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Police raid more EU Parliament offices in corruption probe

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN 2 hours ago

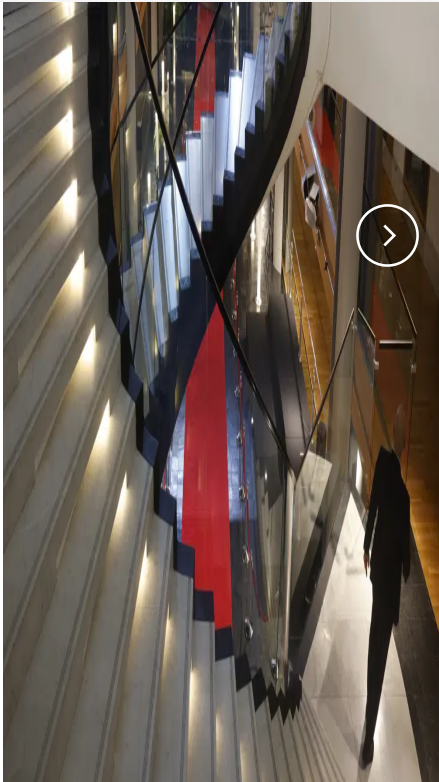


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BRUSSELS (AP) — Belgian police conducted more raids at European Parliament offices Monday as the legislature’s president pledged to launch an internal investigation into

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bloc's top

official

of an EU-

wide

independent

ethics body.

Prosecutors

investigating

alleged

influence

peddling by

a Gulf

country at

the

European

Parliament

charged

four people

over the

weekend

with

corruption,

participation

in a

criminal

group and

money

laundering.

Parliament

Vice

President

Eva Kaili of

Greece was

relieved of

her duties.

The

prosecutors

declined to

identify the



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cash or gifts

↩

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exchange
for political
favours.
Several
members of
the
assembly
and some
Belgian
media
linked the
investigation
to Qatar,
which is
currently
hosting
soccer's
gala event,
[the World
Cup](#).

Qatar's
Ministry of
Foreign
Affairs has
denied any
wrongdoing.

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Police
conducted
Monday's
raids at
European
Parliament

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	computer
	data
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	parliamentary
	assistants,
	prosecutors
	said.
	Officers
	have
	conducted
	20 raids in
	total as part
	of an
	investigation
	launched
	four
	months
	ago.
	“Several
	hundred
	thousand
	euros have
	been seized
	in three
	different
	places:
	600,000
	euros at the
	home of
	one of the
	suspects,
	several
	hundred
	thousand
	euros in a
	suitcase
	seized in a
	room of a
	Brussels
	hotel, and



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apartment
balancing

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said.



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WAR

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of the weapons
war in
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New Europe
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windfall
from oil year

Kaili, who
was
relieved of
her duties
over the
weekend,
was
expelled
Monday
from the
legislature's
Socialists
and
Democrats
group with



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Commission

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the head of
the EU’s
executive
arm, said
the
accusations
against Kaili
threatened
the
confidence
EU citizens
have put in
the 27-
nation
bloc’s
institutions.

She said the
independent
ethics body
she
proposed
establishing
would cover
lobbying
activities at
the
European
Commission,
the
European
Council and
European
Parliament,
as well as at
the
European
Central



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		Justice and the			
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Auditors.

The EU does not already have comprehensive lobbying regulations.

“The principles of having such an ethics body where there are very clear rules on what has to be checked, how and when and what has to be published, how and when would be a big step forward,” she said.

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began its
last plenary
Strasbourg,
France,
European
Parliament
President
Roberta
Metsola
promised
“there will
be no
sweeping
under the
carpet.”
She said the
Parliament
and
European
democracies
were
“under
attack” by
“malign
actors,
linked to
autocratic
third
countries.”
“We will
launch a
reform
process to
see who has
access to
our
premises,
how these
organizations,



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what links

with this

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Metsola added. “We will ask for more transparency on meetings with foreign actors and those linked to them. We will shake up this Parliament and this town, and I need your help to do it.”

