

MEPs say unregistered lobbyists should be denied entry to Parliament's premises

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All EU lobbyists looking to influence legislation, should be required to sign the transparency register before being allowed to enter the European Parliament, says a resolution approved by the Constitutional Affairs Committee on Tuesday.

The resolution, drafted by Sven Giegold (Greens/EFA, DE), notes that non-transparent interest representation may pose a significant threat to the integrity of policymakers. It therefore suggests that all EU lobbyists looking to influence the legislative process should be required to sign the transparency register before being allowed to meet MEPs on Parliament's premises.

The text, adopted by 20 votes to 2 with 2 abstentions, further welcomes a request by Parliament's Bureau (President, Vice-Presidents and Quaestors) that it develop a template for a voluntary "legislative footprint" for MEPs, in which they could set out which representatives and organisations they have consulted.

Restricted access for non-cooperative lobbyists

MEPs also reiterate the need to withdraw access privileges from interest organisations that refuse to cooperate with Parliament on inquiries or committee meetings with a fact-finding mission. They stress that organisations that have signed the transparency register should be prohibited from employing individuals who disguise the interest parties they serve.

Committee chairs and other lead MEPs, who have a special responsibility to be transparent in their contacts with lobbyists inside and outside Parliament should meet only interest groups that are registered and publish these meetings online.

Extended "cooling-off period" for former Commissioners

The resolution highlights the need to strengthen restrictions on former Commissioners taking part in lobbying activities, by extending their "cooling-off period" to three years after they leave office. It also states that decisions on former Commissioners' new role must be taken by an authority as "independent as possible of those affected by its decisions".

Furthermore, MEPs want the Commission to propose that Parliament be granted co-decision powers to appoint and dismiss the directors of all EU agencies, as well as the right to question and hear them.

Improved transparency and access to documents

The resolution also underlines that documents produced during informal talks on legislation between the three main EU institutions should be made directly available on Parliament's website.

Press release

MEPs acknowledge the EU Commission's efforts to increase the transparency of EU trade negotiations, but nevertheless believes that the EU executive and the Council should improve Parliament's access to information and documents relating to EU commercial policy.

Background

New rules to improve transparency and efficiency were included in Parliament's new Rules of Procedure, approved in a plenary vote on 13 December 2016. These require that MEPs' declarations of financial interests be more detailed, regularly updated and checked. Former MEPs will henceforth be required to inform Parliament when they take a new job as a lobbyist. The Code of Conduct for MEPs was also revised, to include an explicit ban on serving MEPs taking paid lobbying jobs.

Further information

- Parliament's Constitutional Affairs Committee: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/afco/home.html>
- Procedure file: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?lang=&reference=2015/2041\(INI\)](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?lang=&reference=2015/2041(INI))
- Profile of rapporteur Sven Giegold (Greens/EFA, DE): <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/96730.html>
- Press release on Parliament's new rules of procedure (13.12.2016): <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20161208IPR55155/improving-transparency-at-the-european-parliament>

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