



On the Agenda

Transparency and EU funds during the coronavirus pandemic

Zoom Webinar

16 July 2020, 12h30 – 13h30 (CEST)

ABOUT THE EVENT

As the European Commission is proposing a major 2.4 trillion EUR recovery plan to kick-start the European revival, protect lives and secure jobs, some figures in Europe are already thinking of how they can divert these funds for their own self-interest. In times of crisis, as now during the coronavirus pandemic, certain rules (i.e. public procurement, staff hiring, etc.) seem to have been relaxed in order to ensure fast reactions to the crisis. Democratic scrutiny is weakened, the public is distracted by the very real threat to their health, yet the fraudulent use of EU funds continues to take place in the member states. The crisis has exacerbated the illiberal and corrupt tendencies of some governments, especially those from Central and Eastern Europe.

The European Commission is right in proposing this much-needed recovery plan, however, it also needs to make sure that the money will be spent wisely and transparently on the things that actually matter to people. Whilst everybody is looking through the microscope at this novel virus, nobody sees the backhand transactions that take place in certain parts of Europe. Transparency should be insured at all levels of society, starting from the highest. How can the EU ensure the sound use of its funds whilst respecting the national sovereignty of its member states? What kind of conditionality should the European Commission attach to this new wave of funds? Should the EU close its eyes to these practices as long as some of the funds reach and benefit large parts of the population?

The European Liberal Forum believes that ensuring sound spending and use of European funds needs to be put *on the agenda* before the Commission's recovery package makes its way into accounts across Europe.



EVENT SCHEDULE

12h25 Participants connect to the Zoom event

12h30 Opening Remarks

Daniel Kaddik, Executive Director, European Liberal Forum

12h32 Introduction by the Moderator

Beatriz Rios, EU Affairs Reporter

12h36 First intervention

Katalin Cseh, Member of the European Parliament, Renew Europe Group

12h43 Second intervention

Nicholas Aiossa, Deputy Director, Transparency International EU Office

12h50 Third intervention

Mark Schelfhout, Acting Director, Audit, Evaluation and Communication (Dir. G),
DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission

12h57 Moderated debate

13h27 Closing remarks

13h30 End of event

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Speakers' Bios



Katalin Cseh, Member of the European Parliament, Renew Europe Group

Katalin studied medicine in Budapest and health economics in the Netherlands before she started her political career at Momentum Movement, a newly established centre-progressive party in Hungary. She was one of the founding members of the party and later she became a candidate for the European Parliament elections.

After taking up her mandate in the European Parliament, she was elected for the position of Vice-President of the Renew Europe Group. Katalin is working actively as a member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Committee on Human Rights, the Committee on Regional Development and the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy. She is a bureau member of the Anti-Corruption Intergroup and Vice-Chair of the Climate Intergroup. Katalin is also the Chair of Renew Europe's Working Group on Values and Democracy.

Nicholas Aiossa, Deputy Director, Transparency International EU Office

Nick is the Deputy Director of Transparency International EU and leads the work on EU political integrity. He has been at TI EU since 2014 and previously coordinated the movement's advocacy on the EU whistle-blower directive. He has also worked on a variety of issues including public fiscal accountability and the misuse of EU funds. Prior to working at Transparency International EU, he worked for over six years in the European Parliament on a range of topics, including human rights and transatlantic relations.



Mark Schelfhout, Acting Director, Audit, Evaluation and Communication (Dir. G), DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission

Mark Schelfhout is the Acting Director for Audits in DG EMPL. He has been active in the field of auditing the European Social Fund since 1993 and has vast experience with management and control systems in shared management. He is also the business owner of the Arachne system which was developed under his initiative and which is considered a powerful tool to prevent and detect fraud and irregularities in shared management.

Beatriz Rios, EU Affairs Reporter (Moderator)

Beatriz Rios is a Brussels-based reporter, broadcast journalist and events moderator covering EU affairs with a particular focus on Economy and Social Affairs for newspapers El Mundo and the Luxembourg Times as well as European media Euranet + and EURACTIV.

