

## MEPs quiz Jean-Claude Juncker on change of heart in fight against tax avoidance

- MEPs question Commission President's past record in field of taxation
- Juncker points to Commission's slew of recent anti- money laundering, tax avoidance initiatives
- Commission head commits more resources and new proposals for qualified majority voting on tax

**MEPs suggest that the President of the European Commission has undergone a damascene conversion in the fight against tax evasion.**

The comments came during exchanges between Jean-Claude Juncker and the Committee of Inquiry into Money Laundering, Tax Avoidance and Tax Evasion (PANA), when the Commission head also gave a number of concrete commitments to improve the EU's battle against money laundering, tax evasion and avoidance.

Sven Giegold (Verts/ALE, DE), Peter Simon (S&D, DE), Bernd Lucker (ECR, DE), Fabio de Masi (GUE/NGL, DE) and David Coburn (EFDD, UK) all grilled Mr Juncker about his previous work as Finance Minister and Prime Minister of Luxembourg -- which was at the heart of a tax avoidance scandal covering the period during which Mr Juncker held high office.

### From Saul to Paul

Mr Simon told Mr Juncker that his name was "associated with a country getting rich through tax avoidance." His previous positions contrast sharply with his current work as head of the European Commission, spearheading the fight against money laundering, tax avoidance and evasion. Mr Juncker repeatedly stressed that over recent months, the Commission has produced twelve new initiatives in the field of taxation.

But this failed to satisfy Sven Giegold. "You have turned from Saul to Paul on the road to Damascus", suggested Mr Giegold, referring to the biblical episode recounting the conversion of Saul into Paul the apostle. "People want a clear idea of what you did in the past," said Mr Giegold.

Mr Juncker said MEPs should judge him on his current actions.

**Commission head commits to improve fight against tax avoidance**

Thomas Mann (EPP, DE), suggested that the current requirement that changes in tax policy needed unanimity from all member states was an “obstacle to tax reform.”

Mr Juncker responded that he was in favour of a treaty change to shift from majority to qualified (two-thirds) majority voting in tax matters. Later, he added that he might even consider the never-before used “Rule 116” [which sets out a procedure for amending distortions in the internal market] to change the process for tax reforms.

### Contacts

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Hyun-Sung KHANG

Press Service

☎ +32 2 28 34710 (BXL)

☎ (+33) 3 881 72420 (STR)

🐦 @EP\_Economics

✉ [econ-press@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:econ-press@europarl.europa.eu)

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