

One year after the elections, a deeply unstable European Parliament

• Introduction

In the aftermath of the European elections in June 2024, the major political balances seemed likely to hold, despite the unprecedented surge of the far right. This relative optimism was short-lived. Everyone now realises that the new European Parliament has changed radically, that the rupture in the Union is profound and that a new world is emerging.

It is true that in November 2024 a pro-European majority gave the green light to the new Commission chaired by Ursula von der Leyen (CDU) of Germany. Despite a few defections in their ranks, the centre-right (EPP), the Social Democrats (S&D) and the Liberals (Renew) voted in favour of the new

Commission, joined by around half of the Greens (Greens/EFA) and the Conservatives (ECR)¹.

But competitiveness, administrative simplification and the fight against illegal immigration have replaced the green transition as the main priorities. And for the first time, an alternative right-wing coalition, without the S&D, is now possible in Strasbourg. In the long term, this could weaken the European Parliament, whose political and institutional influence has already declined in recent years, despite an increase in its powers under the Lisbon Treaty².

DEMOCRACY &
INSTITUTIONS

POLICY BRIEF
JULY 2025

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Study prepared and discussed within the framework of the Jacques Delors Institute's Observatoire politique du Parlement européen. The author alone is responsible for its content.

1 On 18 July 2024, with 401 votes in favour, 284 against and 15 abstentions, the European Parliament elected Ursula von der Leyen as President of the European Commission for a second term. In November, MEPs approved the College of Commissioners by a narrower majority of 370 votes in favour, 282 against and 36 abstentions.

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/fr/press-room/20241121IPR25546/le-parlement-approuve-la-commission-von-der-leyen-ii>

2 See the EP's infographic on its new powers and competences

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/fr/parliaments-powers/the-lisbon-treaty>



I • An unprecedented configuration

I A FAR RIGHT ON THE RISE

– Numerical power

With a historic score that reflects national political developments in recent years, MEPs from the radical and extreme right are now divided into three parliamentary groups.

Chaired by Frenchman Jordan Bardella, the «Patriots for Europe» (Pfe) group succeeded «Identity and Democracy» (ID) in 2024 and now ranks third in the hemicycle (85 MEPs out of 720). Its ranks include the Rassemblement National, which with its 29 MEPs represents one of the largest delegations in the Institution³, and the Fidesz of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, which has sat in the non-attached seats since its forced departure from the EPP in 2021 and is at the origin of this new formation.

A little behind with 79 MEPs, the «European Conservatives and Reformists» (ECR) group includes both groups considered acceptable by the pro-European majority and far-right groups: it is dominated by Fratelli d'Italia, the post-fascist party of Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, and by the Law and Justice Party (PiS), which has just won the presidential election in Poland. The group is not free of internal dissension, as demonstrated by the discussions surrounding a motion of censure initiated in early July by one of its members, Romanian MEP Gheorghe Piperea⁴.

Finally, the new “Europe of Sovereign Nations” group (ENS) is the eighth and last largest political group, with 27 MEPs, including 15 from the Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland - AfD) - excluded from the ID group in May 2024 following a series of scandals involving its leader in the European elections.

In accordance with the rules of the Parliament, their numerical weight enables the Patriots and Conservatives to benefit from substantial financial and human resources⁵. The latter are all the more vocal in that they now speak after the EPP and the Social Democrats, and have more speaking time than the smaller groups.

While in the past elected representatives of the far right were reputed to do little work, preferring to show off and provoke, the situation is slowly changing. While some, through lack of experience or interest, remain outside the parliamentary game and still don't understand what drives it, others are more present and active: They are gaining in visibility, relying on more experienced collaborators (some of whom come from other groups), drafting reports and amendments, and now find it less judicious to remain in systematic and sterile opposition than to use parliamentary procedures to defend their ideas (rejection of any new European integration, the fight against immigration, dismantling of the European Green Pact, hostility to gender policy, etc.).

³ Barely out of the shadow parliamentary assistants affair, which earned Marine Le Pen a heavy sentence, the Rassemblement National (RN) is facing a new financial scandal. In a confidential report revealed by Le Monde, the European Parliament administration accuses the RN and its allies of having irregularly spent €4.3 million of European funding

https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2025/07/08/le-parquet-europeen-ouvre-une-enquete-sur-le-rn-et-ses-allies-au-parlement-europeen-suspectes-d-avoir-mis-en-place-un-systeme-illegal-pour-financer-des-associations_6619920_3210.html

⁴ Gheorghe Piperea (ECR) criticises Ursula von der Leyen for her lack of transparency in the matter of alleged SMS exchanges with Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla concerning the purchase of vaccines during the Covid-19 pandemic. Under the [Parliament's Rules of Procedure](#), a motion of censure against the European Commission may be submitted to the President of the Parliament by one tenth of its Members, i.e. 72 MEPs. To be adopted, the motion must receive a two-thirds majority of the votes cast, representing a majority of the Members of the Parliament. A Commission has never been censured in Strasbourg

https://www.euractiv.fr/section/politics/news/le-groupe-des-conservateurs-et-reformistes-divise-sur-une-motion-de-censure-visant-la-commission/?utm_source=euractiv&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_content=zone_2&utm_term=0-0&utm_campaign=FR_LES_CAPITALES

⁵ Rules on political groups in the European Parliament [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/762337/EPRS_BRI\(2024\)762337_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/762337/EPRS_BRI(2024)762337_EN.pdf)

– Unity out of reach

Between them, the PfiE, ECR and ENS groups represent the strongest force in the Chamber, to which must be added a good number of the thirty non-attached Members⁶. But despite the advantages this would represent in terms of influence, a large, structured and lasting alliance remains out of reach for the time being, given the ideological differences on a number of issues, such as transatlantic relations, international trade and the very fate of the European project. Some elected representatives, especially within ENS, still dream of destroying it, others want to reshape it from within, and still others welcome the right-wing shift in policy initiated in Brussels.

Having long castigated the EU, Giorgia Meloni has preferred to play the institutional game since coming to power. On the other hand, without questioning membership of the EU, the Patriotes have no hesitation in taking a hard line against it, described as a “mercantile, wokist, ultra-liberal empire” by their brand-new honorary president, Marine Le Pen, at the “Fête de la victoire” organised in France on 9 June 2025⁷.

But the biggest sticking point undoubtedly concerns Russia and Ukraine, including between national delegations from the same group. On the PfiE side, Jordan Bardella calls for “a clear and effective line of support for Ukraine”, while Viktor Orban likes to denounce pro-war politicians and rule out any solution on the battlefield⁸. On the ECR side, Luxembourg MP Fernand Kartheiser, the only elected member of the Reformist Party for a Democratic Alternative (ADR),

was expelled from the group after incurring the ire of President Mateusz Morawiecki (PiS) for having visited Moscow in the middle of the election campaign in Poland; his party could suffer the same fate. The Sovereignists, for their part, are clearly showing their support for Moscow.

