Resolution on following up on measures requested by Parliament to strengthen the integrity of the European institutions

2023/2571(RSP) - 16/02/2023 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 401 votes to 3, with 133 abstentions, a resolution on following up on measures requested by Parliament to strengthen the integrity of the European institutions.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled by the EPP, S&D, Renew, Greens/EFA, ECR and the Left groups.

Transparency and accountability are a precondition for citizens' trust in EU institutions. However, ongoing investigations led by the Belgian authorities have uncovered substantiated suspicions of corruption, money laundering and participation in a criminal organisation involving three sitting Members of the European Parliament and one former Member, as well as other staff, in particular by Morocco and Qatar, as well as other states. These recent revelations have led to greater public interest in the measures in place to guarantee the transparency, independence and accountability of Members of the European Parliament.

Laws are essential to fight against corruption and criminal behaviours but cannot alone prevent criminal behaviour by individual Members, former Members, staff or officials of the European Parliament or the other Europeans institutions. Parliament insisted that potential loopholes in the institutions' rules and procedures that facilitate unlawful behaviour need to be detected and closed.

Moreover, the resolution noted that the internal monitoring and alert mechanisms of the EU institutions have dramatically failed to detect the ongoing corruption and foreign interference. The existing safeguards and sanction mechanisms have proven ineffective in deterring criminal behaviour.

Parliament reiterated its deep shock and condemnation of the recent allegations of corruption against current and former Members of the European Parliament and reaffirmed its **zero-tolerance policy** on corruption in any shape and at any level. It also insisted that the magnitude of the ongoing investigations requires Parliament and the EU institutions to react with unequivocal unity and unwavering resolve, in an inter-institutional and non-partisan manner and by taking strong and immediate measures.

Penalties

Noting that not a single financial penalty has ever been imposed for a breach of the Code of Conduct of Members despite at least 26 breaches having been documented, Parliament considered it of the utmost importance to ensure that the current transparency and accountability rules are fully implemented, including **financial sanctions** for breaches of the Code of Conduct for Members of the European Parliament. It also called for a review of the **list of sanctionable activities** for Members to help improve compliance with their obligations and responsibilities.

NGO funding

The resolution stated that in the case of the Members and former Members under investigation, NGOs were allegedly used as vectors of foreign interference in European parliamentarism. Parliament therefore urged a review of existing regulations with the aim of increasing transparency and accountability of NGOs, in particular related to governance, budget, foreign influence and persons of significant control. It

underlined that NGOs receiving money from third parties whose registration in the Transparency Register is not required need to disclose the sources of their funding by specifying the same information as all regular registrants. They requested that if this information is not disclosed, any public EU funding to the NGO in question should be **freezed immediately**. Furthermore, Members called for **comprehensive financial pre-screening** of NGOs before they are listed on the EU transparency register, the publishing of contractual agreements between the European Commission and NGOs and a clear definition of NGOs allowed to register under the transparency register and eligible to receive EU funding.

New EU ethics body

Members reiterated their long-standing call for the Commission to put forward a proposal to set up an **independent and effective ethics body**. They urged the Commission to come forward with its proposal to establish an independent ethics body by **March 2023 at the latest**.

Additional vetting

Parliament recommended additional vetting for parliamentary assistants and staff working on sensitive policy fields, particularly in foreign affairs, security and defence. Members considered that the staff working in such fields could be considered as politically exposed persons and called trips paid for by third countries to be subject to prior approval by a dedicated body of the European Parliament. They also considered essential the introduction of a 'cooling-off period' for Members for a period of six months immediately following the end of their respective mandates.

The resolution called for a ban on Members carrying out remunerated side activities that could create a conflict of interest with their mandate.

The Commission and the Council are called on to cooperate with Parliament on working towards carrying out the reforms needed to ensure prevention and preparedness, to reinforce the transparency and accountability of EU institutions and to fight against corruption.