



15 December 2022

PES Presidency Declaration

Corruption has no place in our democratic institutions and in our society

Adopted by the PES Presidency on 15 December 2022

The Party of European Socialists (PES) is extremely concerned about allegations of corruption in the European institutions and the political system. For years, socialists and democrats have been denouncing corruption and attacks on the rule of law in the EU and beyond. This is our priority, and we are constantly fighting against all types of fraud, bribery as well as against illegal influence and lobbying. Such practices are unacceptable. We have zero tolerance for corruption.

On Friday 9 December 2022, the Belgian Federal Prosecutor's Office has carried out an anti-corruption operation targeting MEPs, civil society and other actors who carried out illegal lobbying operations with foreign actors. The PES thanks authorities for the effective policework which uncovered evidence of corruption.

In view of the current events, we support a full and thorough investigation into allegations that foreign actors are exerting illegal pressure on the European institutions, including through Members of the European Parliament and staff, trade unionist, and a non-governmental organization (NGO). All those found responsible must be prosecuted. Any individual, company, or country involved in acts of corruption and illegal influence and lobbying of democratic institutions must face all necessary legal consequences.

We welcome PASOK-Movement for Change's immediate suspension of Eva Kaili from the party in response to the ongoing investigations. We also welcome the Socialists and Democrats Group in the European Parliament's quick action to expel her from the S&D Group, and the call to replace her as Vice-President of the European Parliament.

As PES, we support the proposals made by the S&D Group and its stance on zero tolerance for corruption. These include the suspension all members who are under judicial investigation, the removal of files from MEPs whose assistants are under investigation for related matters, and the call for the establishment of EP Inquiry committee into foreign interference with potential sanctions for any states or individuals involved. We also support the S&D Group's call for the European Parliament to suspend work on any files and plenary votes relating to the Gulf States, particularly concerning visa liberalisation and planned visits, until the competent authorities provide relevant information and

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clarification. To protect against future scandals, and to safeguard citizens' trust in public institutions, the developments that lead to this scandal must be fully analysed, in an independent and transparent process.

In light of the seriousness of these accusations, we call on the European Parliament and all institution to take urgent and thorough measures, in order to build strong defenses against bribery, corruption, and illegal interference.

The PES political family is permanently committed to the fight to eradicate corruption. Working alongside our member parties, we are committed to doing so in every member state and at all political levels. The PES is committed to further strengthening processes, within the progressive political movement and the European institutions, to defend against corruption. We must show zero tolerance for corruption. Corruption has no place in our democratic institutions and in our society.