














Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2022/2080(INI)	Procedure completed
Lessons learnt from the Pandora Papers and other revelations		
Subject		
3.45.04 Company taxation		
7.30.30.08 Capital outflow, money laundering		
8.70.02 Financial regulations		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	 Economic and Monetary Affairs	 FUGLSANG Niels	17/03/2022
		Shadow rapporteur	
		 DORFMANN Herbert	
		 KELLEHER Billy	
		 CARÊME Damien	
		 MOŹDŹANOWSKA Andżelika Anna	
		 GUSMÃO José	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	 Development	 BULLMANN Udo	19/04/2022
	 Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs	 CARÊME Damien	10/10/2022
European Commission	Commission DG International Cooperation and Development	Commissioner URPILAINEN Jutta	

Key events			
07/07/2022	Committee referral announced in Parliament		

21/03/2023	Vote in committee		
30/03/2023	Committee report tabled for plenary	A9-0095/2023	Summary
14/06/2023	Debate in Parliament		
15/06/2023	Results of vote in Parliament		
15/06/2023	Decision by Parliament	T9-0249/2023	Summary

Technical information

Procedure reference	2022/2080(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 55
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 165
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	ECON/9/09474

Documentation gateway

Committee draft report		PE735.471	14/10/2022	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE738.737	24/11/2022	EP	
Committee opinion	DEVE	PE736.547	12/12/2022	EP	
Committee opinion	LIBE	PE737.243	12/01/2023	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A9-0095/2023	30/03/2023	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T9-0249/2023	15/06/2023	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2023)436	15/11/2023	EC	

Lessons learnt from the Pandora Papers and other revelations

The Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Niels FUGLSANG (S&D, DK) on lessons learnt from the Pandora Papers and other revelations.

As a reminder, the Pandora Papers were a massive data leak, which the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists began publishing on 3 October 2021, documenting the beneficial owners of corporate entities established in secrecy jurisdictions.

General considerations

The report recognised that journalists and whistleblowers have an important role in investigating and exposing potential violations of tax law, as well as corruption, organised crime and money laundering. It deemed it necessary to further protect the confidentiality of the sources of investigative journalism, including whistleblowers.

Members regretted the fact that 24 Member States failed to transpose and communicate the transposition of the Whistleblower Directive within the deadline. They look forward to the Commissions report, due to be published in December 2023, on the implementation of the 2019 EU Whistleblowers Directive. They called on the Commission to consult stakeholders, when appropriate, on how to improve the directive.

Tax transparency and the exchange of information are essential for stemming illicit financial flows and increasing the mobilisation of domestic resources, which is of particular importance for achieving the sustainable development goals. Members calls for the EU to support developing countries in combating illicit financial flows and tax evasion by companies and multinationals, and to ensure that taxes are paid where real economic value and profits are created. They also called for the EU to support the setting up of a UN framework convention on tax, with

the aim of strengthening international cooperation and governance on tax and trade-related illicit financial flows.

The report highlighted the importance of safeguarding high standards of integrity, honesty and responsibility among public officials in the EU

and in the Member States, as well as fostering, within that environment, an ethos of a sense of duty and personal honesty.

Member States should ensure that they have measures and systems in place, with sufficient human and financial resources, requiring politically exposed persons to declare any relevant outside activities, employment, investments, assets and substantial gifts or benefits which may give rise to a conflict of interest with respect to their functions. Members highlighted the importance of having systems in place for reporting and verifying this information and independently assessing conflicts of interest when they arise, as well as for providing dissuasive sanctions for failure to comply with disclosure obligations.

Role of intermediaries in facilitating tax evasion and avoidance

The report pointed out that, according to research carried out in 2018, the so-called Big Four major accountancy firms PwC, EY, Deloitte and KPMG accounted for 87 % of the global tax advisory market share. It called on the Commission to carry out a study on the tax advisory market in order to have up-to-date information on the market share of the major accountancy firms.

Members regretted the fact that, as exposed by the Pandora Papers, PwC, along with other major accountancy firms, had a central role in assisting Russian oligarchs with their investments in the West through their networks of offshore shell companies. They highlighted that, in view of Russia's aggression against Ukraine and its hybrid actions against EU countries, investigations into the assets and investments of Russian oligarchs should be a top priority, as they are strategically important for the EU's security.

