

**Question for oral answer O-000035/2011  
to the Commission**

Rule 115

**Corinne Lepage, Diana Wallis, Frédérique Ries**

on behalf of the ALDE Group

**Subject:** Revision of the framework for Commission expert groups and balanced representation and transparency

The Commission recently revised its framework governing the Commission's expert groups (SEC(2010)1360 and C(2010)7649).

Article 9 TEU states that 'the Union shall observe the principle of the equality of its citizens, who shall receive equal attention from its institutions, bodies, offices and agencies', and the European Ombudsman's European Code of Administrative Behaviour states that 'when taking decisions, the official shall respect the fair balance between the interests of private persons and the general public interest'. Currently a large number of expert groups have a biased composition in favour of the private sector, and especially the largest companies.

1. In the revised version of the framework, no measures are taken to strive for more balanced expert groups by taking measures to enhance SME or civil society participation in expert groups. Does the Commission agree that this suggests that getting balanced advice is not obligatory? If not, please explain?
2. For the selection of external experts, the Commission shall mention if experts are representative of a particular stakeholder's interest or if they are supposed to be independent from any stakeholder involved. For this last category, what specific action is the Commission planning to take to avoid any kind of conflict of interests? In particular, does the Commission intend to apply DG Sanco's guidelines?
3. Transparency is a core principle for the institutions in EU decision-making, according to Article 1 TEU and Article 11 TEU along with Article 15 TFEU, giving the public the right of access to documents. Is the Commission therefore intending to establish a user-friendly website on which all public calls for applications will be published, all existing expert groups with their full membership enclosed, and all minutes made available to the public? If so, how and when? If not, please explain?
4. Why has the Commission not consulted the EP before taking final decisions on the revision of the framework, as transparency has become an issue of common concern to both the Commission and the EP? Is the Commission willing to do so?

Tabled: 10.2.2011

Forwarded: 14.2.2011

Deadline for reply: 21.2.2011