BARROSO CLEARED OF WRONGDOING BY EU ETHICS COMMITTEE

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Former European Commission President José Manuel Barroso did not breach EU ethics rules but he may have been unwise to take a controversial top job at US investment bank Goldman Sachs after leaving office, an EU panel said today (31 October).

On the basis of the information provided ☀ there are not sufficient grounds to establish a violation of the duty of integrity and discretion in Barroso working for Goldman Sachs, the EUs Ad Hoc Ethical Committee said in a statement.

Barroso, however, had also not shown the considerate judgement one may expect from someone having held the high office he occupied for so many years, it said.

Barroso was head of the European Commission from 2004 until 2014, emerging as a high-profile public figure with contacts worldwide.

Stepping down, he waited the compulsory 18 months before going to work for Goldman Sachs, which is widely blamed in Brussels for its role in the 2008 global crash and eurozone debt crisis.

EU EMPLOYEES SET TO HAND IN PETITION AGAINST BARROSO

Hundreds of thousands of EU officials and citizens have signed a petition calling for a suspension of pension rights to former European Commission president José Manuel Barroso for taking a job at Goldman Sachs.

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After the panel ruling, a Commission spokesman said: We will now examine the panel ruling closely before taking any decision on further, appropriate steps.

The executive said at the time that Barroso had satisfied the cooling-off period but the uproar continued until European Ombudsman Emily OReilly asked current President Jean-Claude Juncker to scrutinise the appointment further.

Juncker has been badly embarrassed by the criticism of Barroso and the Commissions apparent initial willingness to accept his move to Goldman Sachs, but he insisted that he opposed it all along.

What did I say? I repeat: No problem for him to take a job in a private bank, but not that one,

Juncker said last month.

He said he made the remarks because Goldman Sachs was one of these outfits which contributed, wittingly or unwittingly, to the emergence of this enormous financial and economic crisis.

Juncker also said he considered Barroso to be an honest guy and a friend but that he would no longer be received at the Commission as a former head, being treated henceforth as a simple lobbyist.

JUNCKER FORCES BARROSO TO FACE HUMILIATING SECURITY CHECKS IN BRUSSELS

José Manuel Barroso will face humiliating security checks after Jean-Claude Juncker, his successor as European Commission President, stripped him of the privileges traditionally offered to visiting dignitaries in Brussels.

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Barroso insisted he has done nothing wrong and only last month hit back at his critics.

Why dont I have the right to work where I want, if its a legal entity? Its not a drug cartel, said Barroso, who was also the prime minister of Portugal.

When he was hired in July, Goldman Sachs said Barrosos job had nothing to do with the outcome of the Brexit vote.

At the time, the Commission said Barroso did not have to inform Juncker about the job because he had been through the cooling-off period and it was safe to assume he no longer had access to privileged information or influence. But it added he would still be bound by EU rules of professional secrecy.

As a decision on the Barroso case took so long to materialise, the European Parliament in the meantime decided to freeze part of the allowance granted to former Commissioners once they finish their mandate.

PARLIAMENT FREEZES COMMISSIONERS' PENSIONS OVER CODE OF CONDUCT ROW

EXCLUSIVE / MEPs have responded to the recent conflicts of interest concerning members of the Barroso Commission by freezing part of the allowance granted to former Commissioners at the end of their mandate. EurActiv France reports.

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