



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Committee on Foreign Affairs

2011/2033(INI)

5.9.2013

OPINION

of the Committee on Foreign Affairs

for the Committee on Budgetary Control

on budgetary management of European Union pre-accession funds in the areas of judicial systems and the fight against corruption in the candidate and potential candidate countries
(2011/2033(INI))

Rapporteur: Jelko Kacin

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Foreign Affairs calls on the Committee on Budgetary Control, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Recalls that the fight against corruption and organised crime is one of the most important priorities for any candidate or potential candidate country wishing to fulfil its European perspective;
2. Reiterates the importance of an independent judiciary, of the protection and promotion of fundamental rights and of an effective fight against corruption in strengthening the rule of law and democracy; welcomes the EU's new negotiating approach, which firmly anchors these core areas at the heart of the accession process and includes an early opening of Chapters 23 and 24 on the basis of clear and detailed action plans, stimulating the establishment of the necessary legislation, institutions and solid track records of implementation; stresses the need for setting transparent and fair benchmarks for the entire process that can translate the criteria into concrete steps towards accession;
3. Considers it essential to link EU financial assistance more closely to the priorities of enlargement policy, especially in relation to the rule of law, in order to improve the independence, accountability, impartiality, professionalism, transparency and efficiency of the judicial systems; stresses that predictable and sufficient funding is a key precondition for sustainable judicial reforms; underlines the importance of continuous professional training for judges, prosecutors and officials; calls for further financial assistance to and engagement with relevant civil society actors in order to enhance the transparency of the judiciary and improve its long-term capacities, as well as those acting as watchdogs or whistle-blowers as regards misuse of funds;
4. Wishes to see a track record of unbiased and successful prosecutions and court rulings in the field of combating corruption, including in high-profile cases, in order to enhance citizens' trust in the rule of law and public institutions; invites the relevant authorities to improve interinstitutional cooperation, especially with law-enforcement structures, raise public awareness and develop capacities for planning, enforcing and monitoring anti-corruption rules and activities, as well as to cooperate closely with the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) and to engage closely with independent state bodies such as anti-corruption agencies; calls for the implementation of strategies to prevent and combat corruption nationally and internationally;
5. Regrets the fact that funding under IPA-I appears to be limited when set against the importance of these areas; observes, however, weak absorption capacity of IPA-I in the area of the rule of law in some candidate and potential candidate countries; considers it essential to improve the management of pre-accession funding in this area under IPA-II, and stresses that progress in meeting specific objectives relating to an independent and efficient judiciary, the rule of law and combating corruption, including their implementation, should be monitored and assessed on the basis of quantitative and qualitative indicators; also considers it important to provide for a performance incentive under IPA-II in order to reward performance in making substantial progress in meeting the objectives specified in the strategy papers;

6. Believes that freedom of the press and media and digital freedom represent a crucial check on power and an important component in the fight against corruption, both by providing a platform for freedom of expression and by providing the public with access to information; calls, therefore, for these freedoms to be actively pursued through programmes under the IPA aimed at governments, citizens and press and media outlets;
7. Stresses that Parliament should be actively involved in the supervision of the allocation and spending of pre-accession funds in the candidate and potential candidate countries in all areas, including judicial systems and the fight against corruption; stresses, therefore, that Parliament should be kept informed on the implementation of the IPA and the allocation of funds for candidate and potential candidate countries.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	4.9.2013
Result of final vote	+: 54 -: 0 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Sir Robert Atkins, Bastiaan Belder, Elmar Brok, Tarja Cronberg, Mário David, Susy De Martini, Mark Demesmaeker, Michael Gahler, Marietta Giannakou, Ana Gomes, Takis Hadjigeorgiou, Anna Ibrisagic, Liisa Jaakonsaari, Anneli Jäätteenmäki, Tunne Kelam, Nicole Kiil-Nielsen, Evgeni Kirilov, Wolfgang Kreissl-Dörfler, Eduard Kukan, Krzysztof Lisek, Marusya Lyubcheva, Willy Meyer, Francisco José Millán Mon, Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck, Raimon Obiols, Kristiina Ojuland, Pier Antonio Panzeri, Ioan Mircea Pașcu, Tonino Picula, Mirosław Piotrowski, Cristian Dan Preda, Libor Rouček, Tokia Saïfi, José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra, Nikolaos Salavrakos, Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, Werner Schulz, Davor Ivo Stier, Charles Tannock, Eleni Theoharous, Geoffrey Van Orden, Nikola Vuljanić, Sir Graham Watson, Karim Zéribi
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Göran Färm, Roberto Gualtieri, Elisabeth Jeggle, Emilio Menéndez del Valle, Doris Pack, Jean Roatta, Marietje Schaake, Alf Svensson, Janusz Władysław Zemke
Substitute(s) under Rule 187(2) present for the final vote	Dubravka Šuica