

European Parliament press release on the 2014 European elections (16 April 2013)

Caption: In the run-up to the 2014 European Parliament elections, the Committee on Constitutional Affairs asserts that the rules on founding and funding European political parties should be revised to improve their visibility, transparency and effectiveness and enhance the European character of these elections.

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2014 European Parliament elections: revising rules on EU political parties

Committees Committee on Constitutional Affairs [16-04-2013 - 11:06]

In the run-up to the 2014 European Parliament elections, rules on founding and funding EU political parties should be revised to improve their visibility, transparency and effectiveness and enhance the European character of these elections, said the Constitutional Affairs Committee in a negotiating mandate voted on Monday for talks with the Council.

"This new legislation will strengthen the actual involvement of EU citizens in the EU affairs. For EU citizens, a European political party with a legal personality is a strong representative body of EU citizens' interests. Citizens can be more actively involved in political life. We are now starting the trilogue with the European Commission and the Council to have the new rules in force on time, before the elections of 2014", said Marietta Giannakou (EPP, EL), who is steering the legislation through Parliament.

EU legal statute

European political parties and their affiliated foundations need to be established according to EU law in order to overcome the obstacles created by the diversity of national legal forms and ensure high standards of transparency and accountability, said the committee.

Respect for EU values a prerequisite

Respecting EU values, in line with EU Treaty Article 2, would still be a prerequisite for any alliance of national parties wishing to apply for EU legal status. Once this status is obtained, a European party could apply for EU funds, but to be eligible for them, it would have to have at least one elected MEP, as clear proof of its European political ambition.

The same rules would apply to EU political foundations, provided that they are formally associated with an established European party.

More financial flexibility...

New rules would make it easier for European parties to generate their own resources by raising the ceiling on donations from €12,000 to €25,000. Any donation above 1,000€ would have to be publicly disclosed, Members also agreed.

...and stricter sanctions to ensure compliance

Sanctions would be toughened, to counterbalance greater financial flexibility. An EU party infringing EU law would be deleted from the register and all its unspent EU funds would be seized. In addition, the committee proposes that any fine imposed should be at least the double the financial advantage gained through the infringement.

The European Parliament would be in charge of monitoring and assessing compliance with these rules and would decide on any sanctions. Members would be assisted by a committee of independent leading figures, whose conclusions would be made public.

No funding for national campaigns other than EU referenda

Using EU public money to fund national candidates or political campaigns would remain prohibited. However, the committee inserted an exception to allow the use of EU funds for referenda on EU legislation or to ratify an EU Treaty change.

A mandate to start negotiations with the Council for an agreed text was approved with 13 votes in favour and 10 against. Talks will start immediately with a view to ensuring that the new rules take effect in time for next year's European Parliament elections.

Committee on Constitutional Affairs

In the chair: Carlo Casino (EPP, IT)

Procedure: codecision, mandate for trilogue

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