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News | 21.10.2015

Tax Justice

The European Commission undermines Parliament's rights to access tax information

This is mission (almost) impossible. A few hours in a secured room in the European Commission to look into over 800 pages of complex tax documents discussed by EU Member States since 2010, with no possibility to take notes out or mention anything that you have read on the premises.

This is the mission that was forced on us by the European Commission. The [European Parliament Special TAXE Committee](#), in charge of investigating the Luxleaks scandal about large companies getting special deals with tax administrations, has requested access to some essential documents from the Commission in order to fulfil its mission.

Unfortunately, the European Commission has been dragging its feet for months and argued the documents cannot be shared as they are confidential, containing information provided by the Member States, most of whom would like their tax secrets to remain undisclosed.

Pushed by the Greens, the European Parliament legal service clarified that our institution has the right to receive this information, even if it is confidential. But instead the Commission is offering only a very strict consultation procedure in its premises – which we renamed « mission (almost) impossible ».

More importantly, even here, the Commission is not cooperating fully as it only provides information since 2010, although the Parliament requires it from 1997, which is when the Code of conduct on business taxation, a Council working group aimed at ridding the EU of harmful tax regimes was created. Older documents from 1997 to 2009 and the minutes of the meetings will not be available; making it mission (really) impossible this time for Parliamentarians to fulfil the TAXE mandate and shed real light on whether EU obligations have been breached by Member States.

Those to blame are first the Member States because fourteen of them, including the UK, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Malta or Spain have simply refused to disclose any information to the Parliament at all. Then comes Mr Juncker as President of the European Commission. He has the political power to allow for these documents to be transmitted. President Juncker should fully support the European Parliament in its investigations. As Greens, we are calling upon him to take this crucial decision, to show that his past is behind him and as a gesture to prove he is genuinely committed to fighting corporate tax avoidance.

Philippe Lamberts, Greens/EFA co-president and shadow rapporteur for TAXE as well as Sven Giegold, Green coordinator of the TAXE committee have accepted this mission. But they cannot read at light speed and analyse and memorise all information. And until we get all the documents we have requested, we believe the mandate of the Special Committee TAXE should be extended, to give the Parliament the appropriate time to analyse the documents and draw all the necessary consequences.

As Greens, we will continue to fight and use all means available to ensure we have further access to these essential documents. Loyal to our commitment for tax transparency, we will make sure this message does not self-destruct in the next 5 seconds.

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