

Transparency in financial matters

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The Committee on Budgetary Control adopted a report by Mr. José Javier **POMS RUIZ** (EPP-ED, ES) on transparency in financial matters in the extension of the Commission's Green Paper on the European Transparency Initiative and in the Commission's Communication on the follow-up to the Green Paper (see [INI/2007/2115](#)).

The Parliamentary Committee recalls that transparency is closely related to whether the information provided on beneficiaries is easily accessible, reliable and suitable for further research, comparison and assessment.

MEPs believe that, as a general principle, the Commission web pages disclosing information on the beneficiaries of EU funding of whatever category, whether contracts, grants, agriculture or structural fund expenditure (or other types of funding) should be organised in such a way as to make it possible not only to obtain information on individual beneficiaries but also to carry out searches based on specific criteria in order to obtain an overall picture under various headings, which can then be checked against the Commission's implementation figures.

The Commission is, therefore, called on to:

- accept political responsibility for publishing information on beneficiaries of EU funding under all modes of management;
- introduce a fully operational system of information for the wider public on all beneficiaries of EU subsidies and the outstanding recoveries by the end of 2009.

The report points out that the EU institutions at present have divergent approaches to declarations of their Members' financial interests ranging from a public register (European Parliament) to no declarations at all. MEPs are of the opinion that all institutions should consider whether the current principles and rules are sufficient and notes the possible need to revise the rules of the European Parliament to make the public disclosure of financial interests on the internet compulsory.

MEPs consider that it would be inappropriate to create a single advisory body for all EU office-holders but believe, nevertheless, that each institution should adopt rules of professional ethics for its Members (depending on the specific nature of each institution) and recommend that the rules of professional ethics of each institution should also touch upon the overall political, financial and legal responsibility of its Members.

The Commission is also called upon to examine ways of applying the same transparent approach to the membership of these expert committees, which advise it, and hence disclose information, unless legitimate compelling grounds are given individually on a case by case basis.

Regretting that information regarding recoveries of Community funds is excluded from the European Transparency Initiative, MEPs call on the Commission to make available to the budgetary authority and to the public, the names and amounts of recoveries as well as the final destination of these sums. Members welcome, however, the fact that a summary of waivers of recoveries of established amounts receivable in 2006 was published as an annex to the Commission's Communication setting out a synthesis of the Commission's management achievements in 2006. In this respect, it notes the total of waivers of

recoveries (amounts above EUR 100 000) was EUR 23 038 784 for the EC budget and EUR 6 549 996 for the EDF budget. The Commission is called upon, in the future, to make further improvements along these lines with a view to increasing transparency.

The report finally calls upon the Commission to consider how a public "blacklist" of confirmed fraud cases and the entities behind them could be set up to name and shame as well as inform the public about the results of the Community's anti-fraud endeavours. It also reiterates the urgent need for a code of ethics for OLAF, with a view to guaranteeing the presumption of innocence in the case of beneficiaries who have been the object of a long and prejudicial investigation procedure and are cleared by the courts.