European Parliament committee and then, failing agreement, the plenary;
- obligation for **changes to the legal base** of proposals to be preceded by inter-institutional discussion.

Gender equality/mainstreaming (Rule 38 a (new): it will be possible for the FEMM Committee to request a proposal to be referred to the FEMM Committee for an opinion, if there is a gender issue at stake.

Topical debates (Rule 153 a): at each part session **one or two 1-hour topical debates** on a matter of major interest to EU policy will now take place.

Transparency and accountability: the proposed amendments to the Rules of Procedure cover in particular the following issues:

- allowing rapporteurs to attach a "**legislative footprint**" to their reports;
- prohibiting Members from having **paid lobbying jobs**;
- a more detailed breakdown for Members' declarations of financial interest;
- verification that **declarations of financial interest** are kept up to date and accurate;
- former Members to inform the EP when they take up a new (lobbying) job;
- **removal of badges** for registered lobbyists who do not comply with rules;
- greater **transparency** on 1st reading agreements and **trilogue transparency**.

Various measures to improve efficiency: the proposed amendments are as follows:

- the **order of voting on legislation** is more clearly laid down;
- **question time** (Rule 129) will be changed so that, when it is used, a ping pong style gives the chance to ask Commissioners a question followed by a 30 second follow up question;
- the authorisation for each Members to submit a **maximum of 20 written questions** over a rolling period of three months;
- the limitation of **motions for resolution** to no more than one per month per member;
- the limitation of **roll call votes** in plenary;
- the abolishment of **written declarations**.

Thresholds: the report proposed to rationalise most of them into just three:

- **lower threshold**: one group or individual Members who together constitute one twentieth of Parliament;
- **middle threshold**: one or more groups or individual Members who together constitute one tenth of Parliament;
- **higher threshold**: one or more groups or individual Members who together constitute one fifth of Parliament.

A new requirement is proposed according to which any Member joining a Group has to **sign a statement of political affinity**.

Election of the Commission President by roll call vote instead of by secret ballot (Rule 117): when the European Council proposes a candidate for President of the Commission, the President shall request the candidate to make a statement and present his or her political guidelines to Parliament.

Conduct of MEPs (Rule 165 on sanctions and Rule 166 penalties):

- Members will now be sanctioned if they use defamatory, racist or xenophobic language or undertake actions to disrupt parliamentary activity;
- penalties for serious misbehaviour have been increased (up to 30 days daily allowance, doubled in case of repetition) and no longer being able to represent the European Parliament externally for up to a year.

Committee seats belonging to Groups (Rule 199):

- Members would no longer be formally appointed to committees by the plenary. Instead, the groups would appoint the Members, in function of the number of seats they are entitled to;
- that seats in committees to which a Member is appointed would stay with the group concerned if the Member leaves the group.

The committee called for:

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the deletion of Rule 106(4) from the Rules of Procedure as soon as the regulatory procedure with scrutiny has been removed from any existing legislation;

- **the review of the Code of Conduct** for negotiating in the context of the ordinary legislative procedure in order to bring it in line with Rules adopted as a result of this Decision;
- **the review of Rule 168a concerning the new definitions of thresholds**, as well as to review one year after the entry into force of that Rule the application of such thresholds to specific Rules.

Lastly, Members shall **adapt their declaration of financial interests** to reflect changes to Article 4 of Annex I to the Rules (Declaration of Members) at the latest six months after the date of entry into force of those changes.