



PROTECTING DEMOCRATIC INTEGRITY

- RISING UP TO NEW CHALLENGES -

DRAFT BUDGETARY PLAN 2026

FOR THE AUTHORITY FOR EUROPEAN POLITICAL PARTIES AND EUROPEAN POLITICAL FOUNDATIONS

Part I: Our work streams to help secure European democracy

A. Mission of the Authority

In line with Article 10(4) of the Treaty on European Union, political parties at European level contribute to forming European political awareness and to expressing the will of the citizens of the Union. European political foundations contribute to the debate on European public policy issues.

Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2014 on the statute and funding of European political parties and European political foundations (“Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014”) establishes an independent Authority for European Political Parties and European Political Foundations (the “Authority”) for the purpose of registering, controlling and, where necessary, imposing sanctions on European political parties and European political foundations. Additionally, the Authority provides transparency services to the Union citizens by publishing key information on European political parties and European political foundations. The Authority’s team conducts this mission independently, efficiently and in respect of political pluralism. It contributes proactively to the European Union’s “Team democratic integrity” in close cooperation with the Parliament, other Union institutions, bodies and agencies, as well as competent national authorities.

This document sets out the draft budgetary plan for the financial year 2026 for the Authority in accordance with Article 6(7) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014, based on its mandate, and taking into account the evolving digital and possibly regulatory landscape.

Pursuant to Article 6(7) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014, the appropriations for the expenditure of the Authority are provided under a separate Title in the Section for the European Parliament in the general budget of the European Union. According to that provision, those appropriations must be sufficient to ensure the full and independent operation of the Authority.

B. Preparing for growing challenges

In order to face the challenges and operational demands related to a rapidly evolving political and geopolitical landscape, the Authority is continuously adjusting its operations as indicated below.

- **Increasing numbers of entities under the Authority's control**

Following the 2024 elections to the European Parliament, the political landscape at European level has evolved. While from 2019 to 2024, the Authority had a total of 20 entities under its purview (10 European political parties and 10 European political foundations), 2 new European political parties were registered in 2024. The Authority also expects further developments in this area, with potential new applications, especially for new European political foundations affiliated to the newly created European political parties.

Verification procedures as well as compliance controls and transparency services will in the years ahead inevitably require further resources allocated to cope with the increased number of European political parties (and potentially European political foundations) registered.

- **Upgraded compliance control cycles**

The Authority engaged a service provider to create, develop, and implement a tool utilising the KNIME Analytics Platform. This tool aims to enhance the efficiency of the Authority's compliance control obligations. Specifically, its aim is to analyse the annual accounts of European political parties and foundations, along with the corresponding reporting template forms submitted by these entities. The objective is to detect any irregularities based on the risk markers established by the Authority. Through this project, the Authority will be in the position to replace some of the labour-intensive and repetitive manual spreadsheet tasks in the compliance control cycle with an automated process.

- **Enhanced transparency services to the citizens and continuous guidance**

The Authority is committed to continuously improving the modalities of implementing the transparency provisions of Article 32 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014. This requirement mandates the Authority to disclose certain information pertaining to the organisation and funding of European political parties and European political foundations. It extends to both the information contained in the Authority's Register of parties and foundations and details of contributions and donations reported by these entities. The Authority has already further significantly expanded and accelerated its transparency services on its website and social media. However, efforts to enhance the workflow for organising and structuring verified information for publication will persist.

Furthermore, drawing upon case law and accumulated administrative experience, the Authority issues guidance documents on various topics on its website. These guidance materials are periodically supplemented to address evolving needs. It is noteworthy that the website is

accessible in all 24 official EU languages, necessitating translation support and additional time investment for publication purposes.

The aforementioned optimisation of the processes requires an increased need for time investments.

- **Enhanced cooperation with other expert bodies**

In addition and complementary to the close cooperation with the European Parliament, the Authority has developed relations with other EU institutions, agencies and bodies, as well as national contact points, data protection and cybersecurity authorities. In this vein, the Authority organised an annual conference with the Authority's National Contact Points as defined in Article 2(10) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014, to deepen mutual understanding and exchange best practices. Additionally, the Authority set up a European Information Exchange Platform on Political Parties and Political Foundations Supervision in order to create synergies among the Authority and Member States' competent authorities.