– A fragile cordon sanitaire

In the face of the far right, the cordon sanitaire put in place by the central groups operates on a variable geometry basis. This unwritten agreement held at the start of the term of office, when appointments to positions of power and influence were made, preventing the PfiE group from obtaining, as its good score had authorised it to do, committee or delegation chairmanships or from being represented on the Bureau⁹.

But it has not totally curbed the allocation of parliamentary reports: the Patriots have inherited several to date, including one on biotechnology and life sciences, one on access to finance for SMEs and, recently, one on the EU’s 2040 climate targets¹⁰. Despite their small numbers, the Sovereignists have obtained one on technological sovereignty which, rather unusually, gave rise to a counter-report from the pro-European forces in the form of a single amendment.

What’s more, the cordon sanitaire - which will have to be confirmed mid-term - excludes ECR as in the past, as it is considered more acceptable by the von der Leyen majority: the group thus snatched three parliamentary committee chairmanships, two vice-presidential posts on the Bureau and one questure¹¹.

6 On the International of Nationalists, see l’Opinion of 2 June

<https://www.lopinion.fr/international/leurope-a-droite-toute>

7 Speech by Marine Le Pen at the “victory party” on 9 June 2025 in Loiret. Marine Le Pen and Jordan Bardella had invited representatives of the 16 political parties belonging to the PfiE (Patriots for Europe) group.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTaGo3LdZCs>

8 Read Viktor Orban’s speech at the “Peace March” organised on 1st June 2024 in the presence of his supporters.

<https://miniszterelnok.hu/en/discours-de-viktor-orban-lors-de-la-marche-de-la-paix/>

9 The EP’s political bodies and documentation service

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/fr/organisation-and-rules/organisation/political-bodies>

10 Distribution of parliamentary reports, EP Legislative Observatory

https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/fr/search?fullText.titleOnly=true&fullText.mode=EXACT_WORD&reference.type=EPdoc&reference.initialType=EPdoc&reference.subType=PE&reference.initialSubType=PE&term=10%C3%A8me+1%C3%A9gislation+2024+-+2029&year=2025

11 EP committee chairs

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/fr/article/20190711STO56847/decouvrez-qui-preside-les-commissions-du-parlement-europeen>

Above all, this barrier is fragile on a day-to-day basis, and the far right's ability to influence the legislative process is tending to increase within the EP.

I THE EPP, AN ESSENTIAL PARTNER IN ANY COALITION

– An essential group

In this new hemicycle, the median line now runs through the European People's Party (EPP), the leading political force in the Parliament since 1999 and the big winner of the 2024 elections with 188 MEPs; it is the only pro-European party to have improved its score against the far right, halting in the process the decline that began twenty years earlier¹².

Not content with claiming victory and having obtained the reappointment of both Roberta Metsola as head of the Parliament - for a further two and a half years - and their 'Spitzenkandidat' Ursula von der Leyen as head of the Commission - for a further five years - the Christian Democrats are more than ever in control of the game in Strasbourg: no majority can arithmetically be formed without them (unless we imagine an alliance, totally inconceivable, of all the other groups) and they are free to decide, depending on the issues, to ally themselves either with the centre and the left within the pro-European coalition or with the right and the far right.

A number of EPP members are prepared to abandon their party's traditional position, arguing in passing that the European Parliament is not modelled on national parliaments and that a majority in good and due form has never existed. The temptation is all the greater given that the right and far right govern together in several Member States (Italy, Finland, Slovakia and, until recently, the Netherlands). In Sweden, the Democratic Party (SD) supports the government without participating in it. In Belgium and the Czech

Republic, the parties of the prime ministers in power are members of ECR.

The EPP has also integrated into its ranks forces that are not in total agreement with its "pro-Europe, pro-Ukraine and pro-State of Law" line, such as the Dutch "Farmer-Citizen" Movement, described as populist. The Hungarian Tisza is opposed to the sending of arms and troops to Ukraine by its country (but not by the EU).

– A fragile "Venezuela majority"

In Strasbourg, discussions between the EPP and the far right are taking place outside the framework of any official agreement and are taking place unofficially, via the delegations or within the Conference of Presidents. While the cordon sanitaire stipulates that the political groups of the centrist majority should not vote on amendments tabled by the far right, the EPP sometimes breaks the rule or includes them in its compromises. It also happens that some of its proposals are supported by the Patriots and ECR. The first major act of this ideological shift took place in September 2024, with the adoption of a joint resolution tabled by the EPP, P/E and ECR groups, denouncing the regime of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and the electoral fraud orchestrated by the National Electoral Council¹³.

The votes of this "Venezuela coalition", which sometimes includes ENS MEPs, are beginning to multiply. The AFCO (Constitutional Affairs) Committee's rejection of the proposal to amend the EP's Rules of Procedure blocked the creation of an inter-institutional ethics committee designed to prevent corruption and undue interference in the democratic process in the wake of the *Qatar-gate* scandal in Parliament¹⁴. The agreement was officially signed before the elections by Roberta Metsola; this time the EPP was able to oppose it by joining forces with the far right. It was thanks to this same alternative majority that on 17 June, ahead of the Fourth

¹² List of Members by Member State and political group
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/fr/search/table>

¹³ Resolution on the situation in Venezuela, EP Legislative Observatory
<https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/fr/document-summary?id=1789789>

¹⁴ See the Council website on the EU Ethics Body
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/fr/policies/eu-ethics-body/#scope>

United Nations Conference in Seville, the Parliament rejected an own-initiative report on financing for development which called on the Member States to increase their commitment to international cooperation in this area.

While it is defended by the Spanish People's Party (PP), which for a time governed with the far right in several regions, this right-wing approach is criticised by many EPP MEPs, loyal to the Christian Democrat heritage of Robert Schuman, Alcide de Gasperi and Konrad Adenauer. This is true of the Portuguese, Irish, Slovaks, Romanians and Finns, but also of the Poles and Hungarians, who are fighting against the PiS and Fidesz respectively¹⁵. Like Christian Ehler and Peter Liese, most CDU members are also committed to the traditional line. The election of Friedrich Merz to the Chancellery and the coalition agreement between the CDU and the SPD, which rules out any cooperation with the far right, raise hopes that the EPP will anchor itself in the centre. But nothing is certain.

— The risk of weakening the Parliament

Bavarian MEP Manfred Weber (EPP), who chairs both the party and the group, remains unclear about his intentions. On the one hand, this former unsuccessful candidate for the presidency of the Commission regularly reiterates his attachment to the VDL majority and is keen to distance himself from the far right¹⁶. On the other hand, he sometimes agrees to vote with the far right and would like to see the EPP form an alliance with the

ECR at European level. At the June 2025 plenary session, he also stated that he did not feel bound by a majority commitment with the Social Democrats and Liberals, whom he accused of contributing to the rise of populism in Europe¹⁷.

