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*Plenary sitting*

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**B9-0144/2023**

14.2.2023

## MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statements by the Council and the Commission

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

on the establishment of an independent EU ethics body  
(2023/2555(RSP))

**Iratxe García Pérez, Gabriele Bischoff, Domènec Ruiz Devesa,  
Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz**  
on behalf of the S&D Group

**European Parliament resolution on the establishment of an independent EU ethics body (2023/2555(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Treaty on European Union, in particular Articles 9, 10, 15(3) and 17(3) thereof, and to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, in particular Article 298 thereof,
  - having regard to its resolution of 15 December 2022 on suspicions of corruption from Qatar and the broader need for transparency and accountability in the European institutions<sup>1</sup>,
  - 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 body<sup>2</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 14 September 2017 on transparency, accountability and integrity in the EU institutions<sup>3</sup>,
  - having regard to the support of Commission President Ursula von der Leyen for the establishment of an independent EU ethics body, as publicly expressed in December 2022,
  - having regard to the measures for strengthening integrity, independence and accountability adopted by its Conference of Presidents on 8 February 2023,
  - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas all EU institutions have to meet the highest standards of independence and impartiality;
- B. whereas the independence, transparency and accountability of public institutions and their elected representatives, Commissioners and officials are of the utmost importance for fostering citizens' trust, which is necessary for democratic institutions to function legitimately;
- C. whereas citizens' trust in public institutions and decision-making processes is a pillar of any democratic government and requires integrity, transparency, accountability and exemplary standards of ethical behaviour;
- D. whereas transparency and accountability are a precondition for citizens' trust in the EU institutions and whereas, therefore, corruption constitutes a serious attack on European democracy; whereas corruption and fraud are a constant danger to the integrity of public

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<sup>1</sup> Texts adopted, P9\_TA(2022)0448.

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 117, 11.3.2022, p. 159.

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 337, 20.9.2018, p. 120.

decision-making;

- E. whereas the EU institutions and their officials must safeguard the integrity of the EU's democratic principles and values and serve as an example for citizens and officials alike;
  - F. whereas the Code of Conduct for Members of the European Parliament with respect to financial interests and conflicts of interest is monitored by an Advisory Committee on the Conduct of Members composed of five MEPs, based on a purely self-regulatory approach; whereas this committee has proved to have limited human and financial resources and competences for verifying information;
  - G. whereas the shortcomings of the current EU ethical framework derive largely from the fact that it relies on a self-regulatory approach and has insufficient resources and competences to verify information; whereas the creation of an independent ethics body could contribute to strengthening trust in the EU institutions and their democratic legitimacy;
  - H. whereas the current ethics framework appears to be inconsistent across the EU's institutions, agencies and bodies, with different rules, processes and levels of enforcement, creating a complex system that is difficult to enforce and hard for citizens to trust;
  - I. whereas the President of the Commission committed to establishing an ethics body in her political guidelines in July 2019; whereas Parliament has already expressed its support for such a body;
  - J. whereas in its 2022 work programme, the Commission pledged to 'look to make progress on the design of the new interinstitutional EU Ethics Body, including by continuing to work closely with the other institutions to find the necessary common ground on the scope, role and competences of the future Body';
1. Reiterates its deep shock at and condemnation of the allegations of corruption in the European Parliament and states its zero-tolerance policy on corruption in any shape or form;
  2. Considers that the 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;
  3. Recalls that the 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;
  4. Insists on the need for greater ambition and a shared political will on transparency, with the goal of creating a holistic approach to ethical representation of interests; considers that comprehensive, mutually agreed definitions of integrity and transparency should be established for use in tools such as codes of conduct and policies relating to conflicts of interest, lobbyist involvement, side jobs, and cooling-off periods;

5. Strongly urges the Commission to deliver on its 2019 and 2021 commitment to establish an ethics body and urgently calls on it to submit, without further delay, a proposal for an independent EU ethics body with extensive powers of oversight, own-initiative investigation and enforcement, as set out in Parliament's resolution adopted in September 2021;
6. Confirms its support for the detailed position, as outlined in its resolution, on the functions, structure and governance of the independent EU ethics body;
7. Believes that a single independent EU ethics body could better ensure the consistent and full implementation of ethics standards across the EU institutions in order to guarantee that public decisions are taken in the spirit of the common good and with citizens' trust in the EU institutions in mind;
8. Considers that the establishment of the independent EU ethics body should be accompanied by a complementary proposal to ensure procedural guarantees and by an adequate data protection protocol;
9. Suggests that the decisions of the EU ethics body should be binding, without prejudice to Parliament's competences concerning decisions on the absence of conflicts of interest in respect of Commissioners-designate, which may be reviewed before the Court of Justice of the European Union and about which complaints may be submitted to the European Ombudsman;
10. Believes that the powers and activities of the ethics body should be without prejudice to Parliament's call to strengthen its right-of-inquiry prerogatives in accordance with the conclusions of the Conference on the Future of Europe and in line with Article 226 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which is a cornerstone of parliamentary democracy;
11. Recalls that the competences of the independent EU ethics body would not interfere with the competences of the European Ombudsman, the European Anti-Fraud Office or the European Public Prosecutor, or with the rights of EU citizens and institutions to address the European General Court or European Court of Justice;
12. Considers it necessary to modify its Rules of Procedure in order to introduce stricter criteria and commitments on transparency and accountability; highlights the importance of following an activity-based approach that includes indirect lobbying activities; insists on the importance of covering such activities, in particular in the context of the emergence of new forms of interaction of interest representatives with EU decision-makers;
13. Emphatically reiterates its call for the EU institutions to urgently adopt measures to introduce minimum 'cooling-off periods' for senior EU officials and former Members in order to avoid the phenomenon of 'revolving doors';
14. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the parliaments and governments of the Member States.