



Joint Transparency
Register Secretariat



**Annual Report on the operations of the Transparency Register
2017**

**Presented by the Secretaries-General
of the European Parliament and the European Commission**

to

**Ms Sylvie Guillaume, Vice-President of the European Parliament
and
Mr Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President of the European
Commission**

As laid down in **Paragraph 28 of the revised Interinstitutional Agreement on the Transparency Register**, signed on 16 April 2014 (as a joint instrument for the European Parliament and European Commission), this **Annual Report provides an account of the operations of the Transparency Register during the year 2017**.

This Report presents statistics on the operations of the Transparency Register from January to December 2017 and describes the activities undertaken by the Joint Transparency Register Secretariat, in particular with regard to ensuring an optimum quality of data, monitoring compliance with the Code of Conduct and raising awareness of the scheme.

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Transparency Register website: <http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister>

I. INTRODUCTION

The Transparency Register was set up as a joint scheme by the European Parliament and the European Commission in 2011 through an Interinstitutional Agreement. It represents one of the key tools for implementing the commitment of these two institutions to transparency. The Transparency Register applies to all interest groups and self-employed consultants engaging in activities carried out with the objective of influencing the law-making and policy implementation processes of the EU institutions. By shedding light on what interests are being pursued, by whom and with what level of resources, the Transparency Register allows for increased public scrutiny, giving citizens, the media and stakeholders the possibility to track the activities and potential influence of interest representatives. The Transparency Register includes over 11 000 entities, all signed up to a common Code of Conduct¹.

II. STATE OF PLAY OF THE TRANSPARENCY REGISTER²

1. Statistics

There are six sections for registration in the Transparency Register.

'In-house lobbyists³ and trade/business/ professional associations' (**Section II**) continued to be the largest section, representing almost half of all registrants, (see pie chart 1). Within this section, the sub-section, *'Trade and business associations'* represented almost 42% and the subsection *'Companies and groups'* over 37% of all in-house lobbyists and trade/business/professional associations (see pie charts 2, Section II).

'Non-governmental organisations' (**Section III**) was still the second most common type of registrant in 2017, representing over a quarter of all registered organisations.

'Professional consultancies, law firms or self-employed consultants' (**Section I**) came next, representing over 11% of all registrants.

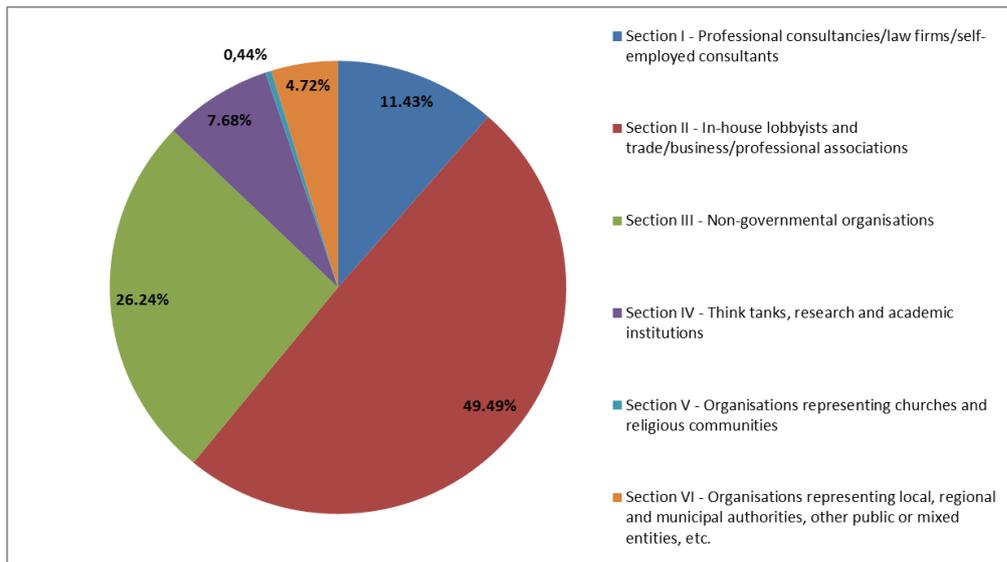
Less numerous were *'Think tanks, research and academic institutions'* (**Section IV**), followed by *'Organisations representing local, regional and municipal authorities, other public or mixed entities, etc.'* (**Section VI**) and *'Organisations representing churches and religious communities'* (**Section V**).