If it opts for a right-wing alliance, the EPP could go very far in dismantling the Green Deal, a major priority of the previous mandate¹⁸. But this “Venezuela majority” is narrow, and it only takes a few absences or defections to swing a vote. This was the case during the campaign against the funding of non-governmental organisations by the LIFE environmental programme, a campaign led jointly by the far right and the EPP and ultimately lost.

The EPP did not support the ECR group's request - supported by the Patriots and Sovereignists - to set up a committee of enquiry into the Commission's funding of NGOs. But it then obtained from the Conference of Presidents that a working group on the subject be set up for six months within the Committee on Budgetary Control¹⁹. The S&D group proposed, in the name of the fight for transparency and the “demand for exemplarity and equal treatment”, to extend the mandate to all beneficiaries of European funds; rejected, it accused the EPP of aligning itself with the extreme right²⁰.

Another episode illustrates the fragility of the current political situation. In October 2024, the Social Democrats and the Centrists refused at the last moment to adopt

¹⁵ Ahead of the European Council on 28 June 2025, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk refused to sign the EPP declaration calling for an “ambitious but pragmatic” climate policy and a reduction in immigration. According to Euractiv, Donald Tusk and Manfred Weber have a stormy relationship because of Weber's rapprochement with ECR, on which the PiS has a seat

<https://www.euractiv.fr/section/the-capitals/news/les-capitales-merz-contre-tusk-contre-weber/>

¹⁶ Interview with Euractiv by Manfred Weber, 26 June 2025

https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/interview-epp-chief-manfred-weber-on-defence-the-green-deal-and-his-future-ambitions/?utm_source=euractiv&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_content=zone_1&utm_term=0-0&utm_campaign=FR_LES_CAPITALES

¹⁷ “We, the EPP, decide what is on the European Commission agenda, not bureaucrats in Brussels”. Statement by Manfred Weber at a meeting of the National Council of the Les Républicains (LR) party on 26 June.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzF2I8QiNTk>

¹⁸ Green deal for Europe

https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_fr

¹⁹ EPP Group proposes new parliamentary structure to control NGO funding - EPP press release

<https://www.eppgroup.eu/newsroom/epp-group-proposes-new-structure-to-scrutinise-ngo-funding>

²⁰ See the press release from French MEPs (S&D) Thomas Pellerin-Carlin and Christophe Clergeau on the “witch-hunt against NGOs”.

<https://www.social-ecologie.eu/le-ppe-dans-une-alliance-honteuse-avec-lextreme-droite-pour-mener-une-chasse-aux-sorcieres-contre-les-ong/>

the resolution on the 2025 annual budget because of several amendments tabled by the far right and voted for by the EPP, calling for the construction of anti-migrant walls at the EU's borders; opposed to the very principle of an EU budget, the P/E and ENS groups also voted against this first draft, preventing any majority. The EP then adopted its position on an amended version. Choosing the "Venezuela coalition", which some MEPs have not hesitated to describe as a "devil's majority", could ultimately undermine the implementation of the political programme as defined by Ursula von der Leyen in her investiture speech.

The EPP group - and the whole Parliament with it - also runs the risk of having less influence over the Member States: its amendments aimed at watering down the regulation against deforestation, contrary to the commitments made in the Environment Committee and narrowly adopted in November 2024 thanks to the support of the far right, were, for example, rejected en bloc by the Council. The two institutions then reached an agreement to postpone by one year the ban on the sale in the EU of products derived from deforested land, without touching the actual content of the regulation, as proposed by the Commission²¹. Refusing to give up, the EPP joined forces with the far right a few weeks later to vote against the implementing act approved on this subject by the latter.

I A PRO-EUROPEAN MAJORITY TRYING TO RESIST

— Hesitant Social Democrats

Faced with this right-wing trend, the S&D group is trying to find a way forward, but so far without much success. Admittedly, with 136 MEPs, it limited its losses in the last elections and still represents the second largest force in the Parliament. But its political influence is no longer the same. While it had always formed a majority, pro-Euro-

pean coalition with the Centre-Right - which was joined in 2019 by the Renew group - this *gentleman's agreement* has been shattered and it is now possible to have texts approved without its agreement.

In these conditions, the group is divided on the strategy to follow. First scenario: rely on the central coalition to stay at the negotiating table, salvage what can be salvaged and marginalise the far right. But this would come at the price of political renunciations on the Green Deal and social issues, for which it risks paying a high price at the next European elections. Second scenario: choosing confrontation by setting red lines during the vote, and waging a two-pronged battle, in Parliament and in the public arena, to consolidate an alliance stretching from the Left to the Liberals and encourage certain EPP MEPs to vote with them, as has been the case in the past on certain clearly identified issues. But if he fails, he runs the risk of being outvoted.

In the absence of a clear line, the Social Democrats continue to forge alliances with Renew or also with the Greens, and more occasionally with the Left in the Left group. But they seem helpless in the face of the new balance of power and the constant threat from the EPP that they will prefer another coalition. As a symbol of this procrastination, in November 2024 the S&D group voted in favour of the new Commission, despite having announced a few weeks earlier that a red line had been crossed with the appointment by Ursula von der Leyen of an ECR executive vice-president, the Italian Raffaele Fitto.

But the group is not standing still. It has just defined eight priority areas (security and defence, sustainable development, equality, rule of law and democracy, social justice, green transition, health, digital security) which will later be translated into legislative demands²². One of the major challenges will also be to secure the Presidency of the Par-

²¹ Agreement with Council on deforestation gives companies another year <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/fr/press-room/20241121IPR25541/l-accord-avec-le-conseil-retarde-l-application-de-la-loi-sur-la-deforestation>

²² Progressive priorities, Message from Iratxe García Pérez, President of the S&D GroupD <https://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/fr/publications/qui-nous-sommes-nos-priorites-progressistes>

liament for the second half of the term, in accordance with the practice of alternating between the two largest political forces in the EP. This will be the moment of truth for the pro-European coalition. There is nothing to suggest that the Socialists will come out on top.

— Centrists in retreat

Renew, which with 75 MEPs has slipped from third to fifth place and must therefore wait before it can speak in committee or plenary, is also finding it difficult to position itself in this new configuration. He, who during the previous mandate was indispensable and acted as a link between the S&Ds and the EPP, is now having to fight to carry weight in the negotiations. The French delegation is still in the lead, which has enabled Valérie Hayer to be re-elected as chair of the group. However, it has lost 10 elected members compared to 2019 (13 compared to 23).

This setback is exacerbated by internal divisions on a number of issues (Mercosur, the end of internal combustion vehicles, the launch of a new loan), between a centrist line defended in particular by France, and a liberal line defended in particular by Germany and the Netherlands. The Group therefore modulates its alliances. For example, it tends to play the central coalition card in the Committee on Civil Liberties (LIBE), where it promotes a vision that is intended to be balanced, both firm and humanist. But on economic and industrial issues, including those linked to the Green Deal - such as the Commission's Clean Industry Pact - it is prepared to make concessions to safeguard the essential part of the texts.

