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Suspicion of irregularities in relation to Asia-Europe Foundation's organisational management

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (MFA) provides support to the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) with the aim of strengthening connectedness between people in Asia and Europe. The Danish support finances events and participation from citizens of countries eligible to receive official development assistance (ODA). DKK 2,550,000 was granted for the period 2019-2023. The full amount was disbursed to ASEF by the end of 2022.

In June 2023, all ASEF donors received a mail by an anonymous whistleblower at the organisation's headquarters in Singapore accusing ASEF's management of maladministration and insufficient financial compliance, as well as unjust dismissal, harassment, and bullying of staff who had addressed the issue, including members of management.

Together with the main donors represented at ASEF's Board of Governors, the MFA requested the organisation to formally investigate the allegations. ASEF's Finance Committee, comprising of Governors from donor countries initiated an investigation with assistance from an external auditor and external lawyer. The results presented to the Board of Governors in December 2023 found no basis for the accusations of maladministration and insufficient financial compliance, nor of non-compliance with regard to Singaporean labour laws. The report nonetheless provided recommendations to follow up on improving the working environment and atmosphere in the ASEF Secretariat.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs thus regards the case as closed without loss of Danish funds.