¹ Counting only entities that were registered and active on 31 December 2017.

² Figures presented in this report reflect the situation on 31 December 2017.

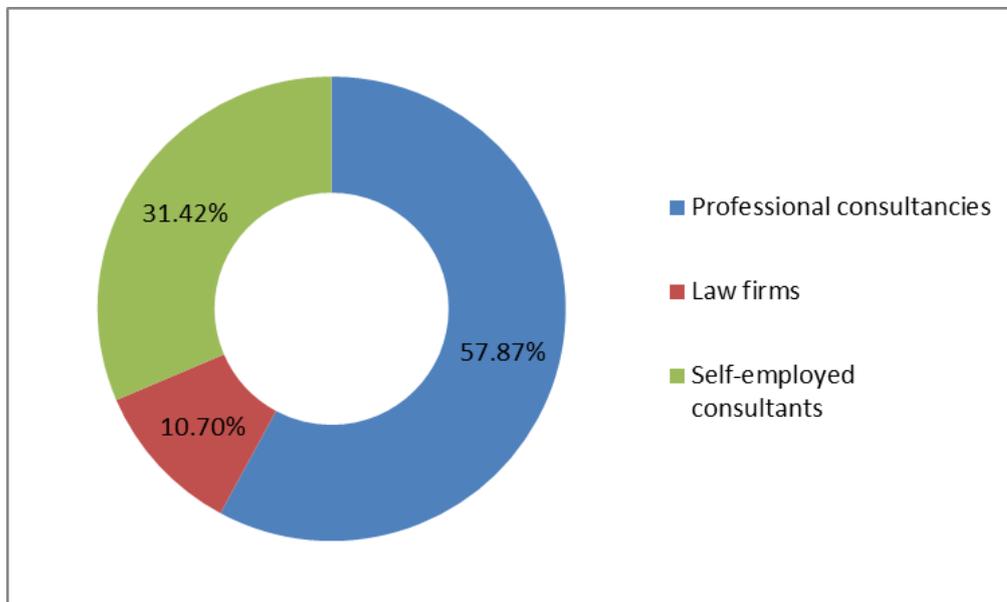
³ This term refers to persons employed within the organisation as opposed, for example, to hiring external consultants to represent the organisation from the 'outside.'

Pie chart 1: Distribution of interest representatives



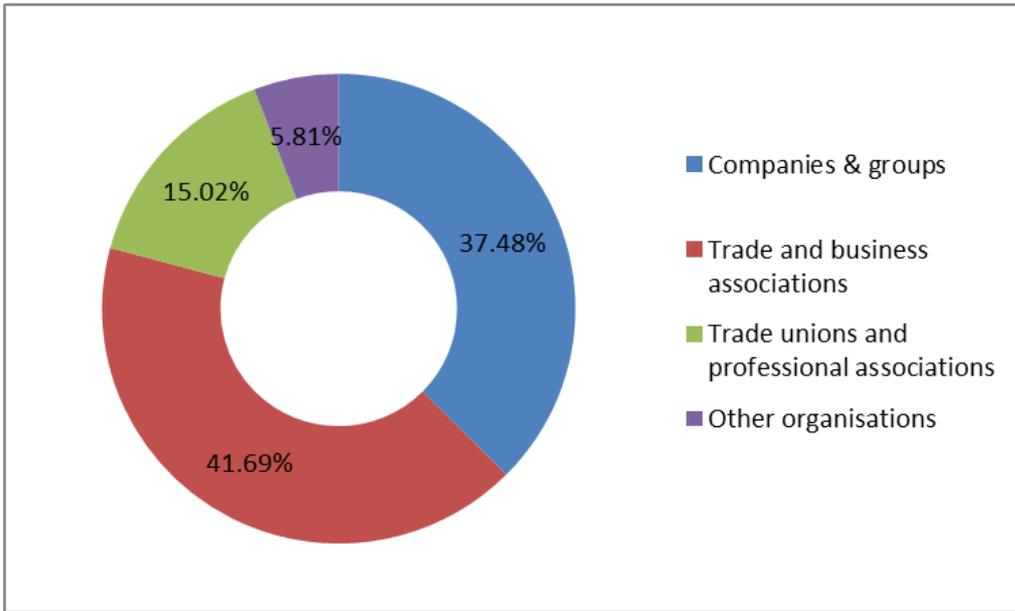
Pie charts 2: Breakdown per sub-section⁴

