

ZERO TOLERANCE FOR CORRUPTION

15-POINT PLAN TO PREVENT AND COMBAT CORRUPTION AND CORRUPTIVE POLITICAL INTERFERENCE

In the wake of the shocking Qatargate revelations, we, the Socialists and Democrats Group in the European Parliament, are determined to root out corruption in the European Institutions. We take a zero tolerance stance against corruption and corruptive political interference. Following our decision on 20 December 2022 to launch an internal S&D Inquiry, the S&D now sets out proposals for reform to make the European Parliament corruption-proof. Our **15 concrete proposals** aim to:

- ensure the current transparency and ethics rules are fully implemented, including the Code of Conduct for Members of the European Parliament
- close loopholes by strengthening existing measures and introducing firm new rules and new bodies
- create a culture of genuine transparency and accountability in the European Parliament.

The proposed measures and methods build on the resolution from 15 December 2022 “Suspicions of corruption from Qatar”, include both, short term and mid-term measures and goes beyond other reform proposals currently on the table. By improving accountability, boosting transparency, increasing information to the public and tightening controls, we are determined to prevent future criminal acts, curb the damaging influence of lobbyists and stop corruptive political interference.

We are fully committed to undertaking serious and concrete reforms in the European Parliament and in the EU Institutions to regain citizens’ trust and protect European democracy. The S&D Group, while awaiting the decision of the EP as whole, will proceed with the implementation of the measures as far as they can be implemented unilaterally.

WE PROPOSE:

Boosting Transparency

1. To **strengthen and enhance whistleblower protection** for staff and accredited parliamentary assistants, by urgently revising European Parliament Rules in order to immediately align them with the necessary protection provided in the Whistleblower Directive. At the same time, Article 22c of the Staff Regulations should be urgently revised, in order to align it with the standards of the Whistleblower Directive.
2. To urgently and immediately **set up an Ethics Body** with a scrutiny mandate for the EU institutions and agencies, with the necessary financial means and staff to fully carry out its tasks, before the end of the 2024 legislature. The Commission committed to this in 2019 and the European Parliament reminded the Commission of this obligation with a resolution in 2021. Until the Ethics Body can take on its role, it is imperative to reform, upgrade and strengthen the Parliament's Advisory Committee on the Code of Conduct for Members to ensure a **more effective and transparent system of stricter sanctions** against Members and former Members working for outside interests, if MEPs were found not complying with ethics, rules and regulations. Sanctions must include the option of financial penalties.
3. To **set up a Special Committee on Integrity, Transparency and Corruption** within the European Parliament to analyse internal proceedings particularly focusing **to political interference by lobbyists and third countries**, reporting to Plenary before summer 2023. An administrative taskforce, as recently proposed, is not enough.
4. To implement the current provisions of the **Transparency Register IIA** within the European Parliament in a much stricter way:
 - a) Ensure that all Members of the European Parliament, accredited parliamentary assistants and staff members' meetings with third-party representatives can only take place in accordance with the **EU Transparency Register** provisions. To this end the EP should enforce mandatory anti-corruption and transparency training for MEPs, accredited parliamentary assistants and staff members.
 - b) **Withdraw the parliamentary badges** of lobbyists and third-country representatives whose organisations and countries are under investigation.
5. To regularly **verify funding streams** to and from organisations that are listed on the transparency register.

Improving Accountability

6. To unconditionally **ban "Friendship groups"** with third countries. Third countries must interact with the European Parliament through parliamentary committees and delegations. If the latter is not applicable, specific case by case arrangements should be possible.
7. To **review and assess the functioning of the Intergroups** in the European Parliament and require full financial transparency, including the annual disclosure of financial contributions to Intergroups.
8. To **prohibit trips** undertaken by MEPs, accredited parliamentary assistants and staff members being paid for by third countries or by the private sector.
9. To **forbid** MEPs from keeping **gifts** above 100 Euros.

Increasing Information for the Public

10. To amend the Members' Statute in order to create a verifiable, searchable and detailed public mandatory register of annual **financial declarations on wealth and income**.
11. To make it compulsory for all MEPs, accredited parliamentary assistants, political group staff and European Parliament staff, to **publish all scheduled meetings** with lobbies and interest representatives, not just those related to European Parliament legislative reports and resolutions but also own initiative reports. This would imply a mandatory **'legislative and non-legislative footprint'** (this is information that details the time, persons present, and subject of contact with a specific stakeholder). Specific rules will be defined in relation to meetings with vulnerable people (e.g people seeking protection) in order to guarantee their safety.
12. Review all accreditation procedures to access the EP premises. To create an **entry log** for everyone entering the European Parliament premises, with information on the reason, interlocutors and scope of the visit. The entry log must be public and protection of data privacy must be ensured.

Tightening Control

13. The new Ethics Body must assess possible incompatibilities as well as provide proposals to improve transparency and accountability regarding MEPs' **second jobs** during their mandate, in order to prevent conflicts of interest.
14. To revoke all **former MEPs' privileges** linked to administrative support, such as permanent badges, when becoming a lobbyist.
15. To introduce a **"cooling-off period" for MEPs** at the end of their respective mandates: 24 months, when taking up lobbying activities and for the duration of the transitional allowance when taking up new employment. In order to avoid any conflicts of interest, former MEPs must notify the European Parliament, which has to authorise new employment during the "cooling-off period".

S&D

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