
Parliament strengthens its anti-harassment policy

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- New mediation service to support Members and staff in resolving difficult relational situations
 - Agreement to have mandatory training for MEPs for a well-functioning team
 - Agreement to review of the rules on the functioning of the Advisory Committee dealing with harassment complaints concerning Members, including increased protection and shorter procedures
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Today's Bureau agreement reaffirms Parliament's commitment as an employer to offer a safe and inclusive working environment, where there is zero tolerance towards inappropriate behaviour.

In January 2023, President Metsola mandated the Quaestors to work on proposals to reinforce Parliament's anti-harassment policies. Building on the recommendations of the Quaestors, the Bureau decided on 10 July to establish a mediation service and gave its political backing to the introduction of mandatory training for Members. The Bureau also agreed to improve the existing procedure of the Advisory Committee dealing with harassment complaints concerning Members.

President Metsola underlined *"Places of work must be safe and dignified. Improving and incentivising anti-harassment policies in the Parliament was always a priority for me. It forms part of my objective to reform the European Parliament to make it more efficient, transparent and fairer. And this reform has the potential to deliver. It pays special attention to measures that will better protect victims, it speeds up the processes and it focuses on prevention, through training and mediation"*.

New mediation service in the European Parliament

The decision establishes a mediation service to support Members and staff in resolving difficult relational situations and to maintain a positive and collaborative working environment, where

conflicts are prevented or solved at an early stage. The established mediation service will act independently and be based on the universal principles of mediation: confidentiality, voluntariness, informality and self-determination.

Mandatory training for Members

In order to provide 360-degree support to Members, training on “How to create a good and well-functioning team”, consisting of five different modules, should be mandatory for Members and offered at the beginning and throughout their mandate as of next spring.

The content of the modules will cover the recruitment of assistants, successful team management, including conflict prevention and early conflict resolution, administrative and financial aspects of parliamentary assistance as well as harassment prevention.

Revision of the functioning of the Advisory Committee

A number of modifications were agreed to improve the existing rules codifying established best practices, aligning with recent case law and taking into account suggestions from the representatives of the Parliamentary assistants. For instance, the new rules aim to streamline and shorten procedures, putting in place additional options to protect complainants and support measures for the remainder of the complainant’s contract, when a case of harassment has been established. A new restricted format of hearing is also agreed upon if needed in sensitive situations, such as complaints of sexual harassment. The modifications also supports strengthening the complainants’ and the Members’ obligation to cooperate with the committee, while maintaining the confidentiality of all their procedures in order to protect all parties’ privacy.

In addition to the proposals summarised above, the Bureau supported the principle of introducing an **amicable termination of contract** between a Member and their accredited parliamentary assistant.

All the measures agreed will be finalised in the coming meetings and accompanied by several awareness-raising campaigns.

Next steps

The Mediation service approved will be in place in the best possible timeframe. The existing training on harassment prevention will continue to be offered to the Members while the new mandatory training on “How to create a good and well-functioning team” for Members will be developed to be offered as of spring 2024, at the beginning of next term and through the legislature. The Constitutional Affairs Committee will work on this in order to incorporate this agreement into Parliament’s existing rules. In addition, additional staff will be allocated to the relevant service to ensure the necessary administrative support to the implementation of the decisions taken to strengthen *Integrity, Independence and Accountability* in the Institution.

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