Section I: Professional consultancies/law firms/self-employed consultants

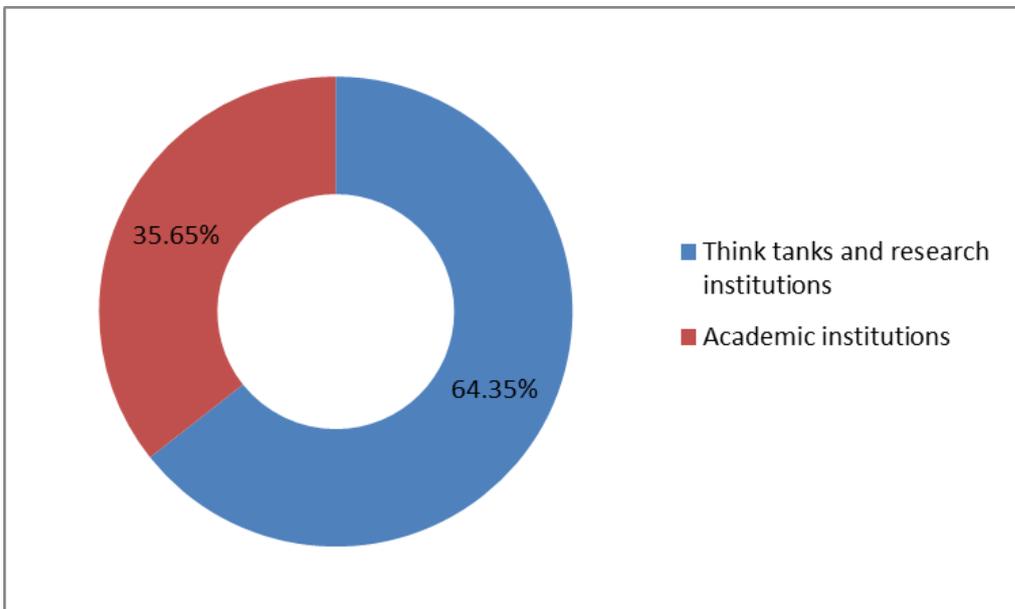


⁴ Sections III and V do not have sub-sections so they are not included in the breakdown.

Section II: In-house lobbyists and trade/business/professional associations



Section IV: Think tanks, research and academic institutions



Section VI: Organisations representing local, regional and municipal authorities, other public or mixed entities, etc.

