

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

2007/2115(INI)

29.11.2007

OPINION

of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

for the Committee on Constitutional Affairs

on development of the framework for the activities of interest representatives
(lobbyists) in the European Institutions
(2007/2115(INI))

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PA_NonLeg

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Ensuring transparency around lobbying the European institutions, as well as ensuring that the European Commission truly serves the general and only the general interest of the Community are prerequisites for gaining back the confidence of citizens into its Institutions.

Lobbying transparency

The professional lobbying sector - with the objective of influencing EU policy-making - is developing fast and constantly in Brussels. It is therefore necessary to establish clear rules in this field, ensuring transparency on whose interests lobbyists represent and preventing unethical practices as far as possible.

The core element of the European Transparency Initiative is the creation of a register for lobbyists, including financial disclosure, but the Commission proposes a voluntary approach.

The Environment Committee, as one of the most intensely lobbied Committees in the Parliament, considers that such an approach is bound to fail. Instead it requires a mandatory registration and reporting system. Such an approach will not allow anyone to stay out of the system and not to comply with the rules, and will put all lobbyists on a same level playing field. Financial disclosure will provide comparable and easily accessible information to decision-makers and the public on how much money is paid by whom and to whom to lobby on which issue.

The European Commission

Given its monopoly to initiate legislation and its obligation to serve the general interest of the Community in a completely independent manner, the Commission must increase its own transparency. In a first time it should step up its efforts to effectively prevent conflict of interests of its staff, its advisory and implementation bodies, and ensure balanced representation of sectors of society.

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety calls on the Committee on Constitutional Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Recognises the significant influence of lobbying on EU decision making and therefore the need for clear rules; believes that a credible and effective registration and reporting system in all EU institutions, including financial disclosure as well as disclosure of all documents sent to Members of the institutions, has to be mandatory for all lobbyists and be linked to a common code of ethical behaviour; it should also include an independent implementation and sanction mechanism; calls for the documents concerning lobbying, particularly the common code of ethics, the declarations of interests, and all documents sent out by lobbyists to be publicly available in an electronic registry;
2. Considers that the mandatory registration and reporting system needs to include, as a minimum, the following information¹:
 - the name(s) of lobbyist(s);
 - contact information;
 - interests and/or bodies represented;
3. Calls for a common code of conduct for all lobbyists to be agreed by the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council;
4. Considers that Members of the European Parliament have a responsibility of their own to ensure that they receive balanced information; stresses that Members of the European Parliament must be deemed capable of making political decisions independently of lobbyists;
5. Calls upon the Commission to clarify the role and background of its special advisors, make their curriculum vitae publicly available and clearly define what constitutes linked interests or a conflict of interests; considers that no special adviser who has a conflict of interests may be employed by the European institutions; calls upon the Commission to clarify the exact purposes of its high level and expert groups and set guidelines for ensuring a balanced representation of diverse sectors of society and different nationalities; stresses that no expert who has a conflict of interests may be a member of a committee of experts; calls upon the Commission to publish on its websites a searchable register of all groups' membership, including *comitology* committees, their meeting agendas and documents, and to ensure transparency for the establishment of new such groups;
6. Calls upon the Commission to establish a searchable, centralised database containing all relevant information on shared management funds and their beneficiaries;

¹ Information to be updated once a year.

7. Calls upon the Commission to report on all officials having left the services of this Commission, definitively or for a time-limited sabbatical, to take up a new job that is related to his/her former field of work within two years of leaving the service, with particular reference to employment in lobby firms as an advisor, consultant or assistant, and any conditions or prohibitions it has adopted pursuant to Article 16 of the Staff Regulations;
8. Calls upon the Commission to provide a detailed list of all staff or experts working at the Commission and in the Cabinets of Commissioners and being remunerated by the private, national governmental or non-governmental sector, including who is remunerating them, how long they have been employed and on what type of contract, what services they work for and what files they work on and have worked on since taking up duty at the Commission in order to provide information on the activities at European level of staff seconded by national governments and other experts;
9. Calls upon the Parliament to publish on its website a comprehensive and complete list of existing Intergroups, their members, meeting agendas and documents;
10. Believes that the European Parliament should take a lead by adopting a policy of best practice with regard to the requirements for registration of Members' interests; calls on the Parliament's Bureau to commission a study of the policies of each of the Member States' parliaments and thereafter to recommend what improvements may be required to its own procedures;
11. Calls upon Parliament to establish a questionnaire for Members for their declaration of interests with clear criteria on how to fill it out so as to ensure a coherent and comparable implementation of the rules on conflicts of interest.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	22.11.2007
Result of final vote	+: 41 -: 0 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Liam Aylward, Pilar Ayuso, Johannes Blokland, Frieda Brepoels, Dorette Corbey, Chris Davies, Avril Doyle, Mojca Drčar Murko, Edite Estrela, Jill Evans, Matthias Groote, Françoise Grossetête, Cristina Gutiérrez-Cortines, Satu Hassi, Marie Anne Isler Béguin, Caroline Jackson, Dan Jørgensen, Eija-Riitta Korhola, Marie-Noëlle Lienemann, Alexandru-Ioan Morțun, Roberto Musacchio, Riitta Myller, Miroslav Ouzký, Frédérique Ries, Guido Sacconi, Karin Scheele, Carl Schlyter, Richard Seeber, Bogusław Sonik, Antonios Trakatellis, Thomas Ulmer, Anja Weisgerber, Glenis Willmott
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Alfonso Andria, Kathalijne Maria Buitenweg, Bairbre de Brún, Duarte Freitas, Milan Gaľa, Alojz Peterle, Andres Tarand, Claude Turmes
Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote	