



Brussels, 15th October 2015

Inge Gräßle (EPP/CDU):

OLAF Director-General cuts off his own controllers' funding

OLAF Director-General Giovanni Kessler's attempt to hamper his own controllers' work by curtailing their budget "demonstrates once more that the OLAF Supervisory Committee's budgetary autonomy is overdue", finds Inge Gräßle MEP (CDU), rapporteur on OLAF legal basis in the European Parliament's Budgetary Control Committee. "It is scandalous that this damages the reputation of senior police officers, public prosecutors and a former court of auditor's president." Gräßle has analysed a compilation by the Director-General, which was leaked to the press, in which he sets out with meticulous precision which Member accounts for how much travel expenses and which meetings have taken place. "The Director-General's high-handed administration of his office and his unlawful investigations have caused the Supervisory Committee more work than ever before. Holding it against them that they are doing that work, under the pretext of being concerned about budgetary ceilings, is something unheard of", states Gräßle. The Supervisory Committee with its five Members has a budget of 200 000 euros per year. Kessler is reproaching them with having overspent it by 20 000 euros.

Gräßle considers it "quite pharisaic for someone who is happy to take home around 20 000 euros per month to find fault with an annual budget increase of 20 000 euros, spent on doubtlessly strenuous meetings which have actually taken place and which one has provoked oneself. Mr Kessler's unjustified allegations and insinuations against members of his own watchdog, who have strongly criticized him in the past for his unlawful investigations, falsifications of OLAF's statistics and breaches of administrative rules, cannot but be seen as a retaliating and malicious action. This is of great concern."

"Speaking of budgetary spending, let us also take a look at the Director-General's expenditure: he had an unjustified conference held in his home region which cost OLAF 136 000 euros; under his aegis, we cannot trust neither his figures nor his statements in Parliament." In Gräßle's view, the time has come for the Commission to put an end to the Director-General's continuing distortion of the facts by relieving him of his duties: "Kessler has shown once again that he is incapable of heading this difficult and important office."

For further information:

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