

Transparency, accountability and integrity in the EU institutions

2015/2041(INI) - 14/09/2017 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 368 votes to 161 with 60 abstentions, a resolution on transparency, accountability and integrity in the EU institutions.

In view of the growing distance between the EU and its citizens, the EU institutions must strive for the highest possible standards of transparency, accountability and integrity.

Transparency Register and relations with interest representatives: Parliament proposed backing up the EU Transparency Register with a legislative act and to achieve a fully mandatory register for all interest representatives with an interinstitutional agreement.

It recalled the revision of the Rules of Procedure of 13 December 2016, according to which Members should adopt the systematic practice of only meeting interest representatives that have registered in the Transparency Register, and called for meetings between interest representatives and Secretary-Generals, Director-Generals and Secretary-Generals of political groups to be included.

Members welcomed the decision of its Bureau to request that its administration develop a template for all rapporteurs and draftspersons for opinions to produce a voluntary legislative footprint, setting out what interest representatives and organisations they have consulted.

The Commission should make all information on interest representation towards the EU institutions, declarations of interest, confirmed conflicts of interest and expert groups easily accessible to the public through an online one-stop shop. It should also publish meetings of all relevant Commission staff involved in the EUs policy-making process with external organisations. The Council is called on to join the Transparency Register as soon as possible.

Parliament insisted that registered entities, including law firms and consultancies, should declare in the Transparency Register all clients on whose behalf they perform interest representation activities that fall within the remit of the Transparency Register. Declarations of registered entities should be checked each year.

Conflicts of interest: Members called on the EU institutions and bodies which still do not have a code of conduct to develop such a document as soon as possible. The Council, for its part, should introduce a specific code of ethics, including sanctions, which addresses the risks specific to national delegates.

The Commission is invited to address the revolving door issue given that its effect can be detrimental to relations between the institutions and interest representatives. Members proposed to strengthen the restrictions on former Commissioners by extending the cooling-off period to three years and making it binding for at least all activities falling within the remit of the Transparency Register. They stated that decisions on senior officials and former Commissioners new roles must be taken by an authority appointed as independently as possible of those affected by its decisions.

Expert groups: Members stressed the need for a balanced composition of expert groups. They considered that a provision containing general criteria for the delimitation of economic and non-economic interests would help the Commission to pick experts representing interests with a better balance.

The Commission is called on to explore systemic safeguards with a view to avoiding conflicts of interest in the area of the regulation of industry products and policy enforcement.

Full access to documents in the legislative process: Members recalled their Commission and the Council in its [resolution of 28 April 2016](#) in which it:

- called for the scope of Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 to be broadened to include all the European institutions it currently does not cover, such as the European Council, the European Central Bank, the Court of Justice and all the EU bodies and agencies;
- called for full compliance with the obligation by the institutions, agencies and other bodies to keep complete registers of documents;
- considered that documents created in trilogues such as agendas, summaries of outcomes, minutes and general approaches in the Council;
- called for a common interinstitutional register, including a dedicated joint database on the state of play of legislative files for which works are under way as agreed in the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making;
- called on the Commission to set up a register of all second-level legislation, in particular for delegated acts.

External representation and negotiations of the EU: Members welcomed the recent case law by the European Court of Justice, which reinforces Parliament's right to information on international agreements. They called on the Council, the Commission and the European External Action Service to genuinely commit to reaching an agreement with Parliament on improved cooperation and information sharing throughout the whole life cycle of international agreements.

The EU must take the lead in furthering the transparency of trade negotiations, not only for bilateral processes, but also for plurilateral and multilateral processes where possible.

Protection of whistleblowers and the fight against corruption: whistleblowers have too often found more prosecution than support even in the EU institutions. Stressing that effective whistleblower protection to be a key weapon in the fight against corruption, Parliament called on the Commission to propose an EU legislative framework for the effective protection of whistleblowers and to add to the Ombudsmans remit her task of being a focal point for whistleblowers who find themselves victims of ill-treatment.

The resolution stated that persons convicted by a final judgment of corruption in the EU or companies led or owned by persons who committed acts of corruption or misappropriation of public funds for the benefit of their company and have been convicted by a final judgment on those grounds should, for at least three years, be effectively banned from entering into procurement contracts with the European Union and from

benefiting from EU funds.

Lastly, Members believed that the data on budget and spending within the EU should be transparent and accountable through publication, including at the level of Member States as regards shared management.