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News | 26.10.2016

Greens freeze part of Commission budget to force action on revolving doors and ethics

Today, the European Parliament voted on the EU budget for 2017, sending a clear signal to the European Commission that they need to urgently reform their ethics codes, particularly to control the revolving doors (which is when public officials move into the private sector to work in the same industries that they were previous in charge of regulating).

The various scandals involving both past and present Commissioners led the European Parliament to introduce a budget reserve into the European Commission's budget as a "slap on the wrist" given their refusals so far to reform their ethical code of conduct.

Greens/EFA members of the budget committee managed to "freeze" 20% of the budget line that is used to pay ex-Commissioners their "transitional allowance" up to three years after they leave their position. This is paid in order to help them to "transition" into another job; and arguably is there to prevent them from relying on the revolving door. The total budget for this is just over 2.5 million.

In practical terms, this means that the Commission can spend up to 80% of the budget line, BUT, if it wants to use the remaining 20% (or €505,000), it will have to comply with the demands set by the European Parliament. And the demand is clear: ***"The Commission should adopt a stricter code of conduct before the reserve is released"***. The full text of the amendment is below, as is the text of the resolution which focuses on conflicts of interest and revolving doors.

What next?

Negotiations with the other 2 institutions are due to begin soon, and we want to **keep up the pressure to make sure that this item is not dropped somehow** along the way.

More information?

Below you will find the text of the amendment, and the text of the resolution in which the Parliament calls for a stricter code of conduct to prevent conflicts of interest.

The text of the resolution:

Decides, in the light of recent revelations and in order to regain the confidence of Union citizens and the credibility of the Union institutions, to hold 20% of appropriations of the Temporary Allowances for former

Members in reserve until the Commission enforces a stricter Code of conduct for Commissioners to prevent conflict of interests and the revolving doors.

The amendment tabled thanks to the Greens/EFA group

Draft amendment 1555

=== BUDG/3547 ===

Tabled by Committee on Budgets

BUDG/3547 = Compromise amendment

SECTION III — COMMISSION

Item 30 01 13 01 — Temporary allowances

Amend figures and conditions for releasing the reserve as follows:

| | MFF | Draft budget 2017 | | Council's position 2017 | | Difference | | New amount | |
|-------------|--------|-------------------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------|-------------|----------|-------------|-----------|
| | | Commitments | Payments | Commitments | Payments | Commitments | Payments | Commitments | Payments |
| 30 01 13 01 | 5 2 3X | 2 525 000 | 2 525 000 | 2 525 000 | 2 525 000 | -505 000 | -505 000 | 2 020 000 | 2 020 000 |
| Reserve | | | | | | 505 000 | 505 000 | 505 000 | 505 000 |
| Total | | 2 525 000 | 2 525 000 | 2 525 000 | 2 525 000 | | | 2 525 000 | 2 525 000 |

Conditions for releasing the reserve:

Add following text:

In order to strengthen European democracy and enhance EU citizens' confidence in the EU institutions, Commissioners and former Commissioners should be bound by the most ambitious standards in the world, especially concerning conflicts of interest and 'revolving doors'.

The Commission should adopt a stricter code of conduct before the reserve is released.

Justification:

See the conditions for releasing the reserve

BUDG has taken over and modified the amendment tabled by VERT.

Compromise amendment between VERT/7993

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