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55,000 sign petition as campaigners fight for transparency in EU lobbying



Barroso's Goldman Sachs chairmanship sparks campaign for greater transparency among MEPs and EU institutions

A PETITION calling for action on the lobbying activities of EU officials has gained 55,000 signatures in a bid to pressure for transparency on a "revolving door" culture in the European Union.

The action, created by the **Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and Ethics Regulation (ALTER-EU)** (<http://alter-eu.org>), is in response to the news last month that the former president of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso, had joined the controversial investment bank Goldman Sachs as a non-executive chairman.

The petition (https://act.wemove.eu/campaigns/eu-revolving-doors?utm_source=partner&utm_medium=mail&utm_campaign=en_20160810) has already gained the signatures of 55,000 EU citizens with the group aiming to reach 100,000 so that it can call on the EC to institute policies such as a mandatory lobby transparency system to allow EU citizens to see who is influencing EU decision making on issues and budgets.

"The resulting loss of democracy in EU decision-making and the postponement, weakening, or blockage even, of urgently needed progress on social, environmental and consumer-protection reforms," are reasons reform is needed, according to ALTER-EU

The other proposal would be to ensure former commissioners should be banned for at least three years from any job that "provokes a conflict of interest", including all direct and indirect EU lobbying.

ALTER-EU is a coalition of over 200 public interest groups and trade unions concerned with what they call "the increasing influence exerted by corporate lobbyists on the political agenda in Europe".

They cite "the resulting loss of democracy in EU decision-making and the postponement, weakening, or blockage even, of urgently needed progress on social, environmental and consumer-protection reforms", as reasons that these reforms are needed.

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Barroso, a previous Portuguese prime minister who was president of the EC for 10 years, will act as non-executive chairman as well as an advisor to the international arm of the US investment bank giant.

Elected to the Portuguese parliament in 1985 and from 2002 to 2004 serving as prime minister of the country, he later joined the European Commission as president in 2004 and stepped down in 2014.

Barroso is not the first top EU official to add Goldman Sachs to his résumé. Mario Draghi, the chairman of the European Central Bank, Mario Monti, a former Italian prime minister and commissioner for competition, and Carlos Moedas, the current European commissioner for research, science and innovation, worked at the US bank in the past.

Goldman Sachs was attacked during the Greek economic crisis for having helped Athens hide its financial situation to enter the Eurozone in 2000.

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