

Dear Member of the European Parliament,

Headlines about lobbying controversies in the European institutions are common. In the past legislature, scandal surrounded the processes around the trade deals with the US and Canada, the Copyright Directive, Dieselgate, the re-authorisation process of glyphosate and measures to fight tax avoidance, among many, many others.

This rapid succession of stories is not an accident. There are over 25, 000 lobbyists working to influence EU lawmaking, and the Members of the European Parliament are of course some of their main lobbying targets. There are over 7, 000 lobbyists with a permanent access pass to the European Parliament, which works out to around 10 lobbyists per MEP. Given the power and influence many lobbyists have, rules to ensure they do not impede public-interest lawmaking are inevitable.

For over a decade, the Alliance for Lobbying Transparency and Ethics Regulation (ALTER-EU), a coalition of over 200 civil society groups and trade unions, has been campaigning for a strong EU Transparency Register, balance in the institutions' engagement with stakeholders (and citizens) and stronger rules to prevent conflicts of interest.

We have also witnessed and supported the European Parliament in developing a variety of rules to prevent conflicts of interest, create transparency around lobbying and spell out the duties and rights of people who are lobbied, as well as those who lobby.

With the enclosed guide, we want to give you a consolidated overview of those rules and best practices on how to implement them. We also want to offer our guidance on how to interact with lobbyists and comply with the current rules. We hope you find it useful.

There is still much to be done when it comes to lobbying and ethics regulations, starting with ensuring that they are fully implemented by introducing an independent monitoring body. But rules alone won't resolve the arguably biggest challenge of interest representation today: the lack of balance in the access to power and the increasing influence exerted by corporate lobbyists on the political agenda in Europe.

There are things that MEPs can and should do themselves to deal with this problem: make sure to have a balance of interests in your lobby meetings, actively reach out for citizens, and don't rely on paid lobbyists but instead seek multiple viewpoints.

And there will be a need to think further how to make sure the voices of citizens can be better heard in Brussels against the often well-resourced special interests of business.

We would be pleased to discuss any of these matters with you, or to provide further information on our proposals.

We look forward to hearing from you.



Myriam Douo, on behalf of the ALTER-EU Steering Committee

