

Nigel Farage snubs European Parliament, rebuffs request to testify over gift allegations

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News

Nigel Farage has angrily rejected a European Parliament request to appear before a committee to testify about allegations that he failed to disclose gifts worth over €400,000 from a UK businessman.



Nigel Farage | *Photo credit: Press Association*

In a statement, Farage, leader of the Brexit Party in the UK, branded Parliament's advisory committee on the code of conduct, which he was asked to appear before, as a "kangaroo court."

He was asked to testify to the committee on Wednesday but said he was unable to do so "at such short notice."

It has been claimed that items paid for by him by Leave campaigner Arron Banks included Farage's

London home, his car and trips to the US to meet Donald Trump.

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The MEPs' code of conduct stipulates that all members must declare travel, accommodation or subsistence expenses from third parties.

A Parliament source said on Wednesday that Farage was not under any obligation to appear before the committee, which will examine the case before advising Parliament President Antonio Tajani.

Farage, however, hit back at the allegations, which first surfaced in a UK television programme.

He said, "What is this but an EU kangaroo court where I am given 24 hours notice about allegations picked up from press stories. I will not be attending at such short notice."

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"And if they try to bar me from the building, who else gives voice to the thousands of people who voted for me? Is this democracy EU-style? I did not receive any private money for political purposes."

"This committee would better spend its time investigating the waste of public money by well-known MEPs," he added.

On Tuesday, Farage met President Trump who is on a state visit to the UK.

Banks has reportedly said he had "willingly helped Farage and was honoured to do so", adding: "This was all designed to help Nigel get out of politics."

While there are "no sanctions or consequences" for an MEP who refuses to attend a hearing by the advisory committee, a Parliament source said potential penalties for any proven misconduct may consist of one or more of the following measures: a reprimand; forfeiture of entitlement to the daily subsistence allowance for a period of between two and 30 days; the right to vote in plenary, temporary suspension from participation in all or some of the activities of Parliament for a period of between two and 30 days and prohibition from representing parliament on an inter-parliamentary delegation, inter-parliamentary conference or any interinstitutional forum, for up to one year.

The five-man advisory committee works behind closed doors and its decisions are not public.

An MEP asked to appear before it can decide not to attend, ask for another date or send a statement in writing.

The Parliament source told this website, “To ensure full respect of the procedures in place and the rights of the MEPs, in line with its rules of procedure regarding referral by the President on an alleged breach of the code of conduct, the advisory committee will appoint one of its members as rapporteur on the alleged breach.”

“The rapporteur shall not be from the same political group as the MEP alleged to have breached the code of conduct. The full advisory committee may hear the MEP concerned. In exceptional cases it may mandate the rapporteur to hear the MEP.”

“The rapporteur shall prepare for the committee's consideration a draft recommendation to the president on the alleged breach of the code of conduct. The draft recommendation shall present the facts of the case, the arguments presented by the MEP concerned, an evaluation of these facts and arguments and a conclusion.”

“The conclusion shall lay down whether the code of conduct has been breached or not and shall include advice on possible action to be taken and a recommendation to the President on a possible decision,” the source added.

Farage has been an MEP since 1999 and led the UK Independence Party in the run-up to the 2016 EU referendum, campaigning alongside Leave.EU, of which Banks was a major financier.

Farage stepped down as leader later the same year, but remained as an MEP before launching the Brexit Party in March this year.

After last month's European elections, the Brexit party is now one of the largest national delegations in the European Parliament, with 29 MEPs, as many as Angela Merkel's centre-right CDU-CSU alliance.

About the author

Martin Banks is a senior reporter at The Parliament Magazine

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