

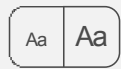


WORLD NEWS

Why won't Brussels release report on EU-wide corruption?



Chris Harris



EDITOR'S CHOICE



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last updated: 28/06/2017



Campaigners want to know why Brussels bureaucrats are refusing to release a report on fighting corruption.

EU chiefs had promised to report every two years on how well countries in the bloc were battling graft.

But, after its first report in 2014, there has been nothing.

There had been an update scheduled for 2016, but this was [scrapped suddenly in January this year by European Commission vice president Frans Timmermans](#).

Transparency campaigners say it was such a last-minute move the data would have already have been compiled.

They have asked for the reports via freedom of information requests but the European Commission has so far refused their demands, saying it would have a chilling effect on people talking to them about corruption.

"The whole point of these reports [in the first place] was that they are going to be made public, so it doesn't make sense for them to say that these people didn't know what they would say would be made public," said Andreas Pavlou, a campaigner and researcher at Access Info.

"Supposedly this was information that was going to be published anyway so to suddenly say they are not going to raises questions about why and how and what information they do have.

"In Europe there are huge questions around the rule of law and whether there is greater corruption than there was before.

“So these reports would be hugely useful and hugely important for civil society.

“The massive effort to collect comparative information about the state of anti-corruption measures in 28 EU member states has been thrown in the bin by the European Commission, having abruptly decided not to publish them, and refusing to publish them following requests for access. Given the present-day challenges to European democracies, the Commission’s decision to shelve the publishing of these anti-corruption reports makes it ever more difficult for citizens and civil society to hold public officials to account and tackle corruption.”

Three years ago, the EC [said corruption cost the European economy 120 billion euros annually](#) and more should be done to “punish and prevent it”.

A number of corruption scandals have erupted in Europe so far this year, most notably in Romania and French presidential candidate Francois Fillon.

A spokeswoman for the European Commission said: “When we took the decision on the way forward at the end of 2016 there was no draft report, nor anything that resembled a draft report. Our work on anti-corruption did however continue. The Commission decided to mainstream its anti-corruption policies in the European Semester and embed it in the DNA of its economic policy dialogue between the Member States and EU institutions. All preparatory work has fed into that process.”

Your view Do you think the reports should be made public? Let me know via chris.harris@euronews.com

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