



The commission estimates EU-wide corruption costs the tax payer some €120 billion annually (Photo: h.koppdelaney)

EU-wide corruption report drops chapter on EU institutions

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BRUSSELS - The European Commission has decided not to include a chapter on EU institutions in a report on corruption in member states due out next week.

The original plan, announced in 2011, was to assess corruption across the member states and within the EU institutions.

EU home affairs commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom is set to release the first bi-annual report on Monday (3 February), around six months later than originally planned.

Malmstrom's spokesperson Michael Cercone told this website in an email that the commission had considered assessing the anti-corruption efforts of the EU's own institutions but "realised that this is something we will have to come back to in a future EU anti-corruption report – to be sure that the evaluation would be satisfactory and objective."

He noted that it would be difficult to provide an objective self-evaluation because, unlike for member states, there are no independent external reviews the commission could draw on to evaluate its own institutions.

"Nor do we have a lot of academic research on anti-corruption measures within the EU institutions," he said.

Malmstrom, for her part, in a speech delivered in March 2013 noted that corruption within the EU institutions was also a problem that needed to be taken seriously.

But a follow-up conference on the future anti-corruption report on member states last December made no mention of the previously announced EU institution probes.

Instead, Cercone said they are working on getting the EU signed up to the Council of Europe's Group of States Against Corruption (Greco), which "should lead eventually to external evaluation of EU institutions."

"Those reviews would make it much easier to have an assessment of EU institutions in future EU anti-corruption reports," he added.

A contact at the Council of Europe said how those evaluations would be carried out and on which areas at the institutions is unknown.

The institutions are currently carrying out internal evaluations on how they would interact with Greco once they sign up.

"I don't know what is going on there right now, the ball is clearly with the European Commission," said the contact.

Commission expert groups and a 2012 EU-wide corruption risk report by Transparency International (TI) contributed to the wider 28-member state report.

The commission's expert advisory group on corruption reviewed sections on some of the country specific chapters. But it did not see a draft on the EU institutions.

"It was certainly originally envisaged when the idea was set up that there would be one on the EU institutions and I certainly think it would be a good idea to have it," one of the experts on the advisory group told this website.

Meanwhile, TI in a report earlier this month found that the Brussels executive has a poor record on banning corrupt companies that abuse EU funds.

It noted that in recent years the commission has banned only one company across all its spending programmes.

"The commission blacklisting system is not working. That may be understatement. It appears to be completely toothless," notes TI's website, which is soon set to issue its own assessment on the risk of corruption in the EU institutions.