

WALKING THE TALK: HOW TO FIGHT CORRUPTION IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

A check list



The worst corruption scandal in the history of the EU institutions continues to rock the European Parliament. If anything, the Qatargate disgrace illustrates that this is not a question of a few rotten apples, but a rotten culture of revolving doors, opaque practices and scant oversight. Such deep-seated structural problems require a radical overhaul of rules and regulations. We need to prevent corruption in the first place and put an end to the culture of impunity that allows these murky practices to flourish.

The Left has been calling on the President of the European Parliament to ensure proper follow up of all [measures](#) voted through by MEPs in December with a clear timeline. If it took a scandal for Parliament to tighten its integrity and anti-corruption measures, a clear and transparent roadmap is needed to implement them.

The [Resolution on suspicions of corruption from Qatar](#), passed by the European Parliament in December 2022, contained 15 measures to strengthen integrity and curb corruption in European institutions. Since then President Metsola has presented *in camera* a [14 point plan](#) to the Conference of Presidents, which only contains 4 of these recommendations. The roadmap to clean up the Parliament's act must not be decided behind closed doors, rather it should be ambitious and follow the recommendations contained in the December resolution.

OUR DEMANDS & WHAT HAS HAPPENED SO FAR

In December, immediately after the scandal broke out, The Left put forward [a range of immediate measures](#), some of which were adopted by Parliament:

- MEPs debated and voted on a resolution on the allegations of corruption, making some clear commitments on a strong ethics, transparency & anti-corruption regime;
- While the investigations continue, the European Parliament decided to terminate the term of office of Vice-President Eva Kaili.
- Postponement of the planned vote on Qatar visa liberalisation in plenary in view of the ongoing investigation.



HARDWIRING INTEGRITY IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S WORK

Despite the magnitude of this scandal, the measures adopted so far are mere baby steps compared to the lengths the European Parliament needs to walk. The house of European democracy now needs to raise the bar, with an ambitious roadmap that can engrain integrity and ethics into its daily work. This can only take place with the clear political commitment of all groups, and MEPs need to "walk the talk" and drive forward far-reaching measures. Here are some proposals put forward by The Left in the European Parliament.

Inquiries and oversight

- Establishment of a **Special Committee** tasked with identifying flaws and loopholes in Parliament's rules on transparency, integrity and corruption and making proposals for reforms, building on the work of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs and best practice in other parliaments.
- Immediately engage with the Council and the European Commission to strengthen and "give teeth" to the [Transparency Register](#), making it mandatory and binding in practice, while also equipping it with additional resources.
- Accelerate the establishment of an **inter-institutional ethics body** in line with the [Parliament resolution adopted in 2021](#).
- As soon as the criminal investigations and court proceedings are completed, establish a **Committee of Inquiry** examining the maladministration which has allowed third countries to unduly influence European policy.

Transparency

- Alignment of the internal rules to the EU **Whistleblowing Directive**, ensuring mandatory training for all MEPs giving full responsibilities to Members for ensuring compliance.
- Place the spotlight on MEP activities, ensuring that a clear and accessible **legislative footprint** is readily available to the public. This should include the mandatory disclosure of all meetings MEPs hold with external stakeholders, as well as declarations of gifts and trips to countries outside the EU, including those paid for by the European Parliament.
- Strengthen cooperation with relevant bodies, such as the European anti-fraud office OLAF, granting them **full access** to conduct relevant **investigations**.
- Revise and strengthen the list of **sanctions** in place for MEPs to have the adequate **deterrent** effect.

Conduct of MEPs

- Strengthen transparency measures, introducing a mandatory **declaration of assets** by Members of the European Parliament at the beginning and end of each mandate to detect suspicious enrichment.
- Introduce clear rules regulating **conflicts of interest**, forbidding MEPs, assistants and group staff to belong to external organisations engaging in lobbying activities. Current rules rely entirely on self enforcement, which as recent events indicate is not nearly enough. Disclosure of external engagements should be mandatory allowing rapporteurships or shadow rapporteurships to be contested in case of conflict on interest of a Member.
- Introduction and enforcement of a **cooling-off period** for former MEPs wishing to engage in lobbying activities. This should include - but not be limited to - the organisations and companies in the Transparency Register.