

THE BRIBERY SCANDAL IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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The European Parliament (EP) has been shaken up by reports of corruption since December 9, 2022. Within the scope of the investigation conducted by the Belgian Federal Prosecutor's Office, corruption within the European Parliament linked to Qatar, connection to a money laundering criminal organization and interference in parliamentary decisions were brought to the agenda. According to the allegations, Eva Kaili, a Greek politician and former Vice-President of the European Parliament, who is among the names involved in the scandal, was suspended by her party[1] and is still in custody, initially denied all allegations, but on December 20, 2022, she made a partial confession, saying that she asked her father to take the money[2].

Some parliamentarians have explained that this is just the tip of the iceberg, while others believe that it is limited to a few individuals[3]. However, the Belgian police have stated that there are suspicions that the scandal is much deeper. Nevertheless, the President of the EP, Roberta Metsola, has artfully shifted the blame for the EUs epic bribery scandal. Qatar, an enemy of democracy, one of the autocratical countries, has made such a slander to destroy our democracy, Metsola stated. Apparently, according to Metsola, holding others responsible is enough to ease ones conscience[4]. With this mentality, an attempt has been made to create the impression that the fault lies not with the side who takes the bribe but the one who gives it. It seems that while accusing Qatar, EP President Metsola forgot about the negotiations between Qatar and the EU on security and energy issues. President of the European Council, Charles Michel, on the other hand, said that the launching of an investigation harms the credibility of the European Union[5]. Michel also stated that lessons should be learned from this scandal and that they should work on precautionary packages to prevent corruption in the future. As it is known, Qatar is a major producer of liquefied natural gas and Western politicians are seeking to find alternative sources of energy while Russias war against Ukraine continues and are trying to appease Qatar during this period[6]. For this reason, EU Council President Michel is

displaying a more cautious approach regarding Qatar than EP President Metsola.

As one may recall, the non-disclosure of the content of the messages between EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Pfizer CEO Albert Burla during the procurement of Covid-19 vaccines damaged the credibility of the EU administration. Similarly, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyens refusal to answer questions about the Qatargate scandal has also raised eyebrows[7].

When the scandal first emerged, the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D group) stated that they were appalled by the severity of the allegations and demanded the suspension of planned visits to the Gulf countries until the accused authorities make a statement[8].

As it is known from the media reports, the former EP President Pier Antonio Panzeri (and his family), the Parliamentary advisor Francesco Giorgi and the Moroccan Ambassador to Warsaw Abderrahim Atmoun have had close ties for many years on various occasions[9]. Today, Panzeri, Kaili and her partner Giorgi are in prison. Morocco being brought to the agenda is also linked to the pressure on Morocco over the fisheries trade agreement between the EU and Morocco - a sensitive issue for France, Spain and Italy[10]. Fishery is a strategic issue for the Rabat government and for the separatist Polisario in Western Sahara. For this reason, Morocco also has a significant place in the EPs Qatargate scandal [11]. The Polisario Front representative Mohamed Sidati also claimed that the scandal started with Morocco, not with the Gulf countries[12].

In an interview with La Stampa, Franco Roberti, an Italian S&D MEP, said that he thought the network of corruption could go beyond Qatar and Morocco. Even though there is no concrete evidence regarding the extent of the corruption, there are many who are dwelling upon this possibility[13]. Roberti stated that the possibility of jeopardizing the stability of the EU is worrying.

The EP Presidents attitude concerning the scandal does not seem fair. Therefore, it is clear that this scandal should be thoroughly scrutinized by the EU. Such an investigation is especially important for Türkiye in terms of the EPs resolutions, which are clearly not objective. An in-depth investigation will perhaps reveal the flaws in the decision-making structure. All in all, this scandal is likely to trouble the EP and thus the EU for a long time. However, if the investigations and studies to be carried out within the EU and the EP in relation to the scandal can have a positive outcome such as providing results that will enable these bodies to be objective in their decisions, this will be a development that will be beneficial primarily for the prestige of the European Union.

**Photograph:*
https://www.elcorreo.com/internacional/europa/qatargate-corrupcion-20221214134545-ntrc.html?ref=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.elcorreo.com%2Finternacional%2Feuropa%2Fqatargate-corrupcion-20221214134545-ntrc.html

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