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Transparency International EU calls for independent investigation into appointment of MEP Markus Pieper as EU SME Envoy

Pia Engelbrecht-Bogdanov · Friday, February 23rd, 2024

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The [revelations](#) that German MEP Markus Pieper has been appointed to the newly-created job of EU SME Envoy—despite other candidates scoring higher on the European Commission’s own assessments—raises serious concerns about the integrity of its recruitment processes, as well as the role the Commission President might have played in this decision.

Those appointed to be senior public officials should undergo a rigorous, open and transparent recruitment procedure. This newly-created envoy post is [equivalent to](#) one of the most senior positions in the Commission and corresponds to the second highest grade on the EU salary scales. The [Commission’s own general principles](#) require that recruitment be based on **merit, gender balance** and **geographical balance**. Therefore, it is deeply troubling that Markus Pieper was outqualified by the two remaining female candidates from smaller Member States by [at least 30%](#) in the Commission’s own recruitment assessments. Nor was Mr. Pieper the candidate that had been recommended by the Commissioner for the Internal Market Thierry Breton—who was seemingly sidelined from the ultimate appointment decision. The elevation of Mr. Pieper, a political ally of President Ursula von der Leyen’s, to the detriment of better-qualified candidates, suggests that top Commission jobs are promised to those politically beneficial to the President over those who best demonstrate their suitability to the role.

Nick Aiossa, Director of Transparency International EU (TI EU), said, “At best this appears to be a deeply flawed recruitment procedure by the Commission, at worst it’s a potential conflict of interest by the President for installing a fellow political party member in a highly lucrative position of power.”

In light of these revelations, mere insistence on the part of the Commission that correct recruitment procedures have been followed is not good enough. The European Commission cannot afford [further recruitment scandals](#). TI EU therefore calls for an investigation into potential breaches of the Commissioner’s Code of Conduct in this recruitment process. Only this would restore trust in decision-making at the top and demonstrate that senior public officials are appointed based on transparent procedures, where the chosen candidates are of the highest qualification and merit.

For press enquiries, please contact EUPress@transparency.org

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