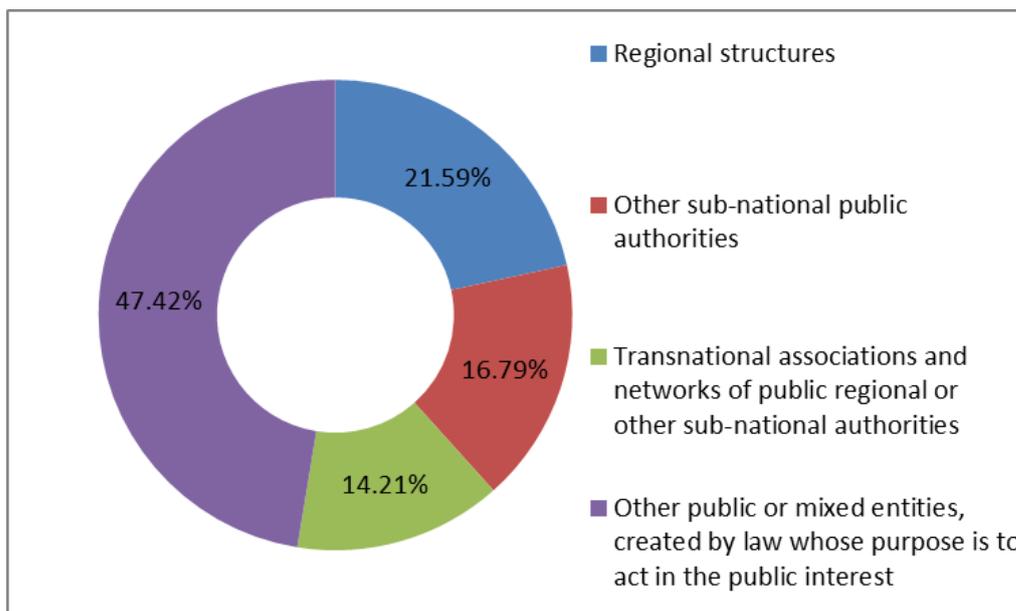


Table 3: Distribution of registrants

On 31 December 2017, there were 11 612 registrants in the Transparency Register spread across the following (sub)sections:	
I - Professional consultancies/law firms/self-employed consultants	1 327
Professional consultancies	768
Law firms	142
Self-employed consultants	417
II - In-house lobbyists and trade/business professional associations	5 747
Companies & groups	2 154
Trade and business associations	2 396
Trade unions and professional associations	863
Other organisations	334
III - Non-governmental organisations	3 047
Non-governmental organisations, platforms and networks and similar	3 047
IV - Think tanks, research and academic institutions	892
Think tanks and research institutions	574
Academic institutions	318
V - Organisations representing churches and religious communities	51
Organisations representing churches and religious communities	51
VI - Organisations representing local, regional and municipal authorities, other public or mixed entities, etc.	548
Regional structures	117
Other sub-national public authorities	97
Transnational associations and networks of public regional or other sub-national authorities	77
Other public or mixed entities, created by law whose purpose is to act in the public interest	257

There were 2 430 new registrations in the Transparency Register in 2017 (counting only entities that registered in 2017 and were still active on 31 December 2017⁵). The average number of new registrations per month was 202.

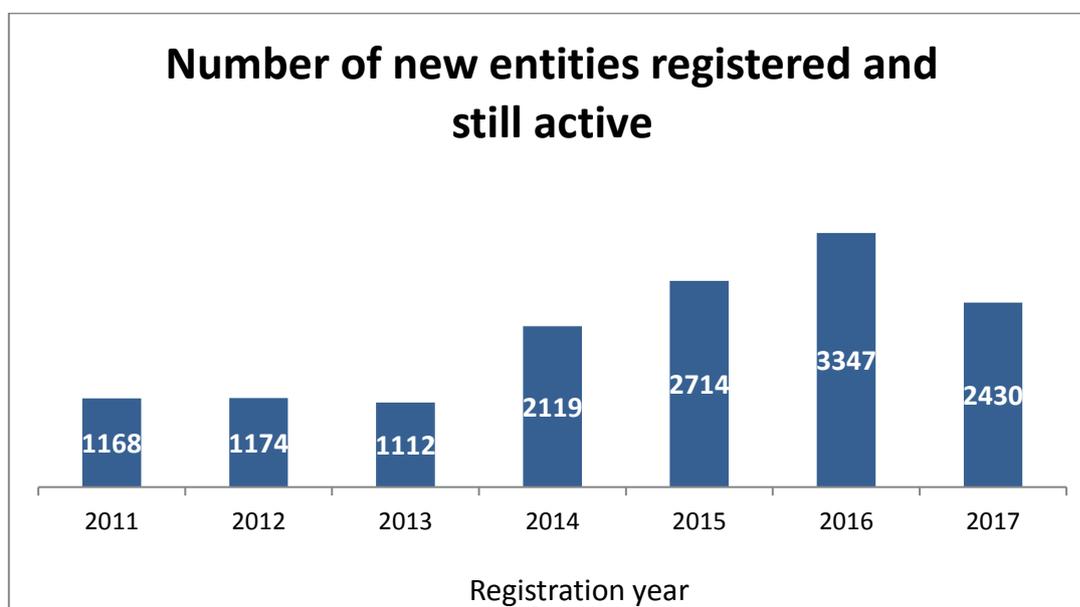
The breakdown of new registrations per section was as follows:

- 344 entities in **Section I**;
- 1 041 in **Section II**;
- 675 in **Section III**;
- 239 in **Section IV**;
- 6 in **Section V** and
- 125 in **Section VI**.

Note:

For yearly statistics since 2011, please refer to the [statistics page](#)⁶ on the Transparency Register website.

Chart 4: New registrations per year

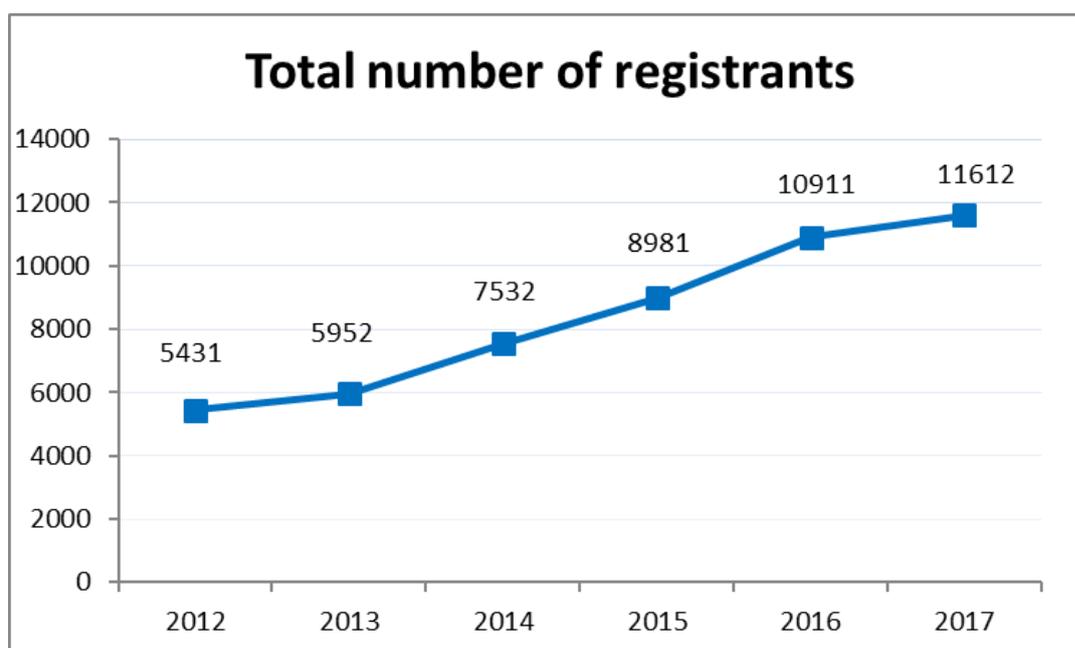


The overall number of registrants has risen from 10 911 in 2016 to 11 612 in 2017, representing an increase of over 6% (Chart 5).

⁵ Possible reasons for deactivation include self-withdrawal, removal by the JTRS following an ineligibility/quality check, etc.

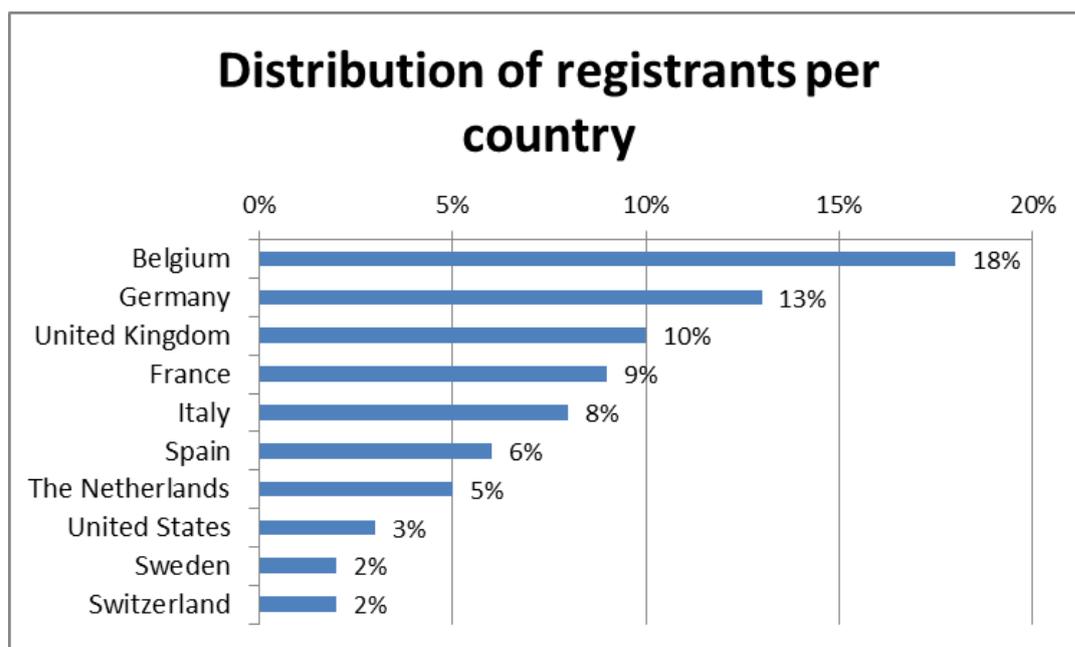
⁶ <http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/consultation/statistics.do?locale=en&action=prepareView>

Chart 5: Total number of registrants per year



Registrants with a head office based in the EU account for approximately 77% of all registrations. Two countries outside the EU (United States and Switzerland) feature in the list of the top 10 countries (Chart 6). There are organisations from all of the EU Member States in the Transparency Register, with half of all registrants declaring a head office in one of the following four countries: Belgium, Germany, the United Kingdom or France. Up to 30% of all registrants have an office in Belgium; for approximately 18% of all registrants this represents their head office.

Chart 6: Distribution of registrants per country – top 10⁷



⁷ This statistic is based on the location of the registrant's head office as indicated in the registration. Some registrants may have a dedicated EU office in Belgium in addition to the head office.

2. Incentives for registration

Unlike in 2016, in 2017 no new incentives for registration were introduced either by the European Parliament or the European Commission which could be the reason why the number of new registrations returned to the 2015 level (Chart 4).

Registration is a precondition for organisations and self-employed individuals whose representatives have been invited to speak at committee hearings of the European Parliament or who seek facilitated access to its premises. Accreditation to European Parliament's premises can be granted for a period of up to 12 months. Approximately 8 000 access authorisations for individuals were granted in 2017 by the European Parliament, for representatives of approximately 2 500 organisations in the Transparency Register (either as a new request or a renewal). This represents some growth compared with 2016. Since 2017, the European Parliament no longer allows holders of long-term badges from suspended organisations to use their badge during the period of suspension. Their access may only be re-established once the suspension of the organisation is lifted.

The European Commission continued to enforce the rules applicable to interest representatives established in 2016 regarding expert group members and in 2014 on 'no registration, no meeting' with the Commissioners, Members of Cabinet or Directors-General⁸.

The full list of incentives for registration offered by the two institutions is available on the Transparency Register website⁹.

3. Visits to Transparency Register website

In 2017, the Transparency Register website¹⁰ received about 360 000 visits¹¹ (30 000 visits per month). The greatest number of visits originated from Belgium (35%) followed by Germany (12%) and the United Kingdom (8%). Around 67% of the visits were direct, while 14% reached the website via search engines. As regards language preferences, the English version of the webpage generated almost 56% of the visits, followed by French (14%) and German (10%).

II. ACTIVITIES OF THE JOINT TRANSPARENCY REGISTER SECRETARIAT

The Joint Transparency Register Secretariat (hereinafter: the Register Secretariat) is made up of a team of officials from the European Parliament and the European Commission. A total of 11 officials assigned full-time or part-time are involved: 5 at the European Parliament and 6 at the European Commission. For Transparency Register-related tasks their work amounts to approximately 6 full-time equivalents.

⁸ 'Commission Decision of 25 November 2014 on the publication of information on meetings held between Directors-General of the Commission and organisations or self-employed individuals' - [C\(2014\) 9048](#) and 'Commission Decision of 25 November 2014 on the publication of information on meetings held between Members of the Commission and organisations or self-employed individuals' - [C\(2014\) 9051](#)

⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/staticPage/displayStaticPage.do:TRPUBLICID-prod=zn3Bu37HVgScAerUCZ1YmqwADpYM6Uen1yYgQiTXYN2f9ZdCoBgY!1758742562?locale=en&reference=WHOS_IS_EXPECTED_TO_REGISTER

¹⁰ <http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public>

¹¹ A 'visit' is defined as a visitor coming to the website for the first time. If the same visitor visits a page more than 30 minutes after his last page view, this will be recorded as a new visit.

The Register Secretariat is in charge of the day-to-day management of the Transparency Register; it provides a helpdesk service, issues guidelines for registration, undertakes data quality checks, handles alerts and complaints received, coordinates IT development and maintenance of the system and carries out awareness-raising and other communication activities to promote the scheme. The Register Secretariat operates under the coordination of the Head of the Transparency Unit in the European Commission's Secretariat-General. The Council of the EU was an observer to the meetings of the Register Secretariat in 2017.

1. Monitoring of data in the Transparency Register

One of the main tasks of the Register Secretariat is to monitor the overall quality of data in the Transparency Register by performing eligibility and quality checks on each new registration. Additionally, the Register Secretariat seeks to ensure appropriate follow-up to alerts and complaints it receives from third parties.

