Conférence européenne des **Présidentes et Présidents de Parlement**
European Conference of **Presidents of Parliament**
Rome, 15-16 octobre 2026 / 15-16 October 2026

MEETING OF SECRETARIES GENERAL

Friday, 16 October 2026 – 8.30 am to 10 am

TRANSPARENCY, INTEGRITY AND ETHICS: RENEWING TRUST IN PARLIAMENTS

BACKGROUND DOCUMENT

Public trust and integrity standards

Public trust in democratic institutions is essential to their legitimacy and proper functioning and is all the more crucial in the case of parliaments, given their role as institutions composed of representatives of the people. Parliaments' legitimacy rests in fact on their representative character and their duty to serve the public interest while acting with the highest standards. By setting the standards bar very high, they can lead by example and contribute to increasing citizens' trust in the institution. However, public trust in parliaments is under strain through perceptions that certain actors have an untransparent and undue influence on democratic decision-making. Increasing political and societal polarisation and misinformation further exacerbate these concerns.

Key questions for discussion:

This discussion aims to explore the challenge of renewing public trust in parliaments – with a specific focus on the role of parliamentary integrity frameworks in supporting public trust in democratic institutions. We invite participants to share their experience, including of best practice as well as challenges in implementing reforms.

- **Sources of declining public trust in democratic institutions**: What are the key drivers of declining trust, including the impact of misinformation, polarisation, perceived elite detachment, and gaps in ethical enforcement?
- **Ethical standards and public expectations**: How can parliaments ensure that their ethical standards keep pace with evolving public expectations?
- **Transparent and independent parliaments**: What measures to ensure transparency can parliamentary administrations adopt to strengthen citizens' trust in the institutions? Which technical tools administrations can provide to ensure transparency? What potential does the use of AI offer in terms of enhancing transparency?
- **Towards a culture of ethical leadership:** How can parliamentary administrations foster a culture of ethical leadership within parliaments? How can this be done at the level of the secretariat?
- How can parliamentary administrations support the **development of better ethical standards**?
- How can parliamentary administrations support the **implementation of the codes of conduct**?
- **Role for the Council of Europe**: What more can the Council of Europe do to assist national parliaments in sharing best practice on transparency, ethics and integrity and in bolstering public trust in democratic institutions?

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Further reference may be made to:

PACE Resolutions:

- Resolution 2632 (2025) "Identifying and managing conflicts of interest in the Parliamentary Assembly"
- Resolution 2596 (2025) "Respect for the rule of law and the fight against corruption within the Council of Europe"
- Resolution 2405 (2021) "Revision of the Code of conduct for members of the Parliamentary Assembly: introducing the explicit prohibition of sexism, sexual harassment and sexual violence and misconduct"
- Resolution 2406 (2021) "Fighting corruption – General principles of political responsibility"
- Resolution 2170 (2017) "Promoting integrity in governance to tackle political corruption"
- Resolution 1943 (2013) and Recommendation 2019 (2013) "Corruption as a threat to the rule of law"
- Resolution 1903 (2012) "Code of conduct of members of the Parliamentary Assembly: good practice or a core duty?"
- Resolution 1214 (2000) "Role of parliaments in fighting corruption"

Other reference texts:

- The PACE project "strengthening ethics and integrity in parliaments"
- IPU-PACE Joint Study on "sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe"
- The website of the Council of Europe's GRECO (Group of States against Corruption) and in particular the Recommendations to each member State of its 4th round of evaluation which focussed on the prevention of corruption in respect of members of parliament (as well as judges and prosecutors).

The **European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD)** has been very active in promoting the exchange of information, experience and best practices on the subject. Reference may be made to the following requests initiated by the national parliaments recently:

- Request 6236 – The bodies responsible for overseeing MPs' ethics (2026)
- Request 6233 – Training for Members of Parliament on ethical conduct (2026)
- Request 5935 – Violations of a Code of Ethics (2024)
- Request 5910 – Gifts and hospitality to MPs (2024)
- Request 5751 – Code of conduct for Members of Parliament outside of their parliamentarian activities (2024)
- Request 5537 – Corruption prevention and avoiding conflicts of interest among staff of Members of Parliament (2023)
- Request 5478 – Anti-corruption activities of the parliamentary administration (2023)
- Request 5335 – Regulation for Members of Parliament regarding undesirable behaviour (2023)
- Request 5167 – Public officials and business activities – conflict of interest (2022)
- Request 5100 – Rules governing Lobbying in national Parliaments (2022)
- Request 5096 – Transparency of the decision making process (2022)
- Requests 4814 and 4815 – Investigations into bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct (2021)
- Request 4537 – Support of Members of Parliaments in terms of ethical guidance of their conduct (2020)
- Request 4451 – Sanctions available to Parliaments to apply to Members of Parliament (2020)
- Request 4127 – The Charter of the Council of Ethics (2019)
- Request 4065 – Code of Conduct for MPs (2019)
- Request 3857 – Gifts accepted by Members of Parliament (2018)
- Requests 2946 and 2468 – Structures and Procedures with regard to the Code of Conduct for MPs (2015)