



Plenary sitting

B9-0146/2023

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))

Daniel Freund

on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

European Parliament resolution on the establishment of an independent EU ethics body (2023/2555(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 resolution of 15 December 2022 on suspicions of corruption from Qatar and the broader need for transparency and accountability in the European institutions²,
 - having regard to Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen’s letter to the Council of 18 March 2022 including the Commission’s follow-up to the European Parliament’s non-legislative resolution of 16 September 2021 on strengthening transparency and integrity in the EU institutions by setting up an independent EU ethics body,
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the European Parliament broadly supported a proposal for setting up an independent ethics body in its resolution of 16 September 2021;
 - B. whereas since that date the Commission has not presented a proposal for an interinstitutional agreement with a view to establishing an independent ethics body;
 - C. whereas revelations of third-country influence and lobbying have continued to expose the insufficient ethics frameworks within EU institutions, agencies and bodies and the failure of the current system to self-monitor the current rules;
 - D. whereas the recent revelations of corruption in Parliament have again demonstrated the main shortcomings of the current rules regarding conflicts of interest, revolving door effects and corruption and their enforcement both in Parliament and the Commission;
 - E. whereas citizens’ trust in public institutions and decision-making processes is a pillar of any democratic government and requires exemplarity, integrity, transparency, accountability and the highest standards of ethical behaviour;
 - F. whereas no single financial penalty has ever been imposed for a breach of the Code of Conduct of Members despite at least 26 breaches documented in the annual reports of the Advisory Committee on the Conduct for Members;
- 1. Strongly reiterates its proposal contained in its resolution of 16 September 2021 on strengthening transparency and integrity in the EU institutions by setting up an independent EU ethics body to conclude an interinstitutional agreement on the basis of

¹ OJ C 117, 11.3.2022, p. 159.

² Texts adopted, P9_TA(2022)0448.

Article 295 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to create an independent EU ethics body for Parliament and the Commission which is open to the participation of all EU institutions, agencies and bodies but not conditional upon the participation of any single institution, agency or body other than Parliament and the Commission;

2. Recalls that its proposal envisages an ethics body composed of nine independent experts that must credibly enforce the rules on conflicts of interest, revolving door effects and corruption within the EU institutions in the future;
3. Believes that in the light of the recent corruption revelations the current system of self-monitoring has failed to prevent scandals concerning conflicts of interest, revolving door effects and corruption;
4. Strongly believes that an independent ethics body can gain credibility by becoming a role model for the control of third-country influence and lobbying by merging the functions of existing bodies responsible for ethics;
5. Reiterates therefore its call to give this independent ethics body the right to launch investigations on its own and publicly issue its recommendations, including on possible sanctions, in order to hold decision-makers accountable by advising on ethical rules for Commissioners, Members of the European Parliament, members of other institutions and their staff;
6. Regrets that the Commission has not been able to come forward with a proposal for an interinstitutional agreement in the 17 months since Parliament adopted its resolution; insists that the Commission urgently present a proposal to Parliament for an independent ethics body open to the participation of all EU institutions, agencies and bodies;
7. Highlights the fact that the recent revelations of corruption in Parliament have corroborated the fact that the current rules have not been sufficiently implemented and enforced and believes that if Parliament is seen to be under attack from covert influence, this is because it has not built up sufficient mechanisms of protection, including robust rules against conflicts of interest, revolving door effects and corruption and even stronger instruments to enforce them;
8. Emphasises that some of these shortcomings brought to light by recent revelations in Parliament include a completely insufficient oversight and enforcement mechanism with a powerless Advisory Committee on the Conduct of Members, a non-transparent and nearly non-existent sanctions policy by the President, rules that are too lax for former Members, including a lack of a cooling-off period, no enforcement of the obligations under the transparency register and the need to reform it, insufficient safeguards against corruption as regards side jobs, assets, gifts and travel, failed policy regarding friendship groups, inexistent transparency concerning spending under the General Expenditure Allowance and weaker whistleblower protections than outlined in current legislation in all EU institutions, but especially in Parliament;
9. Commits to reforming its internal Rules of Procedure on transparency, integrity and anti-corruption with a view to making them clearer; commits to ensuring that any

violation is at least financially sanctioned and that its Advisory Committee on the Conduct of Members is reformed closely in line with the proposal for an independent EU ethics body and that these reforms are voted on in plenary as soon as possible and no later than June 2023;

10. Points out that recent revelations about the Commission such as its lack of transparency in its communication with pharmaceutical companies, the Uber files' finding concerning Neelie Kroes' lobbying efforts, a lack of transparency concerning Commissioner Schinas's trips to the Gulf region and former Commissioner Avramopoulos's paid involvement in the Fight Impunity association show that there is a need for stricter rules within the Commission, that it lacks the ability to proactively monitor whether officials are complying with the rules in place and that punishments lack effect;
11. Expresses concern about the general lack of transparency within EU institutions, agencies and bodies, but especially the failure to improve the transparency framework in the Council, fully disregarding European Court of Justice case-law;
12. Urges the Commission to consider the recent revelations and put forward an ambitious proposal for a strong ethics body which will be able to credibly enforce current rules and advise on strengthening current ethics frameworks; stands ready to engage in negotiations on setting up an independent ethics body with a view to creating it as soon as possible;
13. Calls on its Conference of Presidents to appoint its negotiators and send a letter to open negotiations with the Commission and other institutions, agencies and bodies which are willing to join;
14. 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 and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.