What's more, some of the parties represented within Renew sit or work with the far right at national level. This was the case for the Dutch VVD, which was allied in a coalition with Geert Wilders' PVV until Wilders toppled the government at the beginning of June 2025. The VVD has ruled out forming a new coalition with the PVV after the 29 October elections, which should secure its position within Renew.

The first year of the mandate was marred by incidents when the EPP opted for an alternative coalition. But cooperation between

the pro-European forces, while not easy, is holding up well on many issues, such as defence, digital technology and the budget. The commitment and personalities of the rapporteurs and coordinators have played a big part in this. Despite their differences, the members of the "platform" - the EPP, Renew and S&D-, as well as the Greens have adopted their priorities for the next multiannual financial framework (see below). And geopolitical tensions, the deterioration of consensus within the international community, including within NATO, the hardening of transatlantic relations, the war in Ukraine and the rise of authoritarian regimes have, if anything, brought Europeans together around common interests, at least so far, and shown the importance of taking difficult decisions together, particularly on security and defence.

Parliament will have to be effective in supporting this movement. The "Venezuela majority" does exist in numerical terms, but it is neither stable, reliable nor constructive; the EPP will not be able to build anything solid with the far-right groups. The only majority that can be agreed, discussed and negotiated remains and will remain the majority made up of political forces from the centre, the centre-right and the centre-left: this is the only one that can guarantee the unity and strength of the institution. In order to consolidate this, there needs to be a genuine strategy and a reciprocal commitment on the part of the leaders of the groups concerned to cooperate and work together, with the EPP clearly stating that its partners are the other pro-European groups and the Social Democrats, and Renew avoiding pushing initiatives deemed unacceptable by the Centre-Right. Discussions are likely to continue between the groups.

— The Greens in difficulty and a very vocal Left

The situation is even more difficult for the Greens (53 MEPs): their numbers have dwindled and the fight against climate change and for the environment is now considered less crucial by part of the Chamber, which has won over to the competitiveness and simplification agenda promoted jointly by the EPP, the Commission and the Council.

The far left, on the other hand, sees the EP's move to the right as an argument for becoming even more vocal and accentuating its populist edge. The Left group (46 MEPs) is made up of 20 delegations, including the French LFI, the Germans Die Linke, the Italians 5 Star Movement, the Spanish Podemos and the Greeks Syriza. Its guidelines are clear: defence of workers, the environment, feminism, peace and human rights. But its president, Manon Aubry (LFI), regularly uses social networks and the Chamber to make provocative gestures and comments.

II • A weaker position in the inter-institutional game

I A REAPPRAISAL OF THE PREVIOUS MANDATE

– More difficult compromises

Tensions between the political groups are complicating the European Parliament's ability to make progress on issues. The situation is so tense that some issues are dealt with in an inconspicuous or ineffective manner, in the form of debates or questioning of the Commissioners concerned. One year after the elections, it is clear that the situation has changed profoundly. Whereas in the past the Parliament did not hesitate to vigorously defend European values and call for measures to be taken against countries such as Hungary that seriously and repeatedly violated them, it is now much more cautious. The rule of law could be one of the main victims of this new situation.

The institution's legislative activity is also being slowed by an external factor, namely the simplification and even deregulation agenda that is taking hold in the EU, particularly in environmental matters. Citizens seem less eager to defend the climate than their income, and farmers' demonstrations have

replaced those against climate change²³. The European election campaign was marred by numerous incidents, some of them violent, during which candidates were criticised for their votes on the Green Pact.

Governments and MEPs are being directly challenged to respond to the real or perceived expectations of society and industry. This trend has accelerated with the war in Ukraine, which has put security and defence, purchasing power and energy costs at the top of the agenda. The fact is that the EU's agenda is no longer that of the last twenty years. Faced with upheavals and geopolitical risks, the EU needs to readjust itself, in depth and on all fronts, so as not to let populists take the initiative. But this rethink, however necessary, should not be at the expense of the consensus that has prevailed until now between pro-European forces.

– Omnibus legislation

Against this backdrop, the Commission has decided to present several packages of "Omnibus" measures designed, in the name of a major simplification drive, to postpone the entry into force of certain texts adopted during the previous term of office or to ease the constraints on businesses. These include the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) - which Friedrich Merz and Emmanuel Macron, President of the French Republic are now calling for to be repealed - and the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CS3D)²⁴. Other legislative packages of the same type have been presented or are expected, on defence, digital or energy.

The Commission also announced in its work programme that it intended to withdraw 37 legislative proposals²⁵. The Conference of Group Presidents agreed, thanks to the support of the "Venezuela majority". Roberta Metsola informed the European Commission

²³ "The cost of living is the main concern of citizens", EP post-election survey published on 3 October 2024 <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/fr/press-room/20240930IPR24358/le-cout-de-la-vie-est-la-principale-preoccupation-des-citoyens>

²⁴ Simplification: Council adopts position on sustainability disclosure and due diligence obligations to boost EU competitiveness. Council press release <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/fr/press/press-releases/2025/06/23/simplification-council-agrees-position-on-sustainability-reporting-and-due-diligence-requirements-to-boost-eu-competitiveness/>

²⁵ Commission work programme for 2025 https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/strategy-documents/commission-work-programme/commission-work-programme-2025_en?prefLang=fr

of this, and also forwarded to it for information the position of the Conference of Committee Chairs (chaired by the German Social Democrat Bernd Lange), which was calling for the retention of four initiatives, on air slots, anti-discrimination rules, responsibility for artificial intelligence and essential patents²⁶.

This work of simplification may be salutary in strengthening the EU's competitiveness in the face of ruthless competition from certain third countries. But it is not without danger: Europe must ensure that it remains a regulatory force and that it does not abdicate any ambition in what is one of its *raison d'être*, namely the production of standards that sometimes inspire other regions of the world, particularly in the environmental field where it has played a leading role in recent years.

– Controversy surrounding environmental claims

Another example of this desire to deregulate has just been provided by the controversy surrounding the “green claims” directive aimed at combating false environmental claims made by companies. On the eve of a potentially decisive trilogue on the subject, the Commission announced at the end of June that it intended to withdraw its March 2023 proposal because of an amendment aimed at imposing obligations on micro-enterprises that were deemed contrary to its objective of reducing regulation, an amendment that the Parliament had already planned to remove during the inter-institutional negotiations. However, the EPP, ECR and P/E had each just written to Environment Commissioner Jessika Roswall asking her to take action in this regard.

The Greens, Social Democrats and Liberals strongly criticised the Commission's announcement, which the S&D group described as deeply worrying for the democratic process and the Renew group as shameful and an unprecedented institutional scandal. The latter even threatened to leave the coalition, expecting Ursula von der Leyen, at the latest during her State of the Union speech in September, to make a very clear commitment to the pro-European majority and the programme on which she was elected, with their support²⁷. The Commission finally announced that it would await the outcome of the trilogues before deciding whether or not to withdraw the text. Italy has meanwhile withdrawn its support for the proposal, which now has little chance of being adopted.

