



Reforming European political parties

Considerations to increase transparency and strengthen the framework on European parties

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State of play

On 25 November 2021, the European Commission presented its proposal for a recast of Regulation 1141/2014 *on the statute and funding of European political parties and European political foundations*.

On 22nd March, the European Council adopted a partial general approach.

The European Parliament is scheduled to adopt its position during its September plenary.

Discussions will then begin between the Parliament and Council with a view of adopting the new regulation in the Spring of 2023.

Introduction

Since the European Council has already negotiated its partial general approach, European Democracy Consulting chose to focus its attention on shortcomings and adjustments that the Council does not address in its position and may have overlooked.

The issues identified fall under two main categories: **increasing the transparency** on European political parties, and **strengthening their legal framework**.

Each reform proposal is summarised here and links are provided to our main report ([%](#)), including a full drafting of the proposed amendments and an accompanying justification.

Increasing transparency

The vast majority of European citizens remains unaware of European political parties, which directly hampers their ability to carry out their treaty-mandated role of “forming European political awareness and [expressing] the will of citizens of the Union” (Article 10(4) TEU).

Beyond structural issues, the absence of clear, publicly visible, and easily understandable information concerning European parties is a major obstacle in their discovery by European citizens – either directly or through the news media. With European parties in a position of relative obscurity, it is all the more important for information about them to be not only available, but **truly accessible**.

It is therefore imperative to clarify certain provisions and, in some instances, expand the transparency mandate of the Authority. Information must be published in a timely manner (with clear deadlines for the transmission of each document *to the Authority*, as well as for its publication *by the Authority*), and its content must be accessible, clear, and understandable.

Increasing transparency – provisions ^(1/4)

- Give a **mandate of public information** to the APPF (Art 7.1 and 7.2) 
- Provide a deadline for the **publication of the annual report** of the Director of the APPF (Art 7.10) 
- Provide a deadline for the transmission of **amendments of European parties' statutes** to the APPF (Art. 10.5) 
- Provide a deadline for the transmission of the **list of European parties' member parties** following each change, instead of once a year (Art. 10.6) 
- **Separate the deadline** for the reporting of donations and contributions from that of the reporting of annual financial statements (Art. 23.2) 
- Provide a **shorter deadline** for the reporting of donations and contributions (Art. 23.2) 

Increasing transparency – provisions ^(2/4)

- Ensure that **contributions by individual members** are properly reported to the APPF (Art. 23.2) 🔗
- **Remove the €1,500-3,000 donation category** for which written consent is required for the reporting of information by European parties (Art. 23.2) 🔗
- Ensure that the result of **due diligence measures** by European parties is always shared with the APPF (Art. 23.5) 🔗
- **Shorten the deadline** for the provision of annual financial statements in line with national financial reporting best practices (Art. 26.1) 🔗
- Ensure that annual financial statements provide **comparable and sufficiently detailed information** on donations and contributions (Art. 26.1) 🔗

Increasing transparency – provisions ^(3/4)

- Make the **APPF responsible for transparency** measures and ensure that its website is the single point for information on European parties (Art. 36.1) 
- Provide a deadline for the **publication of documents by the APPF** (Art. 36.1) 
- Ensure the publications of European parties' **applications for funding** (Art. 36.1) 
- **Remove the €1,500-3,000 donation category** for which written consent is required for online publication by the APPF (Art. 36.1) 
- **Lower the threshold** for the reporting of donations and contributions to €500 (Art. 36.1) 

Increasing transparency – provisions ^(4/4)

- Ensure the **timely publication of donations** ahead of European elections (Art. 36.1) 
- Ensure a **yearly record of MEPs' European party membership** is kept available online and not simply replaced with updated data (Art. 36.1) 
- Ensure a **yearly, machine-readable record of European parties' member parties** is kept available online and not replaced with updated data (Art. 36.2) 
- Request that the requirement for the APPF to provide machine-readable data on donations and contributions **applies retro-actively to data already published** under Regulation 1141/2014 (Art. 44.3 (new)) 

Finally, based on the findings of our [Logos Project](#), we call on the Council to review its position and **re-instate the Commission's more precise language** concerning the **display of European parties' logo** on national parties' website (Art. 4.1(i), which the Council moved to the preamble). 

Strengthening the legal framework

This section aims at strengthening specific points of the legal framework on European parties and is therefore more diverse than the section on transparency. These proposals focus on areas in line with or not affected by the Council's partial general approach.

Two proposals aim to create a closer link between European parties and citizens; firstly, by ensuring that MEPs endowing a European political party with public funding are actually individual members of said European party, and, secondly, by incentivising European parties to raise private income outside of the contributions provided by its member parties.

One further proposal supports the Council's opposition to funding European parties entirely with public funds in election years, but recognises that election years lead to extra expenses and limited time for fundraising. It therefore recommends the creation of an electoral lump sum for distributed equally to all European parties.

Finally, we recommend reverting to the Regulation's initial sanctions regime for non-quantifiable infringements, which the Commission proposes to water down.

Strengthening the legal framework – provisions

- Require MEPs to be **direct/individual members** of European parties in order to be counted for MEP-based European public funding (Art. 20.3) 
- Create a **separate stream of European public funding**, distributed equally to all running European parties/lists, ahead of European elections (Art. 20.4a (new)) 
- Provide a **ceiling for contributions** from European parties' member parties as a share of their private income (Art. 23.9) 
- **Strengthen the sanctions regime** for non-quantifiable infringements (Art. 30.4) 