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Pandora Papers show urgent need for more action on tax evasion and money laundering

Pandora Papers

Last night, new revelations, known as the Pandora Papers, were released by the International Consortium for Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) and partners which reveal apparent tax evasion and money laundering by the global elite. The investigations show that tax evasion and financial crime continue on a vast scale through letterbox companies and trusts. The revelations implicate Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babiš and Dutch Finance Minister Wopke Hoekstra, among hundreds of others. The Greens/EFA Group are calling for an urgent debate on the Pandora Papers during this week's plenary session in Strasbourg.

Sven Giegold, Greens/EFA financial and economic affairs spokesperson, comments:

“Tax evasion and money laundering continue to flourish through letterbox companies despite all past scandals. The policy measures taken after scandals like the Panama Papers are insufficient. We need stricter rules that ensure full transparency and the better exchange of information across borders. Tax authorities must be able to tax capital income from abroad on real estate and complex letterbox companies. International rules make tax evasion for smaller amounts more difficult today, but the basic problem for large fortunes remains. It cannot be possible that people can buy themselves out of their tax responsibilities. Tax evasion endangers our democracy as people lose confidence in the rule of law. This is all the more true when political elites hide their wealth. Letterbox companies enable corruption and money laundering.

“The Pandora Papers show that the advances in international tax cooperation are not enough. The global minimum tax only applies to large corporations, but not to the letterbox companies of the wealthy and corrupt. We need full international transparency about the real owners of letterbox companies and real estate. The international exchange of information needs to be expanded to identify tax evaders. The new data leak must be a wake-up call. Global tax fraud fuels global inequality. We now have to expand and focus efforts to tackle financial secrecy. Thanks once again to the journalists who have done this research for the common good. EU Ministers of Finance should postpone tomorrow's decision on the EU list of tax havens to avoid embarrassment and ensure that the list is fit for purpose with all global tax havens included.”

Mikuláš Peksa, Czech Pirate Party and Greens/EFA Member of the Budgetary Control Committee, comments:

“The EU and all its member states must lead in the fight against fraud, corruption and money laundering. However, it’s clear from these revelations that not all EU leaders are putting in the effort needed to tackle financial secrecy. Unfortunately, it seems that Czech PM Andrej Babiš is deeply implicated by the revelations in the Pandora Papers. There must be an urgent investigation into the extent of the Prime Minister’s involvement in any fraudulent or illegal schemes. Any illegal activity must not go unpunished. These revelations show the urgent need for further EU action on tax evasion and financial crime. The EU cannot demand action abroad if it does not hold itself to the same standards at home. The Commission must take action on those member states not enforcing the exchange of tax information and anti-money laundering rules.”

More:

The revelations are based on the largest tax data leak of all time, with 600 journalists from 117 countries collaborating on this project. The enormous data set comprises 11.9 million documents from a total of 14 financial service providers. The names of numerous celebrities, politicians and billionaires appear in the records. An ICIJ analysis of the secret documents identified 956 companies in offshore havens tied to 336 high-level politicians and public officials, including country leaders, cabinet ministers, ambassadors and others. More than two-thirds of those companies were set up in the British Virgin Islands.

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Responsible MEPs



Sven Giegold

Member



Mikuláš Peksa

Member

Contact person



Alex Johnson

Press & Media Advisor EN (English language press)

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