Moreover, the Authority signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Moldova on exchange of best practices on 26 September 2024, in light of - but without prejudice to - the EU accession process of Moldova. The Republic of Moldova is exposed to significant levels of malign foreign interference attempts in its democratic processes. The Authority's cooperation with Moldova aims to defend democracy and making both: (1) a positive contribution on the ground and (2) helping to tackle more comprehensively a threat that affects all European democracies.

All such partnerships need to continuously be nurtured and reinforced in the years to come, requiring further efforts for the Authority in terms of time and human resources allocations.

- **Flanking measures**

The Authority continued to proactively raise awareness on European democracy among key multipliers, in particular by a school competition organised on a yearly basis, with the aim of raising awareness about the European democracy system and its functioning, especially in young and first time voters. The pupils were encouraged to put their thoughts about the European democracy on paper and share them with the public. The aim was to encourage the first time voters to reflect on how European democracy relates to their daily lives and the lives of the citizens in general. We also challenged them to think about measures to make EU democracy as lively and the voices of the citizens as relevant as possible.

In 2024, the Authority launched an EU School competition on the topic of EU democracy in the age of digital transformation.

In addition to honouring one school class from the current EU Member States, the Authority decided to extend additionally a Special Prize of a visit to the European Parliament to a school class in Moldova that will be selected on the basis of essay and video contributions with the help of a high level inter-institutional expert jury.

C. Support provided by the European Parliament to the Authority

While the Authority has made efficient use of its own resources for the above efforts, and in particular benefited from the high level of personal commitment of its small number of staff, it should be recognised also that the Authority's own capacity is complemented by administrative support provided by the European Parliament and by staff allocated to it. Before indicating resource needs, it is therefore relevant to summarise the budgetary structure and administrative support services already provided by the European Parliament.

The European Parliament has been supporting the Authority in the following ways:

- In accordance with Article 6(7) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014, to ensure the Authority's full and independent operations, the Authority manages independently an operational budget line on the European Parliament's budget title, with means to cover task-specific expenditure exceeding the scope of administrative support services, in budget item 5 0 0 dedicated to "*Operational expenditure of the Authority for European Political Parties and European Political Foundations*".
- Furthermore, in accordance with Article 6(4) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014, the Authority is physically located in the European Parliament, which provides the Authority with the necessary offices and administrative support to conduct its main activities.

The Authority and the European Parliament implemented this system of cooperation more specifically across the following areas:

- **Staff management:** Pursuant to Article 6(6) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014, a Service Level Agreement was signed in September 2021 with the Directorate-General for Personnel of the European Parliament ("DG Personnel"). The agreement defines the conditions under which DG Personnel provides certain services to the Authority and describes the cooperation of DG Personnel and the Authority concerning various functions coming under personnel management or associated therewith (medical service, missions, well-being at work etc.). The agreement does not concern the provision of posts, which remain a matter for the budgetary procedure and arrangements between the Institutions for allocating the resulting burden.
- **Translation services:** Translation services are currently provided by the European Parliament.
- **Training services:** The Authority's staff has currently access to trainings and related services provided by the European Parliament, including by virtue of the Service Level Agreement with DG Personnel mentioned above. In addition, the appropriations envisaged in Part II below provide the Authority with a certain financial autonomy to source additional training services from the market (e.g., audit and accounting), should the Authority need specialised trainings outside the catalogue made available by the European Parliament.

- **Premises:** Pursuant to Article 6(4) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014, the Authority is located in the European Parliament, which provides the necessary office space and administrative support facilities. In this context, a Service Level Agreement with the Directorate-General for Infrastructure and Logistics of the European Parliament was signed in December 2021. The Authority is based mainly in Parliament's premises in Brussels. Additionally, the Authority also obtained one office in Strasbourg, in order to be represented, when required, during Parliament's plenary part-sessions, in particular, to meet institutional representatives and stakeholders.
- **IT services:** The purchase, hire, servicing and maintenance of hardware and software for standard operations and related services are currently provided by the European Parliament. In this context, a Service Level Agreement with the Directorate-General for Innovation and Technological Support of the European Parliament was signed on 10 January 2023.

