



MEPs back joint Parliament-Commission register of lobbyists

Plenary sessions

MEPs gave their backing on Wednesday to plans for a joint register of lobbyists and other interest groups seeking access to Parliament and the Commission. Parliament urges that lobbyists' exchanges with lead MEPs be listed in a "legislative footprint annex" to parliamentary reports. It also hopes the Council of Ministers will take part in this "transparency register".

"The Transparency Register is an important step forward in our fight for clean and accountable decision-making in the European Union. We need advocacy and lobby groups for knowing what impact our legislation might have on different groups of people and companies, but we must make sure that nobody influences decisions through illicit means", said EP President Jerzy Buzek.

Rapporteur Carlo Casini (EPP, IT) said in a debate on Tuesday that the texts approved are "a first step towards greater transparency". He added "I think this is a clear indication of our commitment to the value of transparency."

A joint register of the two institutions will enhance transparency, argue MEPs, as citizens will find in one place all the information on people and organisations that are in contact with the EU institutions. This "one-stop shop" system should also make the registration of representatives of specific interests easier.

The register will combine the existing Parliament and Commission registers, as agreed by the two institutions in November 2010. The name change, from "lobby" to "transparency", will make it easier for non-commercial organisations, such as think-tanks, churches and religious communities, to sign up to such a register.

Voluntary or mandatory?

Registration will not be mandatory under the rules as agreed by Parliament and the Commission. However, MEPs have decided that for lobbyists wishing to enter Parliament's premises, registration will indeed be compulsory.

MEPs also call on the Council of Ministers to join the register as soon as possible and welcome the fact that the Council has indicated it will do so.

"Legislative footprint" and other information

Parliament also endorsed a proposal for a "legislative footprint annex" to reports drafted by MEPs. This annex would list all the lobbyists whom lead MEPs met while a legislative report was being drafted.

The new joint register will provide further information, such as the number of individuals involved in any activities relating to the register and any EU funding or support received by the registrant. It will also set out procedures for handling complaints and sanctions.

Press release

In a separate vote on Parliament's internal rules, MEPs decided they should update their financial declarations "as soon as changes occur" and at least once a year.

Background

Parliament has had a lobby register since 1996 and the Commission has had one since 2008. Parliament passed a resolution in 2008 calling for a joint register, including the Council of Ministers. Parliament and the Commission then set up a working group that agreed in November 2010 on arrangements for a joint register. The common register is scheduled to be available online in June 2011.

Procedure: Interinstitutional Agreement Procedure and EP Rules of Procedure

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