Harmful practices in non-corporate tax regimes

The report draws attention to the impact of new technologies (e.g. crypto-assets) which create new challenges in the area of tax avoidance and money laundering and for which new, appropriate and targeted regulations may be needed. It stressed that base erosion is facilitated by the fact that outbound dividends, royalties and interest across borders are not subject to withholding tax and that there are no common rules and procedures ensuring the effective taxation of intra-EU flows. The Commission and the Member States are invited to coordinate a withholding tax framework that ensures that all dividends, interest and royalties are taxed at least once at an effective rate.

Members observed, in parallel, a trend for countries, including EU Member States, to adopt legal frameworks designed to attract high-net-worth individuals, foreign pensioners and highly skilled workers to invest or live in their territory, notably granting them generous tax benefits and exemptions which do not apply to nationals, in addition to offering golden visas and selling citizenship opportunities. They urged the Commission to provide detailed information on the progress made by Member States in repealing or withdrawing the citizenship or residence permits of Russian or Belarusian individuals who have obtained their status through investment.

Misuse of shell companies and opaque structures

The report stressed the importance of strengthening coordination between national legal frameworks to close loopholes and improve supervision through the creation of a European Anti-Money Laundering Authority with adequate resources and powers. It called on the Commission to publish a list of assets that have been frozen or confiscated following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Members stressed the importance of strengthening the tools for authorities to access information on the ownership of high-value assets.

The Pandora Papers identified examples of people circumventing beneficial ownership transparency requirements in Member States. However, Members deplored the delay in the setting up of the Beneficial Ownership Registers Interconnection System in the EU due to technical difficulties. They stressed that access to adequate, accurate and up-to-date information on beneficial owners and the monitoring of legal persons is a valuable tool in the fight against tax fraud and evasion.

The report noted that shell companies may be misused for aggressive tax planning or tax evasion. It welcomed the Commission's proposal for a Council directive laying down rules to prevent the misuse of shell entities for tax purposes and amending Directive 2011/16/EU and called on the Council to swiftly adopt the proposal, taking into account Parliament's opinion.

Members reiterate their call to the Council to extend the mandate of the Code of Conduct Group (Business Taxation) to include preferential personal income and capital tax regimes, and personal income and wealth tax regimes that are considered harmful.

Lastly, the report pointed out that several Member States have maintained preferential corporate tax systems, which may have led in billions of euros in tax losses for other Member States. It called for greater transparency concerning preferential tax systems, as well as more tax solidarity among EU Member States.

Lessons learnt from the Pandora Papers and other revelations

The European Parliament adopted with 465 votes, 5 against and 36 abstentions, a resolution on the lessons learned from the Pandora Papers and other revelations.

The Pandora Papers were a massive data leak, which the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists began publishing on 3 October 2021. The Pandora Papers revealed how wealthy individuals, including politically exposed persons, criminals, public officials and celebrities, rely on intermediaries such as banks, accountants and law firms to set up complex corporate structures registered in opaque jurisdictions or tax havens, in order to evade tax, penalties and other legal obligations on their income and wealth and to enable money laundering and terrorist financing.

General considerations

Recognising that journalists and whistleblowers play an important role in exposing potential breaches of tax law, corruption, organised crime and money laundering, Members believe it is necessary to further protect the confidentiality of investigative journalism sources and to defend the freedom of journalists to report on issues of public interest without facing the threat of costly legal action. Member States are urged to adopt anti-SLAPP legislation and to transpose the Whistleblowers Directive into national law as a matter of urgency.

Parliament stressed that the practices highlighted by the Pandora Papers revelations have a particularly serious impact on fiscal space and public spending, especially in developing countries. It called on the EU to help developing countries combat illicit financial flows and tax

evasion by companies and multinationals, and to ensure that taxes are paid where profits are made and real economic value is created. The EU is invited to support the establishment of a United Nations Framework Convention on Taxation, with the aim of strengthening international cooperation and governance in relation to illicit financial flows of a fiscal and commercial nature.