In addition, the appropriations envisaged in Part II below provides the Authority with a certain financial autonomy to explore alternative IT solutions that are not available in the European Parliament to respond to needs relating to the performance of its duties, in particular relating to auditing and investigating software.

- **Internal audit:** A memorandum of understanding with Parliament's internal auditor was signed in January 2022.
- **Office supplies:** The Authority makes use of the Parliament's framework contract for office supplies, but pays from its own operational budget line for it.
- **Postage services:** Postage services, including processing and delivery by national postal services or private delivery firms, are provided by the European Parliament.
- **Missions and duty travel:** Services related to the organisation and payment of missions and duty travel are provided by the European Parliament.
- **Documentation services:** Documentation services, including subscriptions to newspapers and periodicals and access to the library, are provided by the European Parliament.

D. Looking ahead - main resources needs

- **Increasing numbers of entities under the Authority's control**

As already mentioned above, the Authority registered two new European political parties in 2024. In the years to come, the Authority expects further developments in this area, with potential new applications, especially for new European political foundations affiliated to the newly created European political parties.

This expansion has already resulted in a growing workload for the Authority, particularly in the registration, verification and compliance oversight of these entities. In the coming years, additional resources will be essential to manage the increased number of registered European political parties and potentially their affiliated foundations effectively in full respect of

established timelines and necessary control standards, such as the four-eye principle. The Authority's teams will need to perform all necessary checks and investigations taking into account that no economies of scale are possible and that each entity is unique and needs a differentiated approach according to its peculiarities.

- **Defending democracy in 2026: adapting to the evolving geopolitical context**

The Authority will need to further engage with international actors in order to exchange best practices as regards supervision of political parties financing, transparency and electoral campaigns integrity, and cooperate in specific practical cases.

In particular, foreign interference threats need to be addressed in the current geopolitical situation in light of the Authority's mandate (especially pursuant to Article 10a of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014). The Authority will continue to be proactive in reaching out and raising awareness among a network of bodies and institutions relevant to the joint defence of European democracy, ranging from the European Parliament's Directorate-General for Communication to the European External Action Service, the Hybrid Centre of Excellence and the European Data Protection Board (EDPB). This entails not only awareness-raising, but also dedicated events organised by the Authority in this respect.

As digital infrastructure and AI systems become more integral to operations of European political parties and foundations, the need for enhanced cybersecurity and data protection increases. In this regard, the Authority will need to ensure that sensitive data is protected in compliance with evolving security and privacy regulations.

In addition, the Authority will continue its work to enhance transparency and public access to information, in order to respond to increasing demands for transparency in political processes, particularly in light of public scrutiny and accountability. Such goal necessitates additional resources to manage and provide easy access to information regarding the activities and financial statements of political parties and foundations.

- **Potentially evolving legal framework for the Authority's work**

A possible extension of the Authority's mandate¹ makes it necessary to propose an appropriate level of resources also in that scenario. Additional work streams on verifications, transparency and preventing threats of foreign interference would complement the tasks of the Authority's staff in that case.

¹ See the European Commission Proposal for a Regulation on the statute and funding of European political parties and European political foundations (recast) of 25 November 2021 (COM(2021) 734 final, 2021/0375 (COD)). On 15 September 2022, the European Parliament in its Plenary session adopted its position at first reading. On 22 March 2022, Council in its General Affairs formation (GAC) reached a political agreement (a partial general approach) on the proposal. The Council revised its mandate on 17 March 2023.

Part II: Appropriations

The breakdown provided hereunder comprises projected expenditure appropriations for administrative support by the European Parliament, the Authority's dedicated budget items 500 and expenditure appropriations concerning staff salaries. The Authority's dedicated budget items 500 are included under *Section I - European Parliament* of the general budget of the European Union. The appropriations foreseen in budget item 500 aim to provide the Authority with a certain financial independence to finance specific professional trainings, purchase specialised studies and analysis following the European Parliament elections, expertise and advice, cover legal costs and damages, documentation and outreach activities, as well as other administrative costs not covered by Parliament's administrative support services.

