

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-002351/24
to the Commission**

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(30 October 2024)

Subject: EUR 149 000 paid to professor of medieval history for writing a farming report

According to the newspaper *Politico*, the Commission has supposedly earmarked EUR 149 000 in remuneration for a six-month assignment given to a German professor whose expertise is in medieval history. He was tasked with writing a report on agriculture. However, other similar reports on the state of Community policies, such as Mario Draghi's competitiveness report and former Finnish Prime Minister Sauli Niinistö's defence report, were drawn up at no cost to the Commission.

What is more, taking into account that farming is extremely important to the economic sustainability of the EU internal market and that, through their efforts to simplify the CAP, in the form of a regulation that Parliament adopted in April 2024, the EU institutions have conceded that the sector faces difficulties:

1. Why was that assignment entrusted to an external expert, with such high pay, and not to an internal staff member?
2. Given that he is a specialist not in agriculture but in medieval history, what criteria were used to select the professor and what specific agriculture expertise does he have?
3. Why did the Commission not choose to give that task to professionals who are actually farming specialists?

Submitted: 30.10.2024

Answer given by Mr Serafin on behalf of the European Commission

(22 April 2025)

In the State of the Union address to the European Parliament on 13 September 2023, the President announced the launch of a strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture in the EU. Considering the complexity of the task, the Commission decided to entrust it to an external independent person.

Special Advisers are engaged to assist Members of the College based on the level of their professional experience and expertise. The choice of the chair of the strategic dialogue was based on his knowledge of the subject and professional experience, especially when it comes to his ability to navigate as a trusted arbitrator in complex negotiation processes with high-level stakeholders and to the proven capacity for consensus-building around complex issues.

As chairperson of the 'Future Commission Agriculture' (ZKL) of the German Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (2021-2024), the professor delivered a report on the future of agriculture.

He led the 'agricultural summit' discussion with 40 associations and organisations.

He was also the president of the German Research Foundation from 2013 to 2019, i.e. with an interdisciplinary and academic management profile, and not a profile limited to medieval history.

Paid special advisers receive a fee for every day worked that is consistent with the level and the quality of the services expected from the special adviser and that is in accordance with the Rules on Special Advisers to the Commission.

Thanks to the chair's engagement, the strategic dialogue brought together a highly diverse range of stakeholders specialized in farming issues, creating trust and presenting consensual solutions.