The resolution deplored the fact that a number of high-level EU decision-makers have been featured in the Pandora Papers. Among the names mentioned are political leaders of developing countries that are heavily dependent on EU aid. Members believe that the unanimity rule laid down in the TFEU Treaty for the adoption of tax legislation in the EU allows high-level decision-makers accused of wrongdoing to wield greater power of influence, enabling them to block legislation to combat tax fraud or evasion. They stressed the importance of preserving high standards of integrity, honesty and accountability among EU and Member State public officials, as well as promoting an ethic of duty and personal integrity in this environment.

Role of intermediaries in facilitating tax evasion and avoidance

The resolution pointed out that, according to research carried out in 2018, the so-called Big Four major accountancy firms PwC, EY, Deloitte and KPMG accounted for 87 % of the global tax advisory market share. It called on the Commission to carry out a study on the tax advisory market in order to have up-to-date information on the market share of the major accountancy firms.

Members regretted the fact that, as exposed by the Pandora Papers, PwC, along with other major accountancy firms, had a central role in assisting Russian oligarchs with their investments in the West through their networks of offshore shell companies. They highlighted that, in view of Russia's aggression against Ukraine and its hybrid actions against EU countries, investigations into the assets and investments of Russian oligarchs should be a top priority, as they are strategically important for the EU's security.

Harmful practices in non-corporate tax regimes

The resolution drew attention to the impact of new technologies (e.g. crypto-assets) which create new challenges in the area of tax avoidance and money laundering and for which new, appropriate and targeted regulations may be needed. It stressed that base erosion is facilitated by the fact that outbound dividends, royalties and interest across borders are not subject to withholding tax and that there are no common rules and procedures ensuring the effective taxation of intra-EU flows. The Commission and the Member States are invited to coordinate a withholding tax framework that ensures that all dividends, interest and royalties are taxed at least once at an effective rate.

Members observed, in parallel, a trend for countries, including EU Member States, to adopt legal frameworks designed to attract high-net-worth individuals, foreign pensioners and highly skilled workers to invest or live in their territory, notably granting them generous tax benefits and exemptions which do not apply to nationals, in addition to offering golden visas and selling citizenship opportunities. They urged the Commission to provide detailed information on the progress made by Member States in repealing or withdrawing the citizenship or residence permits of Russian or Belarusian individuals who have obtained their status through investment.

Misuse of shell companies and opaque structures

Parliament noted that some jurisdictions, such as the United Kingdom, have in place a control mechanism for unexplained wealth aimed at detecting the proceeds of criminal activities. This mechanism consists of a court order requiring a person who is reasonably suspected of being involved in serious crime, or of being connected to a person involved in serious crime, to explain the nature and extent of their interest in a particular property and to explain how that property was obtained, where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the respondents' known lawfully obtained income would be insufficient to enable the respondent to obtain that property. The Commission is invited to assess the effects and feasibility of such a measure at EU level.

Regretting the lack of transparency on the part of the Commission and the Member States regarding the progress made in freezing and seizing the assets of sanctioned persons, Parliament called on the Member States and the EU authorities to make substantial efforts to recover illegal money. It asked the Commission to publish a list of assets frozen or confiscated following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Members reiterated the importance of transparency regarding information on beneficial owners worldwide but deplored the delay in setting up the Beneficial Ownership Registers Interconnection System in the EU due to technical difficulties.

Parliament called on the Council to adopt without further delay the Commission proposal for a Council directive laying down rules to prevent the abuse of shell entities for tax purposes, taking account of Parliament's opinion. It reiterated its request to the Council to extend the mandate of the Code of Conduct Group (Business Taxation) to preferential personal income and capital tax regimes as well as personal income or wealth tax regimes which are considered to be harmful.

Lastly, the resolution pointed out that several Member States have maintained preferential corporate tax systems, which may have led in billions of euros in tax losses for other Member States. It called for greater transparency concerning preferential tax systems, as well as more tax solidarity among EU Member States.

Transparency				
FUGLSANG Niels	Rapporteur	ECON	06/01/2023	Kromann Reumert Bendixen
GUSMÃO José	Shadow rapporteur	ECON	17/11/2022	Eurodad
GUSMÃO José	Shadow rapporteur	ECON	17/11/2022	Oxfam