

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0791/09
by Erik Meijer (GUE/NGL)
to the Commission

Subject: Cutting the privileges of lobbyists who refuse to register voluntarily and the scope for more transparent registration arrangements

1. In the Commission's view, what is the justification for the distinction made between lobbyists and ordinary members of the public, whereby in *de facto* if not *de jure* terms lobbyists can claim a broader range of privileges from the EU?
2. Can the Commission explain why not all lobbyists working on behalf of Netherlands public-law bodies have been included in the register of lobbyists? Does their absence mean that they have been blacklisted?
3. Is the Commission considering using the withdrawal of privileges which they currently enjoy, such as invitations to receptions and meetings, official assistance, the provision of information and access passes, as an incentive to persuade lobbyists who have not registered to do so? Or does it intend to offer lobbyists who practise transparency favourable treatment?
4. Does the Commission intend to improve the digital searchability of its register so that it meets the basic requirements relating to digital accessibility, 'downloadability', ease of navigation, data comparability, the use of filters, the use of synonyms or name recognition functions and use of the indication 'recent' or the indication of a revision date, so that, for example, members of the public are not forced to check all the names in order to make sure that an organisation has not been included in the register under a name which is unknown to them?
5. Can the Commission confirm that the seventh 'European Business Summit' to be held on 26 and 27 March 2009 in Brussels is being advertised on the basis that this 'dialogue between EU decision-makers and business leaders' has the Commission's moral support, can use the Commission logo, a hyperlink and a picture of President Barroso, and that 11 Commissioners will take part? Is the Commission aware that this meeting will be attended by firms such as Heineken, Philips and Shell which have thus far boycotted the register of lobbyists? Does the Commission take the view that contacts with non-registered firms should be kept to a businesslike minimum and that its active involvement in this event is lending them unwarranted legitimacy?
6. If so, is the Commission prepared to use available dates in its schedule to attend meetings of, for example, Friends of the Earth, an environmental organisation which, in late 2008, called in vain on the Commission to attend an event it was organising? Is the Commission prepared to publish its answer to the letter on this matter sent by Friends of the Earth on 21 January 2009?
7. Is the Commission considering denying former MEPs who return 'through the back door' as lobbyists access to special privileges if they are not registered?