The Register Secretariat coordinates the development of innovative IT solutions to improve the system underpinning the Transparency Register. An updated version of the tool was rolled out in May 2017 introducing **automatic detection and flagging of potential data quality issues** in registrations. Registration and updates are now facilitated by providing additional guidance to users on potentially inconsistent data, frequently committed errors, or highlighting where justifications need to be provided. The aim is to assist registrants in providing a more accurate description of the public affairs activities they have conducted vis-à-vis the EU institutions, including the relevant financial elements.

New registrations with sub-optimal data quality (193 cases in 2017) were for the first time subject to prior validation by the Register Secretariat, before publication in the Transparency Register. Stronger data quality control has brought tangible results. While the number of registrations with sub-optimal data was estimated to be around 9% in May 2017, it decreased to around 5% by the end of the year.

As of December 2017, the Transparency Register automatically provides information about the **Commission Expert groups**¹² to which registrants are appointed, retrieved from the *Register of Commission Expert groups and other similar entities*¹³. This new feature increases transparency and reliability of data and reduces the administrative burden for registered entities.

Helpdesking

In order to assist registrants the Register Secretariat provides a helpdesk service. In 2017 the Register Secretariat replied to 1 022 individual enquiries submitted via the multilingual 'Contact us' online form. Of these, 610 enquiries concerned existing registrations whereas 150 concerned new registrations; 262 messages related to other matters. Additionally, the Register Secretariat offers a phone line during dedicated hours of the week.

¹² This refers to individuals appointed to represent a common interest shared by stakeholders in a particular policy area, who do not represent an individual stakeholder, but a policy orientation common to different stakeholder organisations ('Type B members') and to organisations in the broad sense of the word, including companies, associations, NGOs, trade unions, universities, research institutes, law firms and consultancies ('Type C members'), as laid down in Commission Decision C(2016) 3301 of 30 May 2016.

¹³ <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regexpert/>

1.1 Quality checks

'**Quality check**' is a set of verifications carried out by the Register Secretariat to ensure the quality and accuracy of the data submitted by registrants under Annex II to the Interinstitutional Agreement, so as to avoid factual mistakes and non-eligible registrations. In the event of non-compliance with the requirements set out in Annex II to the Agreement, the Register Secretariat starts a dialogue with the registrants to identify a satisfactory solution.

In 2017, the Register Secretariat performed 3 624 quality checks. From the quality checks performed, 53% of the registrations were deemed to be satisfactory (1 921), while the remaining entities were contacted with regard to eligibility or inconsistencies of the data contained in their entries. Out of the 1 703 entities contacted, 715 entities were removed from the Transparency Register for one of the following reasons: inconsistent, incorrect or incomplete data, failure to update, duplicate registration and ineligibility. From the remaining 988 entities, 765 entities updated their registration in a satisfactory manner following guidance from the Register Secretariat, whereas 223 quality checks were still ongoing as of 31 December 2017.

1.2 Alerts

'**Alert**' is a mechanism that allows third parties to inform the Register Secretariat about registrations of one or more entities that may contain factual mistakes or be non-eligible. In 2017, 20 individual alerts were received by the Register Secretariat (eight originally received as complaints were re-qualified as 'alerts'). These alerts concerned a total of 24 organisations, as some alerts related to more than one entity.

When the Register Secretariat receives notifications about possible breaches of the Code of Conduct, falling exclusively under point (d) of the Code of Conduct¹⁴, such notifications are processed as 'alerts', where they are related to potential factual errors contained in the registrants' data.

1.3 Complaints

'**Complaint**' is a notification alleging a breach by a registrant of any of the obligations under the Code of Conduct, except for allegations concerning factual errors which are dealt with as 'alerts' (see above 1.2).

In 2017, the Register Secretariat received 21 complaints, of which three were admissible as 'complaints' and eight were re-qualified as an 'alert'. Ten complaints were deemed inadmissible, either because they concerned matters outside the scope of the Interinstitutional Agreement on the Transparency Register, or because insufficient elements were provided to substantiate the complaint.

The three admissible complaints alleged a breach of one or more of the following clauses of the Code of Conduct:

- clause (b) '*not obtain or try to obtain information or decisions dishonestly or by use of undue pressure or inappropriate behaviour*',

¹⁴ Transparency Register's Code of Conduct point (d): *[interest representatives shall] ensure that, to the best of their knowledge, information, which they provide upon registration, and subsequently in the framework of their activities covered by the register, is complete, up-to-date and not misleading; accept that all information provided is subject to review and agree to co-operate with administrative requests for complementary information and updates.*

- clause (c) *'not claim any formal relationship with the European Union or any of its institutions in their dealings with third parties, or misrepresent the effect of registration in such a way as to mislead third parties or officials or other staff of the European Union, or use the logos of EU institutions without express authorisation'*, and
- clause (m) *'comply strictly with the relevant European Parliament Rules of Procedure'*.

