



Plenary sitting

B9-0147/2023

14.2.2023

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 following up on measures requested by Parliament to strengthen the
integrity of European institutions
(2023/2571(RSP))

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on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

European Parliament resolution on following up on measures requested by Parliament to strengthen the integrity of European institutions (2023/2571(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- 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 institutions¹, to its resolution of 25 October 2016 on the fight against corruption and follow-up of the CRIM resolution² and to its resolution of 19 January 2023 on the situation of journalists in Morocco, notably the case of Omar Radi³,
- having regard to the President of the European Parliament's set of proposed measures aimed at strengthening integrity, independence and accountability presented on 8 February 2023,
- having regard to its resolution of 9 March 2022 on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation⁴,
- 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 body⁵,
- having regard to the Commission President'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 Union⁶,
- 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 Community⁷,
- 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,

¹ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2022)0448.

² OJ C 215, 19.6.2018, p. 96.

³ P9_TA(2023)0014.

⁴ OJ C 347, 9.9.2022, p. 61.

⁵ OJ C 117, 11.3.2022, p. 159.

⁶ OJ C 195, 25.6.1997, p. 2.

⁷ OJ 45, 14.6.1962, p. 1385.

- having regard to the Council of Europe Conventions on Corruption,
 - having regard to the Treaty on European Union, and in particular Article 29 thereof,
 - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas, as an immediate response to the ongoing investigation led by the Belgian authorities which has uncovered an extremely worrying scheme of corruption, money laundering and participation in a criminal organisation involving the investigation of current and former Members of the European Parliament and their staff, on 15 December 2022 Parliament adopted by a large majority its resolution on suspicions of corruption from Qatar and the broader need for transparency and accountability in the European institutions; whereas the resolution called for a number of urgent measures to be adopted to strengthen the integrity, transparency and accountability of EU institutions;
 - B. whereas on 8 February 2023, the President of the European Parliament presented a set of proposed measures aimed at strengthening integrity, independence and accountability; whereas the measures were adopted by Parliament's Conference of Presidents in an in camera meeting;
 - C. 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 about the European institutions and project, as well as the growing sentiment of distrust towards the Union'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 third countries;
 - D. 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;
 - E. whereas this unprecedented corruption scandal should be seized as an opportunity for Parliament to drastically review its working methods and its Rules of Procedure in order to regain public trust, lead by serving as an example for other European institutions and provide a model for an accountable and ethical parliamentary democracy;
1. 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 Parliament equips itself with strong measures to fight in defence of democracy, transparency and accountability and against corruption;
 2. Stresses that bribery and pernicious forms of political corruption have an extremely destructive impact on every aspect of society, contribute to governmental instability, erode public trust in democratic institutions and ultimately pose a great threat to democracy and the rule of law;
 3. Stresses that preventing and tackling corruption is a key responsibility of democratic institutions, and that only through cooperation and the involvement of all responsible

bodies, including the Conference of Presidents, the Conference of Committee Chairs, the Bureau, the Advisory Committee and all relevant committees within Parliament, the Commission, the Council and other institutions can we overcome the extremely negative public impact of the current revelations;

4. Notes that the initial proposals aimed at strengthening integrity, independence and accountability put forward by the President of the European Parliament on 8 February 2023 are a necessary first step towards acting on the urgent need for the institution to ensure the accountability, transparency and integrity of EU institutions; stresses however that it is essential for Parliament to maintain a high level of ambition and calls for additional and more extensive measures to be added to the action plan, in particular on whistleblower protection, monitoring, reporting and oversight;
5. Deeply regrets the fact that two months after its worst corruption scandal, there has not been an open and transparent process including with the involvement of external experts; aims to publicly address the shortcomings of its internal rules and their enforcement in order to credibly show to the public a strong commitment to carry out reforms and regain the trust that citizens should have in the only directly elected house of European democracy; deeply regrets that even the most obvious and consensual changes have not been adopted by Parliament plenary's or other relevant bodies, including changes to transparency rules for all Members without exemption, for their staff and for their meetings and their staff's meetings with interest groups and third party representatives;
6. Reiterates that public scrutiny and democratic oversight are paramount in a functioning democracy; calls for increased clarity and transparency in the ongoing reform process in order to ensure public scrutiny of the process and regain the trust of citizens and civil society through credible action; calls for all decisions to be adopted and deliberations to take place in public meetings, thus ensuring accountability and oversight; regrets that Parliament has developed a practice of making decisions, including those on appointment of administration officials, based on political considerations, rather than on objective criteria such as qualifications;
7. Stresses the need to urgently speed up the process to adopt and implement the reforms needed to win back trust and ensure prevention and preparedness to reinforce the transparency and accountability of Parliament and all EU institutions and to fight against corruption; insists that the reforms are voted in plenary as soon as possible, in any case no later than June 2023, and that more ambitious measures are openly discussed and adopted as soon as possible;
8. Regrets that the measures adopted do not include proposals for a credible reform of the Advisory Committee on the Conduct of Members; commits to reforming this Advisory Committee in line with its proposal for an independent ethics body and believes that this reformed Advisory Committee should operate until the new independent EU ethics body can take over its role; stresses that this must involve adopting an unambiguous and comprehensive definition of conflict of interest in the light of recent 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;

