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Gabrielius LANDSBERGIS
Member of the European Parliament

29 September 2014

Dear Mr. President,

With regard to the Rules of Procedure Article 3 (Conflicts of Interest), I would like to ask to consider the case of MEP Viktoras Uspaskich and Rita Giannini, who is employed as his assistant in this parliamentary term (2014 - 2019).

There are serious grounds to believe, that V. Uspaskich has employed Mrs Rita Giannini (Watson) on the basis of his personal interests and it might cause a conflict of interests. Mrs Gannini is the spouse of former MEP Graham Watson, who was one of the biggest and influential political advocates of V. Uspaskich's immunity during the last parliamentary term (2009 - 2014) in ALDE political group and, possibly, in the EP at large. The employment of his close relative could improperly influence the performance of MEPs duties as well as upcoming debates on V. Uspaskich immunity in the EP.

During the last parliamentary term MEP Mr Watson was patient advocate of V. Uspaskich interest in the EP. In addition, Mr Watson published several articles about V. Uspaskich and his legal immunity, where such lines as "*it seems clear to me that Viktor Uspaskich was the victim of a politically-motivated campaign to force him out of front-line politics <...> I hope MEPs come to Viktor's defense this time, and reinstate his immunity*" suppose that his spouse will continue concentrating on the same personal issue, which cannot be considered as public interest.

Nevertheless, the European Parliament took away the immunity of V. Uspaskich in 2010. When V. Uspaskich resigned on the 2012, he was elected to the Lithuanian national parliament Seimas. A year later Vilnius Regional Court found him guilty of fraud and fraudulent bookkeeping and sentenced him to 4 years in prison. V. Uspaskich filed an appeal denying his guilt and calling the whole process politically-motivated.

V. Uspaskich regained his immunity from prosecution on 1 July 2014, after being re-elected to the EP, and in the plenary on September 2014, the Parliament was asked to take away his immunity once again.

MEPs' duties cannot be narrowed to using instruments guaranteed by the EP for personal gain. In this particular case, budget for the MEP administrative support is wasted in order to retain the parliamentary immunity longer.

Yours sincerely,

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