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On Friday, police in Belgium’s capital carried out multiple raids as part of the investigation and reported seizing



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and mobile
teleshows

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office,
without
identifying
any
individual,
said four of
six people
detained
that day
were
subsequently
charged,
and two
were
released.

Raids also
took place
in Italy on
Sunday.

Prosecutors
have
confirmed
that a
parliament
member
was
arrested but
declined to
confirm it
was Kaili,
44, a former
TV news
anchor.
They said
they
suspect

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of money,
as the offer

gifts” to
people
holding
with
influential
positions at
the
European
Parliament.

Metsola
relieved
Kaili of her
duties over
the
weekend.
Kaili’s party
in Greece
also
suspended
her and
publicly
distanced
itself from
remarks she
made in the
EU
parliament
last month
praising
Qatar,

Qatar came
under heavy
international
pressure to
introduce
labor
reforms in



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time, often

using

migrant

workers

who toiled

for long

hours under

harsh

conditions.

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The EU and

Qatar have

strengthened

their

economic

relationships

since the

start of

Russia’s war

in Ukraine.

Moscow

slashed

supplies of

natural gas

used to heat

homes,

generate

electricity

and power

industry in

Europe in

response to

EU

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crisis that is

fracturing

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looked for

alternatives

to buy

liquefied

natural gas

on a long-

term basis,

notably in

Qatar.

In April, the

European

Commission

proposed

lifting visa

requirements

for short

EU stays by

Qatari

nationals.

Metsola

said

negotiations

with the

Parliament

on the

proposal

would be

postponed.

“I was

scheduled

today to

announce

the opening

of the

negotiating

mandate for



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Qatar and
Persian Gulf tensions

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the investigations, this report must be sent back to committee.”

Asked whether Belgian authorities were in touch with the European Commission as part of their investigation, von der Leyen said she had no clue. She added that the commission was reviewing its own political transparency register.

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		occurs, we			
		will have to			
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		that,” she			
		said.			
		Several			
		Socialists			
		and			
		Democrats			
		lawmakers			
		fell on their			
		swords			
		after the			
		group said			
		that any			
		member			
		being			
		investigated			
		should be			
		suspended,			
		or should			
		give up			
		certain of			
		their duties			
		if any of			
		their staff			
		members			
		were under			
		investigation.			
		Belgian EU			
		lawmaker			
		Marc			
		Tarabella			
		suspended			
		himself			
		outright.			
		His			
		compatriot,			
		Maria			
		Arena,			



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assembly’s
Human

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“Following
the
revelations
of suspicion
of
corruption
linked to
Qatar and
the
European
Parliament,
and the
search of
one of my
assistants
in the
framework
of this
affair, I
have
decided
that
temporarily
I will no
longer
preside
over
meetings of
the Human
Rights
Committee,”
Arena
tweeted.

Italian S&D
lawmaker
Pietro
Bartolo also



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shadow

reporter

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Justice and
Home
Affairs
Committee.
Another
Italian
member of
the
European
Parliament,
Andrea
Cozzolino,
stopped
performing
certain
tasks
temporarily.

Ghent
University
Professor
Hendrik
Vos, an EU
expert, told
The
Associated
Press the
case could
have
lingering
repercussions
on the
generally
positive
image of
the
European
Parliament.



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massive
corruption

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Parliament,”
he said. “It
is so
profound
because it
jars so
fundamentally
with what
Parliament
pretends to
stand for.
The
Parliament
pretends to
stand for
transparency,
unable to
be bribed,
to defend
fundamental
values. And
then, you
get
something
like this.”

—

Lorne Cook
and Raf
Casert in
Brussels;
Elena
Becatoros
in Athens
contributed
to this
story.



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Electric Cars |

Now Legal
in...

Promoted: Tommy

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