Parliament also tends to be more talkative. Although symbolic and non-binding, resolutions often give rise to epic discussions between political groups, who engage in battles over amendments instead of making intelligent use of the indirect right of initiative available to the House. Article 225 of the TFEU allows it to ask the Commission, by a majority of its component members, to submit a proposal to implement the Treaties. If the Commission does not submit a proposal, it must give its reasons²⁸.

■ A RISK OF MARGINALISATION VIS-À-VIS THE COUNCIL AND THE COMMISSION

– Controversial use of Article 122

The Commission is increasingly reluctant to use Article 122 of the Treaty, which authorises the Council alone to decide, “in a spirit of solidarity between Member States”, “upon the measures appropriate to the economic situation, in particular if severe difficulties arise in the supply of certain products,

²⁶ Letter from Bernd Lange to the President of the European Commission published by the Euractiv news website https://www.euractiv.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2025/06/Withdrawals_CWP-2025-EURACTIV.pdf

²⁷ Following this incident, Iratxe Garcia Perez and Valérie Hayer wrote to Roberta Metsola asking her to defend the EP's prerogatives and to intervene with Ursula von der Leyen to ensure that the principle of “sincere cooperation” is respected.

Read more on this subject in *La Matinale* on 25 June 2025

<https://lamatinaleeuropeenne.substack.com/p/crise-au-sein-de-la-majorite-pro>

²⁸ The few rules governing this right are limited to the 2010 framework agreement under which the Commission undertook to report on any request under Article 225 within three months of the adoption of the resolution in plenary. There are only a few specific cases in which the EP has been granted a direct right of initiative. This applies to: regulations concerning its composition; the election of its members and the general conditions governing the performance of the duties of its members; the setting up of temporary committees of enquiry; the regulations and general conditions governing the performance of the duties of the Ombudsman. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2022/729448/EPRS_ATA\(2022\)729448_FR.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2022/729448/EPRS_ATA(2022)729448_FR.pdf)

notably in the area of energy”. This allows the European Union to react quickly in the event of a major crisis (to temporarily derogate from the usual rules, release financial aid or set up a special mechanism), but once again weakens the debate and democratic control exercised by Parliament²⁹.

The Commission has activated Article 122 on several occasions in recent years in response to the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. It has just used it again as the legal basis for the SAFE regulation (Security Action For Europe), a financial instrument providing €150 billion in loans to stimulate the defence industry³⁰.

This new circumvention of the EP has provoked the ire of MEPs ; based on an opinion from the legal department, Roberta Metsola sent Ursula von der Leyen a letter at the beginning of May inviting her to review the legal basis for SAFE. The head of the EU executive replied that recourse to Article 122 was “fully justified” because it was “an exceptional and temporary response to an urgent and existential challenge”. A few days later, the Legal Affairs Committee formally recommended that Parliament take legal action against the Council for excluding it from the decision-making process on the SAFE Regulation³¹.

In December 2020, the three institutions adopted a joint declaration on the control of new proposals based on Article 122 which could have significant implications for the EU budget. In the recent reform of its Rules of Procedure, Parliament inserted a new Rule 138 under which the Commission will be invited to make a statement in plenary explaining its decision to use Article 122 as a legal basis.

– A proliferation of urgent procedures

Until now, the majority of European citizens believed that pooling forces and resources would bring added value compared with the national level. In recent years, however, the narrative has slowly shifted in favour of a view that “the less we do at European level, the better”, against a backdrop of growing populism and sharp criticism of the Community institutional triangle, including from leaders who are always quick to blame “Brussels” for their mistakes and the slowness of the decision-making process.

Instead of counter-attacking and explaining the importance of its role as co-legislator, the European Parliament, the only EU institution elected by direct universal suffrage, has fallen into the trap of accepting several urgency procedures, a mechanism used to speed up the adoption of a legislative act in exceptional situations, for example in the event of a health, geopolitical, economic or other crisis³². The request may be made to Parliament by its President, by a committee, by a political group or by at least one-twentieth of the Members of the European Parliament (currently 36). The Commission and the Council may also make a request, but Parliament always has the final say.

An urgent procedure can take place without a report or, exceptionally, on the basis of a simple oral report from the committee responsible. The vote is taken quickly, sometimes on the same day as the decision to use urgent procedure or in the days that follow. This has the effect of limiting the possibility of amendments and, more generally, of reducing transparency and democratic debate.

²⁹ Article 122 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Official Journal of the European Union, 9 May 2008.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX%3A12008E122%3AFR%3AHTML>

³⁰ On 27 May 2025, the Council adopted the regulation creating SAFE. This new financial instrument will support Member States wishing to invest in defence industrial production through joint procurement, focusing on priority capabilities. The funds will be raised by the Commission on the financial markets to grant loans to Member States.

<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/fr/press/press-releases/2025/05/27/safe-council-adopts-150-billion-boost-for-joint-procurement-on-european-security-and-defence/>

³¹ See the Legal Affairs Committee page

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/fr/juri/home/highlights>

³² Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament, Title VII, Chapter 2, Article 163: Urgency

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RULES-9-2023-04-17-RULE-163_FR.html

During the previous mandate, it was used to adopt measures in response to the health crisis, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the energy crisis. Its use is still tending to accelerate. In April 2025, a majority ranging from Renew to the extreme right validated the use of the urgency procedure to postpone the implementation of new EU legislation on the duty of care and the publication of sustainability information (see above); opposed to this procedure, the S&D, Greens/EFA and Left groups were outvoted, totalling only a third of the votes. The proposal itself was then approved by an overwhelming majority in plenary.

The Commission and the Council see nothing but advantages in this acceleration of the tempo, the former to move its proposals forward more quickly, the latter to assert its leadership a little more strongly. The European executive does not hesitate to put pressure on MEPs or political groups to legislate quickly. The Parliament also sees this as in its interest, to avoid the deadlocks caused by the fragmentation of political forces and to appear as a facilitator of the institutional process. But in the long term it risks weakening itself by further eroding its legislative and supervisory powers: it had already agreed to generalise the principle of interinstitutional negotiations within trialogues, which are quicker than the traditional second readings and conciliation procedures and which are based on mutual trust between the Council, the Commission and Parliament³³.

Given the balance of forces involved, the urgency of the matter also puts the Social Democrats at a disadvantage, as they are now represented by only a handful of Heads of State and Government and only four Commissioners, whereas the EPP has thirteen, including the President.

– A premium on the intergovernmental

Other elements weaken the place of the European Parliament in the institutional triangle.

