

EU ex-health commissioner to challenge ouster

October 24 2012

Former EU health commissioner John Dalli on Wednesday vowed to issue a legal challenge to Brussels following his forced resignation over a tobacco-linked influence-peddling fraud probe.

"I will challenge the decision" by European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso to ask for Dalli's resignation last week following the findings of the probe, the Maltese politician said at a news conference.

Dalli said he was seeking advice from his lawyers on whether to file a complaint in Malta, in Brussels, at the Luxembourg-based European Court of Justice or at Strasbourg's European Human Rights Court.

Dalli agreed verbally to resign October 16 after the EU fraud office OLAF said a Maltese entrepreneur used his contacts with the EU's top [health official](#) to seek a bribe from a Swedish firm in return for changes to draft [tobacco legislation](#).

Dalli, who categorically denies all wrongdoing, said Barroso called him in and demanded he resign within the half-hour, denying his request to give him 24 hours.

In a letter sent to Dalli on Wednesday, Barroso said he was "unable to accept the statements and claims" made by the former commissioner.

"I would remind you that you have had in good time several opportunities to react to the issues raised with regard to the OLAF

investigation," Barroso added.

While Dalli has claimed he was set up by the tobacco lobby in order to delay his draft anti-smoking legislation, Barroso pledged that the "Commission will proceed with this proposal."

Anti-tobacco groups this week said they hoped Dalli's resignation would not hold up efforts to review the EU's decade-old legislation on tobacco.

The February proposals from Dalli's office aimed to make cigarette packaging less attractive while tightening regulations on flavourings in cigarettes as well as on smoke-free products, such as snuff and electronic cigarettes.

On Wednesday, MEP Matthias Groote, who heads the [European Parliament's health committee](#), alleged that "confusion in the Commission is holding up a vital piece of health legislation that could benefit millions of people."

He urged Barroso to ensure that the Commission publishes tobacco control rules by the end of the year.

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