EP Rules of procedure, rule 48: written declarations

1996/2208(REG) - 24/09/1997

The amendments proposed by the rapporteur seek to make it easier for individual Members to exercise their right to table a written declaration while at the same time tightening up the criteria for publication and openness of this procedure. Until 1989 MEPs made considerable use of the written declarations procedure although without sufficient safeguards concerning the arrangements for collecting signatures and the involvement of Members. The Bureau's decision of 7 July 1989, stipulating that written declarations could not be signed by more than one Member when being submitted, thus obliging successive co-signatories to add their own signatures in designated offices that were not easy to locate, has prevented any possible 'abuse' through overly drastic action which has in fact almost entirely ruled out the possibility of making use of Rule 48. Furthermore, the Bureau's interpretation of the existing Rule 48 does not seem to be entirely justified given that no other parliamentary text provides for a ceiling on the number of signatory Members and that elsewhere the Rules of Procedure allow for more than one Member to undertake a joint action without it being necessary to identify a first signatory in the chronological sense. With the aim of giving effect to the right to table written declarations and of restoring an interpretation of Rule 48 that is consistent with the rest of the Rules of Procedure, the rapporteur proposes to spell out the entitlement of Members to table texts with more than one initial signatory. At the same time, the proposed amendments seek to satisfy the requirement of greater formal rigour. The rapporteur is proposing not only a more practical location for the register of written declarations but also the opportunity for MEPs to add their own signatures directly to an official document of Parliament. The greater flexibility of this procedure would be offset by the publication of the list of signatories and by the fact that all Members would be given the necessary time to decide whether to sign a declaration even after the addition of the requirement of support from a majority of Parliament. This would be a means of restoring to Members full and open individual responsibility for deciding whether to sign a declaration under Rule 48.