On the one hand, the division of the portfolios of the European Commissioners does not correspond, or no longer corresponds, to the competences of the twenty parliamentary committees, some of which cover an immense field of competence; the creation of two new full committees, on defence and health, will not really improve the situation³⁴. Added to this is the fact that the new Commission is more powerful and apparently less cooperative than its predecessor: Parliament therefore has every interest in being more united if it wants to continue to carry weight in the institutional triangle. To this end, the pro-European groups could work closely with certain Commissioners and help them to win a majority in the College on a number of clearly identified issues.

On the other hand, the global context tends, given the subjects at the top of the agenda (defence, transatlantic relations, the conflict between Israel and Gaza, relations with China, etc.), to reinforce the intergovernmental dimension. Parliament, which has no direct powers in foreign policy, has been largely bypassed in recent years in the response to the war in Ukraine, whether in terms of sanctions or military and financial aid. Yet it had been at the forefront in calling for the opening of accession negotiations with Kiev.

Finally, it should be noted that nearly 80 MEPs, mainly members of the ECR and the far right, wrote to Ursula von der Leyen on 12 May to complain about the poor quality of the answers provided by her services to parliamentary questions.

33 Read the Euractiv article “Trilogues: is the EU legislative process still relevant”? https://www.euractiv.fr/section/politics/news/trilogues-le-processus-legislatif-de-lue-est-il-encore-pertinent/?utm_source=euractiv&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_content=zone_2&utm_term=0-0&utm_campaign=FR_LES_CAPITALES

34 EP members examine Commission and Council proposals in committee. The EP can also set up temporary subcommittees to deal with specific issues. To find out more about parliamentary committees and sub-committees, read the European Parliament brochure <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/about/introduction>

I ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES ON THE LOOKOUT

– A high turnover

MEPs bear some of the responsibility for the relative weakening of the EP. There are objective factors, such as the large number of newly elected MEPs, who are less familiar with habits and customs: just over half of MEPs had never sat in the European Parliament before (which was already more or less the case in 2019), compared with 46.5% of MEPs who were re-elected after having sat at least during the previous legislature and 2.9% of MEPs who had sat during a previous legislature. The proportion of newly elected MPs varies from 90% in Portugal to 14% in Estonia, and exceeds 54% in France compared with barely 35% in Germany³⁵.

Germans have long understood the importance of staying in Strasbourg for a long time. Some are in their third or even fourth term of office: as such, they are familiar with all the workings of the institution, become points of reference for their colleagues and know how to identify the positions that count most and in which they can best influence the legislative process (committee chairmanships, coordinators).

Among the political groups, ENS has the highest percentage of new MEPs (84%) and the Greens/EFA the lowest (38%); this figure is 63% for ECR, 59% for La Gauche, 58% for PflE, 48% for Renew, 44% for S&D and 41% for the EPP.

– The search for buzz

This may be compounded by a reduced sense of belonging to the institution. While many MEPs are highly committed to their mandate and their parliamentary work, others seem more concerned with their image than with the general European interest. This drift, which is more marked among the extreme right, had already worsened during the previous legislature. It is fuelled by social networks and the desire to create a buzz, to the detriment of the quality of debates and speeches.

In order to strengthen the presence of deputies during plenary sessions, Roberta Metsola proposed at the beginning of the year that the order of speakers should no longer be announced in advance, so that they would be obliged to stay longer in the Chamber. Despite this, it was in front of a virtually empty Chamber that High Representative Kaja Kallas, who was summoned for an emergency session on the evening of 17 June following the Israeli strikes on Iran, debated the situation in the Middle East with the European Parliament. The test continues for certain major debates.

Finally, the European Parliament has an increasing tendency to import national debates into its midst. This is not a new phenomenon: during the previous term of office, certain elected representatives, such as the Ecolo Yannick Jadot and the Insoumise Manon Aubry, did not hesitate to use this forum to attack the policies pursued by Emmanuel Macron. But in recent months it has taken on a new dimension. During the hearings of future commissioners, the EPP obtained in the Conference of Presidents, thanks to the support of the groups to its right, that the candidates nominated for the post of executive vice-president (six in all) should go last, in order to secure the confirmation of Raffaele Fitto, Giorgia Meloni's ECR candidate, whom the centrists and the left did not want in this post.

The episode confirmed the position of Spanish politics in the hemicycle, torn between Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, who has the ear of Socialist Group President Iratxe Garcia Perez, and the Partido Popular (PP), which is furious at the appointment of former Ecological Transition Minister Teresa Ribeira to the post of European Commissioner. This violent division, which runs counter to the European tradition of compromise, tends to exacerbate tensions. A new example of this was given at the plenary session in June 2025, during which the EPP and ECR jointly imposed a debate on the rule of law in Spain, in response to a corruption scandal that has cast a shadow over the Spanish Socialist Party.

35 European Parliament, facts and figures

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/766234/EPRS_BRI\(2024\)766234_FR.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/766234/EPRS_BRI(2024)766234_FR.pdf)

III • An uncertain position for the term of office

I A SLOW RISE IN LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY

– Vote on a defence programme

During this first year, the European Parliament first had to settle in, hear the future Commissioners, vote on the investiture of the new college, evaluate the forces present and fill the posts. It has since voted on a number of proposals, most of which were tabled during the previous mandate, such as the revision of rules designed to prevent security risks arising from foreign investment in the EU, sexual abuse of minors, CO₂ emissions from new cars and the welfare and traceability of dogs and cats.

Several dialogues have also been concluded in recent months, such as those on toy safety, driving licences, the implementation of the entry-exit system at the EU's external borders and the carbon adjustment mechanism at borders to reduce the administrative burden on SMEs and occasional importers³⁶.

At the end of April, the Industry and Defence Committees also approved their position on the creation of the European EDIP programme, presented in 2024 by former Commissioner Thierry Breton, under the fast-track procedure (opening of negotiations with the Council after the committee vote). MEPs backed measures to strengthen the EU defence industry, increase its production capacity and provide greater support for Ukraine³⁷. Spearheaded by its two co-rapporteurs, Frenchmen Raphaël Glucksmann (S&D) and François-Xavier Bellamy (EPP), the proposal was broadly adopted and will carry weight in the rest of the legislative process.

– Backtracking on values

The legislative work is also evidence of a shift towards more conservative positions, with a step backwards on the Green Pact and a further hardening of positions on internal and external security and immigration. Traditionally, the positions expressed in Strasbourg on human rights issues have been more progressive than those expressed at national level. But a dam broke at the last elections: Europeans have fewer qualms and the advocates of tougher management are gaining a foothold in the institutions.

To the great displeasure of the Left and Renew, the Commission proposed at the end of May a targeted amendment to the concept of safe third country, opening the door to the adoption by Member States of the “Rwanda model” for sending asylum seekers far from the EU's borders. This model, which originated in the UK before being rejected by the courts there, was strongly criticised by the von der Leyen I Commission and has since been taken up by the EPP in its election manifesto. The migration issue also gave rise to a manoeuvre by the “Venezuela coalition” in the LIBE Committee at the beginning of July: with the help of the far right, the ECR and EPP groups shared two very sensitive reports, one on safe countries of origin and the other on the concept of safe third countries³⁸.

