



Plenary sitting

B9-0582/2022

13.12.2022

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Commission

pursuant to Rule 132(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on suspicions of corruption from Qatar and the broader need for transparency and accountability in the European institutions
(2022/3012(RSP))

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on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

European Parliament resolution on suspicions of corruption from Qatar and the broader need for transparency and accountability in the European institutions (2022/3012(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Treaty on European Union, and in particular Article 29 thereof,
 - having regard to its resolution of 25 October 2016 on the fight against corruption and follow-up of the CRIM resolution¹,
 - having regard to its resolution of 9 March 2022 on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation²,
 - having regard to its resolution of 16 September 2021 on strengthening transparency and integrity in the EU institutions by setting up an independent EU ethics body³,
 - having regard to Commission President Ursula von der Leyen’s 2022 State of the Union address of 14 September 2022 and to the 2023 Commission Work Programme,
 - having regard to the 1997 Convention drawn up on the basis of Article K.3 (2) (c) of the Treaty on European Union on the fight against corruption involving officials of the European Communities or officials of Member States of the European Union⁴,
 - having regard to Regulation No 31 (EEC), 11 (EAEC), laying down the Staff Regulations of Officials and the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community⁵,
 - having regard to the EU Transparency Register,
 - having regard to the United Nations Convention against Corruption of 2003, showing near-universal recognition of the importance of good governance, accountability, and political commitment,
 - having regard to the Council of Europe Conventions on Corruption,
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the ongoing investigation led by the Belgian authorities has uncovered an extremely worrying plot of corruption and bribery involving Members of the European Parliament, former Members and staff; whereas suspects have been charged with participation in a criminal organisation, money laundering and corruption;

¹ OJ C 215, 19.6.2018, p. 96.

² OJ C 347, 9.9.2022, p. 61.

³ OJ C 117, 11.3.2022, p. 159.

⁴ OJ C 195, 25.6.1997, p. 2.

⁵ OJ 45, 14.6.1962, p. 1385.

- B. whereas at the opening of the plenary session on 12 December 2022, political groups expressed deep concern about the current revelations and welcomed and expressed support for the work of the prosecuting authorities;
 - C. whereas corruption attacks the very foundation of our democratic institutions by distorting electoral processes, perverting the rule of law, undermining the credibility of public mandates and creating structures and processes uniquely aimed at the soliciting of bribes;
 - D. whereas the latest revelations gravely damage the public perception of the European Union in general and of Parliament in particular and risk further fuelling scepticism towards the EU institutions and integration, as well as the growing sentiment of distrust towards the continent's democratic institutions and elected representatives; whereas the recent revelations erode significantly the credibility of Parliament when addressing and denouncing corruption in other EU institutions, Member States or in third countries;
 - E. whereas the scale and gravity of the corruption under investigation have yet to be established, but may involve other institutions;
 - F. whereas this unprecedented corruption scandal should be seized as an opportunity for Parliament to drastically review its working procedures in order to regain public trust and serve as a model for an accountable and ethical parliamentary democracy;
1. Is appalled by the current revelations around the suspicions of corruption by Qatar and expresses its full support for the work of the authorities investigating this case, offering the highest level of cooperation to the Public Prosecutor, the police and all the investigating authorities in Belgium, Italy, Greece and other relevant Member States;
 2. Stresses that transparency and accountability are essential tools to prevent corruption and ensure trust in public institutions, and highlights the urgent need to ensure that the European Parliament equips itself with strong measures to fight in defence of democracy, transparency and accountability and against corruption;
 3. Stresses that bribery and pernicious forms of political corruption have extremely negative impacts on every aspect of society, contribute to governmental instability, erode public trust in democratic institutions and ultimately pose the greatest threat to democracy and the rule of law;
 4. Stresses that tackling corruption is a key responsibility of democratic institutions, and that only through cooperation and the involvement of each level within the European Parliament and other institutions can we overcome the extremely negative consequences of the current revelations;
 5. In the light of the above, commits to establishing a dedicated committee of inquiry to investigate corruption and the influence of third countries in the European Parliament; stresses that the committee of inquiry should also develop recommendations for steps to be taken to further prevent corruption and undue interference; commits to seeking external expertise to support and possibly lead the investigations;
 6. Commits to swiftly introducing a special position on the Bureau charged with looking

into transparency, integrity, and fighting corruption in Parliament;

