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President Jean-Claude Juncker is making a farce of the fight against tax avoidance

Exchange of views with Mr Juncker in TAXE - 17 September 2015

It was a long-awaited and well-attended hearing of the European Parliament Special Committee on tax rulings (TAXE) which took place last week. It is indeed not every day that the President of the European Commission himself, **Jean-Claude Juncker** and two Commissioners visit our committee to discuss the fight against tax dodging. Unfortunately, the hearing did not match at all our expectations.

Despite stating that the fight against tax avoidance and evasion is a key priority for the European Commission, President **Juncker** announced nothing new but reiterated the current ongoing reforms, some blocked by the Member States for years now, like the creation of a European common consolidated corporate tax base for the 28 countries. While he made transparency one of his personal priorities last year, he did not support the European Parliament's position to introduce a tax transparency obligation on all large companies, making them publish key elements (like number of employees and subsidiaries, profits made and tax paid) to ensure they pay their fair share of taxes.

Last week's hearing even turned into a farce when asked by Green MEP **Sven Giegold** to acknowledge his role in making Luxembourg a major tax haven, President **Juncker** denied any responsibility in this as Minister of Finance and Prime Minister of Luxembourg. Showing no sign of remorse for the past 25 years, **Juncker** has failed to restore his credibility in tax matters.

Without surprise, **Juncker** also refused to take responsibility on the issue of access to documents by the European Parliament. The TAXE committee is fighting hard to obtain essential documents from the Council and the Commission to fulfil its mandate. So far, the Council has not sent any meaningful information and the Commission is refusing to transmit 25 background papers and informal minutes of the Code of Conduct Group on business taxation. The Commission is arguing that these documents include confidential information, which Member States are not keen to see transmitted to the European Parliament.

The Greens are challenging the confidentiality argument brought forward by the Commission as we know these documents do not have a "classified status". They contain essential elements needed to shed light on why no governments acted in the past to fight tax evasion and tax avoidance. By denying their access, the Commission is siding with Member States which have an interest in maintaining the status quo.

The Greens are fighting for greater transparency so that every European citizen can know what is going on and whether their leaders are truly acting. MEP **Sven Giegold** has requested, through the Access Info website as a European citizen, to obtain the missing documents and we hope to get an answer in the coming weeks. In the meantime, the Greens are calling for extending the mandate of the TAXE committee - due to finish in November - so that more time is allocated to the European Parliament to obtain the documents, analyse them and draw all the necessary conclusions in its investigations.

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