



Plenary sitting

B9-0584/2022

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

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on behalf of the S&D Group

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

The European Parliament,

- 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 body¹,
 - having regard to its decision of 27 April 2021 on the conclusion of an interinstitutional agreement between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, and the Commission on a mandatory transparency register²,
 - having regard to its resolution of 14 September 2017 on transparency, accountability and integrity in the EU institutions³,
 - having regard to its resolution of 17 January 2019 on the Ombudsman's strategic inquiry OI/2/2017 on the transparency of legislative discussions in the preparatory bodies of the Council of the EU⁴,
 - having regard to its resolution on Qatar of 24 November 2022 on the situation of human rights in the context of the FIFA World Cup in Qatar⁵,
 - having regard to the Interinstitutional Agreement of 20 May 2021 between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on a mandatory transparency register⁶,
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas EU institutions and their officials must safeguard the integrity of the EU's democratic principles and values as well as serve as an example to follow for citizens and other officials alike;
- B. whereas it is necessary to ensure that Members of the European Parliament act without any undue influence from interest representatives, and that the provision of paid activities for Members of the European Parliament, gifts or travel invitations, the creation of expectations for future employment following the end of a Member's mandate or an official's termination of service, and undue use of information or contacts should all be strictly regulated;
- C. whereas the Code of Conduct for Members of the European Parliament with respect to

¹ OJ C 117, 11.3.2022, p. 159.

² OJ C 506, 15.12.2021, p. 127.

³ OJ C 337, 20.9.2018, p. 120.

⁴ OJ C 411, 27.11.2020, p. 149.

⁵ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2022)0427.

⁶ OJ L 207, 11.6.2021, p. 1.

financial interests and conflicts of interest is monitored by an Advisory Committee on the Conduct of Members composed of five MEPs, which has proved not to be effective;

- D. whereas it is essential to ensure that democratic processes are not captured by private interests and that citizens' rights are fully respected;
 - E. whereas the measures recently introduced by the Interinstitutional Agreement on a Mandatory transparency register require Parliament to show greater ambition in ensuring proper implementation of all transparency standards;
 - F. whereas transparency and accountability are a precondition for citizens' trust in EU institutions; whereas, therefore, corruption constitutes a serious attack on European democracy;
 - G. whereas countries including Qatar have invested heavily in lobbying efforts in the EU institutions; whereas this country operates mostly through consultancies and think tanks;
 - H. whereas sports-washing constitutes a practice for authoritarian states to shift global attention away from their domestic corruption and human rights abuse record, most notably but not limited to the hosting of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar;
 - I. whereas in their work and missions Parliament delegations must contribute to the implementation of Parliament's political and legislative priorities, contribute to promoting in non-EU countries the values on which the European Union is founded and represent Parliament's position as adopted in plenary, while also taking account of the position of the relevant competent Parliament committees;
1. Expresses its deep shock and condemnation of the recent allegations of corruption from Qatar in Parliament and states its zero-tolerance policy on corruption in any shape or form; underlines that the gravity and magnitude of the current investigations require Parliament and the EU institutions to react with unequivocal unity and unwavering resolve;
 2. Supports a thorough investigation and full disclosure of the results of the ongoing investigations and declares its full willingness to cooperate with the authorities;
 3. Proposes setting up a committee of inquiry under Article 226 of the Treaty of Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) to comprehensively address foreign interference within the EU institutions aiming to influence decision-making; suggests that if the investigation concludes that foreign interference and corruption took place, sanctions should be imposed on all states and individuals involved;
 4. Believes that the alleged attempts by Qatar to influence Members of the European Parliament and their staff through bribery with the goal of cleaning the country's human rights record are a possible case of serious foreign interference in the EU's democratic processes; denounces such acts in the strongest terms;
 5. Considers that the recent allegations show the urgent need to scale up the effective capacity of the European institutions to monitor and enforce the transparency standards

and anti-corruption mechanisms that have been adopted in recent years;