With one exception, and unlike the 70 or so MEPs who made the trip, not a single EPP was present at the Pride March held in Budapest on 28 June despite being banned by Viktor Orban³⁹.

³⁶ Agreement on the mechanism to combat carbon leakage
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/fr/press-room/20250613IPR28918/accord-pour-simplifier-le-mecanisme-europeen-de-lutte-contre-la-fuite-de-carbone>

³⁷ EDIP programme: Council and EP to start negotiations
<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/fr/press/press-releases/2025/06/23/european-defence-industry-programme-council-ready-to-start-negotiations-with-the-european-parliament/>

³⁸ See the tweet from Fabienne Keller MEP (Renew)
https://x.com/fabienne_keller/status/1940721767691309330

³⁹ A large number of European leaders attended the Budapest Pride Market on 28 June, which was banned by Viktor Orban, including the leaders of the Socialist group, Iratxe Garcia Perez, and the Renew group, Valérie Hayer, as well as 70 MEPs, including French MEP Fabienne Keller.

– Weakening of the Green Deal

The European Parliament has also joined with the Council and the Commission in questioning the Green Deal (see above). The movement had already begun in 2023 with the EPP's criticism of certain proposals relating to energy, climate and the environment, such as the ban on the sale of new internal combustion cars in 2035 or the law on the restoration of nature. But the ecological priorities had held. The situation has changed radically since the 2024 elections and the emergence of an alternative right-wing majority, allowing the EPP to dismantle the Green Pact, many of whose texts it voted for but which it criticizes extensively⁴⁰.

While the general emission reduction targets remain on the table, a kind of disinhibition is sweeping Strasbourg and Brussels on environmental issues, which until now have been seen as an effort to be made at European level and an example to be set to the rest of the world. The Greens, who promised to be benevolent and constructive towards the von der Leyen Commission, may see this as a reason to remain outside the pro-European majority.

Revealing this new state of mind, a proposal to lower the protection status of the wolf was adopted without any problem; the result even gave rise to loud applause on the right of the Chamber. Divided, the S&D group had decided not to give any voting instructions on a subject that is directly linked to biodiversity.

– A pro-European majority in favour of an increase in the EU budget

MEPs also began to take a stance on what will be one of the major issues of the parliamentary term, namely the 2028-2034

multiannual financial framework, on which MEPs Siegfried Muresan (EPP) and Carla Tavares (S&D) have been appointed co-rapporteurs⁴¹.

For the time being, the central majority is in full play on this topic. At the May 2025 plenary session, the Parliament adopted a resolution calling for a much more ambitious budget and considering that the current spending ceiling of 1% of the EU-27's gross national income (GNI) is insufficient to meet citizens' expectations in a context of global instability; this demand was immediately dismissed by German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, who sees no reason to increase Member States' contributions. MEPs also called for new own resources to prevent the budget from being cut too heavily by the repayment of the Next Generation EU plan.

They also rejected the European Commission's idea of reproducing, in the Union's next long-term budget, the Recovery and Resilience Facility model based on a single major plan per Member State. This would mark a major renationalisation of policies and give the Commission much greater power of control over the reforms carried out in the Member States. Instead, MEPs are calling for a structure that guarantees transparency, democratic accountability of the EP and the involvement of regional and local authorities. They are also calling for adequate support for agriculture and cohesion⁴².

The European Parliament will not have the opportunity to amend the Commission's proposal, expected on 16 July. But the adoption of the multiannual budget will require the consent of an absolute majority of its members. This will be a real test for the central majority. In addition, the framework agreement between Ursula von der Leyen and Roberta Metsola includes a commitment

40 Peter Liese and Christian Ehler MEPs (EPP), reacting to the Commission's proposals on climate targets for 2040, stress the need to link any reform on climate to an ambitious reform on the competitiveness agenda <https://www.peter-liese.de/en/32-english/press-releases-en/4344-2040-climate-target>

41 European Parliament priorities for the EU's long-term budget <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/fr/press-room/20250502IPR28212/priorites-du-parlement-pour-le-budget-a-long-terme-de-l-union-apres-2027>

42 In a letter to Ursula von der Leyen, the Socialist & Democrat Group has set out its red lines on the proposed multiannual financial framework. Like the EPP, they reject the idea of a single national cheque covering the CAP and cohesion policy, conditional on reforms <https://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/fr/newsroom/les-progressistes-unissent-leurs-forces-du-niveau-europeen-au-niveau-local-en-vue-du>

by the Commission to strengthen institutional cooperation on budgetary matters.

Other issues to keep an eye on over the coming months include the implementation of the new digital regulation (DSA/DMA) and enlargement negotiations with the countries of the Western Balkans and Ukraine. The European Parliament remains committed to multilateralism and is calling for reform of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

I ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT IN INTERNAL REFORMS

– New Directorates-General

The European Parliament has just embarked on a major internal reform, initiated by its Secretary General, the Italian Alessandro Chiochetti, who succeeded the German Klaus Welle in January 2023, after more than 13 years in the post⁴³. Until now, in addition to the other services (communication, infrastructure, translation, research, etc.), the European Parliament had two Directorates-General responsible for the secretariats of the committees and delegations: the Directorate-General for External Policies and the Directorate-General for Internal Policies, which covered a wide range of subjects such as public freedoms, transport and social policy.

The new Secretary General has decided to subdivide the former Directorate General for Internal Policies into four new Directorates General: Budget; Economy, Transformation and Industry; Cohesion, Agriculture and Social Policy; and Citizens' Rights, Justice and Institutional Affairs. These new, streamlined and strengthened departments will be able to acquire expertise and in-depth knowledge of the issues and thus assist the secretariats of the parliamentary committees concerned and interact with their counterparts at the European Commission, as the Directorate-General for External Policies already does.

This operation should be neutral in budgetary terms and be accompanied by a redeployment of staff in favour of core business, i.e.

legislation, which currently occupies only a small proportion of the Parliament's 7,000 civil servants. It can also lead to a politicisation of the institution: the groups send candidates for the posts of directors and directors-general, in the hope of imposing people they trust. The final decision is taken by the Board.

– MEPs better equipped for dialogues

The new organisation could ultimately strengthen the European Parliament's position during dialogues: MEPs often suffer from a lack of data and information, preventing them from counter-arguing against Commission and Council representatives, who are better armed and accompanied by their legal services.

Improving expertise and analysis will also involve shifting the work carried out within the Directorate-General for Research (EPRS) towards studies that are more often closer to the legislative work itself.

Another aim of this reform is to strengthen the position of the General Secretariat, and more broadly of the administration, in relation to accredited parliamentary assistants (APAs). The latter, paid directly by Parliament for tasks specifically related to the MEP's European activity, are playing an increasingly important role in the internal system, to the detriment, it would seem, of the civil servants, who are the guarantors of the general interest.