9. Welcomes the fact that the measures adopted provide for enforceable and dissuasive sanctions, but sees the strong necessity to outline what these sanctions are and how they are to be transparently decided on, implemented and enforced; regrets that not a single financial penalty has ever been imposed for a breach of the Code of Conduct for Members despite at least 26 breaches documented in the annual reports of the Advisory Committee on the Conduct of Members; believes that any breach of the Code of Conduct must be financially sanctioned and that these sanctions must be dissuasive; proposes the requirement that the President must explain cases where sanctions are not automatically imposed; is of the opinion that in addition to financial sanctions, other sanctions should also be considered based on the severity of the breach; notes that the Rules of Procedure provide that for certain breaches Members may not be elected as office-holders of Parliament or of one of its bodies, be appointed as a rapporteur or participate in an official delegation or interinstitutional negotiations; proposes imposition of this sanction for serious breaches of the Code of Conduct;
10. Regrets the fact that whistleblower protection, especially in Parliament, but also in other EU institution, is weaker than in the relevant Directive; welcomes the fact that the measures adopted commit to improving whistleblower protection and calls for further progress on this while also calling on the Commission and the Council to cooperate with Parliament on the updating and strengthening of rules on the protection of whistleblowers in the EU institutions, bodies and agencies;
11. Welcomes the measures adopted on the introduction of a cooling-off period before former Members can work for interest representatives, public affairs consultancies, consultancies, law firms or other institutions seeking to influence EU or national policy-making; considers that this cooling-off period should last at least six months, but that during this period a former Member should be entitled to receive the transitional allowance; calls for a scheme to be put in place to allow external scrutiny of every case;
12. 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 entries which allow for the identification of funding from foreign governments and entities acting on their behalf; welcomes the measures adopted on a mandatory requirement for all Members, regardless of their role, accredited parliamentary assistants and staff to declare scheduled meetings with diplomatic representatives of third countries and third parties covered by the scope of the Transparency Register; stresses that these declarations of meetings should be as clear and accessible to the public as possible and that sanctions for the failure to declare meetings need to be applied; agrees with the proposed Commission scheme that exceptions can be allowed and more general declarations made in cases where the naming of individuals or organisations would put their life or physical safety at risk;
13. Recalls that all organisations falling under the scope of Transparency Register need to follow the rules on financial declarations and that such information should be readily accessible; believes the Register should have the means to scrutinise these declarations; regrets the fact that certain declarations do not specify the exact amounts that are spent

on interest representation within EU institutions; reiterates the importance of transparent and balanced stakeholder consultation as part of policy-making;

14. Welcomes the measures adopted with regard to representatives of Qatar following the revelations; reiterates, however, its deep concern about the allegations of bribery by Moroccan authorities and calls for the implementation of the same measures for representatives of Morocco; reiterates its commitment to fully investigate and address cases of corruption involving countries seeking to buy influence in Parliament;
15. Welcomes the measures adopted to introduce a mandatory declaration of conflict of interest for rapporteurs and shadow rapporteurs; stresses the importance of truly enforcing conflict of interest rules through sanctions when appropriate;
16. Welcomes the measures adopted to increase the transparency of Members' financial declarations by requiring more information on Members' side jobs and outside activities; believes that Parliament needs to be stricter and more transparent by publishing the exact amount of side income earned and the clients on whose behalf Members work for payment; notes that the enforcement of such rules through sanctions when appropriate is key to their full implementation; commits to prohibiting any paid work by Members for organisations or individuals falling within the scope of the EU Transparency Register; commits to allowing Members, assistants to Members and staff to take up positions within organisations within the scope of the Transparency Register only if these organisations are registered thereon;
17. Regrets that although it was included in its December resolution, the measures adopted do not explicitly provide for the introduction of a declaration of assets by Members at the beginning and end of each mandate, which would offer additional safeguards against corruption, following the example of many Member States; believes that the asset declaration should only be accessible to relevant authorities to allow them to check whether declared assets are in line with declared incomes when faced with instances of substantiated allegations, which would make spending illegal proceeds substantially more difficult;
18. Commits to better clarifying its policy on travel expense reimbursements and gifts received by Members, as well as to better communicating the rules on gifts and trips for Members and to strengthening their enforcement through sanctions when appropriate; calls for adequate measures to ensure that costs for legitimate travel to third countries related to the mandate can be covered by the institution;
19. 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;
20. Welcomes the measures adopted on enforcing a ban on the activities of friendship groups with third countries for which there are already official Parliament delegations and which could result in confusion with official Parliament activities; highlights the importance of full transparency on friendship groups' activities and increased enforcement of their transparency rules through appropriate sanctions, including the dissolution of such unofficial groups if necessary;

21. Expresses its regret that the Bureau has not fully implemented the will of the Plenary expressed on several occasions to reform the General Expenditure Allowance, thereby preventing transparency and accountability in the Union's spending and fostering a culture of impunity;
22. Is seriously concerned by the points in the President's original plan restricting human rights resolutions tabled as matters of urgency; is relieved that these points have been withdrawn; highlights the importance for our institution to continue acting in support of civil society, journalists, academics and human rights and environmental defenders, who risk their lives throughout the world in defence of democracy rule of law and human rights; stresses in this respect that urgency resolutions are a precious if not the main human rights tool Parliament has at its disposal, a tool which needs to be preserved and even strengthened, not undermined;
23. Calls on Member States and all EU institutions, especially Parliament, to increase cooperation with the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust), and the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) in order 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;
24. 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;
25. 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 of the Member States.