6. Recalls that transparency, accountability and openness of institutions are the cornerstone of our democracies and the basis on which the relationship of trust with citizens is built;
7. Highlights the significant threat posed by foreign interference in the democratic processes of EU institutions, which includes but is not limited to influencing the drafting and vote on legislation and resolutions;
8. Considers that corruption of public representatives - in particular illegal activities funded by paid lobbying - constitutes a profound attack on democracy and should be met with zero tolerance and the heightened vigilance;
9. Suspends work on files and plenary votes relating to Gulf States, particularly on visa-liberalisation, and planned visits until the competent authorities have finalised the judicial proceedings;
10. Informs that the S&D Group, supporting the ongoing investigation, will become 'parte lesa' and will look into legal steps against those undermining the S&D Group and the European Parliament as a whole;
11. Calls for full respect for the relevant rules that apply to the work of Parliament delegations; decides to review the functioning and activities of friendship groups with non-EU countries in the institution; believes there is a need to limit access the access of Qatari authorities to Parliament premises as appropriate until the judicial investigations provide relevant information and clarification;
12. Decides to strengthen its mechanisms to scrutinise and avoid potential or actual conflicts of interest of Members of the European Parliament in the external activities of the institution; demands in this regard that the integrity of our institution is guaranteed by the new Parliament Vice-President elected to be in charge of fighting corruption and foreign interference and to lead the revision of Parliament's rules of procedures;
13. Calls for access to relevant intelligence information at the disposal of other EU institutions and relevant Member States services which could facilitate the proactive identification of attempted interference by non-EU countries in the work of Parliament and other EU institutions;
14. Calls for consistent and full implementation of ethics standards throughout the EU institutions in order to guarantee that public decisions are taken with a view to the common good; emphasises that these ethics standards must cover the veracity of declarations of financial interests, transparency obligations, compliance with revolving doors rules and general compliance with all provisions of codes of conduct and integrity rules;
15. Calls for the urgent upgrade of the current European Parliament Advisory Committee on the Conduct of Members to a full Ethics Committee in order to address effectively current and future threats and interference;

16. Insists on the need for greater ambition and common political will on transparency, with the goal of creating a holistic approach to ethical representation of interests;
17. Recalls that the recently adopted Interinstitutional Agreement on a mandatory transparency register represented a major step forward in the introduction of mandatory standards for all stakeholders to be applied by all EU institutions; urgently calls on all institutions to commit to implementing this agreement more strictly;
18. Highlights that the measures introduced by the Interinstitutional Agreement on a mandatory transparency register represent a minimum; strongly calls for all relevant Parliament bodies to ensure full implementation of the new provisions of the Register and to unilaterally introduce urgent measures that would improve accountability of Members - including former Members - and staff;
19. Points out the need to ensure full observance of the code of conduct, as set out in Annex I of the Transparency Register;
20. Believes that any provision on transparency requirements in the institutions should apply to all staff, not only to the most senior staff;
21. Considers it urgent to amend Parliament's Rules of Procedure in order to introduce stricter criteria and commitments on transparency and accountability;
22. Highlights the importance of following an activity-based approach which includes indirect lobbying activities; insists on the importance of covering such activities, given in particular the emergence of new forms of interaction of interest representatives with EU decision-makers; considers that meetings other than in-person-meetings, such as video-conferences or scheduled telephone calls, should also be considered meetings for the purposes of monitoring lobbying activities;
23. Calls on Parliament's Bureau and other relevant bodies to specifically implement a new requirement for all Parliament staff - including group advisers and assistants - to only meet with individuals or organisations in the scope of the Transparency Register if they are registered and to systematically verify this prior to any meeting;
24. Insists on the need for sufficient resources to be allocated to allow the Management Board of the Transparency Register to perform its task of overseeing the overall administrative implementation of the Agreement; calls for the institutions to ensure allocation of sufficient resources and staff to guarantee the proper functioning of the Secretariat and the Management Board;
25. Proposes the introduction of a new legal basis enabling the co-legislators to adopt legislative acts under the ordinary legislative procedure with the aim of imposing binding ethical rules on interest representatives in their interactions with the Union's institutions;
26. Calls for EU institutions to urgently adopt measures to introduce the practice of minimum 'cooling-off periods' for senior EU officials and former Members in order to avoid the phenomenon of 'revolving doors'; asks that names of former senior EU officials or MEPs who have left their institutions and are working for private interests

be made public;

27. Calls on those EU institutions and bodies which still do not have a code of conduct to draw one up as a matter of urgency;
28. Calls for all EU officials, including accredited parliamentary assistants, temporary and contract agents and national experts, to undergo mandatory training on how to deal with interest representatives and conflicts of interest and on integrity and transparency; calls for these issues to be an obligatory item for discussion during recruitment procedures and performance reviews;
29. Points out that the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union grants individuals the right of access to public documents, and criticises the fact that one of the main transparency-related problems facing the European institutions is their own frequent refusal to grant access to documents and information; reiterates its call on the Council to publish minutes of Council meetings and all its other documents;
30. Believes that for this purpose a single independent EU ethics body with the power to initiate its own investigations is necessary; urges the Commission, therefore, to make a proposal in the next few weeks for an interinstitutional agreement based on Article 295 of the TFEU to set up an independent EU ethics body as called for in Parliament's resolution of 16 September 2021;
31. Takes note that Parliament as well as all EU institutions have been working to develop capacity to counter disinformation and foreign interference, though regrettably such measures have proved insufficient to prevent individual cases of corruption;
32. Demands reinforced monitoring of all invitations, gifts and trips received from non-EU countries by MEPs and staff;
33. Stresses the need to develop and implement concrete frameworks and measures in order to monitor lobbying attempts by non-EU countries;
34. 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 Government and Parliament of Qatar.