7. Calls for the establishment of an independent ethics body with the power to investigate all EU institutions, bodies and agencies, with the necessary financial means and staff to carry out its tasks fully;
8. Proposes to introduce a cooling off period for former Members to ensure that they cannot use their position to influence policy;
9. Regrets that Parliament has not seized all opportunities to increase and enforce the accountability of Members; mandates the Committee on Constitutional Affairs to review and improve the Rules of Procedure, including the Code of Conduct for Members, to ensure that there are stronger deterrents against Members and former members working for outside interests;
10. Calls on the Commission and the Council to cooperate with Parliament to ensure that representatives of organisations and third countries lobbying the EU institutions are listed on the EU Transparency Register; reiterates its call for the EU institutions to reform the Transparency Register, including by introducing more stringent transparency rules, mapping foreign funding for EU-related lobbying, and ensuring an entry which allows for the identification of funding from foreign governments and entities acting on their behalf;
11. Instructs all Members and staff to refrain from meetings with unregistered lobbyists and to publish lobby meetings; commits to adding the president, vice-presidents, chairs of delegations and group leaders to the list of office holders obliged to publish their meetings with interest representatives;
12. Instructs rapporteurs and committee chairs to introduce a declaration of independence related to their work and to fully disclose the legislative footprint for all files;
13. Commits to prohibiting financial ties between Members and lobbyists, including representatives of third countries, by ensuring full transparency of Members' side income by exact amount and prohibiting any external financing of Members' and groups' staff; commits to establishing a ban at EU level on donations from third countries to Members and political parties, in order to close loopholes in Member States;
14. Recalls its long-standing position on increasing the transparency and accountability of Members regarding the use of their budget; commits to improving financial declarations to allow for proper transparency and scrutiny by ensuring they are published within two weeks in a standardised, machine-readable format; highlights that it is crucial for financial declarations to explicitly mention any direct or indirect ties to a third country and always mention the clients on whose behalf side activities are performed;
15. Commits to strengthening the ban on lobbying side jobs for Members and making it fully effective, and to introducing a ban on sponsored speeches, events, articles and appearances;
16. Stresses that it is imperative to reform and strengthen the Advisory Committee on the

Code of Conduct for Members until the independent EU Ethics Body can take over its current role; stresses that this must involve adopting an unequivocal and comprehensive definition of conflict of interests, given the current revelations, introducing scrutiny by external experts, allowing the Advisory Committee to scrutinise Members on its own initiative, allowing substantiated complaints to be raised by anyone, introducing the obligatory publication by the President of sanctions adopted and situations where sanctions are not applied, and introducing proactive checks of Members' declarations of interest;

17. Notes with concern that many declarations of intergroups and friendship groups are not up to date and that obligatory annual updates are not enforced; commits to the proper enforcement and strengthening of the rules pertaining to such groups and instructs the questors to implement the existing rules and to develop and maintain an accessible and up-to-date register of friendship groups and declarations;
18. Commits to introducing rules to ensure that questors are elected on the basis of outstanding ethical standards;
19. Stresses that informal and country or region specific friendship groups can undermine the work of the official bodies of Parliament, as well as its reputation and the coherence of its actions; calls for a ban on the participation of Members, accredited parliamentary assistants and group advisors in trips offered by third countries and entities and recalls that such trips cannot be considered official Parliament delegations; calls for strict sanctions should this ban not be respected and for adequate measures to ensure that costs for legitimate travel to third countries related to the mandate can be covered by the institution;
20. Commits to introducing rules aimed at securing the integrity of staff members through a revision of human resources procedures, including pre-recruitment screening, to close loopholes enabling foreign infiltration, as well as improving security clearance procedures for staff and tightening rules and checks for access to its premises to prevent individuals closely linked with foreign interests from having access to confidential meetings and information;
21. Calls on the Commission and the Council to cooperate with Parliament on the updating and strengthening of rules on the protection of whistle-blowers in the EU institutions, bodies and agencies;
22. Instructs its president to suspend, with immediate effect, the access badges for the Qatar mission to the EU institutions pending the ongoing investigation;
23. Commits to revisiting its badge policy by introducing and simplifying the possibility of prohibition or revocation, including in cases where Members or European parliamentary bodies are subjected to restrictive measures such as entry bans or sanctions; calls for transparency regarding access badges allocated to diplomatic representations;
24. Calls on Member States to increase cooperation with European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), the EU Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust) and the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) to ensure proper and effective investigation of all alleged cases of corruption in the EU institutions, bodies and agencies; calls for the

capacities of and cooperation between OLAF and the EPPO to be strengthened further, as the key EU anti-corruption bodies; stresses the need for a single directly applicable EU law that regulates corruption of EU officials;

25. Invites heads of state and government not to attend the Qatar World Cup and to refrain from giving credit to a country that is aggressively undermining our democracies reputation and credibility;
26. Calls on the Commission and the Council to cooperate with Parliament on working towards carrying out the needed reforms to ensure prevention and preparedness to reinforce the transparency and accountability of EU institutions and to fight against corruption; highlights that the upcoming Defence of Democracy Package, and in particular measures to update the legislative framework for fighting corruption, provides a timely opportunity for action to bring covert foreign influence and covert funding to light and to raise standards on offences such as illicit enrichment, trafficking in influence and abuse of power, beyond bribery;
27. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the Government and Parliament of Qatar.