Amounts provided below for 2026 are best estimates at the time of writing and depend on the number of full time equivalents that will be working for the Authority in 2026. The Authority will monitor the evolution of its needs and, if necessary, review this budgetary plan and the amounts contained therein to align them to that evolution.

A. Support from the Institutions

The budget items corresponding to the support appropriations listed below are currently included in the respective chapters of the budget of the European Parliament, with the respective lines managed by the relevant Authorising Officers of the European Parliament.

Nature of expenditure	Assessment	Amount (EUR) for financial year 2025	Amount (EUR) for financial year 2026
Language services (Chap 14)	Costs of translation and interpretation services	10 526,27	10 726,26
Professional trainings (Chap 16)	Costs of trainings	12 631,52	12 871,51
Building, IT and ancillary expenses (Chap 20 and 21)	Expenditure related to premises and standard operations	263 156,75	268 156,72
Missions (Chap 30)	Costs of missions and duty travel	99 999,56	101 899,55
Documentation services (Chap 32)	Costs of access to available documentation	2 631,05	2 681,03
Total		388 945,15	396 335,07

B. Appropriations under item 5 0 0

In accordance with Article 6(7) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014, the Authority shall have a separate Title in the Section for the European Parliament in the general budget of the European Union, which has been located in Title V - budget item 5 0 0.

The same legislative provision requires that these appropriations shall be sufficient to ensure the full and independent operation of the Authority. Consequently, they cover in particular expenditure specifically related to the mission of the Authority, namely professional trainings, purchase of non-standard software and hardware, acquisition of expertise and advice, legal costs and damages, documentation and outreach activities, as well as other costs, including administrative costs. These appropriations may also cover costs invoiced by an institution, in

case the Authority exceeds the thresholds agreed with that institution when sourcing goods or services in the context of the agreements and administrative arrangements concluded under Article 6 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014.

With efficiency considerations in mind, the corresponding request for 2026 is stable in real terms, as its evolution would be limited to a low inflation scenario adjustment.

Resources	Legal Basis	Amount (EUR) for financial year 2025	Amount (EUR) for financial year 2026
Budget item of the Authority 5 0 0(*)	Article 6(7) of Reg. No 1141/2014	408 000,00	416 160,00

(*) It is understood that the appropriations to be foreseen for the functioning of the Committee for Independent Eminent Persons are additional to this amount, and included in a separate budget item.

C. Appropriations relating to staff

In accordance with Article 6(5) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014, the Director shall be assisted by staff in relation to whom he or she is the appointing authority. Currently, the Authority's posts for staff as well as contract agent appropriations are ringfenced in the corresponding budget lines of the European Parliament's budget. The necessary staff-related appropriations are based on the detailed analysis provided in the Annex attached herewith and estimated as follows, taking into account the annual inflation adjustments for 2025 and 2026:

Resources	Legal Basis	Amount (EUR) for financial year 2025	Amount (EUR) for financial year 2026 Scenario 1: Unchanged legislation	Amount (EUR) for financial year 2026 Scenario 2: Updated legislation
Staff-related appropriations of the Authority	Article 6(7) of Reg. No 1141/2014	2 426 595,78	2 541 534,36	3 565 614,84

D. Overall expenditure appropriations deemed necessary for the Authority

Resources	Legal Basis	Amount (EUR) for financial year 2025	Amount (EUR) for financial year 2026 Scenario 1: Unchanged legislation	Amount (EUR) for financial year 2026 Scenario 2: Updated legislation
Administrative support from EP	Article 6(4) of Reg. No 1141/2014	388 945,15	396 335,07	396 335,07
Budget item of the Authority 5 0 0(*)	Article 6(7) of Reg. No 1141/2014	408 000,00	416 160,00	416 160,00
Staff-related appropriations for the Authority		2 426 595,78	2 541 534,36	3 565 614,84
Total		3 223 540,93	3 354 029,43	4 378 109,91

(*) It is understood that the appropriations to be foreseen for the functioning of the Committee for Independent Eminent Persons are additional to this amount, and included in a separate budget item.

