

## Selmayr appointment 'lacks transparency', says Parliament's budgetary control committee

Written by Martin Banks and Julie Levy-Abegnoli on 29 March 2018 in News News

Parliament's budgetary control committee has concluded that the appointment of Martin Selmayr as Commission Secretary General lacked transparency.



Martin Selmayr | *Photo credit: European Commission audiovisual*

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This was the verdict of most members of the budgetary control committee after a hearing on the affairs with European Commissioner Günther Oettinger.

Several committee members suggested changes to be made to the rules setting out the appointment procedures of EU officials to avoid similar situations in future, while others pointed out the procedure “looked bad”, despite being legal.

However, Oettinger, the Commissioner responsible for budget and human resources, stressed that rules had been followed and that Selmayr, a German lawyer, was qualified “professionally and personally” for the job, which he has held since 1 March.

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The conclusions of the hearing will contribute to a resolution to be voted on by the whole Parliament on 19 April in Strasbourg.

The Greens/EFA group had requested that Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker be invited, but this was rejected by the EPP, S&D and ALDE.

After a lively hearing with Oettinger, the committee has now put forward a tough draft resolution on the appointment. The resolution criticises in “unambiguous terms” the “un-transparent” appointment procedure and calls for change.

The resolution is open to amendments by all political groups until 5 April.

Commenting after the hearing, S&D group budgetary control committee coordinator Inés Ayala Sender said, “When Juncker’s mandate is over, the post of Secretary General must be reassessed. This must be done according to a new set of rules inspired by a greater transparency, a collegial approach and an equal opportunities-based principle.

“We are thankful to Commissioner Günther Oettinger for having answered all the relevant questions today at the hearing in the budgetary control committee. Nonetheless, from this painful experience we have seen that the current rules are widely lacking and must be rewritten in favour of greater transparency.”

She added, “This is not personal, nor is it a retaliation on the basis of nationality. We want to be sure that the next Commission can reassess the post of the next Secretary General on the basis of these new rules and procedures. This must of course be valid not only for the European Commission, but for all high ranked staff and administrators in the European institutions.”

Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy, the ALDE group spokesperson on the committee, said, “The Selmayr case is a piece of theatre carefully written by Jean-Claude Juncker and Martin Selmayr, a political-administrative coup. The European Commission denies in an almost Trumpian way that this appointment has caused serious damage to the integrity and reputation of the EU. The European Commission has lacked any kind of sensitivity in this case.”

German Greens MEP Sven Giegold, Parliament’s rapporteur on transparency, integrity and accountability of the EU institutions, called on all of Parliament’s groups “to apply the same high standards also in their parliamentary appointments as we demand them from the Commission.

Equally the public outrage over the appointment of a top European official should make everyone demand the same standards for top appointments to the public services in the member states.”

He added, “Oettinger has admitted that they used an exception rule in order to avoid a public tender although there was enough time for an open and transparent procedure. The Commission completely refuses to draw sensitive conclusions from the criticism on the cloak-and-dagger operation of Selmayr’s promotion. The invitation to a round table does not replace a proposal of one’s own. The EU Commission does not give an inch instead and shows no sign of understanding.

Further reaction on Thursday came from Corporate Europe Observatory’s transparency and ethics campaigner Margarida Silva.

She told this website, “The Commission’s reply to MEPs and subsequent social media messages show its unwillingness to have a proper discussion about integrity and ethics. Their approach to

Selmayr’s promotion is a defensive kneejerk reaction. Instead, the Commission should ask itself if a man with a political imprint like Selmayr’s is the right person to lead the EU’s civil service.

“Around the Selmayrgate and the José Manuel Barroso/Goldman Sachs affair, the Commission continues to downplay the importance of integrity and ethics. They are simply waiting for all criticism to die down, rather than taking the initiative to implement stricter ethics rules.”

## About the author

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