



## [ALTER-EU response to Sven Giegold's report on transparency, accountability and integrity in the EU institutions \(2015/2041\(INI\)\)](#)

The Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and Ethics Regulation welcomes this report and its emphasis on improving the transparency, accountability and integrity of the EU institutions. Below we raise a series of points where we consider the current text is either particularly welcome, or where we recommend to tighten the text.

### **Lobby transparency register**

- *Paragraph 2:* ALTER-EU would like to see the Commission policy to turn down meeting requests with unregistered lobbyists (which currently applies to commissioners, cabinet members and directors-general), extended to all staff in the Commission.
- *Paragraph 5:* ALTER-EU strongly supports the proposal for MEPs to only meet registered lobbyists and to publish these meetings online.
- *Paragraph 6:* Alter-EU recommends the declaration of precise figures instead of bandwidths for lobbying expenditures.
- *Paragraph 7:* ALTER-EU is very pleased to see that *this report* proposes to re-iterate the Parliament's commitment to a legally-binding lobby transparency register backed by legislation. This is the only way to ensure that significant sanctions can be applied to those who do not follow the rules.

### **Lobbyists**

- *Paragraph 12:* ALTER-EU welcomes the recommendation to ensure that unregistered lobbyists are unable to access the Parliament.
- *Paragraphs 13 + 14:* ALTER-EU agrees that there needs to be a far more effective data quality monitoring process for the EU lobby register. The capacity, investigatory and enforcement powers devoted to the EU lobby register need to be totally transformed so that effective monitoring checks are carried out on at least 20 per cent of all declarations each year, and all complaints are dealt with speedily. The Secretariat should also be empowered to enact strict sanctions on lobbyists who declare incorrect information and/or violate the Code of Conduct. Parliament should take a greater responsibility in ensuring that the information in the register is of good quality and engage in introducing appropriate sanctions in case of breaches of the reporting requirements.
- *Paragraph 16:* We believe the advisory board should be staffed 100% with external experts as it is not the task of MEPs to police their colleagues.

### **Code of Conduct**

- *Paragraph 18:* This should include a well-resourced secretariat with the capacity to carry out spot checks as well as systematic evaluations of the DoFIs. The DoFIs should be modified to include smaller bandwidths for financial disclosure as well as the obligation to state precise sums for income above 10 000€ per month.
- *Paragraph 19:* The Code of Conduct also needs to include a clear definition and a list of criteria of what constitutes a conflict of interest. We recommend the following text to be added at the end of the sentence: 'including work for companies or organisations that are involved in lobbying EU institutions such as the Council, the Commission and the Parliament'.

- *Paragraph 20:* MEPs should also not be allowed to receive support in staff or otherwise from outside interests (with the exception of political parties).

### **Cooling-off periods**

- *Paragraph 22:* The cooling off period should cover any new paid role which risks creating a conflict of interest with their former role, including lobbying. ALTER-EU further considers that the decision on (especially) senior officials' and commissioners' new moves should be undertaken by a fully independent and adequately resourced body.

### **Expert groups**

- *Paragraphs 23-24:* In the view of ALTER-EU, the Commission needs to act immediately to tackle conflicts of interest and corporate bias in the composition of expert groups. This has been a longstanding problem that must be resolved now. The Commission needs to implement urgently all of the Ombudsman's recommendations.

### **Access to Documents**

- *Paragraph 29:* ALTER EU welcomes reforms to bring regulation 1049/2001 into line with the Treaty of Lisbon by widening its scope to encompass all EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies currently not covered. We further call for such reform to recognise the fundamental nature of the right of access to information, and to ensure harm and public interest tests apply for all exceptions;
- In addition, we ask for the following proposals to be added: 1) remove the obligation for postal address to register requests; 2) make EU Ombudsman Decisions on transparency binding for EU institutions; and 3) ensure third parties are aware of the EU's transparency obligations.

### **Trilogues**

- *Paragraphs 32-35:* ALTER-EU is pleased that the lack of transparency of the trilogue process is raised in this report. We call for the publication of all documents in a timely and systematic manner, public access to meetings, and access to any reports or notes discussed over the course of the process, in line with the procedures for normal Parliament committee meetings.

### **Trade negotiations**

- *Paragraphs 36-41:* Alongside these welcome proposals, ALTER-EU also asks that there should be full transparency of membership and activities of all advisory bodies in the context of the EU's trade negotiations, including the EU's sector-specific market access working groups, so that the public can know who guides the Commission in its trade negotiations and in which direction.

### **Executive agencies**

- *Paragraphs 47-48:* ALTER-EU calls for all EU agencies, and in particular EFSA, EMA and ECHA, to urgently revise their independence policies so as to explicitly guarantee their strict independence from the economic sectors they are regulating and avoid conflicts of interest among their staff and experts.

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