**ANNEX:
DETAILED ANALYSIS ON THE AUTHORITY'S STAFFING 2026**

The assessment of the Authority presented in the budgetary plan 2026 is based on the analysis of the developments with regards to the factual environment and legal framework.

Where the Authority's responsibilities grow, both in scope and complexity, compliance oversight, and enhanced transparency measures, while at the same time maximising efficiency, appropriations for operational expenditure could remain stable, whereas limited staffing adjustments will be necessary.

Having in mind its unchanged role in protecting democratic integrity, the Authority's request for staffing resources for 2026 is substantiated as follows:

1. Continue to provide core functions in a changing environment, namely by:

- Implementing verification and compliance control cycles in light of a number of European political parties increased by 20% compared to the previous legislature;
- Making available corresponding transparency services to citizens and continuous guidance;
- Enhancing cooperation with other expert bodies.

2. Implement projects to address growing geopolitical challenges, namely by:

- Countering foreign interference threats, capitalising on the experience gained during the election year;
- Fostering deeper collaboration and coordination with Member States and EU Institutions, agencies and bodies;
- Enhancing cybersecurity and data protection in cooperation with the European political parties and European political foundations;
- Providing guidance and scrutiny on European political parties' activities in light of the new framework relating to political advertisement.

The Authority is much encouraged by the additional appropriations relating to contract staff earmarked in the European Parliament's staff-related budget lines as from 2024. However, the Authority wishes to reiterate its concern already expressed in the 2025 draft budgetary plan, consisting of the functional risks inherent to staffing arrangements increasingly reliant on contract agents which results in a potentially higher staff turnover. This was recognised also by the European Commission in the explanatory memorandum annexed to its proposal for a recast of the Regulation on the statute and funding of European political parties and European political foundations², where it highlighted the Authority's need for stable human resources³.

² See (COM(2021) 734 final, 2021/0375 (COD)).

³ See the Annexes to the Commission proposal COM(2021) 734 final of 25.11.2021, 2021/0375 (COD), Annex IV (Legislative Financial Statement), Point 1.4.2 (Specific objective(s)), last paragraph, stating

Furthermore, the staffing levels of 2024 also quantitatively did not yet take into account the 20% increase in European political parties to control since the beginning of the new legislature.

In addition, possible legislative developments in the course of the new legislature would likely affect the mandate of the Authority. This would create an immediate need for additional resources due to the enlargement of its mandate, in all its main competence areas, particularly in the areas of registration, compliance controls as well as reporting and transparency requirements.

In light of the above, the Authority estimates that the level of staffing in 2026 that will allow for effective operations would be as follows, while transparently distinguishing the scenario of unchanged legislative framework from that in case the currently known elements of the legislative procedure for a possible extension of the Authority’s mandate were adopted.

	<i>Scenario 1: Unchanged legislation</i>	<i>Scenario 2: Amended legislation</i>
Additional tasks	Additional tasks resulting from evolving environment of EU democracy.	Additional tasks in the field of registration, enhanced donations control, sanctions, coordination with Member States and EP Authorising Officer,
Resulting additional AD posts	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two temporary AD posts related to enhanced compliance control and cooperation workflows, • Two temporary AD posts related to additional registration conditions and regular verification thereof.
Resulting additional AST posts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One temporary AST post to cover increasing numbers of registered entities under the Authority’s control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three temporary AST posts related to assisting in rapid publication processes and verification cycles, and coordination/liaison with Member States and EU Institutions, Agencies and Bodies.
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>7</i>
		+1 as in base-line scenario 1
<i>Total</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>8</i>

that “It is necessary to ensure that the Authority has sufficient resources to fully complete its tasks, both those provided for by the existing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 1141/2014 and the new ones envisaged by the present recast proposal. This requires stable staffing and strengthening of the human resources currently provided to the Authority.”