I AFFAIRS DAMAGING TO PARLIAMENT'S IMAGE

– Greater transparency

Following the revelations about the possible involvement of several MEPs and parliamentary assistants in the Qatargate corruption affair, the European Parliament drew up a 14-point reform plan under the previous term of office, which includes tightening the rules on the transparency of declarations of private interests by MEPs, conflicts of interest and declarations of meetings with representatives.

43 EP Secretariat General
<https://the-secretary-general.europarl.europa.eu/en>

Amendments to the Rules of Procedure were also adopted in September 2023, including a reinforced ban on all activities by MEPs that would constitute lobbying, greater transparency regarding ideas, suggestions and contributions from external stakeholders, tougher sanctions for breaches of the code of conduct, a broader scope for MEPs' mandatory declarations of meetings with lobbyists, clearer rules to avoid conflicts of interest and greater transparency in MEPs' financial declarations⁴⁴.

The Conference of Presidents also approved guidelines to support MEPs and staff in their relations with representatives of third countries and to clarify the rules for urgent debates on human rights in plenary in order to protect the EP from undue interference.

More recently, the Parliament decided that from 1 September 2025 all 'managers' (from secretary-general to head of unit) will have to declare their 'scheduled meetings' - agreed in advance - with lobbyists and other representatives of European or third-country interests, who are required to sign up to the transparency register beforehand, unless there is a derogation. Political groups will be able to do the same if they so wish. This obligation does not apply to spontaneous meetings, meetings of a social nature or meetings held in conjunction with public debates. Meetings will be disclosed by Parliament, unless an exception is made.

- A special committee on “the European shield for democracy”.

In order to combat foreign interference and the risks it poses to the proper functioning of democracy in the EU and its Member States, the Parliament has set up a special committee on the “European Democracy Shield” (EUDS), replacing the special committees

set up during the Qatargate affair; chaired by Frenchwoman Nathalie Loiseau (Renew), it will present its final report by January 2026⁴⁵.

The Council and Parliament also reached agreement on revising the rules governing the status and funding of European political parties and foundations in order to reduce bureaucracy and combat foreign interference more effectively⁴⁶. But the rejection of the European Ethics Committee (see above) compromises the commitments to greater transparency. The directive intended to strengthen the fight against corruption within the EU is still under discussion; this text provides for minimum standards for the definition and punishment of corruption offences, preventive measures, and provisions for more effective investigations and prosecutions⁴⁷. Finally, the vote on a proposal for a directive aimed at imposing the creation of a transparency register for organisations financed from a third country or operating for a foreign entity has been postponed until September.

It will always be difficult to avoid any risk of corruption, cronyism or collusion in an assembly of 720 MEPs, subject on a daily basis to requests, pressure and sometimes threats from countless interest groups. A new scandal broke at the end of 2024. The Belgian federal prosecutor's office asked the European Parliament to lift the immunity of several MEPs as part of an investigation into attempts to influence and bribe the Chinese company Huawei, which is suspected of having distributed gifts, football tickets and luxury trips to influence the reform of the European telecommunications market. Faced with numerous leaks to the press, Parliament is preparing measures to protect MEPs from any public disclosure of their names during criminal investigations⁴⁸.

⁴⁴ EP Rules of Procedure, January 2025

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/lastrules/TOC_FR.html?redirect

⁴⁵ Special Committee on “the European shield for democracy”

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/fr/euds/home/highlights>

⁴⁶ Agreement on the rules governing European parties and foundations

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/fr/press-room/20250613IPR28914/nouvelles-regles-pour-les-partis-et-fondations-politiques-europeens>

⁴⁷ “L'UE se peine a se doter d'une législation anti-corruption”, Euractiv, 17 June 2025

<https://www.euractiv.fr/section/politics/news/lue-peine-a-se-doter-dune-legislation-anti-corruption/>

⁴⁸ Read the Politico article on this subject

<https://www.politico.eu/article/eu-parliament-stop-belgium-meps-reputations-police-crime-roberta-metsola-immunity/>

But beyond these few scandals, there seems to have been relatively little overt interference from third countries that could endanger the Parliament. The measures taken in recent months have even made it possible to normalise relations with countries that had been implicated in Qatargate (Qatar and Morocco). The victory of the pro-European candidate in Romania despite numerous Russian and American interferences is also a good sign.

• Conclusion

One year on from the European elections in June 2024, inter-institutional relations within the EU remain tense. Weakened by a fragile and unstable European majority, the European Parliament is still trying to find its bearings, faced with a Commission that defends an agenda of simplification and deregulation and a European Council whose role is increasing with the multiplication of perils and geopolitical tensions.

The debate on the motion of censure against the Commission on 7 July in Strasbourg (see above) confirmed the extent of the divisions within the pro-European majority, with Manfred Weber justifying his alliances of convenience with the far right on the one hand, and his colleagues from the socialist, centrist and green groups denouncing the risk of such a strategy and reminding the EPP of its commitments on the other. Unsurprisingly, the motion was overwhelmingly rejected three days later, by 175 votes in favour, 18 abstentions and 360 votes against – 41 fewer than the July majority for the President and 10 fewer than the November majority for the College. Only 553 MEPs took part in the vote, compared with 688 in November. The P/E and ESN groups voted in favour, as did 39 of the 44 ECR members present (out of 79) and 13 members of The Left. In addition to the EPP and the Greens, the S&D and Renew groups voted against. The latter renounced their threats to abstain after obtaining significant concessions from Ursula von der Leyen the day before: the maintenance of the European Social Fund in the EU's multiannual budget proposal for the former, and the maintenance of direct payments to the regions for the latter. The next (delicate) test for the Commission will come

in September 2025 when the President delivers her State of the Union address.

Caught up in its own contradictions, the EP could find it difficult to assert itself in the coming years, for institutional and political reasons, both endogenous and exogenous. The right-wing movement reflects a fundamental socio-political trend in the EU, marked by growing mistrust of «Brussels» and a feeling of abandonment among the middle classes.

For the most part, the far right is still in an observation phase, but if the other groups are not careful, it could tip the overall balance of the Parliament in its favour and come out on top in the 2029 elections.

• Appendix

POLITICAL OBSERVATORY OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AT THE JACQUES DELORS INSTITUTE

CHAIRMAN

Pascal LAMY

REPORTER

Christine VERGER

MEMBERS

Marc ANGEL, Member of the European Parliament

Pervenche BERES, former Member of the European Parliament

Jean-Louis BOURLANGES, former Member of the European Parliament

Monica FRASSONI, former Member of the European Parliament

Daniel FREUND, Member of the European Parliament

Fabienne KELLER, Member of the European Parliament

Alain LAMASSOURE, former Member of the European Parliament

Siegfried MURESAN, Member of the European Parliament

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Institut Jacques Delors

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This project is funded by the European Commission's Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV) under project number 101194174 – IJD 2025.