After investigation by the Register Secretariat and contact with the registrants concerned, one of the three admissible complaints was closed with updates provided by the registrant concerned, while two registrations were removed from the Transparency Register for non-eligibility. An additional own-initiative investigation into alleged inappropriate behaviour by a registrant was opened by the Register Secretariat in late 2017.

2. Guidance and awareness-raising

The Register Secretariat regularly carries out internal training and external communication activities aimed at raising awareness about the Transparency Register and promoting its use.

- The European Parliament organised eight internal training and information sessions for its Members and their assistants, as well as staff;
- The European Commission organised five full-day training courses for staff entitled *'Dealing appropriately and effectively with lobbyists.'* Seven training sessions on ethics, transparency and relations with lobbyists were organised for Cabinets and within the Secretariat-General.

In addition, approximately 30 presentations were delivered to stakeholders and visitor groups by the two institutions during the year.

The Transparency Register and the topic of lobbying regulation at the EU level continue to attract much interest in academic circles. The Register Secretariat also provided information to university students and researchers writing academic papers on these subjects.

3. EU Open Data Portal and the Transparency Register

The year 2017 has seen major improvements in the availability of open data on the Transparency Register. Historical data sets¹⁵ were made available on the EU Open Data Portal; these include complete lists of registered organisations, with their data, and of persons accredited for access to the European Parliament's buildings going back to January 2015. The webpage generated approximately 15 000 views and 5 000 downloads making it the seventh most viewed and sixth most downloaded data set on the EU Open Data Portal. In addition, interactive visuals¹⁶ were created which allow for exploring Transparency Register data in a variety of ways.

¹⁵ <https://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/transparency-register>

¹⁶ <http://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/datavisualisation/>

IV. CONCLUSION

Growth in registrations continued in 2017 although it was less pronounced compared to 2016, with 2 430 new entities joining during the course of the year. The Transparency Register today is one of the biggest of its kind in the world. Its visibility and importance as a go-to database of interest representatives is constantly increasing in Brussels and beyond.

Acting as the guardian of the Transparency Register Code of Conduct, the Register Secretariat ensured that the appropriate administrative follow-up was given to a rising number of alerts and complaints received. Improving the overall data quality in the Transparency Register was another key priority in 2017. To help with data quality, a significant effort was made to develop and implement an innovative IT solution in order to facilitate the registration/updating process for new and existing registrants, essentially to help them avoid the most commonly committed errors. Monitoring and control on the part of the Register Secretariat was also strengthened using this automatic mechanism. The first indications are that overall data quality in the Transparency Register is gradually improving largely as a result of the introduction of this tool.

Looking at the broader political picture several developments worth mentioning took place in 2017. The European Parliament organised a public workshop on 10 May 2017 entitled ‘EU Transparency Register – Lobbying, Parliament & Public Trust’¹⁷. In the context of the Commission proposal for a new Interinstitutional Agreement on a mandatory Transparency Register¹⁸, the European Parliament adopted its negotiating mandate on 15 June 2017¹⁹ and the Council adopted its mandate on 6 December 2017²⁰. Two interinstitutional orientation meetings took place under the Estonian Presidency of the Council of the EU on 6 September and 12 December 2017. Political representatives²¹ from the three institutions started negotiations on a mandatory EU Transparency Register in the first quarter of 2018.

- END -

¹⁷ <https://epthinktank.eu/2017/05/30/lobbying-parliament-public-trust-eu-transparency-register-workshop-of-10-may-2017/>

¹⁸ <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/1/2016/EN/1-2016-627-EN-F1-1.PDF>

¹⁹ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/resources/library/media/20170622RES78125/20170622RES78125.pdf>

²⁰ <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2017/12/06/transparency-register-council-agrees-mandate-for-negotiations/>

²¹ Sylvie Guillaume, Vice-President responsible for the Transparency Register, and Danuta Hübner, Chair of the Constitutional Affairs Committee for Parliament, FVP Frans Timmermans for the European Commission and Matti Maasikas, Deputy Minister for European Affairs for the Estonian Presidency.